

# A Study on Gender Equity and Its Influence on Sports Transformation in India

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Gender bias is an often debated subject. India's sport has not yet reached its pinnacle. India was governed by the Mughals for centuries then the British for another 150 years. Only when we gained independence in 1947 did we begin to transform into a modern nation, with unique privileges granted to its female inhabitants, who make up half of the population. Indian women are still trying to establish their own identity. Women in India are still unable to take a stand for themselves.

Males and females are expected by society to accept, adhere to, and carry out particular gender roles and stereotypes. In general, people expect men to be powerful, independent, and athletic, whereas they anticipate women to be quiet, submissive, attractive, and nurturers. Society expects adherence to the rigidly enforced gender hierarchy. When these gender expectations are broken, it's normal for people to receive labels, get questioned, and face mockery. Gender roles have started to shift significantly in our culture over the past few centuries, particularly in the field of sports. Also female athletes are starting to make a name for themselves in the sports industry. The focus has shifted significantly in recent years from promoting "gender equity in sport" to using "sport for gender equity and personal development." The current study throws light on the significant transition of gender equity in sports at recent time in India.

## II.OBJECTIVES

1. To know and understand the bias and gender inequality in Indian sports arena.
2. To show case the significant transition of gender equity in the field of sports in India at recent times.

3. Promotion of gender equity for sports development.

## III.METHODOLOGY

This study is exploratory. It Analyses qualitatively by using secondary sources, which will include existing literature, census of India, and different national and international reports of government and non-govt. organizations.

## IV.WOMEN AND SPORTS

Women's involvement in sports has come a long way over the years, but there are still various aspects to consider when discussing 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.

Women's participation in sports has increased significantly in recent decades. More girls and women are actively engaging in various sports at recreational, amateur, and professional levels. This increased participation has led to greater

opportunities for women to excel and pursue careers in sports. Women have continually broken barriers and shattered stereotypes in sports. They have achieved remarkable success and demonstrated extraordinary athletic abilities across a wide range of disciplines. From Trailblazers were an Indian like PV Sindhu & Saina Nehwal in Shuttle Badminton, NirupamaSanjeev, Sania Mirza in tennis, Karunam Malleswari in weightlifter, Mary Kom in boxing, Sakshi Malik in Wrestling, Mirabai Chanu in weightlifting, Hima Das in sprinter, Lovlina Borgohain in boxer, Dipika Pallikal in Squash to the dominance of the Indian women's national team, women athletes have achieved remarkable milestones and challenged gender norms. Achieving gender equity in sports remains an on-going challenge. Women often face disparities in funding, media coverage, sponsorship, and overall support compared to their male counterparts. Efforts are being made to bridge this gap and promote equal opportunities for women and girls in sports.

#### V.STEREOTYPICAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORT

Stereotypical attitudes towards women and girls in sport have been prevalent in many societies and can have a significant impact on their participation and recognition in India. Here are some common stereotypes that have been associated with women and girls in sports.

1. Lack of physical ability: One stereotype suggests that women and girls are inherently less physically capable than men, which implies that they are not as skilled or competitive in sports. This stereotype often leads to underestimation of their abilities and a lack of support for their athletic pursuits.
2. Limited interest: Another stereotype assumes that women and girls are not as interested in sports as men and boys. This perception can discourage girls from participating in sports and limit their exposure to opportunities in the athletic world.
3. Emotional fragility: There is a stereotype that portrays women and girls as emotionally fragile, suggesting that they cannot handle the pressures and physical demands of competitive sports. This stereotype undermines their resilience and overlooks their capacity to succeed in challenging athletic environments.

4. Limited media coverage and investment: Women's sports have historically received less media coverage and financial investment compared to men's sports. This inequality perpetuates the stereotype that women's sports are less important, exciting, or marketable, further marginalizing female athletes and limiting their opportunities for growth and recognition.
5. Lack of leadership and coaching roles: Stereotypes often limit women's involvement in coaching and leadership positions within sports organizations. This lack of representation reinforces the notion that women and girls are better suited for supporting roles rather than being at the forefront of decision-making and leading sports teams.

It is important to challenge and overcome these stereotypes by promoting inclusivity, providing equal opportunities and resources, encouraging media coverage and sponsorship for women's sports, and celebrating the achievements of female athletes. By doing so, we can create a more equitable and inclusive sporting culture for everyone, regardless of gender.

#### VI.STUDYING ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORT IN INDIA

A study was carried out in rural and urban India by the Indira Gandhi Institute of Physical Education and Sports Sciences on the attitudes of parents, teachers and coaches towards female participation in sport. The findings indicated that policies are needed at the local level to support and protect women's participation in sport and, in particular, efforts are required to remove misconceptions related to women's participation in sport and the impact of sport on women's health.

#### VII.THE COMMISSION ON WOMEN AND SPORTS IN INDIA



The Commission on Women and Sports, established by the Indian in 31st January 1992 with Mrs. Jayanti Patnaik as the Chairperson. The Second Commission was

constituted on July 1995, tries to influence social attitudes by promoting educational activities on the role of women and their situation in sport. The Commission's activities include:

- Providing special funds to promote sport for women.
- Offering information courses to discuss the future of women in sport.
- Organizing conferences and other events to increase women's participation in sport.
- Creating regional and local networks that encourage women to participate in sport; and Undertaking research and collecting data on women and sport in order to monitor and maintain progress.

#### VIII.INDIA AND THE WORLD

The situation in the western countries is better but still women are facing 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, Sania Mirza, P V Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, Anjali Bhagwat, Vinesh Phogat, Hima Das, Lovlina Borgohain, Mirabai Chanu, Sakshi Malik, Mary Kom. 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.

