



## **... for Asian Games**

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# A policy...



National efficiency depends on the physical health, mental alertness and moral strength of the people at large.

The objectives of the Asian Games Federation are :

- a) to hold periodic competitions to raise the standards of sport in Asian countries and thereby to enable the countries to compete worthily in the Olympic and other international Games ;
- b) to stimulate popular interest in sport in the member countries so that there is an increase in the general fitness of their peoples ;
- c) to promote goodwill and understanding, through sport, between the member countries.

The question is : Are our policy and practice such as serve these objectives ?

Four Asian Games have so far been held, in 1951 in New Delhi, in 1954 in Manila, in 1958 in Tokyo and in 1962 in Jakarta, and the fifth Games are to be held in December 1966, in Bangkok.

There is thus considerable material available for assessing how far the objectives have been achieved.

## First objective

As regards the first objective, we find that a certain amount of progress has been achieved. Asian athletes and teams have been, and are, coming to the fore.

But despite the fact that some of the Asian countries have over 40 years of history of participation in the Olympic Games, on the whole the progress is not commensurate either with the length of their participation, or the strength of their population. With the exception of Japan, in some events in athletics, swimming and gymnastics, and of Iran in wrestling and of India and Pakistan in hockey, Asian countries have not produced the crop of gold medallists in the Olympic Games that the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. have, nor is their progress comparable to that of some new African countries.

It must however be recorded that in some non-Olympic Games, badminton, table tennis, polo and cricket, some of the Asians have come up to the top or very near it. Perhaps, people of these countries have a natural aptitude for these sports. But our question is: Why have not the Asian countries shown a greater advance in the Olympic Games? The answer to this question is tied up with the implementation of the second objective.

### **The second objective**

It is an obvious fact, that national efficiency depends on the physical health, mental alertness and the moral strength of the people at large. It is also well-known that sport is one of the best means of bringing about this threefold development.

There is also the fact, which is not so fully recognized, that high-standard athletes generally rise only in those countries where hundreds of thousands take part in sports.

It should then be the policy to devote national resources to mass-participation in sport.

### **Lack of resources**

But this policy is not pursued in many countries. Lack of economic resources is generally alleged to be the obstacle.

And yet we find considerable sums of money and much national effort being spent, either on mass military training, or on the training of a few promising athletes only, through expensive coaching camps and costly and lengthy tours, in and out of the countries.

As a consequence, not much is left over for the mass of the citizens.

Strangely enough, it is not realized that military training cannot be effective without the basic development of the health and general fitness of the people, and that sports medallists can arise only where there is mass-participation in sport.

In this connection it is worthwhile noticing the policy adopted in the U.S.S.R.

At the start, this country was seriously handicapped by lack of monetary resources, and yet it devoted much of its attention to popularizing

► Attention to the few must yield priority to the general weal...

sport among its millions, particularly among women and children. This policy has borne good fruit. The people at large are healthy and fit and the Russian athletes, women particularly, are at the top in many sports events.

Incidentally, Russia showed great wisdom in encouraging sports among women, for they are the moulders of the new generations.

Still, it must be admitted that many Asian countries are not well-off economically and this is a big hurdle in the way of popularizing sports among their peoples.

### **The answer**

There is, however, an answer to this.

There are many sports which do not require costly equipment or expensive indoor stadia and gymnasias for mass-participation. Such sports

are : track and field athletics, swimming (in lakes, rivers, or open-air-pools), wrestling (on earth instead of on mats), judo, badminton, volleyball, basketball and gymnastics (in the open air or under sheds) and football. It is these inexpensive sports which should be popularized.

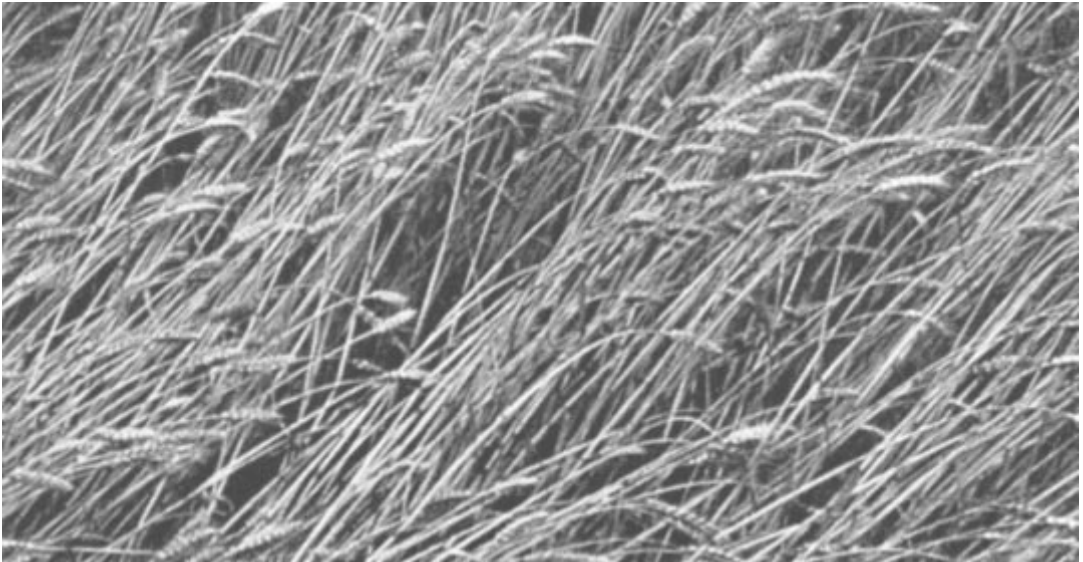
To these sports can be added indigenous sports and folk-dancing, both of which do not require either expensive apparatus or indoor stadia.

