



## INFLUENCE OF PARALYMPICS AND PERFORMANCE OF ATHLETES WITH DISABILITY IN INDIAN CONTEXT

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### ABSTRACT

*Sports can contribute to economic and social development, improving health and personal growth for people of all ages and groups. Sports can promote accessibility, provide economic opportunities and generate employment. International sporting events can raise awareness regarding the accessibility of infrastructure including transportation, communication systems, the built environment and public space. The energy and talent of the Paralympic athletes demonstrate that the human spirit knows no boundaries. The United Nations continues to strive for the realization of universal human rights of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities empowers those who are ready to break through any boundaries in our society. This paper aims to examine the contribution of Indian athletes who are suffering from disabilities and focusing on their talent witnessed in Paralympic games through the ages. This paper aims to emphasize on the history and development of the Paralympic Games from small beginnings as a competition for disabled people and their performance in Indian context.*

### KEYWORDS :

#### INTRODUCTION:

Persons with disabilities have the right to participate in sporting and recreational activities at all levels, organizing and participating in sports, receiving the necessary instruction, training and resources, and accessing sporting, recreational and leisure venues. In addition, children and youth with disabilities have the right to play and the right to equal access in sporting, recreational and leisure activities, including those within the educational system. The goals of the United Nations and the Paralympic Games share the same ideals to serve humanity. The UN strives for the peaceful settlement of disputes, social progress and better standards of life, and harmonious relations among peoples and nations, while the goal of the Paralympics is to place sport at the service of humanity, by harnessing its great potential to contribute to the global struggle for peace, prosperity and the preservation of human dignity.

More than 130 nations participate in the Paralympic Games, which is the second largest multi-sport festival and one of the most prestigious sporting events in the world after the Olympic Games (Brittain, 2010, p. 1). Communities across the globe are motivated by the Paralympics Games and celebrate their fellow citizens who compete in the Games. Indeed, sports serve to inspire communities around the world to aim higher and highest, beyond any boundaries. Paralympic athletes embody the highest ideals of humanity they challenge the boundaries set by society and aim to develop and maximize their potential as world class athletes. It is important to observed that the academic study of the history of the Paralympic Games is not highly developed, especially compared to the historical study of events such as the Olympic Games.

#### Founder of the Paralympic Games:

Ludwig Guttmann, German born English neurosurgeon was the founder of the Paralympic movement. Sir Ludwig Guttmann born on July 3, 1899 in Tost, Germany which is now Toszek, Poland and on died March 18, 1980 in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire England. Guttmann passed a medical degree in 1924 from the University of Freiburg and then became a popular neurosurgeon. He left Germany with the rise of the Nazis in 1939 because Guttmann was a Jew and moved to England. He became head of the National Spinal Injuries Centre in 1944 at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Aylesbury, where he remained until he retired in 1966.

Guttmann championed the concept of early treatment for injured servicemen in specialized spinal units and suggested the exercise of physical activities and compulsory sport as a structure of rehabilitation, integration and motivation. To this end he planned an archery competition for 16 disabled patients including the first competition for wheelchair athletes, named the Stoke Mandeville Games and the event was conducted on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1948, along with the beginning of the London Olympic Games. The subsequent year extra events and participants were featured and the contest named as the Stoke Mandeville Games. In 1952 this event became international and same year Guttmann supported to found the International Stoke Mandeville Games Committee. The association afterwards underwent numerous name changes before unification with the International Sports Organisation for the Disabled (ISOD) in 2004 to become the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation.

#### Origin and History of Paralympics:

After completed the Olympic Games some weeks before, Stoke Mandeville Games were held first at Rome in 1960 (Gold, 2007). This event featuring 400 above athletes from 23 nations became recognized as the earliest Paralympic Games. The Paralympics consequently became a quadrennial event, staged in the same year as the Olympics. The first Paralympic Winter Games followed in 1976, in Ornskoldsvik, Sweden. Guttmann also founded the International Medical Society of Paraplegia afterwards changed as the International Spinal Cord Society in 1961 and served as its first president from 1961 to 70. He also started the British Sports Association for the Disabled in the same year. From 1968 to 1979 he served as a president of ISOD. Guttmann received many awards and honours, and he was knighted in 1966. Paralympic games are main international sports contest for disabled athletes. Compare to the Olympic Games the Paralympics are divide into winter and summer seasonal Games and conducted these games alternately every two years. Several same Olympic events are included such as Alpine skiing cross country skiing and biathlon for winter sports. Cycling, archery and swimming for summer sports although sports equipment for the Paralympics may be modified for specific disabilities. The Paralympics have been conducted in the same place since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that hosts the corresponding Olympic Games. These Paralympics conduct soon after the Olympics completed. In the year 1989 the International Paralympic Committee was formed and is based in Germany, governs the Paralympic Games.

