



India's Paralympic Story: A Tale of Inspiration and Achievement

With 29 medals, India sets a new standard in Paralympic success at Paris 2024

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Introduction

India's most successful Paralympic campaign to date unfolded at the 2024 Paris Games, where Indian athletes achieved an extraordinary feat, securing a record-breaking 29 medals—7 gold, 9 silver, and 13 bronze. This achievement marks a new pinnacle in India's Paralympic history, showcasing the nation's growing prominence on the world stage. The Paris Paralympics have not only underscored India's remarkable rise in para-sports but have also highlighted the broader evolution of the Paralympic movement itself.

The origins of the Paralympics trace back to July 29, 1948, when Dr. Ludwig Guttmann organized the Stoke Mandeville Games—a groundbreaking event for wheelchair athletes. This modest competition, featuring just 16 injured servicemen and women in archery, set the stage for what would eventually become the Paralympic Games, creating a platform for athletes with disabilities to showcase their abilities on a global scale.

From these humble beginnings, the Paralympic movement evolved, with the first official Games held in Rome in 1960, featuring 400 athletes from 23 countries. Since then, both the Summer and Winter Paralympics have grown significantly, held every four years in the same cities as the Olympics, thanks to an agreement between the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which reflects the Games' increasing prestige and global reach.

While India's Olympic success was once dominated by its hockey team, the Paralympics have seen individual athletes rise to prominence, achieving remarkable feats and bringing glory to the nation. The Paris 2024 Paralympics stand as a testament to India's growth in this arena, highlighting the dedication, resilience, and extraordinary achievements of its para-athletes.

India's Debut and Early Years at the Paralympics

India made its maiden appearance at the Paralympics in 1968 in Tel Aviv, Israel. A delegation of 10 athletes, consisting of eight men and two women, represented the country in this historic outing. Although India did not win any medals at the Games, it provided the first significant international exposure for the nation's para-athletes, marking the beginning of India's journey on the global Paralympic stage.

Four years later, at the 1972 Heidelberg Games in Germany, India achieved its first Paralympic success. Para-swimmer Murlikant Petkar made history by winning gold in the 50m freestyle

swimming event, setting a world record time of 37.331 seconds. Despite this monumental achievement, Petkar's gold remained India's only medal at the Games, with the country finishing 24th in the overall medal standings out of 42 participating nations.

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
 HEIDELBERG 1972	1	0	0	1
 NEW YORK 1984	0	2	2	4
 ATHENS 2004	1	0	1	2

Following this landmark victory in 1972, India's participation in the Paralympics faced interruptions, as the country did not take part in the 1976 and 1980 Games. It wasn't until the 1984 Games that India returned to the Paralympic arena. This edition was a significant one, as India secured four medals—Two silvers and two bronzes. Bhimrao Kesarkar won silver in Men's Javelin Throw L6, while Joginder Singh Bedi claimed silver in Men's Shot Put L6, along with two bronze medals in Men's Javelin Throw L6 and Men's Discus Throw L6.

India's next Paralympic success came 20 years later at the 2004 Athens Games. Devendra Jhajharia won gold in Men's Javelin Throw F44/46, and Rajinder Singh Rahelu earned a bronze in Men's Powerlifting 56 kg, taking India's total tally to two medals in that edition.

Era of Transformation (2012-2020)

The period from 2012 to 2020 marked a transformative chapter in India's Paralympic history, witnessing unparalleled growth in both performance and global recognition. Beginning with Girisha N Gowda's lone silver medal at the 2012 London Paralympics, followed by a four-medal haul at the 2016 Rio Paralympics, and culminating in India's impressive 19-medal success at the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics, this era highlighted the unwavering dedication and immense talent of Indian para-athletes. Their achievements on the world stage not only elevated India's standing in the Paralympic arena but also inspired millions by breaking barriers and rewriting records.

