



## INDIA NEED A CASTE-BASED QUOTA IN SPORTS?

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### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the sports in rural area of India. There is a great gap between urban and rural areas in India. Rural residents clearly feel this gap in terms of sports facilities. The present paper aims to fill the class gap by initiatives and demonstrating the benefits of exercise and sport, hoping that the status of physical education in rural areas would be more seriously followed in future plans of the government. In the 86 years since India attained Test status, 290 different men have played test cricket for India. However, only four belong to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. That's four, instead of about 70, as it should have been per the population proportion. This is a disparity that just cannot be dismissed as insignificant. Unfortunately, Dalit under-representation in Indian cricket has received scant attention. A similar under-representation of black players in South Africa resulted in the introduction of a quota for non-White players in the playing XI across all levels of the game. On the other hand, we don't even have accurate data about the socio-economic backgrounds of players playing a sport which is followed religiously by most Indians. Very few scholars have looked at possible reasons for this stark under-representation of Dalits in cricket.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the Hindu caste system, Dalits are a group of people that belong to the lowest caste and are characterised as 'untouchables'. Though the caste system has been dismantled and caste-based discrimination is illegal, it remains deeply entrenched in India and Nepal, culturally and socially. This has meant that Dalits continue to be discriminated against on a daily basis – hate crimes against Dalits are common, and segregation in housing, school and access to public services is deep-seated. Dalits also continue to be underrepresented in many higher socioeconomic occupations. Though Dalits are starting to gain prominence and carve a space out for themselves in the arts, there has been very sparse Dalit representation in sport. Dalit sportspersons that have excelled in their field and broken many barriers. Former India cricketer Mohammad Kaif has slammed a report by a media outlet which carries analysis by a study which questions the number of SC/ST's to have played for India since attaining Test status.

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In the report by The Wire, it says that since India started playing Test cricket, there have been only four capped players from Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) out of the 290 players who have played for India where the number should have been 70 in accordance with the population. In reply to the tweet sharing the story, Kaif queried, "How many prime time journalists are SC or ST or for that matter how many senior editors in your organisation are SC or ST. Sports is perhaps one field which has successfully broken barriers of caste, players play with inclusiveness but then we have such journalism to spread hatred." The article also mentions how players coming from Dalit and Muslim communities have contributed as bowlers. "Three of the four Dalit Indian Test cricketers have been pace bowling all-rounders; five of the eight Muslims to have debuted for India in Tests in this millennium were pace bowlers; as many as 27 Muslims to have played in the IPL are also bowlers, while another 8 are all-rounders, as opposed to only 8 batsmen," the study mentions. In 1970s-80s, about half of the Indian Test cricket team hailed from merely six cities: Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Kolkata. However, the share of these six cities has steadily declined to less than 40% in recent years," we believe that structural impediments can be seen from the urban concentration of the game, the contrast with the women's sport as well as the imbalance in the number of minority batsmen and bowlers.



The fact that the urban concentration of the game has an exclusionary impact can be seen from a study of Muslims, another minority community in India that is underrepresented in cricket. In 1970s-80s, about half of the Indian Test cricket team hailed from merely six cities: Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Kolkata. However, the share of these six cities has steadily declined to less than 40% in recent years. This shift to smaller towns has coincided with a significant increase in the number of Muslims playing for India. A statistical review of Indian cricket found that Muslim representation has increased from about 4% between 1950s and 1990s to 12.5% this millennium. That this is not merely a correlation but involves an aspect of causation can be seen from the fact that only two of the eight Muslim players to have made their debuts in this millennium come from one of the six traditional powerhouses of cricket. Moreover, most Muslim cricketers come from families on the lower rungs of economic standing. Consequently, it is probable that the urban stranglehold and corporate patronage have had a similar impact on Dalits participating in cricket.

**Class hierarchy in Cricket:** The fact that most Dalit and Muslim cricketers to have played international cricket for India have been bowlers and all-rounders further points to inequities in the structure of the game. Cricket has historically had a class hierarchy. Until the dissolution of the professionals-amateurs system, it was fairly common for most bowlers to be professionals from the lower classes, while the upper class amateurs would only play as batsmen. The savarna nature of the cricket team is reflected across the cricketing landscape.

