

## GENDER RELATED ISSUES AND THE SOCIAL APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

A lot of studies show that there are cultural, biological, school sizes, ethos, over emphasis to competition, comparing with others and other related and diverse issues that put girls to disadvantage while taking up sports and physical education. There are small differences in sports performance among the girls and boys in cognitive, affective and motor performance during early childhood but these differences are exaggerated later over time due to differential by the teachers, parents and coaches and peers. These issues become more prominent during adolescence with increased awareness and sensitivity.

**KEY WORD:** *Olympic Games, Tourism, Megaevents and Economic.*

### INTRODUCTION:

The ancient Greek games (776 BC) were strictly for men. Let alone competing, women were not even allowed to see the men participating in the Olympics in Greece as it was considered unethical and against gods. The ancient Olympic Games were banned by the Roman Empire after Greece was invaded. The modern Olympic Games were revived in 1896 but the status of women remained unaltered even then. The father of modern Olympic Games Baron Pierre de Coubertin had stated that women's sports were against the laws of nature and the most unaesthetic sight to human eyes one can contemplate. However it has been reported that one woman named Melpomene did participate, against all odds, as unofficial runner in 1896 Olympics. She spent three weeks training in secret and ran 40 kms from Marathon to Athens in 4.5 hours, ahead of many of the male contestants. Officially women (22 numbers) participated for the first time in 1900 Paris Olympics. In 1789, the educational committees of the French Revolution considered the intellectual, moral, and physical education for both boys as well as girls. Physical education and sports was reduced to military preparedness for boys and men only during Napoleon's reign 20 years later. In 1793, GutsMuths, a German educator and thinker included physical education for girls. This involved the

measurement of sports performances of girls which led to women's sport being more actively pursued in Germany than in most other countries in that period. Prior to 1870, activities for women either ceremonial dances or for fun only rather than sport-specific or competitive in nature. Women's qualities were attributed to her beauty, chastity, modesty, obedience, and inconspicuous behavior. Meek and weak wife was the status symbol of that era. Women were allowed to participate in mild exercises because it was believed that tough exercises would lead to hysteria besides sweating was considered unhealthy for women and other factors like sports was socially unacceptable for girls, it would cause damage to the uterus and so on. Some accepted sports for upper class women were archery, croquet, bowling, tennis and Golf.

The period from 1920 to 1970 saw substantial progress for women in sports. Female athletes made their presence felt despite resistance from the society. Helen Wills Moody reigned as women's tennis champion from 1920 to 1930. Gertrude Ederle swam the English Channel 2 hours faster than anyone ever had in 1926. In 1928 Amsterdam Olympics, several women competitors fell exhausted in 800m race. Keeping this incident in view, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) voted that women should not be allowed to compete in races longer than 200 meters leading to a 32 year long ban in these races for women in Olympics.

World War II witnessed a mass massacre of men that compelled the women to do strength and endurance related jobs which were previously not recommended for them because the women and children had to fend for themselves and survive. Women sports participation grew much faster as 390 women participated in 5 games in the first post war Olympic Games in 1948, London. In 1952, Helsinki Olympics 519 women participated with women gymnastics and equestrian events were added to the list of sports in the same Olympics. 1059 women participated in the 1972 summer Olympics at Munich. 1260 women participated in 1976 Montreal Olympics.

A major boost was seen when Nadia Elena Comăneci of Romania won a perfect 10 in Gymnastics in 1976 Olympics in Montreal. So there was steady increase in women's participation and sponsorship of the elite women as well in the Olympic Games. More and more games were being added for the women that further acted as a catalyst for the women to take up sports. Synchronized swimming and rhythmic gymnastics were added to the list of disciplines in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games in which a lot of

women participated and large number of spectators appreciated the combination of beauty and the physical perfection displayed during the events. Women were allowed to participate in the marathon and 3000 meter races as well. Women heptathlon comprising of 7 track and field events was added in 1984 Olympics and women badminton was added in Olympics in 1992 Barcelona Olympics. In the last 3 years, Indian sportswomen have been making the nation proud in world events in their respective sports. In spite of them not getting enough support from the fans and the media back home, the women have somehow managed to show outstanding performances in the International competitions including Olympics. Latest names are Hima Das and Dutee Chand who are doing extremely well at the international level despite all odds that they had to face from discrimination to poverty and public apathy.