2012 London Paralympics

At the 2012 London Paralympics, India secured its sole medal through the exceptional performance of Girisha N Gowda. Competing in the Men's High Jump F42 category, Gowda won a silver medal, marking a significant achievement for Indian athletics. Despite a strong showing from the team, this was India's only podium finish at these Games. Gowda's accomplishment highlighted his outstanding athleticism and brought a moment of pride to the nation amidst the competitive global arena.

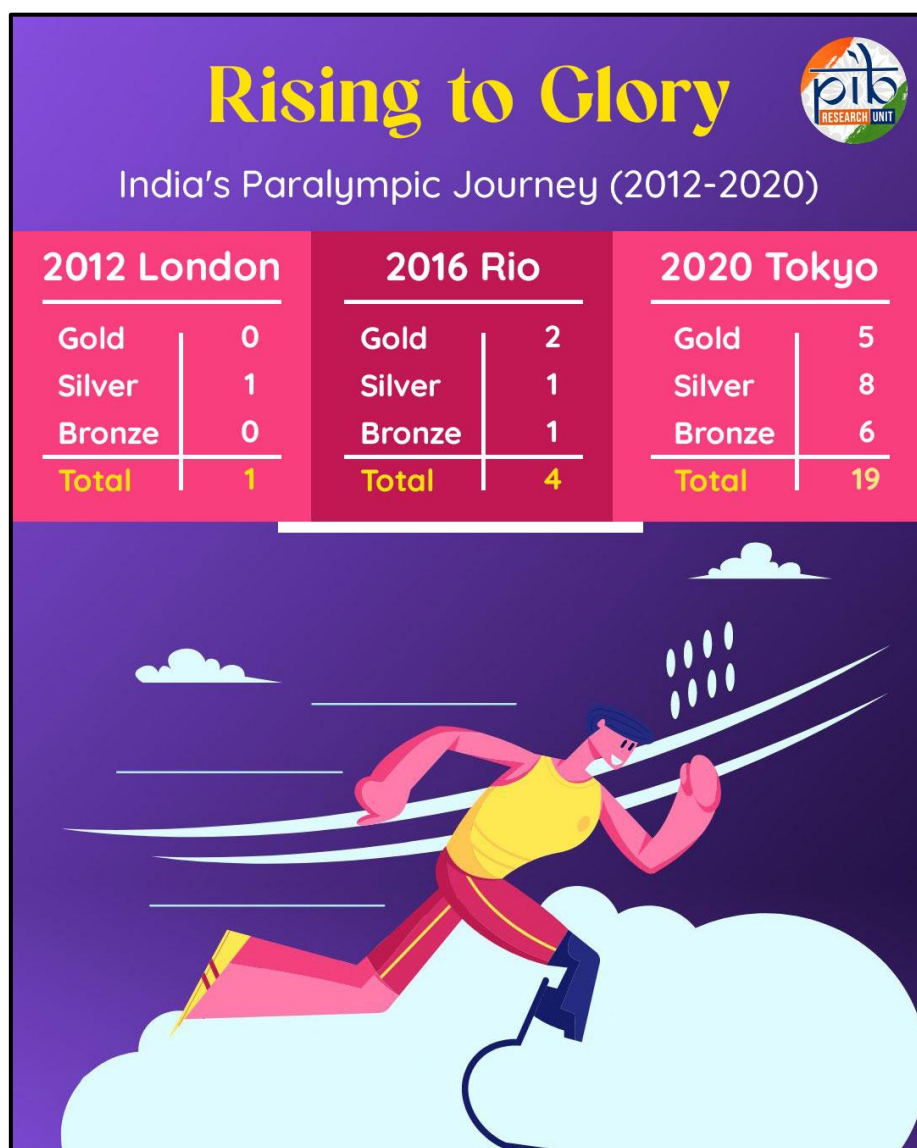
2016 Rio Paralympics

The 2016 Rio Paralympics were a landmark event for the Paralympic Movement, setting new standards in visibility and engagement with record-breaking TV audiences and over 2.1 million spectators. The Games featured a record 4,328 athletes from 160 countries, with 220 world records and 432 Paralympic records set over the course of 12 days.