Paralympic athletes participate in six different disability groups i.e., amputee, cerebral palsy, visual impairment, spinal cord injuries, intellectual disability and dwarfism (athletes whose disability does not fit into one of the other categories). Athletes are again split into classes on the basis of the type and extent of their disabilities within each group. Individual athletes may be reclassified at later competitions if their physical status changes.

The Paralympics developed after Sir Ludwig Guttman organized a sports competition for British World War II veterans with spinal cord injuries in England in 1948. A follow-up competition took place in 1952, with athletes from the Netherlands joining the British competitors. In 1960 the first quadrennial Olympic-style Games for disabled athletes were held in Rome; the quadrennial Winter Games were added in 1976, in Sweden. Since the Seoul 1988 Olympic Games (and the 1992 Winter Olympics in Albertville, France), the Paralympics have been held at the Olympic venues and have used the same facilities. In 2001 the International Olympic Committee and the International Paralympics Committee agreed on the practice of one bid, one city, in which every city that bids to host the Olympics also bids to hold the related Paralympics.

The size and diversity of the Paralympic Games have increased greatly over the years. The Paralympics in 1960 hosted 400 athletes from 23 countries participating in eight sports. Just over 50 years later, at the 2012 Summer Paralympics in London more than 4,200 athletes representing 164 countries participated in 20 sports.

#### **Establishment of International Paralympic Committee:**

Finally, on 22 September 1989, the International Paralympic Committee was founded as an international non-profit organisation in Dusseldorf, Germany, to act as the global governing body of the Paralympic Movement. The word Paralympic derives from the Greek preposition para (beside or alongside) and the word Olympic. Its meaning is that Paralympics are the parallel Games to the Olympics and illustrates how the two movements exist side-by-side. The Paralympic Games or Paraolympics, also known as the Games of the Paralympiad, is a periodic series of international multi-sport events involving athletes with a range of physical disabilities.

#### **Paralympic Flag:**

Although the name was originally coined as a portmanteau combining paraplegic (due to its origins as games for people with spinal injuries) and Olympic, the inclusion of other disability groups meant that this was no longer considered very accurate. The Summer Games of 1988 held in Seoul was the first time the term Paralympic came into official use. Spirit in Motion is the motto for the Paralympic movement. The symbol for the Paralympics contains three colours, red, blue, and green, which are the colours most widely represented in the flags of nations. The colours are each in the shape of an *Agito* (which is Latin for I move/ I shake/I stir), which is the name given to an asymmetrical crescent specially designed for the Paralympic movement.

The three *Agitos* circle a central point, which is a symbol for the athletes congregating from all points of the globe. The motto and symbol of the IPC were changed in 2003 to their current versions. The change was intended to convey the idea that Paralympians have a spirit of competition and that the IPC as an organization realizes its potential and is moving forward to achieve it. The vision of the IPC is, to enable Paralympic athletes to achieve sporting excellence and to inspire and excite the world. The Paralympic anthem is *Hymne de l'Avenir* or Anthem of the Future. It was composed by Thierry Darnis and adopted as the official anthem in March 1996.

#### **World War-II Relation to Disability Sport:**

The huge majority of people with spinal cord injuries died within three years following their injury prior to World War-II (Legg et al., 2002). However, after World War-II sulfa drugs made spinal cord injury survivable (Craven, 2006). There is small proof of organised efforts to develop or promote sport for disabled people prior to World War-II, particularly people with spinal injuries who were considered to have no chance of surviving their problems. After completion of the war, however, medical authorities were asked to re-evaluate conventional methods of rehabilitation which were not enough responding to the medical and psychological requirements of the vast number of soldiers disabled after combat (Steadward, 1992, pp. 293-299).

Consequently, sport was introduced as a rehabilitation programme for patients in the spinal unit. The aim was to not only give hope and a sense of self-worth to the patients, but to change the attitudes of society towards the spinally injured by demonstrating that they could continue to be useful members of society and also take part in activities and complete tasks most of the non-disabled would struggle with (Anderson, 2003, pp. 461-475). According to Guttman (1979), sport is far more important for the well-being of disabled people than for the well-being of healthy people. Sport for the disabled pursues the same goals as sport for the non-disabled. In addition, however, sport has a very high therapeutic value and plays a significant role in the physical, psychological and social rehabilitation of the disabled.