Unlike ancient Greece, as per Indian scriptures of Vedic times, women were not treated as inferior or subordinate but equal to men in all matters of life. It is mentioned in the Vedas that the women had an honorable place in the society. They freely participated in public life like attending assemblies, state functions etc. They used to study the Vedas and composed hymns. They also distinguished themselves in knowledge of science and arts as they were considered integral part of a family and played an important role in the journey of life of their partners, in their religious duties. They were given equal opportunity for education and had a voice in the selection of their husband. A woman was regarded as Ardhgini (better-half). However the condition of women was not same in post-Vedic period. It gradually got degraded in the Puranic and Smriti periods. The description of women's status in the society before BC 300 shows that she enjoyed a fairly high status, though not to the extent that she enjoyed in Vedic period. Several drastic changes that took place in the Indian society from about BC 300 to the beginning of the Christian era that led to the restriction of freedom of women. The so called champion of religion imposed certain gender specific rules and code of conduct that were very rigid probably due to caste system and joint family system that were the main reasons for lowering of women's status in this period. A daughter began to be regarded as curse. They were denied the right of inheritance and ownership of property. Pre puberty marriages were widespread. Women were forbidden to go to the temples and pray and undertake pilgrimages.

The widow was asked to devote herself to an ascetic life at home and marriage became an irrevocable union for the wife but not the husband. Men could marry more than once while it was strictly forbidden for the women. Men were honored as "Mizazee Khuda" who will have the last say in all matters pertaining to family and property etc. The period between 11th century to 18th century witnessed further

deterioration in the position of women due to the impact of cultural diversity becoming more complex. In this period, female infanticide, child marriage, purdah system, sati and slavery were some common social evils affecting women. The girl child abortions became common. There was further curbing of freedom of women in matters of education, mate selection, public appearances, etc. Women education was almost banned. During the period of British rule of about 200 years (early 18th century to the first half of 20th century), the British authorities noted some major problems in the Indian society and brought in some substantial reforms in eliminating inequalities between men and women in matters of education, employment, social and property rights and so forth. Sati, purdah, female infanticide, child marriage, inheritance, slavery, prohibition of widow remarriage and the lack of women's rights in different fields were some of the problems which were eradicated by the Britishers. Though initially the British rulers did not interfere with the traditional Indian social fabric. It was only in the latter half of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century that they took some steps to abolish or change some social customs officially. Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dayanand Saraswati, Keshab Chandra Sen, Swami Vivekanand, Maharashi Karve, Justice Ranade, Mahatma Gandhi and others played a pioneering role in removing the obstacles in the progress of women. Not only this, it had helped in eliminating inequalities between men and women and giving proper respect to the other-half of the society. Abolition of Sati Act in 1813, The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act, 1856, Married Women's Property Act, 1874, The Child Marriage Restraint Act (Sharda Act), 1929 are some examples. Although a lot of women were participating in sports and other adventurous activities but still there were certain myths and misconceptions prevalent regarding safety and security of woman. Women began to slowly break the barriers and started working in the offices, going to gyms, multitasking and take up their hobbies besides taking care of families and obeying some social customs but the gender discrimination was still prevalent in most of the lower and middle class families.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, former Health Minister in India in early 1900's was the first one to set an example for North Indian women by taking to competitive tennis. Several Indian women have participated in the Olympics in the recent past. Karnam Malleswari is the first women to have won a bronze medal at the Sydney Olympics in the Women's 69 kg category in Weightlifting. Other women who have made India proud are Mary Kom (5 times world champion), Saina Newhwal, P.V. Sindhu & Sakshi Malik. Sakshi is a Freestyle Wrestler who won a Bronze in the Rio 2016 summer Olympics, PT Usha, Sania Mirza. Anju Bobby George made history when she won the bronze medal in Women's long jump at the 2003 World

Championships in Athletics in Paris. With this achievement, she became the first Indian athlete ever to win a medal in a World Championships in Athletics jumping 6.70 m.

