

A Study on
Gender Issues in
Sports
in India



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Sport is one area where gender inequality is strongly evident. The problem is more socio-psychological than anything else. Today, as we stand at the start of a new millennium it is deplorable that men and women are treated so differently, especially in sport. Women make up 50% of the world's population but they are not given equal opportunities. Men are still considered the better sex and this is one of the reasons why the world is yet to produce a female Michael Schumacher, Tiger Woods, Mike Tyson or a Sachin Tendulkar.

Sport in India is yet to reach its peak. The Mughals ruled India for centuries, the Britishers for another one and a half-century. It was only after 1947, when we achieved independence that we started developing as a modern nation, with special rights to half of its citizens namely women. Indian women are still trying to establish their own identity. Women in India are still unable to take a stand for themselves.

Times have changed and are improving but there is still a lot to be achieved. Men have an upper hand in all spheres of life. Gender inequality is a deep-rooted issue and in order to change the situation, drastic steps/measures need to be taken. The worst thing to happen is the female feticide. Latest technology is being blatantly misused for killing the girl child. Far from giving her good education and a happy life we Indians are trying to eliminate women from this earth. Dogmatic principles govern much of our thinking.

As is mentioned above, gender inequality is one of the many issues because of which India is not being able to progress at a faster rate. In India we seem to be deifying our great leaders but never pay attention to what they are trying to tell us. Pandit Nehru has said that 'to awaken the people, it is the woman who must be awakened, once she is on the move the family moves, the nation moves'.

A society, which does not allow a girl to do something simple as primary education, is unlikely to let her participate in sport without any hurdles. Even before taking part in 400meter hurdles the girl has to pass so many more social hurdles. This project is an attempt to analyse the problems that a girl, who wants to shape her life as a sports woman.

Research has suggested that participation in sport can be an invigorating and personally empowering experience for women. Being an athlete, especially a skilled athlete, can change the way a woman sees

herself. It can make her feel physically stronger, more competent, and more in control of her life as an independent individual. Sport participation also provides girls and women with opportunities to reconnect with the power of their own bodies.

The notion that men and women are "naturally" different has been used for many years to justify the exclusion of women from some or all sports. Many people feel that since women could never equal or surpass men's achievements, there was no apparent reason why women would be allowed to get involved in sport. After all, if sports were primarily about setting records and dominating others, women would always be second class in power and performance sports. Unfortunately, this way of thinking about gender and sports still exists. Many people continue to compare women and men in terms of performance differences and then go on to say that differences will never disappear because men are simply physically superior to women. Of course, most of these people never wonder what kind of physical skills athletes would need if sports had been shaped by the values and experiences of women instead of men. For example, if most sports had been created by and for women, the motto for the Olympic Games would not be *citius, altius, fortius* (faster, higher, stronger); instead, it might be "Balance, Flexibility and Endurance" or "Physical Excellence for Health and Humanity".

It is important to understand that gender equity in sports is a complex issue. Gender and sport are one of the most important issues in terms of gender inequality. In no other area is the inequity as large as in sport. The purpose of this research is to **STUDY GENDER ISSUES IN SPORT IN INDIA**. The idea for this research topic came about as it was observed that female participation in sport was discouraged and also that those who played faced innumerable problems. Just to keep playing against the wishes of the family and the society is a Herculean task. Excelling in sport is even more courageous. As has been mentioned earlier, the advantages of sport are manifold. In order for India to become a stronger and a more wholesome nation, we need to fight gender inequality.

The Institutional and Policy Context

The National Youth Policy

The New National Youth Policy, 2003, was tabled in parliament in December 2003, in which Youth are defined as in the age group of 13 to 35 years; with the object of bringing a large segment of the adolescent population into the age group. The policy recognizes four thrust areas in which "Gender Justice" is one of them. Policy includes various key sectors of youth development and "Sports and Recreation" is also present there. National Commission for Youth was setup on 15th March 2002 and has submitted the report on 5th July 2004 based on the terms of reference. It was observed that in the terms of reference 'Sports' was totally neglected.

New National Sports Policy, 2001, envisages broad basing of sports, achievement of excellence in international sports events, provisioning of modern sports infrastructure, upgrading skills of our coaching fraternity, more efficient functioning of national sports federations, adequate sport science

backup and active involvement of business and industry in promotion of sports. Enhancement of the participation of women in sport is one of the salient features of the policy.

In order to implement the directives of honorable Supreme court of India, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports constituted a committee to look into the complaints regarding 'Sexual Harassment of women at work place'.

Women and Sports

The recent report of the National Commission for Youth (2004) has traced in detail the participation of women in Sports before and after 1947. The first Indian women to participate in the Olympics was in 1952. In 1975, the Government of India instituted the National Sports festival for women with a view to promote women's sports. The National festival is preceded by competitions at the local and the district level. However the report has observed that these competitions have been reduced to mere issuing of certificates and the subsequent selection at the national level is done on ad-hoc basis. The National Commission report has also pointed towards the issue of dropout rate of girls from the schools. The report observed, "Sports is by and large an elite activity in the country and the adoption of a sports policy, as the government has done in 1984, is hardly likely to change the situation very much."