India's performance at Rio 2016 was notable, with the country winning a total of four medals. Mariyappan Thangavelu claimed gold in the Men's High Jump F42, showcasing exceptional talent and determination. Varun Singh Bhati also competed in the same event and earned a bronze medal, contributing to a strong showing in athletics.

Devendra Jhajharia continued his remarkable career by winning gold in the Men's Javelin Throw F46, further solidifying his legacy as one of India's most decorated Paralympians. Additionally, Deepa Malik achieved a silver medal in the Women's Shot Put F53, marking a significant milestone in Indian athletics.

These achievements underscored India's growing prominence in the Paralympic arena and highlighted the remarkable performances of its athletes on the global stage.



2020 Tokyo Paralympics

The 2020 Tokyo Paralympics, held from August 24 to September 5, 2021, were a landmark event for the Paralympic Movement, featuring 4,393 athletes (2,547 men and 1,671 women) from 164 countries. The Games were marked by unprecedented levels of competition and visibility, showcasing the incredible talent and determination of para-athletes from around the world.

India achieved its best performance to date at these Games, winning a total of 19 medals, including 5 gold, 8 silver, and 6 bronze. This remarkable haul underscored the country's growing prominence in the Paralympic arena.

Among the standout performances, Avani Lekhara shone brightly by securing two medals: a gold in the Women's 10m Air Rifle Standing SH1 and a bronze in the Women's 50m Rifle 3 Positions SH1. Sumit Antil also delivered an exceptional performance, winning gold in the Men's Javelin Throw F64.

In badminton, Pramod Bhagat and Krishna Nagar claimed gold medals in the Men's Singles SL3 and Men's Singles SH6, respectively. Manoj Sarkar and Suhas Yathiraj further added to the medal count with a bronze and silver in badminton, respectively.

Athletics saw significant contributions, with Nishad Kumar and Mariyappan Thangavelu earning silver in the Men's High Jump T47 and T42, respectively. Devendra Jhajharia and Sundar Singh Gurjar won silver and bronze in the Men's Javelin Throw F46.

Shooting also played a crucial role in India's success, with Singhraj Adhana and Manish Narwal winning gold and silver in the Men's 50m Pistol SH1, and Harvinder Singh securing bronze in archery.

India finished 24th in the overall medal standings, a testament to the exceptional performances of its athletes and a significant achievement on the global stage, with several other athletes also playing a crucial role in adding to this historic medal count.

The 2024 Paris Paralympics: A Triumphant Milestone

The Paris 2024 Paralympic Games, held from August 28 to September 8, 2024, were a grand celebration of global athletic prowess and inclusivity. Featuring 4,400 athletes from around the world competing in 22 sports, the Games were hosted across some of Paris's most iconic venues, including the Eiffel Tower, the Château de Versailles, and the Grand Palais.

For India, the 2024 Paris Paralympics marked the nation's most successful Games to date. India's participation reached new heights, with a record 84 athletes competing in 12 sports. This impressive representation reflects the country's growing support for para-sports and the impact of significant government initiatives, such as the Khelo India program and the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS). Under TOPS, India's top athletes receive comprehensive support to prepare for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, with core group athletes receiving an Out-of-Pocket Allowance (OPA) of ₹50,000 per month, alongside full funding for their personalized training plans approved by the Mission Olympic Cell (MOC).

India's achievements at Paris 2024 underscored the progress made in the development and recognition of Paralympic sports within the country. The athletes' outstanding performances highlighted India's continued ascent in the Paralympic arena and set a new benchmark for future participation and success.

India's para-athletes delivered their best-ever performance at the Paris Games, earning an incredible 29 medals—7 gold, 9 silver, and 13 bronze—securing an 18th-place finish in the overall medal tally. This achievement represents a watershed moment for Indian para-sports, showcasing the potential of Indian athletes on the global stage.



