

Is Cricket a Gender Biased Game? India in Relation to the World

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ABSTRACT:

The paper aims to dissect whether Cricket is a discriminatory sport or not. It will look at what has led to Cricket becoming a Gentleman's game and how did this systematic discrimination has occurred? And due to what reasons? The proposition of the paper is that it is the origination, politics, institutional practices accompanied with political agenda and stereotypes which has made Cricket a man's world.

There are various reasons which has contributed to women not being equal participants in Sports. It ranges from the perception of women being physiologically inferior to men, lack of strength, women being allocated places in private then in public and all these values reflect in the upbringing of kids. It leads to disparity between Men's and Women's game. Capitalism, Patriarchy and men in Politics have further contributed to this partiality. The paper is divided into four parts:

- Historical Aspect-
- Social Aspect-
- Economic Aspect-
- Constitutional Aspect-

Key Words- ICC:International Cricket's Council, BCCI- Board of Control for Cricket in India.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Cricket” a game that has ruled millions of hearts for more than four decades now. From the scenes of young boys playing cricket and immersing into rolls of laughter to the most common discussions amongst college peer groups about Cricket matches, scores and the team composition. This game has received immense popularity to be widely known as a religion, especially in our nation. The eye of scrutiny that everyone has on the cricketers and their games is so intense that, their personal lives are also a matter of discussion. All these indicators show how serious a business cricket is. The everyday debates and arguments over selection and performance of cricketers, their advertisements and other aspects seem to be a daily routine for every house in India. This game has passed through many phases of change. It began with the World Cup victory in 1983. Since then, it went on to become one of the most popular games in India. The ‘God of Cricket’ revived it in a new way that it became a religion and definitely Sachin the ‘God’. This popularity conditioned and attached national identities and emotions to the game. It became a matter of pride to win any game against a rival team. This passion reached a stage where one's loyalty towards the nation started being measured in terms of one's loyalty for the cricket team. These strong emotions employed towards Cricket have become a source of profit for the stakeholders because of widespread commercialisation of cricket. The advent of cricket is attributed to test cricket which gave way to the popularity of 50 over Cricket and finally, arrived the popularity of 20 over game. The start of Domestic Leagues like the Indian Premiere League made cricket a mine of opportunity and a hot career option

for the youth. This has not only happened in terms of financial prosperity but also the lavish lifestyle, the iconic image of the cricketers and the huge fan following are the reasons for cricket becoming a favourite sport from a professional point of view.

II. HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY

The above mentioned is an example of the trajectory of development followed by cricket in India.

However, these are the notions that cannot be attributed to Cricket as a whole rather; it can only be attributed to Men's Cricket. The story of women's Cricket has been another tragedy altogether. Cricket originated in the British cricketing circles. It was an attempt to cultivate national identities by the way of promoting masculine identities. It was aimed at conditioning masculine traits amongst men and cultivates a sense of cultural superiority. It was not only the quest to develop a sense of British supremacy but the supremacy of an English man.¹ It ensured that Cricket remains to be a game played by man at the exclusion of women.

The aforementioned facts clearly testify the fact that the birth of Cricket can be accredited to political reasons and gains. Politics during those times was highly male dominated. There were fixed notions of beauty and grace of feminine women. In addition, there were rigid gender roles which provided for men to be strong and protective whereas, maternal and submissive qualities were considered to be an effeminate trait.²(Wigmore)If women chose to defy these notions then they would have lost the effeminate identity, an ideal woman's tag who is not womanly enough in terms of features and her ways. Hence, these notions further obstructed women's participation in Cricket

As a result Cricket has been tilted towards the male gender since its very inception. It is one of the prime reasons that it is still renowned as the 'Gentleman's Game', thereby reinstating the fact that Cricket is a gender biased game. Women were mere spectators of these games and any attempt made by them to step in to this area of sport or challenge a man's authority in the game received adverse responses from people. The justification being that women are biologically not fit to play a game of Cricket which requires strength. This also reinforces the belief that female is the weaker sex.

III. POLITICAL REALM AND CRICKET

The Parliamentisation of the game was the political purpose in the very inception of the it. It was in that sense, a two- pronged political project which was aimed at spreading colonial supremacy. It would not have been

¹Lowerson, John. 1995. "Cricket And The Victorians, By Keith A.P. Sandiford cricket And The Victorians, By Keith A.P. Sandiford. Aldershot, England, Scolar Press, 1994. 207 Pp. \$59.95 U.S.". *Canadian Journal Of History* 30 (2): 362-363. doi:10.3138/cjh.30.2.362.

