Sports Abjection in/and India: Contestation and Critique

Santanu Panda[1], Shri Krishan Rai[2]

[1]Assistant Professor (AIEM) & PhD Scholar (NIT Durgapur)

[2]Professor of English, NIT Durgapur

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ABSTRACT:
The notion of abjection places athletics and itself in close proximity, creating a forging connection. To fully explore the intricate relationships between sports and abjection in India, this research examines the complex dynamics of these connections. Abjects have been utilized in the past decade to show how women and girls develop their gendered identities. This study empirically examines the mechanisms of exclusion in Indian sports by evaluating media portrayals, institutional practices, and public narratives surrounding marginalized sportsmen. To expose the traditional rules of segregation and present them as a sense of self-embeddedness, this article draws on Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection as the theoretical ground to explore the regulation and conditional legitimacy of athletic bodies. This profile aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of India's extensive sports ecosystem, which offers much and boasts a rich sporting history spanning thousands of years and uses a qualitative, interpretive approach that combines media discourse and thematic case study analysis to examine the physical aspects of sports abjection. While Indian sports have been extensively analyzed concerning nationalism and development, the emotional and symbolic mechanisms of marginalization are inadequately theorized. This article addresses that deficiency by presenting abjection as an intersectional framework that connects caste, gender, class, and institutional precarity, such as funding, institutional abjection, and bureaucratic failure, through the lens of abjection. Thereby emphasizing athlete subjectivity in discussions of recognition and social justice.

Keywords: AICS; Gender verification; India sports; sports abjection; sports marginalization

1 Introduction

Sports in India have historically served as a unique confluence of social hierarchies and nationalist narratives. It says that sports are a democratic space that brings people together across social lines and helps to keep the country together. But under this story is a complicated landscape where structural disparities still affect participation, recognition, and athletic identity. The notion of abjection provides a pivotal framework to analyze how athletic institutions serve as arenas for the concurrent negotiation of inclusion and exclusion. Abjection denotes the mechanisms by which individuals or groups are excluded from normative belonging, frequently characterized as impure, aberrant, or disposable. Sex, gender and their involvement in the lives of athletes are significant issues in modern sports. The binary contrast between male and female athletes has historically dominated sports and given rise to two sex categories, segregation, and discrimination. The line of sex binary segregation is a difficult job to set up, as there are no proper markers of male and female empirical boundaries, as "maleness and femaleness are indicated by various markers" (Chelladurai & Patil, 2020).

This is accomplished in some sports through 'sex testing,' also referred to as "femininity testing and gender verification" (Pieper, 2017). Beyond any geographical boundaries, sex testing in sports has traditionally been more straightforward and typically relies on a single marker (genitalia, chromosomes, testosterone level, etc.), which raises issues like test reliability and handling of borderline instances. This perspective on athletics frequently results in bias, intimidation and discrimination against athletes. For instance, discrimination against female athletes participating in "male sports" (Königsberger, 2018) occurs when they do not conform to the stereotypical feminine image. In a similar vein, discrimination against male athletes participating in "female sports" (Spiegel & Rose, 2010) also occurs. The idea of female athletes as a lesser sex is reinforced by the fact that most sports are associated with 'male'. Sometimes, the division between 'male sports' and 'female sports' leads us to a confusing state, usually without any clear explanation. A new period of discourse concerning the distinction between sex and gender, which extended well beyond the area of psychology, began with the idea of sex and gender differentiation proposed by John Money, a prominent psychologist of the 1950s. In Money's view, 'gender' relates to an individual's sense of self as a man or woman, whereas 'sex' refers to biological traits. Money's proposal also caused other pertinent terms, most notably, 'man' and 'woman' (referring to gender) and 'male' and 'female' (referring to sex), to be re-examined. Terms like 'sex' and 'gender', 'male' and 'man', or 'female' and 'woman' are frequently muddled or even used synonymously in our daily language which is employed in popular culture, social settings, athletic environments, and academics.