The Sports Authority of India

The Sports Authority of India (SAI) was established by the Government of India on March 16, 1984 with the twin objectives of broad-basing of sports and spotting/nurturing of talented children in different age groups for achieving excellence by providing them with requisite infrastructure, equipment, coaching and other facilities. It has 6 regional centers at Bangalore, Gandhinagar, Kolkata, Chandigarh, Bhopal and Imphal and one sub-center at Guwahati. SAI has also two academic wings, one for training of coaches and research and development in sports at the Netaji Subhash Chandra National Institute of Sports, Patiala and the other for physical education at the Lakshmbai National College of Physical Education, Thiruvananthapuram. Under the scheme, National Coaching Scheme, SAI has under its rolls 1510 coaches in different grades against the sanctioned strength of 1623.

Budget allocations

It would be also useful to review the resources committed by the Government of India on promoting sports in the country.

Demands for grants of Central Government (excluding Railways) for 2003-2004 (revised estimates) was Rs 860791.33 crores in which Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has been sanctioned Rs 428.00 crores. The department of elementary education and literacy got Rs 5454.60 crores, department of secondary education and higher education got Rs 4832.40 crores.

According to the annual report 2003-2004 of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports GOI, Ministry got the funds for total youth welfare schemes Rs. 10,038 lakhs and for sports and physical

education Rs. 28,971 lakhs. For the promotion of sports and games in school- Rs 125 lakhs was the estimate, for rural sports program- Rs 125 lakhs and for national sports development fund- Rs 20 lakhs was the revised estimate. Rs. 360 lakhs was the revised estimate for the grant of rural schools for development of play fields and purchase of sports equipment.

Lakshmbai National Institute for Physical Education alone has got revised estimate of Rs. 765 lakhs, where Sports Authority of India has got Rs 11,447 lakhs.

Under the scheme 'Grants for Promotion of Sports in Universities and Colleges', central assistance is provided to universities/colleges for development of playgrounds and construction of indoor stadiums/swimming pool. The assistance is in the ratio of 75:25 in the case of special category states and 50:50 in the case of all other states, subject to certain ceilings. During 2003-2004 grants were released for 442 universities/colleges of 20 states and it was Rs. 20,41,97,913/-. (Most of them are from Maharashtra i.e. 98, least number is from Rajasthan i.e.02).

The data on the budget allocations give certain indications of the Government's intentions of promoting sports. However, in reality whether the budget allocations are effective in promoting sports needs to be examined separately.

India and the World

The situation in the western countries is better but still women are facing very similar problems to ours. America is a very developed nation in the world. But even in the United States, women are victims of gender inequality. They still do not have equal representation as compared to men. Men hold majority of the positions of managers, coaches and sport administrators. Things did change after the 1970s when Title IX was introduced but there is a lot of scope for improvement.

There has been research in this area but it is far from conclusive. Lately, however, Indian female sports persons have faired better than the men. Be it Anju Bobby George, PT Usha, Sanya Mirza, Anjali Bhagwat. This does not overlook the achievements of Sachin Tendulkar, Prakash Padukone, Pullela Gopichand, and Leander Paes. All that is implied is that women are making a mark for themselves in the world of sport and are gaining respect.

This study has been carried out with the hope that it will help to map the past and the present condition of women in sport in India. Such a mapping would enable to provide guidelines to improve women's sport in India.

The study will cover all aspects associated with women's sport ranging from health, nutrition, financial and social support, gender biases and will later present a complete and wholesome picture on women's sport in India. The study attempts to trace facts pertaining to differential treatment of women from different social and financial backgrounds.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are some recommendations that we would like to make for the improvement of the condition of women's sport in India. **Our definition of improvement is not limited to success in sport in international competitions.** It could be said as the end product of the whole exercise. We need to have a total all encompassing improvement in women sport. And it should start at the grassroot level. The most important factor for this is the motivation factor, and it is there for all of us to see. We observed that all the girl players that we met were really enthusiastic and concerned with sport. They wanted not only to play but also to have a career in sport. Now it is the society and the government that have to take initiative and work towards improving the state of women sport.

1. Our first recommendation would be to start a 'movement of sport'. Girls should be encouraged to play an organized team sport or even an individual sport from a very young age.
2. Like basic primary education, sport should also be made compulsory. We are not even talking about competitive sport, what we are suggesting is recreational healthy sport. More girls should play more games-'Sport for Health'. Girls should be educated and made aware of the health benefits of sport.
3. A talent search should take place very frequently in all the games all over India, and mainly in the rural and semi-rural regions.
4. Girls should be allowed to make a choice of their game.
5. Parents should be made aware of the benefits and facilities available for a girl player.
6. We need to encourage and also run a special programme so that more and more of them become coaches and referees. Most of the girls in our sample have suggested that they are happy and comfortable with female coaches.
7. The state federations and also the national federations of women's sport have more male office bearers than female. This proportion and system should change. Female office bearers should be more in number and rules should be made to that effect.
8. Ex-players should be elected or nominated to the federations, just like the Indian Ladies Cricket Association. We have seen that the condition of Ladies Cricket and also their performance has improved tremendously because of this.