#### **Eligibility for Paralympics:**

Paralympians compete in different categories within a given sport based on their particular impairment. The Paralympic movement covers 10 impairment types that fall broadly into three categories: physical impairments, vision impairment and intellectual impairment. i.e., Impaired muscle power, Impaired passive range of movement, Limb deficiency, Leg length difference, Short stature, Muscle tension, Uncoordinated movement, Involuntary movements, Vision impairment, Intellectual Impairment. Some sports are open to athletes in all categories, while others are reserved for specific impairments. Within each category, athletes are assessed to see whether they meet a minimum impairment level, to ensure a fair playing field although there have been controversies over some placements in recent years. In some sports like athletics, they are placed in a certain sports class, again pitting them against athletes with similar impairments to ensure equity. Athletes may be reclassified over their lifetime as their situation changes.

#### **Classification of Athletes:**

Classification is the cornerstone of the Paralympic movement it determines which athletes are eligible to compete in a sport and how athletes are grouped together for competition. In Para sports, athletes are grouped by the degree of activity limitation resulting from the impairment. This, to a certain extent, is similar to grouping athletes by age, gender or weight. Classification aims to minimise the impact of the impairment on athletes' performance so that the sporting excellence determines which athlete or team is ultimately victorious. Ensuring that athletes are classified prior to competing is crucial to safeguarding the integrity and credibility of the competition.

Different sports require athletes to perform different activities, such as: sprinting, propelling a wheelchair, rowing and shooting. As sports require different activities, the impact of the impairment on each sport also differs. Therefore, for classification to minimise the impact of impairment on sport performance, classification must be sport specific. Different athletes are classified into different classes, depending on their physical impairment. The next step is determining which

group (class) the athlete needs to be in, so that he or she competes only with other athletes who have either the exact same physical impairment that causes similar activity limitation. This grouping is what the numbers next to the names of the athletes signify.

**India's Participation and Performance in Paralympics:**

India made its Summer Paralympic debut at the 1968 Games, competed again in 1972, and then was absent until the 1984 Games. The country has participated in every edition of the Summer games since then and never participated in the Winter Paralympic Games. India's first medal in Paralympics came in 1972 Games, with Muralikant Petkar winning a gold medal in swimming. India's best finish yet has been in the 2020 Games, at 24th place with a medal haul.

**India's medals at Paralympics (by year)**

S.No	Year	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	2020	5	8	6	19
2	2016	2	1	1	4
3	2012	0	1	0	1
4	2004	1	0	1	2
5	1984	0	2	2	4
6	1972	1	0	0	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>31</b>

The above table shows that India's different medals at Paralympics year wise from 1972 to 2020.

**India's Medals by Summer Sports**

S.No	Games	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	Athletics	4	9	5	18
2	shooting	2	1	2	5
3	Badminton	2	1	1	4
4	Swimming	1	0	0	1
5	Table Tennis	0	1	0	1
6	Archery	0	0	1	1
7	Power lifting	0	0	1	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>31</b>

The above table indicating that India's different medals at Paralympics Game wise those are Athletics, shooting, Badminton, Swimming, Table Tennis, Archery and Power lifting total 31 different medals won by Indians from 1972 to 2020.

India will have two of the four gold medal winners at Paralympic Games at Tokyo 2020. Devendra Jhajharia and Mariyappan Thangavelu doubled India's historic gold tally at Rio 2016 and they will be both looking to defend their titles in Tokyo. Current Paralympic Committee of India's chief Deepa Malik was also among the medallists at Rio 2016, which was India's best Paralympic Games campaign. Other notable Indian athletes at the Paralympic Games include Muralikant Petkar, who won the men's 50m freestyle 3 swimming in 1972, and Joginder Singh Bedi who claimed three medals (one silver, two bronze) in athletics at the 1984 Games. Thus, he became the first multi medallist Paralympian from India.