² Tim Wigmore, 'Sport'S Gender Pay Gap: Why Are Women Still Paid Less Than Men?' (Newstatesman.com, 2016) <<https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/sport/2016/08/sport-s-gender-pay-gap-why-are-women-still-paid-less-men>> accessed 27 March 2018.

possible without inculcating a strong sense of national identity. Both the abovementioned objectives were achieved by the origination of Cricket which also meant, there was a close nexus between the State and cricketing organizations.³ A very well versed fact being that State is a patriarch did not come without its banes. Consequentially, cricket also ended up being a patriarchal tool. All these developments go back to the deep rooted notion of women's exclusion from participation in public life. These Developments also ensured that the resources needed for developing cricket were all under men's control which further hindered the progress of Women's Cricket. The lack of women's participation in Cricket during the Medieval Europe was due to the culmination of factors such as societal mind-sets, strict church sanctions and biological reasons.⁴(MURRAY)

IV. PAST RESPONSIBLE FOR THE STATUS QUO

Aforementioned is the historical background of the contemporary gender biasness taking place in cricket. It serves as the foundation of present day discrimination and prejudices regarding women's cricket. The prejudices are reflected in the social attitude of gifting bat to a boy but, it is not considered to be a perfect toy for a girl. The reason for such an attitude is that either women cannot play cricket or even if they do, it will be at a frivolous level. The attitude of media which considers the victory of the women's team not a news enough, the broad casters do not consider televising even the major games. As a result of this minimum coverage many people are not even aware of the presence of women's cricket. A very good example of his is the fact that we consider Sachin Tendulkar to be the first person to score a double century in One Day Cricket, but only few know that the first person to ever do so was Belinda Clark.⁵(ESPN) But, media cannot be blamed singularly because, the Television industry is a profit oriented industry and they would not cover any news which does not bring enough popularity.

This brings me to the societal mind-set which claims to be modern but has not modernised its perspective on Women's Cricket. As a result there are continued frowns and adverse reactions to Women's Cricket. The attitude seems to be a favour from the society by allowing them to play the game which they are incapable of. This can be clearly seen in the isolated development of Women's cricket. It never grew as a parallel to Men's Cricket but, as a different entity away from any attention. There have been negligible attempts by the cricketing boards and organizations or government for that matter who just allow women to play as an assurance of equality. The lack of fund allocations, resources, facilities, awareness, financial interests and most importantly institutionalization and its legitimisation are still lacking.

³Brian Stoddart, Sport, Culture And History (Taylor and Francis 2013).

⁴Bruce K. Murray, 'Politics And Cricket: The D'oliveira Affair Of 1968' (2001) 27 Journal of Southern African Studies

⁵www.espn.in

V. NEGLIGENT CRICKETING ORGANIZATIONS

Women's Cricket was previously managed by a separate board but in recent times, it has come under the ambit of International Cricket's Council as a measure to reform Women's Cricket. In India it is now being handled by BCCI which does not even provide for a proper U-16 team for chalking out quality players. There are close to no test matches being organized and the situation is worse at junior levels. Many Coaches don't even consider women for coaching. The Cricket boards have shown a very lax attitude and efforts towards the betterment of Women's Cricket. All the quality resources or funds are utilized in men's game leaving the counterparts with meagre facilities.⁶ The match fee is very minimal in comparison to men's game. They have no proper resources to train and any form of security. An example of the Board's discrimination can be the very fact that Sahara sponsors the Indian team but the women are not allowed to wear the Sahara logo on their uniforms. But Saharan ever pointed out that these funds can only be used for men's team. Hence, the gender biasness in cricket is evident on the face of it.⁷

VI. SOCIAL CONNOTATIONS: AND THE CHANGE

- *Attitudes Beliefs and Reactions*

There is still a notion that a woman can never play cricket if she does, she is deprived of her beauty and grace as there is a passive response to such women. This notion is reflected in the everyday attitudes of people towards the cricketing icons. On one side the male cricketing stalwarts are equivalent to gods and garner great respect. However, on the contrary female legends of the same game are not even known by most of the people. The pride of the nation can only be restored if men's team wins a series. Even though, the Women go under the same title but are not greeted or blessed in the same way. Neither do they get praises for victories, nor do they get criticism on losses because of a simple reason, no one cares. Both teams are from India representing the same people in the same game but, gender of the players changes the whole mind-set. That's where the question arises, 'Is Cricket really a religion' and if it is how the gender of the players changes one's commitment towards the so called "Religion". Hence, it is not really the love for the game but rather Men's game. Many people will now raise the apprehension that what women play is not quality cricket. So, a very befitting response to all those would be that the Men's Cricket was never the same. There was a phase when the score of 230 was considered to be a decent one in One day games. In contemporary times, even 350 is chase able. Hence, it can be concluded that the game has not gone up because gender of the players is male rather, it is due to increased

⁶Sudatta Mukherjee, 'BCCI'S Gender Bias Against Indian Women'S Cricket Is Most Deplorable' (Cricket Country, 2013)

<<http://www.cricketcountry.com/articles/bcci-s-gender-bias-against-indian-women-s-cricket-is-most-deplorable-23089>> accessed 27 March 2018.