To examine these dynamics, this study utilizes Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic idea of abjection as a framework for analyzing how specific athletic bodies are symbolically and materially situated at the periphery of sporting culture or literally means "the state of being cast off" (Kristeva, 1982). Abjection elucidates the mechanisms by which individuals or collectives are deemed undesirable, subjected to moral scrutiny, or rendered institutionally expendable to uphold normative boundaries. In Indian sports, these dynamics are evident through gendered physical surveillance, caste-based infrastructure inequities, ableist hierarchies of recognition, and institutional precarity that make athletes conditionally valued. The experiences of marginalized athletes demonstrate that sporting legitimacy is not defined solely by performance; rather, it is shaped by cultural concerns about bodily respectability and national representation. The theory has drawn much attention since Kristeva's book was released, but it is uncommon to find applications of this theory in current sports research and psychoanalytic theories have never been considered while examining sports but psychoanalytic theories can offer valuable insights into sports and related topics, particularly as a supplement or enhancement to modern sports psychology (Ferraro, 2009). Within the realm of sports, academics and sports organizations frequently mix up the terms 'sex' and 'gender', along with 'male' and 'man' and 'female' and 'woman'. This confusion is present in many sports rulebooks. For example, the Federation Internationale de Natation (FINA), which governs water sports, designates athletes as 'male' and 'female' but refers to the category in terms of gender, with 'men's' and 'women's' events. Similarly, the gender labels 'man' and 'woman' are primarily used by the Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron (Fédération Internationale de Natation 2022), which oversees the sport of rowing. However, FISA employs what they regard as the 'gender' alternatives of 'male' and 'female' on the harassment forms and uses 'male' and 'female' to refer to athletes on occasion. Throughout its rulebook, the International Judo Federation (2020) primarily uses terms related to gender, such as "female and male team events" (Martinkova et al., 2022).

Issues like gender and sex are increasingly engaged with global sports scholarship, but the light on the Indian context is still under-theorized in the realm of psychoanalytic and cultural frameworks. There are numerous new studies on Indian sports, but most have focused on nationalism, commercialization, performance

improvement, and policy infrastructure. Researchers have frequently seen sports as a meritocratic and socially unifying field. Sociological studies have recognized differences along gender, class, and area lines, but there has been little research on the emotional and symbolic ways athletes perceive and internalize exclusion or abjection. The idea of abjection, central to Julia Kristeva's work, has not been widely used to examine how sports bodies are perceived as socially undesirable, morally questionable, or institutionally disposable in India. Feminist studies of Indian sports have mostly looked at representation, media visibility, and impediments to participation. They haven't looked enough at how moral monitoring and bodily regulation create deeper forms of psychological estrangement. Judith Butler's ideas about gender performativity suggest that women athletes challenge traditional femininity through embodied practice. However, little research has linked these theoretical ideas to the real-life experiences of Indian sportswomen who face institutional and cultural scrutiny. Caste-based studies of sports are also not very well established; they often seem like side notes instead of main ideas for understanding access, recognition, and the construction of athletic subjects.

Another significant gap is that insufficient attention is paid to the instability of institutions and to how players are disposable after their careers. Even though studies often praise periods of sporting success, they rarely examine how recognition is conditional and how athletes feel abandoned when their symbolic national significance wanes. This article fills up these gaps by introducing abjection as a way to connect caste, gender, class, disability, and institutional neglect using a single set of ideas. The study uses cultural theory, interpretive case studies, and media discourse analysis to examine athletes' subjective experiences and the emotional impact of exclusion. This takes sports scholarship beyond just describing structures to comprehending them in a more embodied way. In this way, the research not only broadens the theoretical uses of abjection in postcolonial settings but also puts Indian sports back in the spotlight as an important site for examining broader issues of embodiment, social justice, and democratic inclusion, showing how marginalized athletes turn rejection into resistance and narrative power and making Indian sports a useful place to look at the politics of inequality and democratic inclusion.