**India's Contribution and Performance in Paralympics**

S.No.	Year	Place	Athletes	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total	Rank
1	1960	Rome						No participation
2	1964	Tokyo						
3	1968	Tel Aviv	10	0	0	0	0	0
4	1972	Heidelberg	10	1	0	0	1	25
5	1976	Toronto						No participation
6	1980	Arnhem						
7	1984	New York	5	0	2	2	4	37
8	1988	Seoul	2	0	0	0	0	0
9	1992	Barcelona	9	0	0	0	0	0
10	1996	Atlanta	9	0	0	0	0	0
11	2000	Sydney	4	0	0	0	0	0

12	2004	Athens	12	1	0	1	2	53
13	2008	Beijing	5	0	0	0	0	0
14	2012	London	10	0	1	0	1	67
15	2016	Rio de Janeiro	19	2	1	1	4	43
16	2020	Tokyo	54	5	8	6	19	24
		<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>55</b>

This table gives the information about Indians contribution and performance in Paralympics, year wise, and place wise (where these games held), medal wise, total and rank from beginning to 2020.

**India's entries at Tokyo Paralympics**

S.No	Sport	Female	Male	Total
1	Archery	1	4	5
2	Athletics	4	20	24
3	Badminton	2	5	7
4	Canoe Sprint	1	0	1
5	Power lifting	1	1	2
6	Shooting	2	8	10
7	Swimming	0	2	2
8	Table Tennis	2	0	2
9	Taekwondo	1	0	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>54</b>

The information mentioned in this table is the total number of Athletes participated in 2020 Tokyo Paralympics by gender wise.

In all honesty, India's campaign at both the Tokyo Olympics as well as the Tokyo Paralympics has been a raging success, with athletes returning with a bountiful of medals from both. While at the Tokyo Olympics, Neeraj Chopra's gold-winning stint in javelin throw made all the difference in the 7 medal haul the Indian Olympians had, the Paralympics saw a full-fledged medal shower with 5 golds 8 silvers and 6 bronze medals neatly tying up the 19 medal haul.

**India's medals at Paralympics (by sport) 2020**

S.No.	Sport	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	Athletics	1	5	2	8
2	Archery	0	0	1	1
3	Badminton	2	1	1	4
4	Shooting	2	1	2	5
5	Table Tennis	0	1	0	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>

The details in this table explain that India's different medals at Paralympics sport wise in Tokyo 2020.

**List of India's Medalists**

S. No.	Medal	Name or Team	Games Place and Year	Sport	Event
1	Gold	Muralikant Petkar	1972 Heidelberg	Swimming	Men's 50m Freestyle 3
2	Silver	Bhimrao Kesarkar	1984 Mandeville	Athletics	Men's javelin L6
3	Silver	Joginder Singh Bedi	New York	Athletics	Men's Shot put L6
4	Bronze	Joginder Singh Bedi		Athletics	Men's javelin L6
5	Bronze	Joginder Singh Bedi		Athletics	Men's Discus Throw L6
6	Gold	Devendra Jhajharia	2004 Athens	Athletics	Men's javelin F44/46
7	Bronze	Rajinder Singh Rahelu		Power Lifting	Men's 56kg

8	Silver	Girisha Nagarajewda	2012 London	Athletics	Men's High Jump F42
9	Gold	Mariyappan Thangavelu	2016 Rio de Janeiro	Athletics	Men's High Jump F42
10	Gold	Devendra Jhajharia	2020 Tokyo	Athletics	Men's javelin Throw F46
11	Silver	Deepa Malik		Athletics	Women's Shot put F53
12	Bronze	Varun Singh Bhati		Athletics	Men's High Jump F42
13	Gold	Avani Lekhara		Shooting	Women's 10m Air Rifle SH1
14	Gold	Sumit Antil		Athletics	Men's Javelin Throw F64
15	Gold	Manish Narwal		Shooting	Mixed 50m Pistol SH1
16	Gold	Pramod Bhagat		Badminton	Men's Singles SL3
17	Gold	Krishna Nagar		Badminton	Men's Singles SH6
18	Silver	Bhavina Patel		Table Tennis	Women's Singles C4
19	Silver	Nishad Kumar		Athletics	Men's High Jump T47
20	Silver	Yogesh Kathuniya	Athletics	Men's Discus Throw F56	
21	Silver	Devendra Jhajharia	Athletics	Men's Javelin Throw F46	
22	Silver	Mariyappan Thangavelu	Athletics	Men's High Jump T63	
23	Silver	Praveen Kumar	Athletics	Men's High Jump T64	
24	Silver	Singhraj Adhana	Shooting	Men's 50m Pistol SH1	
25	Silver	Suhas Lalinakere Yathiraj	Badminton	Men's Singles SL4	
26	Bronze	Sundar Singh Gurjar	Athletics	Men's Javelin Throw F46	
27	Bronze	Singhraj Adhana	Shooting	Men's 10m Air Pistol SH1	
28	Bronze	Sharad Kumar	Athletics	Men's High Jump T63	
29	Bronze	Avani Lekhara	Shooting	Women's 50m Rifle 3 Positions SH1	
30	Bronze	Harvinder Singh	Archery	Men's Individual Recurve Open	
31	Bronze	Manoj Sarkar	Badminton	Men's Singles SL3	

