

Participation level of Indian women in sports in National and International Arena

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Abstract:

The participation of women in sports in India has been increasing. More women are now seen taking up sports as their careers. Their participation level however varies in different regions or states. And some states are still a long way to go in this field. On analysis of the participation of Indian women in Commonwealth Games the number had been very less and no participation till the 17th Games of 2002 which was held in England. However, after the 2002 Games slight increase of number is observed. National Games has been a platform to compete amongst the states and union territories in the country. Overall participation level of women is comparatively less than the male counterparts but there is an increase in number of women participating in the competition over the years. In various National Games Orissa, Kerala, Maharashtra, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh and Jharkhand are the states whose average women participation remains above other states. Delhi also has an average women participants. But other remaining states and Union territories have comparatively lesser average women participants. The reasons attribute to gender difference, various inequalities in different regions, social and economic barriers, lack of proper infrastructures and improper implementations of policies and programmes of Government.

Keywords: Women, Sports, Participation Level

INTRODUCTION

The history of sport indicated that it is mainly an example of masculine supremacy. In the year 720 BC when the ancient Olympic games was begun in Greece, there were only men; women were not allowed to participate and could only be spectators. Therefore they retaliated against it and organised games of their own. The game was organised every four years but not in the

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same year of the Olympics. There was a time were competition almost turned in to war like games.(Reddy,1995:303)

In India after independence, the performance of women in sport is observed to have more than matched then the performance by men. And there are valid reasons, if given the opportunity to take to sports and games women have proof themselves as good players in some games and relatively better than men in others. There were major obstacles for women in regards to the social structure till independence. Women did not go to the field and games and sports were only men's sphere. It was improper and there was social and cultural taboo too. Women did take part in sports but it was few in number and usually restricted to those from the Anglo-Indian community or those who challenged religious bias. And participation of women were also in selected games; for example hockey, athletics and tennis.(Reddy,1995:304)

The contribution of women from the Anglo-Indian community cannot be ignored. They could well be said as leaders or pioneers in country like India where sports were only men's domain. Thus it was expected that the early great women athletes were from Anglo- Indian community who excelled in the games of their choice. They specialised in the game of Hockey in the first place and then followed by the athletics. The early famous sports women from the lines of Anglo- Indian were Ann Limsden and Elvera Britto who outstandingly figured in Hockey and Janice Satur and Elizabeth Davenport who excelled in the athletics. (Ibid)

There were many influences of the Anglo Indians in India. Mention may be made of Railways, Postal and telegraphs. They were successful in projecting a constructive picture in both works and sports. After independence, the trend set by them formed the basis and women particularly from Bombay, Bangalore and Calcutta started to proof themselves. Stephen and Mary D Souza took over the athletics.(Reddy, !995:304)

The Helsinki Olympic Games in 1952 was the first games in which the Indian women participated in an international athletics. The eager participants were Mary D'souza (sprinter) and Nilima Ghose (Hurdler). India had a spectacular win in the 4*100m relay at the second Asian games at Manila. Mary Leela Rao performed well and earned her place in the Indian Olympic Team in Melbourne in 1956. She led the Indian – March past in the games.(Ibid,305)

METHOD AND AIM OF THE STUDY

The methodology of the study is based on review of secondary literature such as books, journals, articles and official data etc. And aim of the study is to analyse the participation level

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of women in sports in various states of India with respect to National Games and Commonwealth Games.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The Theoretical Perspectives include Functionalist View, Conflict Theorist on sports and Feminist theory on sport. The functionalist views sports as learning practices that strengthen and extend the learning that occur in other situation. Sport is made in order to learn important rules, hard work, well organised organisation and an efficient authority structure to those who watch or play. It has also serve as tension management functions in the society by enforcing both the spectators and participants with a channel for aggressive energy. A functionalist approach also shows how sport acts as means to bring the people together and endorse them the feeling of unity, an idea of social identification as well as a source of identity of individual.(Caokley, 1984)

The views of the conflict theorist about the society are different. They viewed it as the constant changing group of relationships which are characterised by the intrinsic differences of interests and bind together by force, coercion and delegate manipulation, instead of viewing it as comparatively stable system of interrelated elements binding together by a common values and agreement. They are concerned with the divisions and utilisation of power but not with common values and integration. Their study of society emphasize on the change of the system rather than the requirement to continue operating the social system smoothly. (Loy and Kenyon,1969).

