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# Gender Discrimination in Sports

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## ABSTRACT

*Gender prejudice is a frequently discussed topic. The dominant socio-political factors demonstrate that the fairer gender is not only marginalised, but also continues to exist in a condition of suppression. Today's women who face adversity continue to achieve in every sector. Sports are one area where it is considered that gender concerns are resolved without reservation. However, a general observation, whether in terms of prize money, celebrity value, advertising/sponsorship relevance, or media coverage received, indicates that not everything is well in the sports arena.*

*Women benefit from sports participation just as much as men do, as it helps build leadership abilities, boosts self-esteem and grades, and promotes physical fitness and health. To mention a few, the pitiful stipend offered to female athletes in comparison to male athletes, the bias associated with earning sports honours, the scarcity of female coaches, the absence of family support, or the issue of sexual harassment, etc. Several more concerns have harmed the status of female athletes. Male supremacy in sports has become a nightmare for female athletes, who have been bereft of self-esteem as a result of a myriad of cases of gender discrimination in their pursuit of professions in the sphere of sports. This can result in an upsurge in male athletes' aggression against women. We need to foster an environment in which sports and fitness are accessible to all, not just a select few, and in which each individual's skills are evaluated and acknowledged.*

**Keywords:** Gender, Bias, Sports, Media, Inequality.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sport is one domain in which gender disparity is particularly pronounced. The issue is mostly socio-psychological in nature. As we enter a new millennium, it is disgraceful that men and women are treated so differently, particularly in athletics. Women account for 50% of the world's population, yet are denied equal chances. Men are still thought to be the superior gender, which is why the world has yet to develop a female Michael Schumacher, Tiger Woods, Mike Tyson, or Sachin Tendulkar.

In India, sport has not yet reached its zenith. For centuries, the Mughals controlled India,

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followed by the British for another century and a half. We began evolving as a modern nation only after 1947, when we gained independence, with specific rights for half of our inhabitants, notably women. Indian women are still attempting to define themselves. Women in India continue to be unable to advocate for themselves.<sup>2</sup>

The media has also played a significant influence in extending the gender disparity in sports. Numerous examples may be cited to illustrate the plight of women players in India. Sania Mirza, for example, has been chastised by certain Muslim religious groups for wearing women's tennis gear that is inappropriate for Islam. Dipa Karmakar was not permitted to bring her personal physiotherapist to the Rio Olympics, despite the fact that she stunned the world by qualifying for the finals. Even after being the first Indian to reach the global Top 15, the Squash Rackets Federation of India did not endorse Dipika Pallikal for the Arjuna Award. Similarly, Sania Nehwal was not recommended for the Padma Bhushan by the sports ministry in 2015, although Sushil Kumar was. According to Jyotirmoyee Sikdar, a former Lok Sabha MP who won two golds and one silver medal at the 1998 Bangkok Asian Games, 'if a woman player does well, her husband becomes a coach and receives a Dronacharya award.'<sup>3</sup>

Times have changed and are improving, yet much remains to be accomplished. Men dominate all sectors of existence. Gender inequality is a pervasive problem, and extreme steps/measures are required to rectify the situation. The worst-case scenario is female feticide. Apart from this, women players have been sexually molested on several occasions by their male coaches or by federation officials.<sup>4</sup>

The latest technology is being flagrantly abused to murder girls. Rather of providing her with an adequate education and a happy life, we Indians are attempting to eradicate women from this planet. Much of our thinking is guided by dogmatic ideas. As discussed previously, gender disparity is one of the several reasons India is unable to advance at a quicker rate. In India, we appear to worship our great leaders but seldom listen to what they have to say. According to Pandit Nehru, "to awaken the masses, the woman must be aroused; once she moves, the family moves, and the nation moves."

## **II. GENDER INEQUALITY IN SALARIES**

There have always been a variety of difficulties about the disparity in salaries or payments

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Sushil Kumar Sharma ,Yatendra Sharma , Dr. Ekta Sharma and Saurabh Kumar, Gender Discrimination in Indian sports,IJASRM, 59-63 (2018)

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Deepti Kohli, Gender Discrimination in Sports: Depleting Respect of Women Players in India, IJSR. 1493-1497, (2017).