2 Methodology, Background and Theoretical Framework

This research is fundamentally grounded on Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection, which elucidates how social systems delineate borders by designating some bodies as impure, unwanted, or marginal. In the realm of Indian sports, abjection elucidates the influence of caste position, gender nonconformity, economic marginalization and physical diversity on athletic legitimacy and inclusion. The paradigm is further enhanced by feminist theories of embodiment and gender performativity, which facilitate an analysis of how athletic bodies are subject to moral scrutiny and normative expectations. This theoretical framework, informed by caste studies and critical sports sociology, elucidates the intersection of structural inequality, recognition politics, and institutional precarity in the formation of marginalized sporting identities. The concept of sports abjection underscores the symbolic marginalization of athletes, even in a context publicly perceived as meritocratic and inclusive.

The research used a qualitative interpretive methodology to investigate the symbolic and experiential aspects of exclusion in Indian sports. It examines how representation, institutional practices, and public narratives contribute to processes of marginalization through media discourse analysis, theme analysis, and illustrative case studies. This method enables the identification of common themes such as body monitoring, unequal infrastructure, and conditional acknowledgment while putting the athlete's point of view and emotional experience front and center. By prioritizing interpretive analysis over quantitative measurement, the methodology enables an in-depth study of national and regional newspaper articles, sports

magazines, televised interviews, digital media coverage, and publicly accessible athlete narratives, including personal writings and recorded utterances. Additionally, policy documents, institutional reports, and historical materials pertaining to sports governance are examined to comprehend the structural aspects of recognition and resource distribution. Select athlete case representations derived from public interviews and media conversations function as illustrative instances for evaluating lived experiences of marginality, without the intention of achieving statistical generalization. Comparative analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA) help us to uncover gender bias in sports. Grounded in feminist theory, particularly liberal and intersectional feminism, this paper aims to understand how patriarchal norms and socio-economic inequalities restrict women's access to sports funding and infrastructure.

3 Mapping Abjection in Sports

As contemporary sports emerged in the late 1800s, sports topics also developed, partly shaped by the idealistic concepts of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the creator of the modern Olympic Games, as a physically fit, healthy, and morally upright athlete (De Coubertin, 2000). The subject-abject relationship is important to understanding the concept of subjectivity. Women were not permitted to participate in competitive sports or even watch the Olympic Games back in antiquity. Two thousand years later in 1896, women were prohibited from competing at the first modern Olympics in Athens, but they were allowed to watch. The discussion of defining who was and wasn't a woman for sports began to gain momentum as things slowly shifted with the addition of some women's and even mixed events at the 1900 Paris Olympics. In the early 20th century, a debate started about the 'protection' of women's sports within the IOC and other international sport-regulating bodies (Davis & Edwards, 2014). David Fairchild's 1989 study, "Sport Abjection: Steroids and the Uglification of the Athlete," was the first to apply the idea of abjection to sports. Fairchild argues that the notion of 'abjection' can help explain our (over)reactions in sports.

According to Kristeva's viewpoint, the process of constructing an identity and assessing what constitutes a threat to it is both influenced by and shaped by the concept of abjection. She states abjection is caused by disruptions of identity, structure, and order rather than by any other marker. Unlike an item, it is something that one does not separate from and does not defend oneself against. Both real and imagined, it beckons to us and ultimately swallows us up (Kristeva, 1982). The particular function of the subjective response to horrible things (the horror) is identity preservation. Moreover, this explains why certain things, pictures, and images evoke in us an abject feeling, a disgusting and loathsome emotion (Young, 1990). It characterizes abjection as terrible, to which it can only react with sickness, disgust, and diversion. This article demonstrates that this viewpoint is crucial to comprehending ethically contentious sports issues. For instance, a strong dislike of a particular sporting behavior may be interpreted as a defense of a specific group of sporting ideals. This could also explain why transgressions of the 'ethos' or 'fair play' in sports are frequently greeted with disdain, if not outright revulsion. It also appears acceptable to distinguish social and corporeal experiences of abjection, or more precisely, between cultural and biological abjections and biological objects. Sometimes, it isn't easy to distinguish between one's biological and cultural identities, and between the self and society, even when one can still do so. Taking sports as an example, it illustrates how 'horror' as a human response is ambiguous and extends beyond the boundaries of the individual or society.