While there may be numerous talented cricketers in rural areas, few have the resources to pursue the sport as an occupation. Proper equipment and access to coaching is almost exclusively available in urban centres, and both are morbidly expensive. Even if someone from the disadvantaged classes were to make it to an established centre, the lack of a support structure could be reason enough to drop out. Males typically tend to be the sole breadwinners of families that are socially and economically marginalised, and do not have the luxury of devoting all their time to training (even if transferring to urban areas is possible). Thus, they often face the societal pull of being forced to return home and take care of the family. Corporate patronage of cricket in India has historically also played a defining role in entrenching upper caste domination. Companies hire promising players and support their sports careers, while ensuring they receive gainful employment once they retire from the sport. However, conditions for corporate patronage have been restrictive: apart from concentrating the development of cricket infrastructure in urban areas, cricketers' "employability" was judged based on their education level, meaning that the better-off benefitted from such sponsorship.

### ROLE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN RURAL AREA SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

Sport and physical education is another view of join or fight with the surrounding natural environment. It is noteworthy that human mind requires minimal training. If circumstances are integrated with rural traditions, intrinsic rural development would be definitely followed by increased productivity of land and creatures. Sport and physical education not only facilitate human interaction with rural development factors, but it will reconcile humans with development and their economic, social, cultural activities with the surrounding environment. Realities indicate limited hardware and software sports facilities in India. The young population and youthful enthusiasm and interest in sport, authorities should develop a plan for decentralization and development of sports facilities in different parts of India. A general look at the structure of sport and physical education in India clearly reveals the lack of facilities in rural areas.

This can lead to migration, drug addiction and other social complications. The present paper aims to fill the class gap by initiatives and demonstrating the benefits of exercise and sport, hoping that the status of physical education in rural areas would be more seriously followed in future plans of the government. Hima Das is an Indian sprinter. She holds the Indian national record over 400 metres, clocking in at 50.79 seconds at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta, Indonesia. She is also the first Indian athlete to win a gold medal at a track event at the IAAF World U20 Championships in 2018, where she won the 400-metre sprint. Das has humble beginnings – the daughter of rice farmers, she hails from a small village in the north-eastern state of Assam. She used to play football in mud fields as a child, but upon the recommendation of her teacher, Shamsul Hoque, she switched to sprint running here is role of Physical Education teacher to make a talent identification and for give opportunities to the young athletes in rural area.

### ROLE OF NGO IN RURAL SPORTS

The importance of developing a positive attitude towards sports, encouraging the popularity of games and sports and providing an opportunity to youngsters to prove their mettle at

whatever sports they might be playing. Inarguably, there is no dearth of sports talent in India, but we need to know how to convert these yet-to-be-discovered players into world-class sportspersons. While there are issues about infrastructure and facilities provided to players, the positives are that despite the lack of funds, there is a hunger within the sportsperson to win and do well for India some of the voluntary organizations, which are nurturing the hitherto hidden sports talents of the nation, we were appalled by the sheer minority of them.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RURAL AND DALIT SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

- ) Need a Dalit sports academy in rural villages among nations
- ) Government must provide competition opportunities in remote areas
- ) State and Central Sports Authorities must provide Scholarships to young Dalit students to promote interest to participate
- ) Nutritional awareness about food choices, hydration and dietary awareness in rural villages
- ) Physical Education Students Govt must make a decision to serve compulsory for a short duration in rural areas as internship of Physical Education students and SAI Coaches among the Nation with Stipend
- ) Need a good infrastructural development for sports in Rural areas to promote Play
- ) State and Central Governments must need to support the NGO that providing voluntary training in rural area sports
- ) Need to Conduct sports Talent hunt in Rural primary level schools to promote the Dalit sports persons
- ) Need to start a Rural Sports Development Association in every Panchayath level and they must need to organizing annual community tournaments which creates engagement within the community
- ) State and Central Governments need to spend more money in rural areas to develop sports among the dalit sportspersons

#### CONCLUSION

Dalits continue to be underrepresented in Indian sport. While India's overall sporting culture can be critiqued to be lacking, the chances available for Dalits to partake in sports, especially team sports, remain slim. Cultural, systemic and institutional barriers continue to prevent Dalits from participating in sports, including poverty and caste-based discriminatory practices. Though the idea of a caste-based quota in sports, especially in the Indian men's cricket team, has been debated, it has usually been met with fierce backlash. Only through concerted and deliberate efforts will Dalit sportspersons get a fair chance at excelling in their fields. Both grassroots sports organisations and elite sports policies should work to ensure that more Dalits can exercise their right to participate in sport and that talent is identified and nurtured so that we can see more Dalit talent in sport in the near future. It is essential that support structures are created at the grassroots in order to ensure that the structural inequality can be tackled at its core. This would also ensure that the players who benefit thereby are not buried under a hailstorm of comments about sport being the domain of meritocracy when they perform poorly. Dalits and Adivasis are severely under-represented in Indian cricket. Adopting a quota system similar to that of South Africa will help remove structural barriers and ensure more diversity

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