

# Inspiring Indians

## Nothing is Impossible - Guts & Glories from Asian Games 2023

Bharat, on Saturday, 7 October 2023, woke up to a golden morning with the women's kabaddi team's 26-25 win over the Chinese Taipei in nail-biting final match resulting into Indian contingent securing its 100th medal at the Asian Games, a historical first. Our team came back home with the highest ever medal tally of 107 (28 gold, 38 silver and 41 bronze medals) in the recently concluded 19th edition of Asian games in Hangzhou, China. India, the cricket loving nation also made its cricket debut this time and both men and women teams clinched the gold.



India's Major Dhyhan Chand Stadium in New Delhi can boast of hosting the inaugural edition of the Asian Games held in 1951. After winning 51 medals in the 1951 inaugural games, India did not cross the 20 medals mark in the next seven editions before touching 57 in the 1982 Delhi edition. From a humble performance throughout and the best in 2018 Jakarta edition with 70, India's performance just got bigger & better by clinching 107 medals in 2023. It has been a splendid feat for the compatriots in general and Indian sports community, in particular. Still, there is a lot more to achieve and we hope and wish the participating Indian team to return with even

more medals in future Asian games.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to the athletes as the "Greatest of All Time" (GOAT) in the common lingo of younger generations and urged athletes to connect with youth, sharing their passion, dedication, and life stories to inspire future generations. He emphasized that athletes had the power to influence and guide the younger generation away from the evils of drugs, underlining the ongoing battle against drug abuse in the nation.

Among many success stories of this game, inspiring journey of a 24-year-old Indian athlete, Ram Baboo, will be recorded in golden letters in the sports history of the nation. His transformation from a waiter to becoming an acclaimed athlete, has turned him into a real-life hero and his unwavering determination and resilience during the COVID-19 lockdown is an amazing tale of grit, determination, and hard-work.

Kabaddi team member Usha Rani, currently working as a Police Constable with the Doddaballapur police station in Karnataka, has overcome the hardship of living on income from stringing flowers in her tiny home at Yesvantpur. We all witnessed, Mr Pradeep Shinde, father of Kabaddi player Snehal Shinde, getting emotional as the family receives her at the Pune Airport. The display of emotion represents the hard work the player puts in and the support that the family provided against all odds.

Jyothi Yarraji, another promising Indian athlete holding national record in the women's 100m hurdles and the 200m, has overcome numerous hurdles throughout her career. She had to deal



with injuries, financial restraints, and a lack of family support but demonstrated a 'never give up' attitude and won silver medal in the 100m hurdles at the games in a demonstration of tenacity and sportsmanship.

Deepak Punia, a wrestling silver medallist, was nicknamed 'ketli' (kettle) because he once apparently gulped down several glasses of milk until the pot was empty, struggled to wrestle on a synthetic mat. Having wrestled in mud his early life, he had to radically change his approach. He soon adapted to the new conditions and even started winning and as they say, rest is history.

Indian Women's rugby team for Asian Games 2023 epitomizes the vivid tale of players facing issues coming from conservative families with poor economic backgrounds. Tarulata Naik, Shweta Shahi, Hupi Majhi, Sandhya Rai and Kalyani and others bring with them inspirational stories for the girls seeking to fly high in their sports career.

The examples cited above are only representational of the true sports spirit with which our athletes have not only just performed and won laurels but also of the process of dedication and practice they undergo and transform from being merely a 'commoner' to an 'achiever'. Each of 249 medallists in Asian games 2023, has a story to tell and a determination to inspire millions of young Indians.

India made history in men's doubles badminton by winning the gold medal for the first time in 61 years when the duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty defeated Malaysian pair. "It has been a tough journey and coming into this tournament, we were not playing at our best. We lost in the World Championships quarterfinals and then in the first round lost in the China Open. Probably, we were at our lowest," Chirag said after the final match. "When we went back home,

we trained even on Sundays. There was only one goal, to play to the best of our abilities and push as hard as possible. Their determination to tide over tough situations is inspiring.

All compatriots do feel happy the way our sports ambassadors approached the games. The earnestness to perform well, amazing resilience shown, the struggle to succeed and willingness to put the best foot forward, everything displayed a new thinking, one free from self-enforced shackles that had characterised the overall participation in some of the previous editions. Again, one of the most touching stories of an inspirational journey must be that of Parul Choudhary, the Meerut girl whose lion-hearted effort brought her a double-a gold in 5000m and a silver in 3000m steeplechase. The 5000m race symbolised the defining moment of India's record-making effort in Hangzhou games. The magnificent lap in last 25m will go down in the history as a moment of rare enterprise leading to ecstasy and all-around jubilation.

Today, we once again celebrate our great sporting heroes like Sailen Manna, Milkha Singh, PT Usha, Jaspal Rana, Geet Sethi-Ashok Shandilya, Mary Kom, Saina Nehwal, Neeraj Chopra, and many more who have made country proud of their achievements in different editions of the Asian games. They have become household names in the country and inspire people to do more. Umpteen biographies have been written and movies have been made on their amazing life and career.

This article will fail in its purpose of presenting the country's true sports spirit if we miss to celebrate many similar glorious performances in the just concluded Asian Para Games 2023 at Hangzhou, which India finished with the best-ever medal tally of 111 medals - 29 gold, 31 silver and 51 bronze. We must salute the 16 years old 'golden girl' Sheetal Devi, hailing from Jammu & Kashmir,



the only current female international archer who shoots with her feet, made India Proud by winning 3 medals at the Para Asian Games 2023. She was diagnosed with phocomelia syndrome when she was born, a condition under which limbs remain undeveloped. "These medals prove that I am special. These medals are not just mine, but of the whole country," she said. Her journey to this day is a living proof that with determination, and belief in yourself, one can do anything in life. Her tremendous performance and wins at the games are an inspiration for millions, a glimmer of hope for many who do not follow their dreams thinking they are not enough.



Avani Lekhara, a 22-year-old, a shooter met with a road accident in 2012 that made her wheelchair bound ever since. She scripted history by winning a gold in Para Shooting R2 10m Air Rifle Standing SH1 category. Furthermore, Indian athletes created 6 World Records, 13 Asian Records and 15 Asian Para Games Records. We,

as nation, must feel proud of the achievements of our sportspersons.

It is pertinent to mention that BHEL has a special bond with Asian games. Our head quarter is in the Asiad village, constructed during 1983 Asian games, held in Delhi. Whenever any employee visits the corporate office, we refer it a visit to 'Asiad' office. The month of October also saw largest contingent from the organization of over 700 runners, including over 100 women employees of BHEL Family, led by CMD, Dr. Nalin Shinghal, participating in the 18th edition of Vedanta Delhi Half Marathon 2023 held in New Delhi. Mr. Tajinder Gupta, Director (Power), Mr. Shiv Pal Singh, CVO, Mr. K.S. Murthy, Executive Director (COM), Mr. S.B. Naithani, Executive Director (PEM & ISG), Mr. M. Isadore, Executive Director (HR) and other senior officials of BHEL also participated in the event. Going with the theme and spirit of better tomorrow, let us wish to have some of very own fellow 'BHELites' securing medals in upcoming Asian games.