Recent scholarship (Joshi, 2023) pointed out how the domain of Indian sports is deeply embedded in hierarchies. Earlier works, such as Dimeo (2022) and Gupta (2015), have highlighted the colonial legacies of independent sporting institutions and the persistence of the Orientalist paradigm, whereas contemporary research focuses on new psychoanalytic models to

interpret bodily regulations (Rao, 2020; Devi, 2024). In the Indian scenario, the political idea of purity and pollution extended from social structure to athletics. It is critiqued by Bhattacharya (2023) about how Dalit and tribal athletes from North Eastern regions are labeled as 'others' by the self-proclaimed mainstream, and it still persists even amid neoliberal sports institutions. Malhotra & Thakur's (2021) article "Atypical Athletic Corporeality and Clinical Embodied Deviance: A Case Study of Dutee Chand" examined the bodily abjection by power on an athlete by her nation, which she is representing. The new policies of IOA are reviewed in "IOA Safe Sports Policy Drawbacks and Pathways for Improvement" by Sinha & Singh (2025), which identifies and critiques the governance of safe sports (protection from harassment and abuse).

4 Abject Bodies in Sports

Marginalization in sports is a pervasive phenomenon worldwide, evident in various contexts. However, Western civilization has consistently led the way in policy formation. Among many miserable stories in sports history, one of the most talked-about cases in recent years is the runner Caster Semenya (Martinkova et al., 2022). Her situation is an ideal example of how the process of sports abjectification frequently operates. Caster Semenya, an 'unknown' eighteen-year-old South African sprinter, clinched the 800-meter gold medal in the 2009 World Athletics Championships in Berlin. It was a surprisingly amazing performance unmatched by any rival in the competition, particularly since she emerged victorious in the championship race. Naturally, 'everyone' found it 'suspiciously' wonderful. Sports media, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), and the hosting organization, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), all had the same instinct: 'something' was wrong. In addition to being 'too outstanding,' 'too young,' and 'unknown' to the Western sports community, Semenya appeared "too masculine for a female athlete" (Jonsson, 2019). It goes without saying that after winning a race, she had to appear for a test to check for the presence of banned performance-enhancing drugs. IAAF dissatisfaction consequently started to wonder what gender she was. Was she a 'genuine' woman? To 'determine' her sex, IAAF chose to put her through a 'gender verification' procedure. It proved to be an arduous procedure. The IAAF did not produce a result for nearly a year (Schultz, 2011). Semenya's gender verification test result revealed that she had a higher level of testosterone, precisely ten times higher than that of a 'regular woman'. She stated differently that, at least in terms of IAAF standards and ideals, she was too 'strong' or brawny in the 'wrong' way to be a woman athlete. It appears that gender identities and limits can be flexible, something the IAAF did not consider. Rather, it employed the equitable card. Sebastian Coe, the president of the IAAF, asserted in an interview with the Daily Telegraph that the reason gender classification exists in our sport is that without it, no woman would ever break another record, win another title, or finish first in a medal (Pielke, 2019). It turned out to be a tedious process, and IAAF failed to deliver a result for almost a year (Schultz, 2011). Indian athlete Hima Das's incident is a reflection of it, where she was banned due to higher levels of hyperandrogenism, a medical condition of having higher levels of testosterone, claiming to prove her 'unfair level of advantages. She defines this condition "I had to fight two battles — one against poverty and another against discrimination. Sometimes I felt I was fighting the system more than my opponents on track" (Das 2019). Both of them were black and brown female athletes who became convenient targets for the primarily white, Westernized sports culture. It turned them into "a raced Other." (Miller, 2015).