#### IX.MEDIA COVERAGE OF WOMEN SPORTS

Women's sports have historically received less media coverage and financial investment compared to men's sports. This inequality perpetuates the stereotype that women's sports are less important, exciting, or marketable, further marginalizing female athletes and limiting their opportunities for growth and recognition.

As previously stated, gender inequality has numerous detrimental repercussions for female athletes. Female athletes receive less overall coverage than male athletes, in addition to the unequal sort of publicity they receive. The media, on the other hand, does not devote much attention to women's sports, reducing the in fact, women's sports are covered by fewer than 10% of sports media, and women's sports that are judged macho by less than 2% of sports media. Unfortunately, news personnel are less likely than viewers (41%) to notice this difference, which means that news personnel may be unaware that they are potentially discriminating against female athletes number of people who watch them. Despite the fact that the Olympic Games currently feature the same number of sports for men and women as they do for men, the Olympic Games still have unequal coverage on television. The US women's basketball team, for example, won their fifth straight gold medal in 2012 but received less than a minute of prime-time coverage, whilst the men's team, who won their second consecutive gold medal, received around half an hour of prime-time coverage. However, for the first time ever, the 2012 Olympic Games included more coverage of women's sports on NBC than men's sports; however, this coverage was primarily for women's sports deemed feminine.



Media Coverage in the year 1963



Media Coverage in the year 2023



New Sports Wear

## X.CLOTHING AND GIRLS' PARTICIPATION IN SPORT

“Play Soccer”, an NGO that offers football programmes for girls and boys in Zambia, recognized that a lack of clothing was prohibiting some children from participating. The programme provided shorts that children, especially girls, could wear during games, thereby enabling girls to move from spectators to active participants.

Gender equality has had a significant influence on the transformation of sportswear. Over the years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of inclusivity and equal opportunities for all genders in sports. This has led to several changes in sportswear design, marketing, and availability.

1. Design and Functionality: Sportswear is now designed to cater to the specific needs and requirements of both male and female athletes. Earlier, sports apparel was predominantly designed for male athletes, with little consideration given to the physiological differences of female athletes. Today, there is a greater focus on creating gender-specific designs that provide comfort, support, and functionality to athletes of all genders.



Old Sports Wear

2. Performance Enhancement: With the advancement in sports science and technology, sportswear has evolved to enhance performance for all athletes. This includes the development of specialized apparel that improves performance and reduces the risk of injuries. This focus on performance enhancement benefits athletes of all genders, providing equal opportunities to excel in their respective sports.
3. Representation and Marketing: The increased emphasis on gender equality has led to a shift in the representation of athletes in sportswear marketing. Brands are now more likely to feature female athletes in their promotional campaigns, breaking the stereotype of sports being exclusively for men. This change in marketing strategies has helped in challenging societal norms and promoting the participation of women in sports.
4. Breaking Stereotypes: The transformation of sportswear has played a role in breaking gender stereotypes associated with sports. By offering a broader range of designs and styles, sportswear has challenged traditional notions of femininity and masculinity in sports. This has created a more inclusive environment, encouraging individuals to participate in sports irrespective of their gender.

## XI.WOMEN IN ECONOMICS

Women's participation in the field of economics has increased over time, but there are still significant gender disparities that need to be addressed. But, gone are the times when Indian Sports was only associated with men. The times when women living in this country were not encouraged to actively participating in sports.

Time and again, the women sportspersons in India are taking the world by storm, have worked extra hard and defied all odds to make us proud. Not only fame, but the sportswomen in India are also now playing money and are a neck-to-neck with their male peers.

## XII.TOP-PAID WOMEN ATHLETES MAKING US PROUD

### PV Sindhu

At Tokyo 2020, PV Sindhu made it two medals in two Olympic appearances with bronze in the women's singles. PV Sindhu became a name of fame after her 2016 Rio Olympics win. Not only did she become the only second Indian to bring home an Olympic (badminton) medal, silver achieved in the global competition was India's highest ever finish. Following this, she received a cash prize worth Rs 13 crore from different states of India. PV Sindhu is the lone Indian athlete to find a place in the world's highest-paid female athlete, according to Forbes. She stood seventh with \$7.2 million earnings.

### Sania Mirza

Sania Mirza carved a niche for herself and an example for the world as India's leading female tennis player – one that remains unchallenged to this day. With her popularizing forehand groundstrokes, Sania Mirza was the first Indian woman to get through the top 20 rankings in World Tennis Association for singles and top 10 for doubles. According to the WTA, Sania's estimated worth is around \$6 million.

### Saina Nehwal

Saina Nehwal is an Indian badminton champion who holds the holds No.1 rank in the World Women's Singles. The estimated net worth of Saina is a whopping amount of \$4 million (20 crores). She is ranked 29 in the Forbes Top 100 Celebrities List, making it a money rank to 43.

### Mithali Raj

Mithali Dorai Raj with a whopping amount of \$1 million net worth is placed at the 4th position in the highest earning woman athletes in India. Mithali is an elegant batswoman who was the former captain of the women's cricket team.

### Mary Kom

With five world titles, three Asian titles and eleven national titles under her belt, Magnificent Mary Kom is a household name now. With a whopping net worth estimated close to 3.32 crores (*according to BFI*).



## XIII.FINDINGS

The paper develops a framework for gender equity through cooperatives and reviews the field experiences to support the framework. The paper concludes that the theory of economic modernity holds true for Gender equity, as economic independence through cooperatives has helped women gain access to control over resources and led to gender equity.

## XIV.CONCLUSION

Overall, gender equality has had a positive impact on the transformation of sportswear, Financial, social media, Recognition, and participation in equal to men level. It has led to the development of inclusive designs, improved performance-enhancing technologies, increased representation, and better accessibility for athletes of all genders. These changes contribute to creating a more equitable and inclusive sporting culture.

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