<sup>4</sup> <http://ncwapps.nic.in/pdfReports/Gender%20Issue%20in%20Sports.pdf>

made to men and women over the years. This has occurred in every industry, when males get paid more than women in a variety of cases, despite the fact that both parties perform the same amount of labour and contribute equally. The questions that arise are why women are not treated equally and why they suffer such difficulties. Despite performing the same type of job at the same level, they are frequently placed in a subordinate position. This has also been a common occurrence in sports and among sportsmen. The majority of athletes participate in sponsorships and endorsements, although these do not cover their actual income.<sup>5</sup>

Coming to India's unequal wages. we will begin with the sport that has had the most effect on India, Cricket. The Indian Premier League is the world's most popular cricket league ( The IPL). Men make enormous sums of money; even players who were barbers in the past earn crores. There is a women's league, but it consists of only three teams and is quite low-key, which means that women earn far less than men. Virat Kohli, the Captain of the Indian Men's Cricket Team, and the other A grade players earn an annual salary of 7 crores from the Board, the BCCI, for representing the country, whereas the Captain of the Women's National Cricket Team and the A grade players earn a meagre 50 lakhs per year from the same National Cricket Board. An even more amusing statistic is that the lowest graded player in the Indian Men's cricket team makes 1 crore per year, which means he earns more than the A grade players in the Women's squad, so you can image the entire disparity in player pay. Because cricket is the pinnacle of sports, the pay scale is thus high. In lower sports, the male domain earns an adequate and fair wage, but women earn less than males, and this is all in terms of the compensation set by the same board.<sup>6</sup>

In *State of Punjab v. Jagit Singh*<sup>7</sup> the Supreme Court observed that an employee performing the same or comparable work cannot be paid less than another performing the same sort of activities and carrying out the same obligations, especially not in a welfare state. Additionally, the judiciary established a legislation allowing women to seek equal pay under the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976. Thus, there are several laws in existence, but the issue remains unresolved. To be honest, the fact that women receive little audience cannot be used as an excuse; so, authorities must find a means to equalise wages for women in sports.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hamzah Hussaini, Equal Pay for Equal Work: Labour, Sports and Constitutional Perspective, SSRN, 1-14 (2020)

<sup>6</sup> Ryan James, India: Gender Inequality In Salaries Given To Athletes, September, 01, 2021, 12:20PM, <https://www.mondaq.com/india/sport/1107398/gender-inequality-in-salaries-given-to-athletes>

<sup>7</sup>State of Punjab v. Jagit Singh, [Civil Appeal No. 213 of 2013]

<sup>8</sup> Senne Joshua A. "Examination of Gender Equity and Female Participation in Sport", 2016, Vol. 20 The Sports Journal, 1543.

### III. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Women athletes frequently face sexual harassment - they are chastised for their clothing choices and objectified beyond comprehension. And, what's more, these women are frequently compelled to accept their conditions as authorities turn a blind eye.

Women athletes are frequently portrayed as 'things of desire' rather than athletes. The most prevalent instance of this is the "Sports Illustrated Swimwear Cover."<sup>9</sup> It has nothing to do with female athletics; rather, it is form of 'soft core pornography'.

In the 1980's, during the height of the aerobics craze, the corporate media pushed women more as 'things of desire.' There is less emphasis on the benefits of aerobics - fitness and health. Rather than that, several new health and fitness items entered the market, all of which projected the ideal image of a woman - slender, youthful, and attractive. While women athletes in tennis and athletics are frequently portrayed as sensational, the Indian sports industry seldom enables women athletes to be shown as sensational. Ashwini Nachappa or Sania Mirza are possible stand-alone instances.<sup>10</sup>

A female gymnast accused coach Manoj Rana and gymnast Chandan Pathak of sexual harassment during the 2014 Asian Games. The pair allegedly made rude remarks about her attire.

The Gymnastic Federation of India (GFI) vowed that if Pathak and Rana were found guilty, they would face severe penalties. However, Jiji Thompson, SAI's director general, alleged a plot stemming from an internal conflict inside the GFI. He implied that the 29-year-old lady was at blame for approaching police.

