



THE LESS KNOWN WINTER SPORTS IN INDIA AND THE WORLD

Prof. Vishan Singh Rathore *

Shweta Choudhary**

S.Swapnil Iyengar**

* Professor, Department of Physical Education, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur, (C.G.)

** Research Scholar, Department of Physical Education, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur, (C.G.)

** Research Scholar, Department of Physical Education, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur, (C.G.)

Abstract

Winter sports are the sports that are played in higher altitude regions. Winter sports have a history of about more than 100 years. The first Winter Olympic Games took place in 1924 in France, since then European countries are dominating the game whether it is about achieving medals or hosting the events. India's first participation in the Winter Olympics was in the year 1964, since then India has participated in 11 Winter Olympic Games but is still searching for their first medal in the Games, whereas India has achieved medals in the Asian championships several times. Khelo India winter games is a new chapter in the field of winter sports in India which is helping in the promotion of the winter sports. The Winter Olympic Games have been hosted only on three continents by thirteen countries since 1924, in which none of the cities from the southern Hemisphere have ever hosted the Olympic Games. In the 2022 Winter Olympic Games 91 countries participated which is very less from 206 of the Summer Olympics. Europe has its dominance in the Winter Olympic Games medal tally as 7 of the top 10 countries in medal tally of 2022 Winter Olympics are from Europe.

WINTER SPORTS IN INDIA

Winter sports are common in India in the Himalayan areas. Ski tournaments take place every winter in Gulmarg, Kashmir and Manali. Winter sports are generally more common in the northern states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand (formerly Uttaranchal), Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

Skiing, snow rugby, snow cycling and snow football are few of the common sports played in India. Skiing is more popular although India has taken part in Luge in Winter Olympics since 1998.

Bandy also called Banty, a game similar to ice hockey. It is played almost exclusively in the Scandinavian countries, the Baltic countries, and Mongolia. A team is composed of from 8 to 11 players who wear skates and use curved sticks to hit a ball. It is also played in India; The Bandy Federation of India has headquarters in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh. Another major event of winter sports is Luge, which is practiced in a big way by the mountain residents in India and its improvised form in India is called 'Reri'

Khelo India Winter Games

The latest addition in promotion of winter games is “The Khelo India Winter Games” which are the national level multidisciplinary winter games of India. In this year 2023, Khelo India Winter Games held in Gulmarg, Jammu and Kashmir. This was organized from 10th to 14th February. These were the 3rd edition of winter game. The previous two editions were jointly hosted by Gulmarg and Leh in 2020 and 2021.

In third edition, the Khelo India Winter Games 2023, over 1,500 athletes from across the nation, competing in 11 sports, i.e. Alpine skiing, curling, bobsleigh, skeleton, snowshoe, Nordic skiing, snowboarding, ski mountaineering, ice skating, ice hockey and bandy participated.

In 2020, Jammu and Kashmir dominated the Games, they won 76 medals in the inaugural edition which included 26 gold, 29 silver and 21 bronze medals, they were followed by Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) with 21 medals, and Uttarakhand in the third spot with 13 medals.

The 2021 edition Jammu and Kashmir won 34 medals - 11 gold, 18 silvers and 5 bronze and positioned in top of the medal tally however, Karnataka and Maharashtra took up the second and third place with 9 and 8 medals respectively.

INDIAN ARMY AT WINTER SPORTS

Indian winter sports were played mostly by the Indian Army reason being there deployment in the higher altitude region of the country, where snow is easily available for the sports.

KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES 2023 MEDAL TALLY

KIWG medal winners					
Rank	Team	Gold medals	Silver medals	Bronze medals	Total medals
1	Jammu and Kashmir	26	25	25	76
2	Maharashtra	13	8	6	27
3	Himachal Pradesh	10	14	7	31
4	Army	10	10	9	29
5	Haryana	8	10	13	31
6	Ladakh	7	3	7	17
7	Uttarakhand	6	6	4	16
8	Tamil Nadu	6	5	3	14
9	Karnataka	5	2	7	14
10	Gujarat	4	1	1	6

INDIA IN WINTER OLYMPICS

India first participated in the Winter Olympics at Innsbruck in 1964, which was held from 29th January to 9th February 1964. Jeremy Bujakowski was the only athlete representing India in Innsbruck, who competed in the men's downhill event in alpine skiing. He failed to finish the race and went unranked in the competition, but went back to compete in three events - men's downhill, slalom and giant slalom – at the 1968 Olympic. This time, he finished the downhill and giant slalom events. After that India skipped winter Olympic for 20 years. After 20 years, in 1988 India entered again to participate in Winter Olympic. In 1988, Gul dev and Kishor Ratna Rai participated in the men's slalom event. And in the same Olympic, the first Indian women participated in 28th women's slalom. In 1992 winter Olympics, the duo of Lal Chuni and Nanak Chand participated in Slalom and Giant Slalom.