Political and ideological factors play a pivotal role in sports. In addition to race/ethnicity, nationality, age, and gender, cases like Caster Semenya (South Africa), Serena Williams (USA), Mary Kom (regional discrimination), Santhi Soundarajan (dalit discrimination), Hima Das (regional discrimination), PT Usha (institutional

neglect), psychological structures and cultural standards that lie beyond the surface and shows how the biological and ethnic, began to coincide. Additionally, it is evident that athletes' bodies "exercise a cultural norm" (Butler, 1998) are not isolated from cultural influences. It was 'forced' upon the athlete to accept the conventional Western perspective to continue her athletic career and become a 'spectator' of her own body and life. She had to disassociate herself from who she is in certain ways because "the bodily ego is always an effect of a culturally framed body" (Butler, 1998). They did not conform to the Westernized ideal of a sports person's appearance or behavior; as a result, they were compelled to internalize the laws and standards.

5 India and Sports Abjection

"In India, we celebrate success but don't build systems to repeat it. There's very little scientific planning and the athlete's mental and physical well-being is often left to chance" (Bindra, 2009)

With a population of over 1.4 billion, India is the second-largest country in the world and home to almost one-sixth of the planet's population (World Bank, 2022), but the sad reality of structural inequalities, bureaucratic apathy, and gendered marginalization is reflected in the laments of Abhinav Bindra, India's first individual Olympic gold medalist. His words highlight the Indian Ad Hoc nature in sports, and post-victory celebrations are considered more important than basic facilities for athletics. India, home to the world's largest democracy, comprises 28 states and 8 UTs, distinguished by the diversity of its ethnicities, religions, cultures, and languages (Chelladurai & Patil, 2020). Despite its few sporting successes, it offers a live experience of deep-rooted systemic issues. The land of sportspersons such as Abhinav Bindra, P.T. Usha, Dutee Chand, Mary Kom, and others shows a pattern of neglect that undercuts the potential and future of becoming a sporting nation. The nation's economic expansion over the last decade has coincided with its integration into the global economy, ranking seventh globally with a current GDP of USD 2.30 trillion, making it one of the fastest-growing countries (World Bank, 2022). Due to the nation's low per capita income and high poverty rates (Mukherjee & Badola, 2021), India has a growing economy but limited publicly investible resources. Consequently, the country's investment in sports is restricted in favor of more pressing needs, such as addressing poverty-related issues. India has the world's third-largest GDP in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), although it ranks 122nd globally in PPP (CIA, 2022) and lags behind the average of other developed nations.

This nation's profile offers a comprehensive understanding of India's diverse sporting landscape by examining laws and regulations, challenges in elite sports, sports participation, and the application of sports to achieve non-sporting objectives across the country. With a rich history of sports dating back thousands of years and being the second-largest country in the world, India has received criticism for its 'dismal' performance in international sports, except cricket (Nandakumar & Sandhu, 2014). Although India has medaled internationally in sports such as tennis, badminton, shooting, boxing, and wrestling, the country is often regarded as underperforming in elite sports, given the number of medals it has earned relative to its size and expanding economy. Indian track legend P.T. Usha, the present president of the Indian Olympic Association, underscores infrastructural deprivation, like "athletes from small towns have to struggle even for basic facilities like tracks and proper diet. When I trained, there were no physiotherapists or dieticians. Even now, young athletes face similar neglect" (Usha, 2018). This is a visual representation of rhetorical representation and a stagnant sports ecosystem outside cricket. India revised its sports policy in 2001, with the dual goals of promoting elite performance and increasing widespread participation in sports. As per the 2001 strategy, the federal government was responsible for spearheading the promotion of popular participation, while the SAI, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and NSFs will work together to foster excellence in elite sports.

