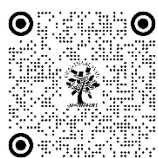


WOMEN'S CRICKET IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Women's cricket in India has failed to make a mark at international level. Some of the hurdles in the popularization and development of women's cricket in India are discrimination in the availability of facilities, financial benefits, awards, the number of matches played and failure in promotion of cricket for women at the school level. Furthermore, adequate attention is not given to cricket at the college/university level. The study will help to plan the strategies to overcome the problems of women's cricket in India through improving its status by creating awareness regarding the game. The study will inspire schools, colleges and private cricket academies to increase their role for the development of women cricket by providing separate facilities, equipment, qualified coaches and necessary provisions for women cricketers. The study will bring awareness to the governing bodies at various levels and encourage them to change their attitude towards women's cricket.

Keywords: Women, Cricket, India

1. INTRODUCTION

India is a country of diversity, not only in regard to religion, languages, culture or food but also in respect of games and sports. Numerous games have been played in India from a long period of time. Games like Chaupar, Ashtapada, Chess, Snakes and Ladders have been played indoors for ages. Outdoor games like Wrestling, Kho-kho, Kabaddi, Polo, Gilli-danda Hunting, Archery, Horse Riding, Swimming, and Martial Arts were omnipresent in ancient India. Involvement in games and sports allowed people to spend time with their friends, family members and relatives. Furthermore, participation in sports was a great source of recreation especially in times when there were no or limited options for entertainment.

When the British arrived in India in the 1600s, many new games and sports including Cricket gained popularity. Cricket, even though mainly played by men in the initial stages, has been played by women recent times.

Female participation in different games and sports has increased dramatically in this century, especially in the last 25 years, and the important change in modern society has laid stress on gender parity. Women's sports like tennis, gymnastics, weightlifting, hockey, swimming, etc. are popular all over the world and watched on television very

frequently by people. The Women's Cricket somehow does not enjoy the same popularity even though efforts are being made so that this sport also is liked and admired as well as witnessed by the spectators.

Men and women do have social differences and the four main structures in contemporary gender relations are: power relations, production relations, emotional relations and symbolic relations. Despite numerous studies about the experiences of female footballer's psycho-socially, little is known about women's cricket. During early child rearing practices, the society pushes forward internalized gender-based and stereotyped beliefs and values about the (in) appropriateness of female participation in sports especially cricket.

2. HISTORY OF CRICKET IN INDIA

The first reference to cricket in India dates back to the year 1721. It was in this year when a British ship reached the coast of Kutch in Western India, the sailors of which had played cricket. After this, it was in the year 1751 when the first recorded match was played by the British army against the English settlers. The first major landmark for this sport in India was in the year 1792 when the Calcutta Cricket Club was established. This club also has the distinction of being the second-oldest cricket club in the world, after the MCC (1787).

In the year 1802, a match between the Calcutta Cricket Club the Old Etonians was organized. In this match, Robert Vansittart scored a hundred. This was the first 'recorded' century scored by any player on the Indian soil. This game was watched and thoroughly enjoyed by many Indians. Matches were played amongst the Indian soldiers and other senior army men. Thereafter, it was taken up by the civilians as well. Parsis were the first civilian community of India who played cricket and also established a club called the Oriental Cricket Club in Mumbai in 1848. Though this club did not survive for long, the Parsi community established another club in the year 1850, the 'Young Zoroastrians Club'.

In 1911, the Maharaja of Patiala, sponsored an 'All-Indian' team for the first tour of England. The best cricketers of that time were part of the team. Baloo Palwankar, a left-arm spinner was the best performer of the tour, who took more than hundred wickets. Despite being a member of the 'untouchable' part of the Hindu society, due to his excellence in the game, he captained the team in subsequent tournaments.