Shiva Keshavan qualified his first Winter Olympics Games at 1998 in Nagano, Japan. He became the youngest luger to qualify for the Winter Olympics at the time. He participated total 6 times in Winter Olympics, which is making him the most decorated Winter Olympian in Indian history. He is also the first winter athlete who participated in Luge event from India.

Subsequently, after 18 years, Indian women made a comeback again. At the 2006 Winter Olympics, Neha Ahuja represented India in women's slalom and giant slalom in Italy. Neha Ahuja is the first Indian woman to meet the minimum eligibility criteria to qualify for the Winter Olympics. Shailaja Kumar's slot was an invite slot. Shailaja Kumar and Neha Ahuja are the only female athletes from India to compete in the Winter Olympics till now.

In 2022, Beijing Winter Olympics, Arif Mohammad Khan became the first Indian to qualify for two separate events directly in men's Slalom and giant Slalom.

INDIAN ATHLETES AT THE WINTER OLYMPICS

Year	Indian athlete(s)	Events
1964		Downhill
1968	Jeremy Bujakowski	Downhill, Giant Slalom, Slalom
1988	Shailaja Kumar	Woman's Slalom
	Gul Dev	Slalom
	Kishor Rahtna Rai	Slalom
1992	Lal Chuni	Slalom and Giant Slalom
	Nanak Chand	
1998		
2002	Shiva Keshavan	Luge
2006	Neha Ahuja	Women's Slalom and Giant Slalom
	Hira Lal	Giant Slalom
	Bahadur Gupta	Cross-country sprint
	Shiva Keshavan	Luge
2010	Jamyang Namgial	Giant Slalom
	Tashi Lundup	Cross-country 15km freestyle
	Shiva Keshavan	Luge
2014	Himanshu Thakur	Giant Slalom
	Nadeem Iqbal	Cross-country 15km Classical
	Shiva Keshavan	Luge
2018	Jagdish Singh	Cross-country 15km freestyle
	Shiva Keshavan	Luge
2022	Mohammed Arif Khan	Slalom and Giant Slalom

WINTER OLYMPICS

The first Winter Olympic Games were held in the French Alps in Chamonix, France in 1924. The Games were held every four years from 1924 until 1936, after which they were interrupted by World War II. The Olympics resumed in 1948 and are being celebrated every four years. The winter and Summer Olympic Games were held in the same years until 1992. Decision by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to place the Summer and Winter Games on separate four-year cycles in alternating even-numbered years. Because of the change, the next Winter Olympics after 1992 were in 1994. The original six sports divided into 16 different events included ski jump, bobsled, curling, ice hockey, skiing, and skating. Today, it has become a major international, multi-sport event taking place every 4 years, with 16 sports from Milano Cortina, in 2026.

EVENTS IN WINTER OLYMPICS-

01) Alpine skiing

02) Biathlon

03) Bobsleigh

04) Cross-country skiing

05) Curling

06) Figure skating

07) Freestyle skiing

08) Ice hockey

09) Luge

10) Nordic combined

11) Short-track speed skating

12) Skeleton

13) Ski jumping

14) Snowboarding

15) Speed Skating

16) **Ski mountaineering (Ski Mountaineering to debut at Milano Cortina 2026)**

MAJOR PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD

As of 2022, twelve countries have participated in every Winter Olympic Games – Austria, Canada, Finland, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. Also, Czechoslovakia participated in all Winter Olympic Games before its dissolution and its successors, Czech Republic and Slovakia have participated in all Winter Games thereafter. Six of these countries have won medals at every Winter Olympic Games – Austria, Canada, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and the United States. The only country to have won a gold medal at every Winter Olympic Games is the United States. Norway leads the all-time Olympic Games medal table for the Winter Olympic Games. When including defunct states, Germany (comprising the former countries of West Germany and East Germany) leads, followed by Norway, Russia (including the former Soviet Union), and the United States.