Feminist theory focuses on understanding the nature of inequality; it aims at gender politics, power relations and sexuality while in general giving an assessment of social relations, feminist theory aims mainly on studying inequality of gender and promotion of women's rights, interest and issues. Themes discover in feminism consist of art history, contemporary art, aesthetics, discrimination, stereotyping, objectification and oppression. Patriarchy is showcased as a system of might and domination that gives men and male activities and qualities. Feminist views that gender is the main organising ideology of social life that it lives across time and place and that it both create and require gender differences which resulted in the necessity of masculinity and femininity. (Smith, 2010)

According to Scraton, the approach of liberal feminist to sport is that it is primarily sound and represent a constructive experience to which girls and women need to access. It is viewed that differences in sport participants are due to socialization practices followed by institutions like family, media and school. For instance, girls are projected as feminine activities like netball,

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gymnastics or hockey and sport which are feminine in nature, while men are socialised into masculine sports such as football, rugby or cricket and into a masculine physicality (Scranton,1992). The approach of a radical feminist to sport proposes the necessity of reconstruction or recreation of sport in such ways that celebrate the values of female but not just generally associated with masculine aggression and competition (Birrell,1987).Marxist feminism finds out the inequalities in gender as results from capitalism, class and economic exploitation. The sexual division of labour is basic to this approach and give attention on not only how capital benefits from the unpaid domestic labour of women but also their upholding of the future labour force (child care) and the daily concern of male labours. (Scranton, 1992) Socialist feminism looks more closely at the inter-relationships of gender, race and class that exist within capitalism, patriarchy and neo-colonialism. Social feminist showcases the role played by women in the service of both men's and women's sports. For instance, women usually serve refreshments at male sporting events. Further, the cloths of their partner or men's teams are also washed by them, carry their children to sports and give their support in their activities leaving behind their own leisure and sporting activities. This sexual division of labour tends the women to be employed in the sports organisations and sports clubs as server and play as supporting roles, for instance; as secretaries or cleaners.(Birell,1981)

Poststructuralist ideas focus on the ways social forms and institutions through language and symbol systems; construct social reality and self-identity. Poststructuralist explores how a culture's language and symbol systems define and legitimize what is to be taken as true or untrue, normal or abnormal and good or bad in society. A major emphasises in poststructuralist theory is power. Sports have been shaped in relation to power Sport in its present form is a result of different deployments of physical activity and competitive spirit upon different bodies in different period of time.(Birell,1981)

SURVEY OF LITERATURE

A few researches done by those renowned personalities are being reviewed in this section. Singh(1990) studied Indian women and sports in different regions of Rajasthan. The research was mainly focused on participating and non-participating sportswomen and their families. Women participants belong to joint families and nuclear. Among the participants those who live with local guardians do not get proper guidance and opportunities, security and freedom to participate in games and sports while those girls living in hostels get more awareness and opportunities. The levels of education of the family members also have direct impact on girls

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in sports activities; the higher the education of parents is, the more chance of participation in games and sports. But the participant's family have wider outlook than non participant's family. (Singh,1990)

Roberts (1992) examines the conflict between what was considered woman's natural function (wife / mother / home maker) and her desire to participate in athletics. At its core there is conflict over control of women's bodies, leisure time and social roles. During the eighteenth century, lower- class women ran in smock races at local fairs and fought in pugilistic contests and upper class women rode horses and participated in archery and field sports which was unquestionably a past time in which social class mattered more than gender. (Roberts1992)

Pelak(2002) studied women's ice hockey , emergence and development of a women's collegiate ice hockey club at a large university in the mid-western United States during the 1990s. The role of collective actions plays in contesting sexist structures and practices within a traditionally male dominated institution. Clubs collective identity as a legitimate ice hockey organisation was an important factor in the women's successful challenge of exclusionary practice at University ice rink. The author use a case study of the development of a women collegiate ice hockey club in the Midwestern United States to demonstrate the importance of women's collective action in the process of institutional change in this masculine flagship sport. The explanation of the construction of solidarity and an oppositional identity among a group of women athletes played a critical role in challenging the gender states quo at an ice rink on a major university campus. (Pelak, 2002)