Various advancements and provisions were made in order to formulate a favourable situation for India to play test cricket. Indian Team experienced a tough debut from 1932 to 1952 before registering its first-ever victory in Test cricket. India won the final match by an inning and eight runs against England in 1951-52 at Chennai. In 1953, the Indian team won against Pakistan, their first time series win. In 1967-68 India won its first Test series abroad, defeating New Zealand by 3-1 on their own ground. Later, the Indian team registered uninterrupted victories in West Indies and England.

In 1983, India created history by the unexpectedly lifting the 3rd World Cup, defeating the West-Indies team, the two times consecutive champion. It was then that cricket had no longer remained a game. It had taken the place of religion in the country.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Neetu (2000) conducted a study to establish the relationship between selected Anthropometric measurements and performance of women cricket players. The Anthropometric variables were weight, height, sitting height, upper by length, lower by length, arm length, upper arm length and power. 35 women cricket players were selected from Delhi University. The age ranged between 17 to 25 years. Mean, standard deviation and Pearson's product moment correlation were employed. The level of significance was .01 and .05 at 33 degrees of freedom. The results indicated that there exist significant correlation between cricket performance and selected anthropometric measurements.

Khajuria and Melton (2010) The purpose of this crosssectional study was of two-fold: firstly, to evaluate the back strength of Indian inter-university male cricketers and secondly, to study its relation to leg strength, along with selected anthropometric characteristics. Thirteen anthropometric characteristics were from 98 Indian inter-university male cricketers aged 16-25 (mean age 21.03, \pm 1.72), all students at nine Indian universities, and the competition was held in Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Punjab, India. An adequate number of control participants (n = 99, mean age 21.50, \pm 1.13) were also collected from students at the host university for comparison. The findings of the present study indicated statistically significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$) in weight, BMI, thigh length, total leg length, biceps, triceps, subscapular and calf skinfolds, percentage of body fat and back strength between the cricketers and control participants.

The striking findings of the present study were that back strength showed significant positive correlations only with leg strength but not with any of the other studied anthropometric characteristics.

Koley and Kanupriya (2010) The purpose of this study was of twofolds, firstly, to evaluate the anthropometric profile of Indian inter-university female cricketers and, secondly, to search the correlations of these anthropometric characteristics among themselves. To serve this purpose, fifteen anthropometric characteristics, were measured on purposively selected 56 Indian inter-university female cricketers aged 18-22 years (mean age 19.23 years, ± 1.87) collected from six Indian universities, and the competition was held in Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Punjab, India

4. INDIAN WOMEN CRICKET

In 1934, the first women's Test at the international level was played between England and Australia. However, in India women's cricket emerged much later and the Women's Cricket Association of India (WCAI) was formed in 1973. In 1976, the Indian women's team played their first Test match against the West Indies. In 2006, the Women's Cricket Association of India (WCAI) was merged with the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) as a part of the International Cricket Council's initiative to develop women's cricket.

5. COMPARISON BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN CRICKET IN INDIA

Diana Edulji, the former Indian Women's Cricket captain, a member of the CPO women's committee and the former manager of the Indian Women team, has criticized the "discriminatory" attitude of CPO and expressed that this organization is not interested in running women's cricket beyond paying "lip service". If the current situation persists, the women's cricket in India is in the danger of dying out. It was a 'dream come true' when the CPO took over women's cricket in 2006 in line with International Cricket Council (ICC) regulations - but now the bubble has burst.

The CPO is running women's cricket because just because it is their responsibility. The International Cricket Council (ICC) is now running both men's and women's cricket, otherwise, there is no women's cricket. They cannot play under any other banner. Edulji openly stated that it is an insult to women's cricket to be treated this way.

She criticized the gender bias of the game's administration. She openly spoke about how the National Women's Cricket team preparing for the Women's World Cup had been put up in a centrally located but budget hotel while they were training for the competition. The practice sessions of the team were also arranged at substandard fields i.e. Police Gymkhana, Hindu Gymkhana and Bombay Gymkhana grounds. Male cricketers would never be provided with any such playgrounds or lodging places.

