

## Androcentrism in Indian sports

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### **Abstract**

The personality of every individual concerning caste, creed, religion, gender in India depends on the structures of society. The society acts as a ladder in diffusing stereotypes from generation to generation which becomes a fundamental constructed ideal type for generalizing ideas on what is masculine or feminine. The gynocentric and androcentric division of labor in terms of work gives more potential for females in household works but not as the position of males. This paper is more concentrated on the biases of women in terms of sports and games which are male-dominated throughout the globe. The researcher looks at the growing stereotypes upon Indian sports as portrayed in various Indian cinemas. Content analysis is carried out on the movies Dangal and Chak de India to portray the prejudices shown by the Indian media. A total of five non-fictional sports movies are made in India in the name of Bhaag Milkha Bhaag (2013), Paan Singh Tomar(2012), MS Dhoni: An untold story(2016), Azhar(2016), Sachin: A billion dreams(26 May 2017) are on male sportsperson whereas only two movies are on women, namely Mary Kom (2014), Dangal(2017). This indicates that male preference is more than female in Indian media concerning any sports. The acquaintance of males in every sphere of life is being carried out from ancient to modern societies. This paper will widen the perspectives of not viewing society per media but to the independence and equity of both the sex in every sphere of life.

Keywords- Androcentrism, stereotypes, gynocentric, content analysis

### **Context of games and sports in India's nation-building-**

India is the seventh-largest country in the world sheltering around 1,210,854,977 people (Indian census, 2011), where the population is distributed for the rise of the nation in various aspects of the country in economics, politics, science and technology, law and order, military, bureaucracy and games, and sports. In the field of sports, hockey being the national game, on contrast focus mainly relies on cricket. In the current scenario, cricket is rejoiced all around the state and more focus on the sports is given from top to bottom of the people, from the government to the citizen of the country. These sporting events like cricket bring us a kind of feeling togetherness and collective conscience for the country, by raising the notion of patriotism among us. The nation-state is an imagined community (Anderson, 2016) and we might not know each other of the population but we have a mutual connection of patriotism for the country through games and sports, cherishing the events in one identity.

On the contrary, all the events or sporting categories are male-oriented in Indian society. The stereotypes have prevailed from generation to generation that females are more convenient for the household works and are not categorically meant to compete with men with the works relating to muscular activities (Bourdieu, 1986). The females are more in the private sphere and the males are concentrated on the public sphere (Smyth, 2008). This advent is represented by the male population which enjoys the fruit of benefits from Indian sports and sporting events. The events of the international level are more concentrated in male athletics as compared to female athletics. The prevalence for the females is very low and in recent times for the good development of a nation, both males, as well as the female sex, are required to give an effort for contribution as a whole together. Today in every phase and sphere of life the males are being competed parallelly by the females and the competition is toughened in due course of time due to the rise in feminist activism. The difference in gender is not washed away in our society but is getting faded away gradually. The evolution of games and sports and the implementation of the activities at the school level are being made compulsory by the Indian government, those of which do not make any difference between the masculine and feminine nature of the sports. The nodal authority for the legitimization of sports in India is held by the ministry of youth affairs and sports which is headed by various programmes in the names of Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram, National Programme for Youth and Adolescent Development,

National Service Scheme (NSS), National Youth Corps, International Youth Exchange Program, National Youth Festival, Urban Sports Infrastructure Scheme, Panchayat Yuva Krida Aur Khel Abhiyan, Promotion of Scouting & Guiding, and lastly Youth Hostels. These programs of various kinds are meant for encouraging the spirit of sportsmanship in the nation which rejoices the achievements of the citizens.

