



# THE DISMAL PERFORMANCE OF INDIA IN THE 2024 PARIS OLYMPICS: ANALYZING CAUSES AND CHARTING THE FUTURE

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## ABSTRACT

*India's performance in the Paris 2024 Olympics was very disappointing, marking a significant setback after the country's best-ever show at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Despite growing investments in sports infrastructure, training, and athlete development, India's medal tally remained far below expectations. This article explores the factors contributing to this underperformance and offers insights into what needs to change to realize the country's Olympic aspirations.*

**Keywords:** India, Paris 2024, Olympics, Sports Performance, Athlete Development, Medal Tally, Sports Policy.

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## Introduction

India entered the 2024 Paris Olympics with high hopes following a record seven medals, including a historic gold in javelin, in Tokyo 2020. With a population of over 1.4 billion and increasing governmental support for sports, expectations were sky-high. However, India's performance at Paris 2024 turned out to be underwhelming, with a significantly lower medal tally. This article seeks to examine the various factors that contributed to this dismal show, including policy missteps, infrastructure gaps, and cultural issues surrounding sports in the country.

## 1. Expectations vs. Reality: A Gap Too Wide

Ahead of the Paris Olympics, India had set an ambitious target of 10-15 medals. There were hopes of success in archery, shooting, wrestling, boxing, and athletics—disciplines where India has historically performed well or shown promise in recent years. However, with fewer medals and no standout performances, it became clear that India had fallen short of the expectations set by the government, fans, and the athletes themselves.

## 2. Challenges in Key Disciplines

- **Shooting:** Traditionally one of India's strongest sports at the Olympics, shooting saw several near-misses in Paris. Despite promising talents like Manu Bhaker and Saurabh Chaudhary, the team failed to capitalize on opportunities, with nerves and inconsistency often cited as reasons.
- **Archery:** Indian archers, who had consistently performed well in international events leading up to the Olympics, succumbed to the pressure on the big stage. There were strategic errors, and the team lacked mental fortitude in crucial moments.
- **Wrestling and Boxing:** Indian wrestlers and boxers faced tough competition, and several were eliminated early. In many cases, the athletes were simply outclassed by better-prepared opponents, revealing gaps in training, coaching, and match strategy.
- **Athletics:** Neeraj Chopra's attempt to defend his javelin gold was one of the bright spots, but outside of Chopra, Indian athletes largely struggled. There was a noticeable lack of depth in athletic events, with no other serious contenders for medals.

### 3. Structural Issues and Policy Shortcomings

- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Although the Indian government has invested in sports infrastructure over the past decade, much of it remains concentrated in a few urban centers. Athletes from smaller cities and rural areas still face significant challenges in accessing world-class facilities. Moreover, the quality of sports science support—essential for injury prevention, recovery, and performance analysis—lags behind international standards.
- **Talent Identification and Development:** India continues to struggle with identifying and nurturing talent at the grassroots level. Many promising athletes are lost due to a lack of early support, poor coaching, or inadequate nutrition and fitness programs. The absence of a clear pipeline from junior to senior levels exacerbates this problem.
- **Coaching and Technical Expertise:** One of the major gaps in India's Olympic preparations has been the lack of high-quality, internationally experienced coaches. Several disciplines suffer from outdated training methods and an inability to adapt to evolving international standards. Moreover, language barriers and cultural differences often create challenges for athletes working with foreign coaches.

### 4. Cultural Barriers to Sporting Success

While cricket dominates India's sports landscape, other Olympic sports struggle for attention. Parents, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, remain skeptical about encouraging their children to pursue sports as a career. This societal attitude, combined with the pressure to focus on academic achievements, leads to a smaller talent pool for sports like athletics, swimming, and gymnastics. Moreover, India's lack of a strong sporting culture beyond cricket results in fewer resources and public enthusiasm for Olympic sports.

### 5. The Role of the Government and Federations

India's sports federations have long been plagued by inefficiency, lack of transparency, and bureaucratic red tape. While the Sports Authority of India (SAI) and initiatives like the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) have made strides, the overall functioning of sports federations remains a barrier to success. Mismanagement, internal politics, and corruption often lead to delays in training camps, inadequate financial support for athletes, and suboptimal utilization of resources.

## 6. Mental Conditioning: The Missing Element

The pressure of performing on the Olympic stage is enormous, and mental conditioning has emerged as a critical element of success in modern sports. While countries like the USA and China have embraced sports psychologists as an integral part of their teams, India's focus on mental health and resilience training for athletes remains limited. Several Indian athletes faltered in the critical stages of competition, pointing to the need for greater psychological support.

## 7. Lessons from Successful Nations

Countries like China, Japan, and the USA have set benchmarks for sustained Olympic success. China's system of early talent identification, state-sponsored training programs, and a rigorous national sports school system has produced consistent results. Similarly, the USA's focus on collegiate sports as a breeding ground for Olympians has fostered a deep and competitive talent pool. India could benefit from adopting similar models that combine early talent identification with systematic training and support.

## 8. The Way Forward: What Needs to Change

- **Grassroots Development:** Building a robust sports culture at the grassroots level is essential. Schools and colleges should play a more active role in promoting sports, with state governments providing the necessary infrastructure and financial incentives.
- **Coaching and Sports Science:** India needs to invest in world-class coaching and sports science facilities. Collaborations with foreign experts and institutes could help bridge the existing gaps in training methods, nutrition, and injury prevention.
- **Mental Health and Conditioning:** A comprehensive focus on mental conditioning should be included in every athlete's training regime. This would ensure they are better prepared to handle pressure on the global stage.
- **Federation Reforms:** A complete overhaul of India's sports federations is long overdue. Introducing accountability, transparency, and professionalism in the functioning of these bodies would lead to more effective athlete management and resource utilization.

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- **Private Sector Involvement:** While government support is crucial, the private sector can also play a significant role in funding athletes and events, sponsoring training facilities, and offering financial security to sportspersons.

### Conclusion

India's dismal performance in the Paris 2024 Olympics should serve as a wake-up call. While the country has made strides in several sports, it is clear that significant structural and cultural changes are needed to compete consistently on the global stage. By focusing on long-term planning, fostering a national sports culture, and providing athletes with the necessary resources and support, India can hope to see improved results in future Olympic Games. The time to act is now, to ensure that Paris 2024 becomes a stepping stone toward a brighter sporting future.

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