*"The victim never complained to us. She should have registered a complaint first with SAI. She is not a part of the Indian contingent but was practising at the stadium under the 'Come and Play' scheme. I can assure you we would have taken immediate action. But she went directly to the police. We have still launched an inquiry",* he said. He further added that no action could be taken based on media reports.

In 2013, two girls from SAI's Gandhinagar centre accused their coach of sexually harassing them and then blackmailing them by pretending to have their tapes. They even addressed emails to Jitendra Singh, the then-Union Minister of State for Sports and Youth Affairs, and

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<sup>9</sup>Sagnik Kundu, 5 instances of sexual harassment in Sports in India where late or no action was taken, Sportskeeda, 14 Dec 2016

<sup>10</sup> Aditya Vikram Singh, 'Gender Disparities in Sports in India: an ethnographic investigation', 2018, Vol. 3, IJSSER, 8834.

Congressman Rahul Gandhi. In their letter, the girls stated that the coach encouraged them to accompany him in his car and to pleasure him. He offered to take them to Sri Lanka for a tournament in exchange. Otherwise, he threatened to ruin their careers as stated by SAI official. The transferred was moved to SAI's Sonapat facility in December 2013 following an inquiry.<sup>11</sup>

In January 2014, five young girls at the SAI training centre in Hisar accused their instructor of grabbing and kissing them at the 'world kiss day' celebration. They first lodged a police report but dropped it once the village panchayat intervened. Three years later, a SAI sexual harassment committee penalised the coach with a 10% reduction in his pension for one year.

In a similar case, a few female students at Thiruvananthapuram's Lakshmibai Institute of Physical Education accused their teacher of misbehaviour in 2015. However, no action was taken against him, and he remains in power to this day.

According to SAI authorities, a lack of female trainers and a relationship between coaches and SAI executives are the primary causes for the organization's insensitivity to sexual harassment charges.<sup>12</sup>

In recent years, young women in educational institutions in India have spoken out for the execution of due process in sexual harassment situations. And when they have grown upset, they have legitimately resorted to calling them out, a practise known as naming and shaming professors and academics. It has not been simple for women from certain educational institutions to respond in this manner. However, naming abusers after years of suffering is particularly traumatic for individuals who work in organisations as rigorous and remote from the public as athletic centres, where the stakes are far higher. Arriving at a sporting institution, being mentored, prepared, and coached, serves as a springboard for class and status mobility. These women have spoken up against their attackers with incredible bravery and in the aftermath of enormous agony.

#### **IV. LACK OF WOMEN COACHES**

Sport is one of the world's most visible and influential social institutions. Individuals who are visible and well-known in the world of sports, such as coaches, convey who and what is

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<sup>11</sup> Sports Authority of India coach apprehended on charges of sexual assault <https://www.sportskeeda.com/athletics/sports-authorityindia-coach-apprehended-charges-sexual-assault> Sports Authority of India coach arrested on molestation charges, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWUNEZKCPHQ> (accessed on 17th December 2017)

<sup>12</sup>Coaching Women:Developing Female Coaches <https://www.womeninsport.org/wpcontent/uploads/2015/04/Developing-FemaleCoaches.pdf> (accessed on 16th December 2017)

significant and valuable, and in the majority of cases, such coaches are men.<sup>13</sup>

Another indicator of gender discrimination in sports is the dearth of female coaches. Males dominate the administration, sports federations, and coaching centres. If appointed to sports federations, the women are expected to address the rising number of sexual assault accusations in Indian sports organisations. Many female coaches considered this disrespectful, as their value was frequently viewed solely as security guards for the safety of female players.<sup>14</sup>

According to a research by the International Olympic Committee, over half of the National Olympic Committees polled have fewer than 20% of women on their Executive Boards, with ten nations having no women at all. Women make up only 2.8 percent of the members of Indian sports association governing bodies. Among the few female coaches who have made a reputation for themselves are Sunil Dabas, the only woman coach to be awarded the Padma Shri in India; Nikki Ponappa, a golf coach; and Simi Begam Sharma, a tennis coach. Female coaches also face hostility from their families, as travelling as a female is not deemed safe. Occasionally, female coaches are replaced for no apparent reason. Purnima Rao, the coach of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup, was replaced by a former Baroda batsman, despite the fact that the squad was already doing well and was reported to be in winning form.