The information in the above table indicated that names and teams of the medallists from the 1972 to 2020 held at places and information about different metals of medals in the respective sports event wise.

**Multiple Medalists**

S.No	Athlete	Games	Sport	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	Devendra Jhajharia	2004 Athens 2016 Rio de Janeiro 2020 Tokyo	Athletics	2	1	0	3
2	Mariyappan Thangavelu	2016 Rio de Janeiro 2020 Tokyo	Athletics	1	1	0	2
3	Avani Lekhara	2020 Tokyo	Shooting	1	0	1	2

4	Joginder Singh Bedi	1984 Stoke Mandeville/ New York	Athletics	0	1	2	3
5	Singhraj Adhana	2020 Tokyo	Shooting	0	1	1	2

The details mentioned in this table shows that multiple medallists their names, who got from different years of Paralympics as well as various games and sports.

Paralympian Sumit Antil's gold winning run at the Tokyo Paralympics was stunning to say the least as he broke 3 World Record's en route to the victory. Pramod Bhagat, the World No.1 para badminton player had a stunning outing at the Tokyo Paralympics and returned with a gold medal to crown his efforts. Krishna Nagar played top-notch badminton at the Paralympic Games and was phenomenal from start to finish, leaving no doubt that he would go get the gold which he ultimately did after pulling off a great comeback in the finals.

The Indian para athletes returned from Tokyo Paralympics after an unprecedented medal haul of five gold, eight silver and six bronze. This was the countries best-ever Paralympics campaign as it finished 24<sup>th</sup> in the overall tally. This time we competed in only nine sports and won medals in five sports. Two shooters Avani Lekhara and Manish Narwal won gold medals while shuttlers Pramod Bhagat and Krishna Nagar also clinched the yellow metals. The fifth gold was won by javelin thrower Sumit Antil.

The likes of javelin thrower Devendra Jhajharia and high jumper Mariyappan Thangavelu both 2016 Rio Paralympics gold winners won silver medals this time. Lekhara (gold and bronze) and another shooter Singhraj Adana (silver and bronze) were the ones to finish on the podium twice. Archer Harvinder Singh and table tennis player Bhavinaben Patel won historic first medals in their respective sports with silver and a bronze respectively. shuttlers Suhas Yathiraj, the District Magistrate of Noida, who won a silver, gold medallist Krishna Nagar (badminton) and young Palak Kohli (badminton). Indian shuttlers bagged four medals including two gold in para badminton is made its first in the Paralympics.

Shooters Avani Lekhara and Singhraj Adana both were won two medals each in the Tokyo Games. Lekhara, who was paralysed waist down after being involved in an accident, had scripted history by becoming the first Indian woman to win a Paralympic gold before adding a bronze to her kitty. The 39-year-old Adana, who is afflicted with polio, clinched a silver and a bronze. Also present were table tennis player Bhavina Patel, who won a silver, and bronze medallist recurve archer Harvinder Singh.

With 22 sports on offer, badminton and taekwondo being the latest of admissions in the Paralympics, the Tokyo edition promises to be an exciting one. The number of athletes has also increased exponentially and over 3686 para athletes are expected to participate in the Games this time from as many as 136 countries. India is also going to send its largest paralympic contingent this time to Tokyo and medals are assured to come this way.

**CONCLUSION:**

The Indian para athletes registered their best ever performance in the Tokyo Games The Indian para athletes returned from Tokyo on the back of a sensational campaign that saw them win an unparalleled 19 medals, including five gold, eight silver and six bronze. This was the nation's best ever performance in Paralympics campaign as it finished 24<sup>th</sup> in the overall tally among 162 nations competing and ranking 20<sup>th</sup> on the basis of total medals won. India had won only 12 medals until 2016 since making its Paralympic Games debut in 1968 and performance of Paralympics (people with disability) is good than the Olympic games.

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