India's medal haul at the 2024 Paris Paralympics was led by stellar performances from athletes across a range of disciplines. Avani Lekhara clinched gold in the Women's 10m Air Rifle Standing SH1, while Nitesh Kumar dominated in badminton, winning gold in the Men's Singles SL3. Sumit Antil and Dharambir added to the tally with golds in Men's Javelin Throw F64 and Men's Club Throw F51, respectively. Archery saw Harvinder Singh secure gold in the Men's Individual Recurve Open, while Navdeep Singh triumphed in the Men's Javelin Throw F41. Suhas Yathiraj brought home silver in the Men's Singles SL4 badminton event, and Nishad Kumar earned silver in Men's High Jump T47. Rakesh Kumar and Sheetal Devi took bronze in Archery's Mixed Team Compound Open, rounding off India's historic campaign. Many more athletes contributed to the nation's impressive medal count, making it a truly collective achievement for Indian para-sports.

The 2024 Paris Paralympics will be remembered as a defining chapter in India's sporting history, inspiring future generations of athletes and reaffirming the nation's commitment to inclusive excellence in sports.

2024 Paris Paralympics

India's Stellar Medalists

	Athlete	Sport	Event	Medal
1	Rakesh Kumar / Sheetal Devi	Archery	Mixed team compound open	Bronze
2	Harvinder Singh	Archery	Men's individual recurve open	Gold
3	Preethi Pal	Athletics	Women's 100m T35	Bronze
4	Preethi Pal	Athletics	Women's 200m T35	Bronze
5	Nishad Kumar	Athletics	Men's high jump T47	Silver
6	Yogesh Kathuniya	Athletics	Men's discus throw F56	Silver
7	Sumit Antil	Athletics	Javelin throw F64	Gold
8	Deepthi Jeevanji	Athletics	Women's 400m T20	Bronze
9	Mariyappan Thangavelu	Athletics	Men's high jump T63	Bronze
10	Sharad Kumar	Athletics	Men's high jump T63	Silver
11	Ajeet Singh	Athletics	Men's javelin throw F46	Silver
12	Sundar Singh Gurjar	Athletics	Men's javelin throw F46	Bronze
13	Sachin Khilari	Athletics	Men's shot put F46	Silver
14	Dharambir	Athletics	Men's club throw F51	Gold
15	Parnav Soorma	Athletics	Men's club throw F51	Silver
16	Praveen Kumar	Athletics	Men's high jump T64	Gold
17	Hokato Hotozhe Sema	Athletics	Men's shot put F57	Bronze
18	Simran	Athletics	Women's 200m T12	Bronze
19	Navdeep Singh	Athletics	Men's javelin throw F41	Gold
20	Nitesh Kumar	Badminton	Men's singles SL3	Gold
21	Thulasimathi Murugesan	Badminton	Women's singles SU5	Silver
22	Manisha Ramadass	Badminton	Women's singles SU5	Bronze
23	Suhas Yathiraj	Badminton	Men's singles SL4	Silver
24	Nithya Sre Sivan	Badminton	Women's singles SH6	Bronze
25	Kapil Parmar	Judo	Men's -60kg J1	Bronze
26	Avani Lekhara	Shooting	Women's 10m air rifle standing SH1	Gold
27	Mona Agarwal	Shooting	Women's 10m air rifle standing SH1	Bronze
28	Manish Narwal	Shooting	Men's 10m air pistol SH1	Silver
29	Rubina Francis	Shooting	Women's 10m Air Pistol SH1	Bronze

Conclusion

The 2024 Paris Paralympics stand as a monumental milestone in India's Paralympic journey, marking not only the country's most successful performance to date but also a testament to the resilience, talent, and dedication of its para-athletes. From the humble beginnings of India's Paralympic debut in 1968 to the record-breaking achievements in Paris, this journey has been one of remarkable growth, determination, and triumph. The support of government initiatives like Khelo India and TOPS has played a crucial role in empowering these athletes, enabling them to break barriers and redefine India's place on the global stage. As India continues to champion inclusivity in sports, the 2024 Games will be remembered as a defining chapter—one that inspired millions and set a new standard of excellence for the nation's future Paralympic endeavors.

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