Men and women must be represented equally in all aspects of sports, whether they are participants or future coaches. Scholars have etched out distinctions between male and female coaches' coaching styles. However, the disagreements should not compromise the economic or social interests of any community.<sup>15</sup>

## **V. BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION**

The 'Barriers to Participation' that Indian female confront while attempting to begin a sporting career-<sup>16</sup>

### **(A) Social barriers**

Athletes and their families also expressed anxiety about social pressures from extended relatives. Families frequently dispute the necessity of a girl participating in any activity, let alone one that is competitive. Even for girls with supportive parents, external problems such as an unsupportive school atmosphere and scepticism regarding women's participation in sports

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<sup>13</sup> Husan Habeeb. "A Study on Female and Sports Condition in India", 2015, Vol. 1, IJOSTHE, (2015).

<sup>14</sup> Karan Prashant Saxena, Could the future of sports coaching in India ever be female?, The Indian Express, June 9, 2017

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

<sup>16</sup> Dhirender Kaim, Barriers to women's participation in sport and active recreation, IJPESH, 96-98 (2015)

and greater society were cited as concerns.

### **(B) Infrastructure**

Limited playing possibilities are also a significant factor in girls abandoning the sport. If they are not picked for their state or national teams, females often abandon their cricketing careers and pursue other interests. This is a significant loss, since some of those who leave may have been late bloomers who, with the proper exposure, practise, and supporting environment, may have eventually represented the country.

### **(C) Safety**

Athletes said that one of their primary safety worries and a time when they felt most exposed was when travelling to academies or competitions using public transportation. Each of them described encountering uncomfortable situations when travelling alone and being subjected to some type of harassment. This is especially troubling because teenage girls sometimes travel great distances alone to attend coaching lessons or compete in competitions.

### **(D) Financial barriers**

To begin playing cricket, an athlete should budget around Rs. 15,000 for cricketing equipment such as a helmet, bat, shoes, spikes, and pads, as well as a monthly coaching charge of Rs. 2,000. This expense is prohibitively expensive for the majority of Indian parents. While most parents encourage their daughters playing recreational tennis ball cricket, they are hesitant to assist them in pursuing the sport at a competitive level due to the associated costs. Numerous females withdraw from the game owing to a lack of financial assistance.<sup>17</sup>

## **VI. ROLE OF MEDIA**

Globally, the media is seen as the fourth pillar of democracy, providing citizens with information about what is occurring in their country. It assures that the other three pillars, namely the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary, operate transparently. With such a critical function to play, it is terrible to see the fourth pillar wobbling in respect to equitable coverage of women's and men's sports, which is having a detrimental effect on the popularity and economic worth of the former. In the Indian context, where the Apex Court has declared the Right to Sports to be a Fundamental Right under Article 21, clarifying the obligations of media houses is critical. Nations must consider enacting legislation requiring networks to provide equal coverage to women's sports, or else any international or national marketing plan

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<sup>17</sup> Barriers to women and girls' participation in sport and physical activity, [https://www.funding4sport.co.uk/downloads/women\\_barriers\\_participation.pdf](https://www.funding4sport.co.uk/downloads/women_barriers_participation.pdf)



would remain a pipe dream.

Audrey Azoulay, the Director-General of UNESCO, recently noted during her World Radio Day lecture that just 4% of sports media coverage is devoted to women's sport. Regrettably, this 4% includes their relationship status, their in- and out-of-competition dress, and other "non-athletic" characteristics of female athletes. Sociologists describe this bias as a result of how a sizable segment of society views women....vulnerable, dependable, and weak, even after they legitimately conquered sports supposed to be men's domain. On the other side, media firms contend that the motivation is dual: audience preference and money generating for survival. The justification of audience preference was refuted by the 2015 Women's World Cup final between the United States of America and Japan, which drew a total of 25.4 million American viewers. With a record 764 million global viewers on in-home television and 86 million views on computers and mobile devices, the competition is currently second only to the men's World Cup in terms of global viewership. The statistics above demonstrates how lucrative women's sports are and how they address the issue of survival through "enormous" cash generating.