In the Rio summer Olympics, 2016 among 117 athletes that represented the country - 63 men and 54 women - only 2 players went on to finish on the podium, both of them women, namely PV Sindhu (badminton) and Wrestler Sakshi Malik. Indian Women's Cricket team reached the final of ICC Women's World Cup 2017 in England. Yet, there are very few female athletic icons who are given due attention by the media and glamour world. Most of the time family pressures, biased attitude of coaches, customs and traditions, peer pressure etc. are some of the factors that are deterrents for the young girls to participate in sports rather than strong encouragement to participate in sports and healthy physical activity because of which we have a very small pool of budding female athletes in comparison to the males. The outcome is that most of the talented girls either does not dare to even start and others tend to drop out after some time. The above said barriers to sports participation for women and girls are much higher than for boys and men. This is also covered in detail by the gender critics who see huge gender discrimination in sports even in European countries. Unfortunately even today a number of factors ensure that sportswomen stay two steps behind. Though the Indian culture looks up to a woman as a mother of a race, the Indian society is firm with the belief that women are naturally inferior to men and her main responsibilities lie with giving birth and taking care of her family. The level of physical education and sports for females has been hampered because of the endless limitations as we see in the case of Hima Das and Dutee Chand. Their road to glory is a fight against prejudice, inferiority and gender discrimination, poverty and lack of resources.

Some of the important observations regarding women's participation in sports are as follows:

**Policy barriers:** Given that sports is equally beneficial for both men and women not only from health point of view but also in terms of psychological and social perspective, the sports policy makers and implementers are to be blamed for gender discrimination in sports in favor of men. There is a serious lack of encouragement that enables women and girls to participate besides lack of opportunity & lack of childcare facilities. There should be a mandatory requirement to provide crèche facilities or classes for toddlers and children, so that the women can bring their children along when they go to exercise or



compete. The Wimbledon tennis prize money was being raised at par with that of men after a lot of hue and cry. Similarly the requirement of female coaches has always been less in the backdrop of less girls participating in sports. Media pays less attention to when it comes to covering women cricket or hockey.

Money barriers: Women's sport attracts less funding than men's. Women tend to earn less than men and therefore it is important to consider different payment options and be as flexible as possible. Nominal or free gym memberships, accessibility to stadiums for females, swimming pools, subsidies or other help (for instance free equipment hire) can also encourage girls to take up exercise and sports. Lack of transportation facilities is a very common problem for women and girls with disabilities and for women and girls living in rural areas. The family members find it very difficult to pick and drop for sports and they prefer to do so for tuitions etc instead of sports. A proper public transport system in the villages, share-a-ride systems shall be useful to promote physical activity. Local walking and running groups that require very less investment can be beneficial for women to take part in easily accessible physical activity in a friendly, supportive manner and for lifetime.

#### Conclusion

The Indian Constitution has conferred equal rights to all irrespective of cast creed, color and gender. Women have shown better performances in some sports like Javelin throw, swimming, gymnastics etc than men. Biologically or physiologically the women can master anything and everything. Sometime back triple jump and hammer throw was banned for women but scientists have found that gender has no differences on effect of throwing. But still due to certain constraints we are still unable to produce more good quality sports women. Some of Indian sports women like Deepa Malik, Hima Das, M.C. Mary Kom, Sania Mirza, etc. are excellent role models for the budding athletes. Sports and games help women to overcome hormone dysfunction, menstrual disorders, and eating disorders, osteoporosis. Recent Indian Government initiatives like "swasth bharat abhiyaan", "Khelo India" "beti bachao, beti padhao" campaigns are very encouraging but it is important to work at the grass root level specifically for women sports and empowerment in school, colleges and in universities. Conducting awareness programme for women sports participation, more incentives in those states where religion is becoming a constraint should come up with some alternatives so that their women can also participate in sports and live a better and healthy life.

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