Washington and Karen(2001) study of sport and society has focused on inequality by race/ethnicity class and gender as well as the change of social context of sport by roles of the media and globalisation. They have given the importance of studies which clarify how sports are connected with various cultures and participation by difference social groups. It is interesting to study the logic and pattern of new sports inclusion into the Olympic. Before tennis was included in Olympic in 1988, it was a sport for upper class origin while weightlifting had been in the games for decades. Media has become a bigger player in the field of sports by not broadcast but also involvement in the owning franchise. Due to organisational processes, the cost in socialising sports increases and the profits involves are benefited by a few private.(Washington & Karen,2001)

Scranton (2002) explains that sport is an important device for social empowerment because of its values and skills like teamwork, leadership, arbitration, communication, discipline and respect of others. Many girls particularly in their adolescence have comparatively less chance

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than boys for social interaction outside the house and beyond family structures. So, social benefits of participation in sport are thought to be more important for girls. Participation of women and girls in sports helps them in acquiring new interpersonal skills, develop a sense of identity and gain new opportunities which allow them to become more engaged in school and community life. It also enables them to enjoy freedom and movement, increasing their self-esteem and self-confidence. (Scranton, 2002)

FINDINGS

The following tables I (a, b, c & d) & II show the participation level of Indian women players in National Games and Commonwealth Games respectively

National Games	States	States									
		Andhra Pradesh	Arunachal	Assam	Bihar	Chhattisgarh	Goa	Gujarat	Haryana	Himachal	Jammu and Kashmir
25th (1979)	women	48	-	19	24	-	5	25	38	12	15
	total	167	-	86	163	-	19	101	162	44	72
28th (1994)	women	78	0	36	30	-	8	16	43	10	4
	total	233	4	86	133	-	23	43	197	30	69
30th (1999)	women	94	1	44	49	-	21	11	92	6	11
	total	247	8	132	177	-	46	69	149	47	71
31th (2001)	women	132	6	68	28	2	18	20	132	53	37
	total	331	54	135	47	18	38	93	318	84	98
33th (2007)	women	158	12	304	26	46	33	30	117	22	21
	total	366	34	862	69	156	61	92	504	42	111
34th (2011)	women	130	11	100	51	56	28	33	209	36	8
	total	329	28	226	123	149	67	125	483	61	73

Table I (a)

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National Games	States	Jharkhand	Karnataka	Kerala	Madya Pradesh	Maharashtra	Manipur	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Orissa
25th (1979)	women	-	49	57	12	62	27	-	-	-	20
	total	-	156	176	24	144	71	-	-	-	84
28th (1994)	women	-	103	112	95	210	52	-	5	-	25
	total	-	270	253	207	549	117	-	13	8	90
30th (1999)	women	-	144	133	88	199	266	6	1	3	80
	total	-	297	223	477	477	598	28	24	13	146
31th (2001)	women	32	109	153	81	372	204	4	14	-	54
	total	61	364	317	267	687	349	13	21	-	154
33th (2007)	women	51	124	174	84	203	187	12	37	47	92
	total	116	292	304	279	466	400	60	44	123	183
34th (2011)	women	381	114	149	130	206	183	6	11	25	81
	total	759	293	295	309	424	358	20	53	34	136

Table I (b)

National Games	States	Punjab	Rajasthan	Sikkim	Tamil nadu	Tripura	Utranchal	Utter Pradesh	West Bengal
25th (1979)	women	62	43	-	59	47	-	50	87
	total	228	182	-	167	75	-	185	256
28th (1994)	women	145	30	4	65	-	-	34	103
	total	344	124	18	205	4	-	173	280
30th (1999)	women	148	23	-	101	-	-	108	187
	total	425	115	10	253	14	-	269	370
31th (2001)	women	206	17	1	114	-	6	82	70
	total	477	81	5	289	1	44	275	175
33th (2007)	women	152	23	4	114	-	9	109	127
	total	466	128	23	46	28	78	365	277
34th (2011)	women	177	40	10	124	43	26	176	152
	total	384	152	14	405	63	119	405	152

Table I (c)

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Table I (d)
[Source- Indian
association, New

National Games	Union territories	Andaman and Nicobar Island	Chandigarh	Dadar & N. H	Daman and Diu	Delhi	Lakshadweep	pondicherry
25th (1979)	women	-	-	-	-	48	-	12
	total	-	-	-	-	162	-	36
28th (1994)	women	14	-	-	-	28	-	1
	total	28	-	-	-	52	-	15
30th (1999)	women	12	-	-	-	200	-	-
	total	25	-	-	-	380	-	9
31th (2001)	women	26	-	-	-	149	-	-
	total	70	-	-	1	412	-	-
33th (2007)	women	19	-	1	-	191	-	13
	total	57	-	1	3	529	-	31
34th (2011)	women	17	-	-	1	175	-	16
	total	36	-	-	3	449	-	30