The BCCI's 2018 retainer contracts for senior men and women players exemplify this, with the highest earners, namely 'A' grade women cricketers (Rs.50 L), receiving half the salary of the lowest earning men cricketers in the 'C' grade (Rs.1Cr). Additionally, the men's squad has been awarded a pay of 7 crores per year for cricketers classified as 'A+' or 'best performers, leaving the women's team without such a classification. Despite their current World ranking of 59, the women's Indian Football team earns between five and ten lakh rupees a year, while the men's team earns over 70 lakhs. And indeed, India's top sport, 'Hockey,' likewise has a tenfold salary disparity between its two sides.<sup>18</sup>

Kabaddi is an ancient Asian sport in which competing teams employ a variety of wrestling tactics to pin opponents who enter rival territory before they can return to their own side. On October 4, the men's and women's Kabaddi teams made history as they successfully defended their Games gold medals. Men overcame adversity to earn gold, while women glided to victory. The double gold medal did make the top page of Mid-Day as the cover or main article. However, the headline was strongly gendered, reading: 'True Kings of the Sport,' with the opening strap reading: 'men win, women follow closely behind' (Mid-Day, 2014, p.1). The report's framing was unambiguously centred on the monarchs (men) and was not very subtle

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<sup>18</sup> KhelAdhikar, India closer to egalitarian play: A look at women in sports, THE BRIDGE, 28 Sep 2018 12:48 PM, <https://thebridge.in/law-in-sports/india-closer-egalitarian-play-look-women-sports/>

in referring to the women's team's gold-winning performance as 'not far behind'. Additionally, of the 126 words devoted to these double endeavours in the story, the guys earned a king's share (emphasis added) of publicity.

Hockey champions. When the Indian women's hockey team earned bronze on October 2, just 18 lines were devoted to the medal-winning performance, coupled with an image of the squad members. The next day, when the men's hockey team won gold, they received front page publicity as well as an inside page feature. Over the course of seven days, the men's hockey squad 8 GMJ Indian Edition June 2017 Article got 1048 lines of publicity divided over nine pieces. Additionally, ten images of players and staff were reviewed during the period. No follow-up report regarding the women's hockey team was included.<sup>19</sup>

## VII. CONCLUSION

Sport is one domain where gender disparity is very pronounced. It is unfortunate that women are still treated differently than males, particularly in sports. In India, women are still viewed as domestic and child-rearing machines. Although the situation has not improved significantly, I believe we are on the verge of improvement, with so many outstanding sports women in India reaching the pinnacles. We are all pulling for Mary Kom and Saina Nehwal, to name a few. All that is probably required is an awareness of the existence of distinctions and a desire to work for equal opportunity.

As with many other aspects of life, change begins with us. While it may appear as though sports have a lot to complain about, the truth behind why we enjoy sports is just breathtaking. Sports have evolved and continue to evolve humanity. It teaches us mental toughness, how to overcome obstacles, the value of teamwork, responsibility, and how to stay mentally and physically fit. Sport develops incredible character and teaches the actual characteristics of a decent person.

The second-class treatment meted out to female athletes is not limited to the Indian athletic scene. The media, both electronic and print, should take decisive action to provide a robust forum for discussion about women's sports. As Hardin(2005) notes, if media outlets increased their coverage, interest would grow among viewers. As EdwardKian(2007) notes, "the general public's underestimation of the number of women engaging in competitive sports is a result of the inadequate overall coverage of female athletes."

It's worth recalling here that when India gained independence in 1947, leaders such as

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.caluniv.ac.in/global-mdia-journal/Article-Nov-2017/A6.pdf>

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur recognised the critical role of women's engagement in sport in nation building.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> <https://eprints.manipal.edu/146897/1/nandini2.pdf>