### **The necessity of sports and games in everyday life-**

A healthy nation is always a wealthy nation. With proper training in sports and games, women become active and sportive. They will be adventurous, capable of facing the challenges in future instances during natural disasters like flood, cyclone, super cyclone, etc., they can run fast or swim for safety. The need for sports and games is also important for self-defense of women for which it suffices overcoming of fear and prejudices of gender. This is most importantly necessary for the physical fitness of women. Most people still hold the belief that sports are harmful to women's health, particularly to their reproductive health. But physical exercise is a helpful tool for the management of obesity, prevention of cardiovascular, metabolic diseases and female reproductive organ-related diseases. (Orio, Muscogiuri, Ascione, Palomba, Volpe, Sala, Savastano, 2013) According to the Women's Sports Foundation, female athletes have a more positive body image. Female athletes are less likely to do drugs. High school girls who play sports and games are less likely to have an unwanted pregnancy, more likely to get better grades in school and more likely to graduate than girls who do not play sports. Sports and games motivate collective consciousness for mutual bonding. Indians are socialized in a way that there is a blind belief of people till now that women folks are into T.V. soups and not the news channels and sports. Though it is somehow true but not for every individual. If the women are trained to play sports and games, they can build interest in the areas of sporting events too. They will start watching games in the public as well as through digital Medias, and there will be a increase in collective consciousness among both men and women which is achieved by breaking the stereotypical gender difference habits. The spirit of competition also gets inculcated in the society in most cases by sports and games. As in this 21st century, we mostly become westernized by watching the women from other countries at the rank 1 in every sport, the spirit of sports also can increase among the Indian women if we will provide the proper training and facilities. Encouragement is also necessary here. The inspiration to take a leading role in any

situation of life is also derived from sports and games. Leadership enthusiasm is very important for women to participate in any part of life. Researchers and studies have always suggested that participation in sports can be an energizing and personally empowering experience for women. Being connected to sports feels more in control of her life as an independent individual. Sports participation also provides girls and women with opportunities to reconnect with the power of their bodies.

### **The androcentric notion in Indian sports-**

The inequalities between men and women assigned by sex are social constructions having no base in nature. (Liberal feminism theory) But till now people think that women are naturally weaker than men. As per their thinking by birth women are soft, emotional and weak. That is why in our society when a boy cries, people comment on him “why are you crying like a girl?” so, on their point of view women are weak that is why they cry in every small problem. But in reality, we socialize our girls in this way. We are not simply born men or women; we all also learn and routinely use the commonplace practices that allow us to pass as men and women. It is only in learning these practices that we come to be in a sociological sense, a man or a woman. Thus, even a category like gender, which is thought to be an ascribed status, can be understood as an accomplishment of a set of situated practices (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Women athletes are paid very less in comparison to the men athletes. The facilities, funds, training facilities and tools are very less than the men. International cricket player of India, Diana David, says “Men are treated better than women in cricket. For every Ranji game, we are paid extremely little, perhaps 10% of what the men would be getting. Most of us continue to play only for the love of the game.” (Naare, 2012). Women’s National Kabadi team, after winning the World Cup (2011) was waiting on the roadside for auto. No one came to welcome them after achieving such big competition internationally and make the country proud. Not only this but also the management did not give them clothes. Nobody paid their hotel bills also. (Bhaskar News). Recently Sania Mirza accused the All India Tennis Association’s handling of the Olympics selection being based on male chauvinism (Naare,2012). Jwala Gutta, India’s number 1 doubles player in badminton criticized the Badminton Association of India’s President V.K. Verma for not even congratulating her even after she won the Commonwealth Games gold medal (2010). (Naare, 2012)

Women in India get fewer chances to go to international competition in sports in comparison to men. At the 27th Olympics in Sydney in 2000, women competed in 25 out of 28 sports and in 132 events, 44% of the total. (Bernstein and Galily, 2008) Maximum women in India preferring contemporary dance form rather than gymnastics. But Dipa Karmakar, the first female gymnastic player in Olympics from India (2016) brought the attention of people to the gymnastics in India.