Olympic
Delhi,]

SL.NO	GAMES	WOMEN	MEN	TOTAL
1	1950	India did not participate in the game		-
2	1954	NIL	4	4
3	1958	2	14	16
4	1962	India did not participate in the game		-
5.	1966	0	22	22
6	1970	0	30	30
7	1974	0	20	20
8.	1978	2	45	47
9.	1982	9	43	52
10.	1986	India did not participate in the game		-
11.	1990	7	48	55
12	1994	5	34	39
13	1998	11	30	41
14	2002	42	66	108
15	2006	77	93	170
16	2010	177	220	398

Table II

[Source :<http://www.thecgf.com/countries/games.asp>.]

The above table I (a, b, c & d) show the number of women participants representing their respective states and Union Territory of India in various National Games. The data obtained from the Indian Olympic Association, New Delhi shows the total number of participants and number of women athletes of all the states and union territories of India.

In analysis of the National Games data from 25th (1979) to 34th (2011) National Games, Orissa, Kerala, Maharashtra, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Jharkhand are the states whose average women participation remains above other states. As shown in the Table I (a) Orissa has 20 no. of women participants out of 84 total participants in 25th (1979) National Games. The number of women in the 28th National Games was 25 out of 90 participants. In the 30th, 31st, 33th and 34th National Games the women participants were 80 (out of 146), 54 out of 154, 92 (out of 183), and 81 (out of 136) respectively. The percentages of women participants in the 25th and 34th National Games were 24% and 60% respectively.

The number of women participants of Kerala in 25th National Games as in table I(b) was 57 out of 176 total Participants. The number increased to 112 (out of 253) in 28th, 133 (out of 223) in 30th, 153 (out of 317) in 31st, 174 (out of 304) in 33rd and 149 (out of 295) in the 34th National Games. The percentages of women participants in the 25th and 34th National Games were 32 % and 50 % respectively.

According to the Table I(b) the women participation in the Games is high in case of the state of Maharashtra. The number of women participated as per the table in 25th National Games was 62 out of 144 total Participants. The figures in the subsequent National Games are 210 (out of 549) in 28th, 199 (out of 477) in 30th, 372 (out of 687) in 31st, 203 (out of 466) in 33rd and 206 (out of 424) in the 34th. The percentages of women participants in the 25th and 34th National Games were 43 % and 49 % respectively.

Manipur though a small state in the North Eastern India is among those states whose women participants as well as total participants are high. The number of women participated according to the Table I(b) in 25th National Games was 27 (out of 71) Participants. The figures in the subsequent National Games are 52 (out of 117) in 28th, 266 (out of 598) in 30th, 204 (out of 349) in 31st, 187 (out of 400) in 33rd and 183 (out of 358) in the 34th. The percentages of women participants in the 25th and 34th National Games were 38 % and 51 % respectively.

The number of total participants both men and women of Himachal Pradesh as in Table I(a) is comparatively less however ratio of women participants is high in the state. According to the table the participation of women in 25th National Games was 12 (out of 44), 10 (out of 30) in

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28th, 6(out of 47) in 30th, 53 (out of 84) in 31st, 22(out of 42) in 33rd and 36(out of 61) in the 34th. The percentages of women participants in the 25th and 34th National Games were 27 % and 59 % respectively. This shows that the participation level of women increases over the years.

As shown in the Table I(c) in case of Punjab the trends of women participation in the National Games are as follows; 62 (out of 228), 145 (out of 344) in 28th, 148 (out of 425) in 30th, 206 (out of 477) in 31st, 152 (out of 466) in 33rd and 177 (out of 384) in the 34th. The percentages of women participants of the state in the 25th and 34th National Games were 27 % and 46 % respectively.

Jharkhand started participating from the year 2001 in 31st Games. As per the table the women participants were 32 (out of 61) in 31st, 51(out of 116) in 33rd and 381(out of 795) in the 34th which was held in the state. The percentages of women participants in the 31st and 34th National Games were 52 % and 50 % respectively. National Capital Territory of Delhi also has higher average women participants in comparison to other Union Territories. The number of women participated as in Table I(d) in 25th National Games was 48 out of 162 total Participants. Subsequently the women participation in National Games are 28 (out of 52) in 28th, 200(out of 380) in 30th, 149 (out of 412) in 31st, 191(out of 529) in 33rd and 175(out of 449) in the 34th Games. The percentages of women participants in the 25th and 34th National Games were 53 % and 38 % respectively.