MOST DOMINATING SPORTS IN WINTER OLYMPICS

Here is the breakdown of the available gold medals per sport from the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Beijing. There are more medals in speed skating and cross-country skiing, and in these sports there is the opportunity for athletes to compete in multiple events. The number of events and therefore the number of available medals has steadily increased over time. The Winter Games in 2022 in Beijing had 91 nations competing with 109 events and 2871 athletes.

No. of medals	Events Name
14	Speed Skating
13	Freestyle Skiing
12	Cross Country Skiing
11	Alpine Skiing, Biathlon and Snow Boarding
09	Short Track Speed Skating
05	Figure Skating and Ski Jumping
04	Bobsled and Luge
03	Curling and Nordic Combined
02	Ice Hockey and Skeleton

EUROPEAN DOMINANCE IN THE WINTER OLYMPICS

In first winter games 16 countries participated from which 11 countries were from Europe, 258 total athletes participated at the Olympics from which 233 athletes were from Europe winning 44 out of 49 total medals which shows the dominance of European countries in the Winter Olympics since beginning, whereas in 2022 Winter Olympics 43 out of 44 nations from Europe participated in the games however total number of countries participating was 91, these European countries have won 227 medals out of 327 medals with 8 of them in top 10 of the medal tally and Norway leading the tally with 37 medals including 16 gold medals.

Rank	Country	No. Winter Games	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	Norway	24	148	133	124	405
2	United States	24	113	122	95	330
3	Germany	16	112	104	70	286
4	Soviet Union	9	78	57	59	194
5	Canada	24	77	72	76	225
6	Austria	24	71	88	91	250
7	Sweden	24	65	51	60	176
8	Switzerland	24	63	47	57	167
9	Russia	8	55	57	58	170
10	Netherlands	22	53	49	45	147

HOSTING THE WINTER OLYMPICS

The Winter Olympic Games have been hosted only on three continents by thirteen countries. They have been held four times in the United States (1932, 1960, 1980, and 2002), three times in France (1924, 1968, and 1992) and twice each in Austria (1964 and 1976), Canada (1988 and 2010), Japan (1972 and 1998), Italy (1956 and 2006), Norway (1952 and 1994) and Switzerland (1928 and 1948). Also, the Winter Olympic Games have been held just once each in Germany (1936), Yugoslavia (1984), Russia (2014), South Korea (2018), and China (2022). The IOC has selected Italian cities of Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo to host the 2026 Winter Olympics. As of 2022, no city in the Southern Hemisphere has applied to host the cold-weather-dependent Winter Olympic Games, which are held in February.

CONCLUSION

If we analyze the current scenario of Winter Sports in relation to medal counts, participation and organization of the events, Europe as a continent is leading the race from front, it has most number of medals, participations and hosting in their bag. Whereas Africa, one of the biggest continent does not have a single medal in the winter Olympics, many nations from the continent still don't participate in the winter sports. Asia, the largest continent in the world having about 25% population of the world, only 3 nation from Asia have hosted the winter Olympic Games which are China, South Korea and Japan, this shows that winter sports are less known in India and the world.

REFERENCE

Research Papers:

Gaudette, Marilyne & Roul, Romain & Lefebvre, Sylvain. (2017). Winter Olympic Games, cities, and tourism: a systematic literature review in this domain. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*. 21. 1-27. 10.1080/14775085.2017.1389298.

Vernillo, G., Coulmy, N., & Millet, G. P. (2019). Editorial: Recent Evolutions and Perspectives in Olympic Winter Sports Performance: To PyeongChang and Beyond.... *Frontiers in physiology*, 10, 481. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fphys.2019.00481>

Teetzel, Sarah & Dichter, Heather. (2021). Olympic History and Legacy: New Research in Bidding for and Hosting the Olympic Winter Games. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*. 38. 1-13. 10.1080/09523367.2021.2010928.

Yi Xin & Klaus R. Kunzmann (2020) Winter Olympics 2022 in Beijing: A Must-be Success Story, *disP - The Planning Review*, 56:2, 78-90, DOI: [10.1080/02513625.2020.1794129](https://doi.org/10.1080/02513625.2020.1794129)

Internet:

<https://olympics.com/en/news/india-winter-olympics-history-athletes-list-qualify>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_sports_in_India

<https://lugeindia.org/>

<https://kheloindia.gov.in/>