9. Girls are asking for more competitions in their respective games. They should be provided with opportunity to play in more competitions.
10. Standard of coaching needs improvement.
11. There has to be some machinery which keeps tabs on the functioning of the Sport association the government run sport schools and other sport centers. The mismanagement of funds and facilities should be curtailed.
12. Girls have also spoken a lot about the facilities of living and even toilets at the place of tournaments. This is a very common and serious issue, as this directly affects the performance. The tournament organizers should see to this.
13. Girls should be provided with better security when they are travelling for competitions.
14. The sport ministry and also the Sport Authority of India should be made answerable to the mismanagement in the selection process and in the mismanagement of funds in terms of cash and kind, which are provided.
15. Special training should be provided to coaches, referees and association people on the problems of female players.
16. They should also undergo some training about their responsibility towards the development of women's sport. They should also be made responsible for their actions as coaches, referees and managers of ladies sport.
17. Girl players should be given training on various aspects related to sport like time management, sport psychology, personal hygiene, self defense and career guidance.
18. Sport sciences training centers should be opened and girls should also be made aware that sport sciences could be a choice of career for them.
19. Sport sciences should be used more frequently for the enhancement of performance in women's sport.
20. Girls would be made aware of the various career choices they can have related to the field of sport.
21. More jobs should be generated and reserved for women players.
22. Women players should be given consultations on rehabilitation after their retirement.
23. There should be a tribunal to hear the complaints of girl players, and it should be seen that girls get justice for the misbehavior against them. This has a special reference to sexual harassment. Special State and University level grievance committees should be set up.
24. Role of media is very vital in the development of women sport. Media should give more coverage

to ladies sport so that people become more aware of it. Girls will also be encouraged to participate in sport.

25. Private sector Industries should provide sponsorship to women sport. If government provides them with some benefits then they would be ready to sponsor women sport.
26. Private sector companies should provide jobs to women players.
27. Para-military should reserve jobs for women players.
28. Sport ministry should be would allowed to take care of sport activities in primary schools.
29. Special budgets should be allocated for primary schools.
30. Indian games should be promoted in rural areas as they are more economical.
31. *Sports clubs and centers should be made especially for girls.*
32. *Hostels with safe and hygienic facilities should be provided.*
33. ***In the Ministry of Sports, a special cell should be opened with the focus on the 'development of women's sport' in India. This cell should be entrusted with the mandate of working on promoting women's sport in India.***

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The project was developed with the purpose of identifying the problems that women players in India face during their career as a sports person. At the very outset we knew that the problems are innumerable and every player would have her own story to tell. We wanted to know about it. It was a huge task and the time allotted to us was no match to it. So we decided to design the study in such a way that we get the most possible representative sample in our limited resources. We have managed to reach as many as varied groups of players as we can.

We wanted to reach and talk to as many players as we could. But talking to them personally on one to one basis and interviewing them at a length is a daunting task. And above that that was not going to serve our purpose and aim of reaching many players, from a number of games and also of various ages. Hence in addition to the detailed interviews of players we decided to do something more and flung our nets far and wide. Along with the interviews we also developed a questionnaire, which was really in the form of a written interview. This was of great help and we really could get responses from players from various states, from various regions and also from various backgrounds. Now our sample is made up of players from eight states and from varied regions.

The analysis, which was partially qualitative and partially quantitative, has been able to throw light on all possible issues in women's sport in India. We have discussed all these problems in the earlier chapter.

Now in the conclusion we would like to say.

1. Indian women players are no less than any women players in the world. They are equally talented and hard working. The problems that they face are much more daunting than the problems faced by the players in the developed countries. Indian players are a very courageous lot.
2. It is very sad but we have to say it, the problems that we have are 'man made'. They are of the sociological variety. Still we realized that it is not the parents that are not letting girls play but it is the 'system of Indian sport' that is to blame. The system is not working, as it should. There is a total apathy. People who are running the show of 'sport' in India are to be blamed.
3. All the players whom we interviewed and also those who responded to the questionnaires said, 'we want to play', 'want to have career in sport but..'

4. What they want are good facilities and equipment.
5. They want fair and clean selection procedure.
6. They want good and experienced coaches, especially female coaches.
7. They want good medical support and advice on other related health matters.
8. They want support from families and the people around them.
9. They want job opportunities and job security.
10. They want more competitive opportunities.
11. They want support from the government machinery and the sport federations or some sponsors.
12. Equality is of utmost importance to them. They want equal opportunities to play and to be treated at par with men.
13. Women /girls sports clubs are very rare which restricts girls' participation in sports as parents do not like their daughters to play with boys.

These girls have not stopped at telling their own stories. They have told us what should be done to improve the condition of women's sport in India. In fact, those girls who are playing Indian games like Kho-kho and Kabaddi say, 'we are playing this game because we want this game to become popular, we are fighting for survival'. We can now say that the job that we had undertaken has been completed successfully, though ideally we would have liked to bring in responses from players from all over India. Still we hope that we have managed to put up a case of the Indian girl player.