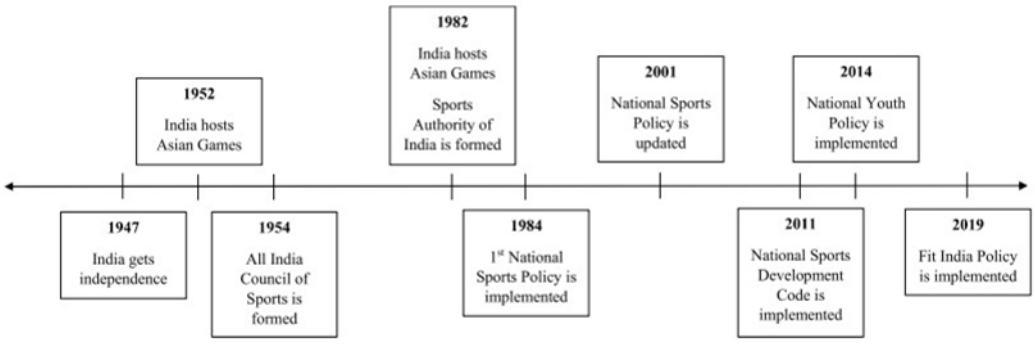

Figure 1: A timeline of key dates influencing sports development policy in India between 1271-1281

The Westminster system serves as the basis for India's governance, referred to as the Union of India (Harding, 2004). According to Harding, the prime minister, parliament, and the supreme court, respectively, are granted powers by the constitution, and these three branches make up the majority of the Union government: the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Beyond infrastructure, the lacuna in Indian sports is bureaucratic inefficiency and inconsistent funding, including delayed stipends, insufficient allowances, and mismanagement during tournaments, even at the international level, which highlights institutional abjection. In an interview in 2015, India's first World Athletics Championships medalist, Anju Bobby George, criticized authorities, saying, "We are celebrated only when we win; the system forgets us the next day" (George, 2018). The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports established the Sports Authority of India (SAI) in 1982 to promote sports in the country, with 61 recognized National Sports Federations (NSFs) covering a range of Olympic and non-Olympic sports. To identify and support athletes who have the potential to win medals at the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Government of India launched the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) in 2014. The TOPS Elite Athletes' Identification Committee was established under the TOPS program to select athletes with the potential to represent their nation in the Olympics, including representatives from high-profile sports such as boxing, shooting, hockey, badminton, archery, and wrestling. But corruption and nepotism are another axis of abjection and marginalization in sports. Selection in camps and events depends more on connections than on merit. Despite his Olympic success, Neeraj Chopra highlighted the inadequacy of resources in an interview with various platforms (Lokapally, 2019).

Budget allocation reflects a deep-rooted structural imbalance that undermines the development of the sports environment in this country. The Republic of India produces its annual financial statement, also known as the annual budget, in accordance with Article 112 of the Indian Constitution on the first day of February to implement it for the new fiscal year. Despite all efforts, the funding mechanism remains unequal, centralized, and politicized. Gender discrimination is another key issue, as the funding bifurcation for female athletics is still under structural neglect. Former Indian women's cricket captain Mitali Raj stated in an interview about the chronic issue of financial support. "There was absolutely no money in the sport, so where would we get match fees from?" (NDTV Sports 2023). Recall her early age; she mentioned that she had a match fee of 1,000 Rs, even after being a runner-up in the 2005 Women's Cricket World Cup. She revealed she had "pretty much emptied [her] dad's pocket to play for India" (Female Cricket, 2020). She has continuously argued, "when we invest in girls' health and opportunities, we give them the confidence to dream without barriers" (The Print, 2024). Many former and current cricketers have echoed similar concerns, including those related to post-retirement issues.

The status of women's sports as a protected category has been the subject of recent discussion

among feminist researchers studying the philosophy of sport. Limited resources and inadequacies have hindered women's status in sports. Olympic bronze medalist Mary Kom discussed her makeshift gym in Manipur and the persistent ignorance about her role as a representative of northeastern India. The idea of cultural abjection is latent within the idea of mainstream, and she urges, "we had talent but no facilities or funds" (The Hindu, 2019). Her words, "we come from the Northeast, and people didn't even know where Manipur was" (Kom, 2012), are an example of geographical alienation or being cast out from the mainstream. Sania Mirza pointed out, "as a woman athlete, you have to constantly prove your worth beyond your sport" (Times of India 2018) to establish your identity. Emphasizing the idea that "sports in India still depend on families' sacrifices more than government planning" (Hindustan Times, 2022), P V Sindhu's argument aligns with that of Rani Rampal, a former Indian women's hockey captain who was once called "sports are not for girls" (BBC Hindi, 2020). Views have shifted dramatically from the idea that there is no longer a need for any protected category for women's sports to thrive and provide equal opportunities, given that men's sports continue to dominate, as they have always done.