### **The biases of gender, overwhelming the male in subordinating the females through media-**

Media acts as an agency in diffusing the thoughts of stereotypes and injustice in the societies and the dirty politics in every household done by the female members in the family through daily soaps and serials. The stereotypes act as a reality in our society in our daily day to day life and this position makes the male members dominant and a powerful identity in every sphere. Today there is a question that can be raised that how many of us see a women match? This happens because all the media channels are focused on showing the male sports and we see what is shown to us by the media. This makes women sportsmen fade away from dignity and respect in comparison to their male counterparts. The first game in the Olympics saw no women as the founder of the modern Olympic game Coubertin insisted- No matter how toughened sportswomen may be; her organism is not cut out to sustain certain shocks (Fuller, 2016). The support from society and the massive system of the country goes beyond the true sportsmanship of masculine or feminine and focuses more on the maximum supported by our society and this makes males the dominant gender in games and sports. at some point even the media brings a little concern about the participation of women in games and sports, they are more excited to show the audience the relationship of the players, their trait and less in the events of contribution to the sports. Media for earning profit through maximum TRP shows coverage that diverts attention away from female athletes' skills and achievements and instead focuses on the physical appearance of a few pretty female athletes, which appears to be automatically pleasing. (Hargreaves, 1982) said that "sports tend to present in the media symbolic representations of a particular kind of social order so that in effect they become morality plays, serving to justify and uphold dominant values and ideas. The Hindu newspaper if read regularly we see that there is much emphasis given on Indian male cricket team but not on women, sometimes badminton and a few on chess, no other games.

### **The portrayal of Indian sports through Indian media-**

The growing stereotypes have been transferred through generations after generations by our media and these acts as a career of circulating false consciousness and false notion about masculine and feminine, that male sex is more powerful than female. The researcher by taking two movies namely Chak De India and Dangal tries to find out the growing stereotypes in the media and wants to concern the readers what is appropriate and what is not. The movies are concentrated on the parameters like duration of time on which the male is dominant on the female and the inequality shown to the society through the lenses. And the inequalities are based on prejudices, allocation of funds, struggle, and transportation.

Looking upon the movie Chak De India we can see that the movie rejoices the glory of the Indian women's hockey team, which sets apart the hurdles to winning the finals. The movie portrays the prejudices towards the north eastern players named Molly and Marrry, where they are being discriminated on the basis of racial profiling. The movie also shows slots where the states are represented hierarchically. The male domination in the Indian society is shown through the context of eve teasing of the northeastern players. The movie portrays the regional differences and biases that are constructed through profiling, such an incident is shown with the character Soimoi, hailing from Jharkhand in a shabby attire and having less adaptability with the Hindi language. This portrays the hegemony of the stakeholders in terms of selection and prejudices for judgments. The Characters of Vidya Sharma and Preeti Sabherwal in the movie are shown to be the victims of patriarchal notion in the society which led them to a notion of role conflict. This role conflict is seen when a player is married or is in a relationship and has to face identity crisis in the family and society. The movie portrays Vidya's father in law as against the notion of a female playing hockey, whereas according to him Vidya should be a housewife and part of family customs and traditions. In a similar context the character of Preeti fights for her existence through the game of hockey, which her boyfriend termed as a game of gulli- danda (sticks), he is a cricketer and boasts the game of cricket as the utmost sporting event in the country. In a particular slot in the movie, it is seen that the cricketer wants to marry Preeti and this keeps Preeti concerned of her future in hockey.