She also criticized the amount being paid as match fee to women cricketers. In women's cricket, the selectors are paid the maximum, then come the match referees and then the players. It is shocking that this order is reversed as we talk about men's cricket. So how do you expect girls to be motivated come into cricket? The match fee for domestic matches is just Rs.2500. For T-20 matches, it is further halved- Rs.1250. It appears to be very insulting. Edulji said that despite consistently being among the top-ranked players in the world, Indian Captain, Mithali Raj as well as Jhulan Goswami, the highest wicket-taker in the world, have little chance of being recognized in the society due to the lack of visibility of women's cricket in India.

On the other hand, Ratnakar Shetty, the CPO's chief administrative officer refuted the charges levied by Edulji. According to him, the board was supporting women's cricket adequately. Since 2006, when the women's cricket came under CPO, the board has done an excellent job. Women cricket players have been extended the best of the facilities. All the state associations have opened their training facilities to the girls. Additionally, every woman's cricket team has the requisite supporting staff, including a coach, a physio and a trainer.

6. PROBLEMS OF WOMEN CRICKET AND CRICKETERS

Cricket, in India, is more than a game and attracts spectators in large numbers. On the occasion of a live telecast of a match on television, people tend to stay at home, avoiding or postponing work and prioritising the match over anything. This, however, may not be true at all times. Unfortunately, the level of enthusiasm for women cricket is not nearly as high. Women cricket, sadly, has little or no audience. It is quite strange that not all women matches are even telecasted

on the television. Cricket is considered as a male-dominated sport in India. There is negligible encouragement for women to play cricket. At the grass root level i.e. at the school level, where the foundation of the sport is to be laid, there is almost never a girls' cricket team in most schools. It is rather easy to come across an academy for boys to learn the skills of cricket but such academies for girls are very rare. A cricket association 'for boys' exists in every state but girls cricket seems to be neglected. The facilities to play cricket, the provision of the latest equipment, availability of scientific coaching and properly maintained grounds are not easily accessible for girls. The number of tournaments organized for girls is also much less than those for boys. Women are less motivated to play cricket in India as there are very few pecuniary rewards associated with playing cricket for them. Furthermore, the employment opportunities in the sports quota are very few for girls. Very few colleges presently offer a sports quota for admissions. It is not surprising that most of the colleges do not promote cricket for girls either.

Financial rewards are practically unavailable at lower levels of cricket. Even at the national level, the match fee for women is significantly less in comparison to the male players. Moreover, the media also gives more support and coverage to men's cricket in comparison to women's cricket. There are several women players who have performed excellently at the international level but have not got the deserved recognition due to unavailability of sponsorships from good sponsors. It is certainly peculiar that test matches in cricket have been discontinued for women. The governing body for cricket in India—Cricket Promoting Organisations (CPO) is also gender discriminative. This can be very well observed from the following excerpts from the CPO annual reports:

7. CONCLUSION

The experiences of girls in cricket are affected by views on traditional gender roles and gender appropriate sport. This less emphasis in girl's cricket especially at the school stage has resulted in the fact that the majority of the girls are not able to play and practice cricket. The physical education teachers in the school continue to provide and develop boys' cricket showing that cricket is a sport for males and this has resulted in undervaluing of women's sport skills and knowledge.

Culture and media have played an important role in popularizing women sports as well as women sports persons. This is an established fact that majority of the girls see and follow men's cricket but have little knowledge about the women's game. One of the main reasons for this was lack of media coverage of the women's game. It is clear from the above discussion that women's cricket has now developed and sports administrators, physical education teachers in schools and coaches do give importance on the psycho-social development of women sports persons and also give them training and prepare them for future. Research in this area demonstrates that women's cricket emerged as a consequence of variety of moral, historical, financial and organizational processes. Overall, sports women, although less aggressive but tend to be better at developing skills, negotiating play and course patterns, and tend to enjoy the same fitness status as that of men.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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