I make particular mention of folk-dancing, for though it is not included in the category of sport, yet it imparts not only physical fitness, but gracefulness, a sense of rhythm, and of team spirit.

Besides this, even the less affluent countries will be able to hold the Games, and thus the cult of sport will be spread much wider and further.

The experience of the Olympic Games shows that whereas many cities used to bid for them in the past, now on account of the extension of their programmes, only a few rich countries are bidding.

Thus the sphere of influence of sport is much narrowed. So, the answer to paucity of resources lies in the introduction and popularization of the less expensive kinds of sports and in the reduction of the programme of the Asian Games.



### Reduction in Asian Games programme

The policy to popularize these less expensive Games in Asia will gain much strength if the programme of the Asian Games, too, is confined to these few sports, and not extended to a large variety. Too much extension of programmes leads to a thin dispersion of money and effort and thus nullifies our objectives.

Incidentally, a restriction of the programme will also reduce the cost of holding the Asian Games. Much money that has now to be devoted by the host country to the building of various kinds of costly stadia, to the providing of larger accommodation for participants and to the guaranteeing of expenses for a multiplicity of officials, judges, referees and volunteers, etc., will be saved, and will be available for the general betterment of its people at large.

### The third objective

In founding the modern Olympic Movement, it was Coubertin's chief aim, that along with progress in human fitness and performance, there should also be a greater development of sportsmanship and goodwill and understanding between the nations of the world. By bringing the youth of the world together in *friendly* rivalry in the Olympic Games he had hoped to create and enhance this goodwill and understanding.

The aim of international friendship has been achieved, but only to a small extent. For, of late, there has been a marked rise in nationalistic feelings, and it is not "for the glory of sport" but "for the honour of the country", that athletes are mostly prepared for the Olympic and the Regional Games. This has led to the shifting of

accent, from sportsmanship and goodwill to winning at any cost and by any means, particularly in team-games.

The press of competing countries, too, has accentuated the nationalistic spirit, by concentrating attention on *national* rather than on *human* achievement. It is medals won by their nationals that are counted and exulted in and not man's advance.

Then there have been some instances of political obstruction and interference with sport in the West and in the East, which have led to resentment and bitterness among the countries.

In addition, there is a tendency to use Games as a means of serving political purposes.

And, it is undeniable that when politics come in, sportsmanship goes out. Thus on account of these reasons the finer objectives of international Games — sportsmanship and goodwill and understanding — have not been well achieved and Coubertin's dream of world peace not well realized.

So, our policy should be to resist to the utmost, chauvinism and unsporting conduct in sport.

### **Concentration on few**

Concentration of attention on promising athletes is, no doubt, necessary to an extent, for it enables human beings to realise the olympic ideal — *Citius, Altius, Fortius* — but, yet, attention to the few must yield priority to the general weal, physical, mental and moral.

And, it must be noted that preparing athletes only for victory can lead to the denial of sportsmanship — the moral benefit from sport. Victory becomes the sole end, regardless of the means by which it is achieved. As an exemple of this, there is the increasing foul and rough play particularly in team events, in the Olympic Games and International Championships.

Accent on victory is also the defect in the suggestion nowadays being made, to create a new class of " non-amateur " athletes, i. e. athletes who will be given extra time and money to practise sports, but will have a profession to earn a livelihood as well.

Even with a profession, the chief aim of these athletes will be victory and not necessarily sportsmanship.

### **To sum-up**

The policy in the East particularly, should be to popularize sports among the largest numbers possible.

To this end sports which are not expensive in money or material should be popularized.

The Asian Games Federation, too, must restrict its programme to fewer and more easily popularized sports.

And above all, there must be the utmost emphasis on sportsmanship and goodwill and understanding. Only then will sport make its fine contribution to human advance and welfare and peace, and only then will the three objectives of the Asian, or of International Games be brought nearer realization.

G.D.S.