On the other hand in the movie Dangal, Mahavir Singh Pogat a protagonist who was a former national heavyweight wrestler had to go through various ups and downs in life and so had to quit

wrestling as a profession for livelihood and adopt other activities. So in this regard, he had a belief that he will train his kid to be an international wrestling champion who will bring a gold medal for the country and make his incomplete dream come true. But perhaps his pain emerged when his wife gave birth to a female child one after another. He wanted to have a male child, as Indian society is mainly patriarchal and male-dominated and sports like wrestling are meant only for boys, not for girls. Had made his daughters cut their hairs short and wear pants and shirts for practice and these were mocked by the society and the girls were teased by the male counterparts in school and the arenas. But Mahavir was determinant and so he worked very hard to train his daughters Geeta and Babita. He made them national champions despite all the criticisms and less funds by the wrestling federation for females. A slot is shown when Mahavir approaches the president of a wrestling federation to grant him funds for buying a wrestling mat, but the fewer funds for female wrestlers and more funds for male counterpart is seen. Having passed through all these barriers his eldest daughter was the first Indian female wrestler to win the gold medal in the commonwealth games and eventually became the first female wrestler to qualify for Olympics.

These two movies show how the stereotypes present in our society can be washed away and the female gender can be uplifted and put into greater heights with the male counterparts.

#### **Future of Indian sports through the researcher's eye-**

The international ranking of Indian women's cricket team is fifth and the upliftment attitude is very necessary and the movies now days are concentrated on bringing the idealism of both the gender together in every space of life. Aditi Ashok, the only Indian golfer to have played the Asian Youth Olympics (2014) and Asian Games (2014), so there should be more participants in the future and every girl should be trained to be a gem of the world of sport.

Title IX was passed by Congress in the year 1972 in the US gives equal rights to women. Five major factors account for the recent increase in sports participation among girls and women in North America and other parts of the world. Similarly, such programs should be enforced in the Indian context too, which will give a strong motivation to the female athletes. New opportunities teams and programs developed over the past two decades have uncovered and cultivated interests ignored in the past. Government legislation these days should demand equal treatment for

women in public programs. The increase in media coverage of women in sports should increase in the daily momentum.

### **A brief note on feminism in the Indian context of games and sports-**

De Beauvoir in her book, *The Second Sex* mentioned that “one is not born a woman, one becomes one.”

Gender differences result from the different roles that women and men come to play within various institutional settings (institutional theory of sexual difference). No one sponsors the women athletes in the fear of losing money. Many good TV advertisements are given to men. On the other hand, women only do advertisements on fair & lovely, perfumes, condoms, etc. Women may claim equality with men based on an essential human capacity for reasoned moral agency that gender inequality is the result of sexist patterning the division of labour and that gender equality can be produced by transforming the division of labour through the re-patterning of key institutions: law, work, family, education, and media (liberal feminism). The most important issues in Marxist feminism is the gendered division of labour. These are two types of labour present in a capitalist economic system:

(a) Productive labour and (b) Reproductive labour.

Productive labour refers to labour or work resulting in services and goods that have monetary value within the capitalist economic system. Reproductive labour refers to things that people do to take care of themselves rather than to earn money. This is often defined to include cooking, cleaning, and raising children.

In capitalist economies, reproductive labour is usually considered to be exclusively women's labour. This creates a system in which women's labour is separated from men's labour and is considered to be less valuable because it does not on monetary compensation. (Marxist feminism)

The upper-class people get more leisure hours than working-class people. Therefore the higher class people have more participation in games and sports than the others (Veblen, 1899). A sport in the 21st century has gained paramount importance in human life. Sports today has gone to bring about cultures and nations together, it has also been a medium of women empowerment.

Women like Deepika Kumari (Archery), Laxmi Rani Majhi (Archery), SaniaNehwal (Badminton), P V Sindhu (Badminton), JwalaGutta (Badminton), Aditya Ashok, Mary Kom (Boxing), Dipa Karmakar (Gymnastic), Sania Mirza (Tennis), etc. are very well known athletes representing India in this current period. On the other hand, gender in sports has always been a controversial issue ever since sports were invented. Women have faced an uphill task throughout the history of sports whether it is to be able to compete in sports to attend equal funding for programs, to have access to facilities or several obstacles that have been thrown in their way.

Though today the perception about sportswomen has changed substantially, the stigma of being considered the weaker sex always remains. The gender issue is one of the important issues in sports because of which India is still lacking behind as compared to another country in the context of sports and games.

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