6 Conclusion

The dominance of a non-sporting country has been heavily contested since independence. Sports, as perceived in India, have traditionally been associated with elite family backgrounds rather than a common ideology. Problems and segregation in Indian sports are not merely an administrative or economic failure but an image of the mind crafted socio-cultural abjection. It operates through exclusion or marginalization, especially for rural women athletes who can be a potential threat to the power, dominant narratives of masculinity and success. India's sports policy is still developing and faces persistent challenges, including poor governance, addressing the high rates of population inactivity, and enhancing elite sports performances internationally, particularly at the Olympics and Paralympics. The lived experiences of the Indian sports fraternity, exemplified by Dutee Chand, Mary Kom, and Mithali Raj, illustrate the condition.

The salary gap has been one of India's most noticeable distinctions between men's and women's cricket. Top male cricket players, particularly those representing the Indian men's national team, receive high salaries from contracts, endorsements, and match fees, but women have traditionally received far lower compensation. Even after winning the recent World Cup, the annual contract gap still persists. Indian sports require genuine reforms rather than symbolic gestures such as the BCCI's equal match-fee policy (2022) or Khelo India advertisement. In India, media coverage of women's cricket has historically lagged behind that of men's cricket. In contrast to other sports, which are frequently restricted to smaller networks or broadcast windows. BCCI organized a victory lap over the win of the T20 World Cup for the men's cricket team in Mumbai Marine Drive, but not the same thing for the women's cricket team, and Gukesh D was hardly acknowledged after becoming the youngest chess world champion. In Indian sports, the gap between men's and women's participation has historically been significant, though efforts to address it have increased in recent years. Here are some key points to consider regarding this topic:

a) Historical Perspective: Historically, sports in India have predominantly been male-dominated. This is partly due to societal norms and traditional gender roles that limit women's opportunities in sports.

b) Infrastructure and Funding: There has been a significant disparity in the infrastructure and funding allocated to men's and women's sports. The male contingent often receives more resources, better facilities, and greater financial support compared to women's sports.

c) Media Coverage and Sponsorship: Men's sports generally receive more media coverage and sponsorship deals than women's sports. This disparity in visibility and financial backing can

impact the development and recognition of women athletes.

d) Cultural and Social Barriers: These include stereotypes and biases, which have hindered the growth of women's sports in India. There may be societal pressure for women to prioritize domestic responsibilities over sports, and female athletes may face discrimination or a lack of support from their communities.

e) Government Initiatives: The Indian government has introduced various initiatives to encourage gender parity in sports, such as the Sports Authority of India's (SAI) efforts to encourage female participation in athletics. Additionally, policies such as the National Sports Development Fund aim to support both male and female athletes.

f) Success Stories: Despite the challenges, Indian women have had notable successes in sports. Athletes like PV Sindhu (badminton), Mary Kom (boxing), Saina Nehwal (badminton), and others have achieved international acclaim and have become inspirational figures for aspiring female athletes.

It is essential to acknowledge that we need further research to fully comprehend the efficacy and significance of sports policies and initiatives in India. There are still few in-depth studies of Indian sports policies, and the existing literature typically focuses on essential issues such as elite sports performance and systems, sports governance, and the commercialization of sports facilities, particularly cricket. However, the gender disparity in Indian sports persists, and addressing it requires sustained efforts from various stakeholders, including government bodies, sports organizations, sponsors, media, and society at large. In conclusion, while progress has been made, the disparity between men and women in sports in India remains a significant issue that requires continued attention and concerted efforts to overcome societal barriers and promote gender equality in sports.

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9 Author Declaration

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