Larger states like Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Andra Pradesh and Gujarat have comparatively lesser average women participants. According to the Table I(c) the participation of women of Rajasthan in 25th National Games was 43 (out of 182), 30 (out of 124) in 28th, 23 (out of 115) in 30th, 17 (out of 81) in 31st, 23(out of 128) in 33rd and 40 (out of 152) in the 34th. The percentages of women participants of the state in the 25th and 34th National Games were 23 % and 26 % respectively. Gujarat has very less women participation as per the table I(c). The figures are 25 (out of 101), 16 (out of 43) in 28th, 11 (out of 69) in 30th, 20 (out of 93) in 31st, 30 (out of 92) in 33rd and 33 (out of 125) in the 34th National Games respectively. The state of Andra Pradesh as shown in the Table I (a) has 48 no. of women participants out of 167 total participants in 25th (1979) National Games. The number of women in the 28th National Games was 78 out of 233 participants. In the 30th, 31st, 33th and 34th National Games the women participants were 94,132,158 and 130 respectively. The percentages of women participants in the 25th and 34th National Games were 28.7 and 39.5 respectively. Thus, the average women participants in the state have marginally increased. Sikkim and other North Eastern states of

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Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya and Anurachal Pradesh are still left far behind both in men and women participation. The participation of women of Sikkim in the National Games according to the Table I(c) are 4 (out of 18) in 28th, no women participation in 30th, 1 (out of 5) in 31st, 4(out of 23) in 33rd and 10 (out of 14) in the 34th National Games respectively. Same is the case of Mizoram as in Table I(b) with only 5 women participants out of 13 in the 28th, 1 (out of 24) in 30th, 14 (out of 21) in 31st, 37 (out of 44) in 33rd and 11 (out of 53) in the 34th National Games respectively. The participation of women in respect of Meghalaya are 6 (out of 28) in 30th, 4 (out of 13) in 31st, 12 (out of 60) in 33rd and 6 (out of 20) in the 34th National Games respectively. There were not even a single women participants in the 28th, 30th, 31st and 33rd National games from Tripura and the number men participants were also very less.

The women participation in the Games in the State of Anurachal Pradesh is also noticed to be very less with no participation till 30th National Games. One (01) woman participated in the 30th national Games as in Table I(a). Total Participation are also very less in all the subsequent Games with only 28 total participants in the 34th Games out of which 11 are women.

Same is in the case of Union Territories though they have very less population. Dadar & Nagar Haveli has so far participated only in 33rd National Games with single participant.

As per table II participation of Indian women in Commonwealth Games the number had been very less but in 2002 which was held in England. Out of 108 participants who represented India, 42 were women. There were no women participants till the 1958 games when two women participated. India did not participate in the 1962 games and there were no women participants in the three successive Games after 1962. After the 2002 Games slight increase of number is observed with 77 women participants in 2006 and 177 participants in Delhi commonwealth Games of 2010.

CONCLUSION:

National Games has been a platform to compete amongst the states and union territories in the country. Overall participation level of women is comparatively less than the male counterparts but there is an increase in number of women participating in the competition over the years. As per record of National Games (Records from Indian Olympic Association, New Delhi) total number of women participated in the 25th National Games, 1979 was 797 (out of 2197) with a percentage of 36%. The total number of women participants in 34th National Games held in

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2011 was 2854 (out of 6640) with a percentage of 43%. Thus the number of participants has increased to certain extent.

In analysis of the National Games data from 25th (1979) to 34th (2011) National Games, Orissa, Kerala, Maharashtra, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh and Jharkhand are the states whose average women participation remains above other states. National Capital Territory of Delhi also has remarkably higher average women participants. Larger states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat have comparatively lesser average women participants. Sikkim and other North Eastern states of Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh are still left far behind both in men and women participation. Same is in the case of Union Territories though they have very less population. There are various reasons for the backwardness of these states and union territories. These reasons include lack of proper infrastructures and socio-economic reasons, among others.

On analysis of the participation level of women in Commonwealth Games the number was very less. No woman participated in various Games. However, after the 2002 Games slight increase of number is observed with 77 women participants in 2006 and 177 participants in Delhi commonwealth Games of 2010.

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