⁷Abhishek Purohit, 'It Is An Insult To Women's Cricket To Be Treated This Way' (Cricinfo, 2013)

<<http://www.espnricinfo.com/women/content/story/602643.html>> accessed 27 March 2018.

competition, home series, better resources and increased reputation in addition to money. No sport can grow in the absence of these. So, we cannot expect women's cricket to show the same quality without providing them the same treatment and facilities. Till then, the patience that we have shown to men's cricket is needed to be put on display again. Our Team India needs us, the game that we love needs us. But the only difference is that the players are from the other half population's gender which is the Female gender. Are we still willing to provide the same support?

- ***England and Australia Undoing The Past***

We can take inspiration from Australia and England who have taken big strides in the development of Women's Cricket. The game originated mainly from the main land and then spread across the world including the colonies. However, the gender biasness of this game owes a lot to these countries. But, with changing times they have tried to make the game gender neutral. It's still a long way to go but they have made a strong start. Since the inception of cricket was a political project, it made cricket a man's game. As a result, it was spread across other countries with the same spirit. Hence, it was widely believed that Cricket was to be played by men. The colonies also played it in the hope to redeem their pride and cultivate national unity by defeating the colonisers in their own game. So, the inclusion of women was farsightedness. But, with the advent of the Suffragette movement and increasing women's liberation in the Western country led to more tolerance and acceptance of Women in public. It also impacted the inclusion of women in sports. These movements defied and struggled against the various stereotypes thereby infiltrating gender boundaries. Women did all that they could not. Hence, they also played cricket in order to break the long existing shackles of taboos.

Today, England and Australian Women's team have signed contracts, get facilities and are paid a better match fees. There is great marketing of their achievements. Women's cricket is being promoted at school as well as University level by ensuring the participation of women in the game to increase the quality of Cricket. Quality Coaches and support staff has made Women's cricket come a long way. The positive response of the society to these steps has been an encouraging factor.⁸

- ***Manifestation of Discrimination***

On the contrary, there are teams such as Afghanistan and South Africa who do not have a proper stadium to practice. New Zealand is also doing quite well to support Women's cricket. But, the upliftment of the game requires a collective and a global effort. This is not a home affair of any nation. For any sport to grow and become popular, it requires the support of the whole International Community. Even, India which boasts of women's empowerment lies far behind in terms of supporting Women's Cricket. There is discrimination even

⁸'Study Shows Growth In Popularity Of Women's Cricket' (BBC Sport, 2013) <<http://www.bbc.com/sport/cricket/24532779>> accessed 27 March 2018.

in terms of the treatment of the legends of Men's and Women's cricket. On one hand, stars like MS Dhoni and Sachin Tendulkar receive laurels and respect ranging from financial to moral accolades. They are celebrated as the national heroes with great number of advertisements under their repertoire whereas, national heroes of Women's cricket who have contributed tremendously for the game are not even recognised. If such is the treatment of female players who take up the game without any monetary interest then, how do we expect the sport to grow?⁹

VII. ECONOMIC ASPECT

- **Women Not Seen as Potential Participants in the Sport**

“Women's Cricket has been relegated to an invisible space while, Men's Cricket has come to be perceived as shaping Indian Nationalism in powerful ways. The potential of women's participants as players towards driving sports economy has to become visible. Until now in relation to cricket, women have come to be perceived as consumers particularly in the aftermath of the Indian Premier League and their role as producers have been masked.”¹⁰

“In Sri Lanka, which hosted the ICC T20 World Cup in 2012, the per diem of women players was € 37 compared to the men players who were being paid € 62. The prize money for the match championship offered by ICC was just € 37,000 when the Men's event would have been for € 6, 19,000. The top woman player has potential to earn up to \$ 80,000 a year, the comparable figure for male counterpart is \$ 2, 30, 0005.” (Sardana)¹¹

The abovementioned figures clearly indicate the existing disparity.

- **Statistical Representation Of The Disparity And Positive Developments**

Male cricketers are typically on county retainers, some of which are suspended whilst they receive payments from their respective countries.

Pay rates for National Cricket teams in Australia, the UK and India

Country Player - gender Annual retainer - players Test, ODI and T20 fees

Australia Men \$ 900,000 \$ 14,000 – per Test

\$ 7,000 – per ODI

\$ 5,000 – per T20

⁹A Tandon, 'Same Game, Different Treatment: Women's Cricket In India' (The Quint, 2018)

<<https://www.thequint.com/sports/cricket/women-cricket-in-india-different-treatment>> accessed 27 March 2018.

¹⁰ Sardana, MMK. 2017. “Economic Potential of Women Cricket waiting to be Exploited.” ISID.ORG.

<http://isid.org.in/pdf/DN1402.pdf>.

¹¹ Sardana, MMK. 2017. “Economic Potential of Women Cricket waiting to be Exploited.” ISID.ORG.

<http://isid.org.in/pdf/DN1402.pdf>.

Australia Women \$ 40,000 - \$65, 00 \$ 15,000 – Big Bash League (WBBL)

\$ 11,000 – National League (WNCL)

England & Wales Men £ 700,000 £ 12,000 – per Test

£ 5,000 – per ODI

£ 2,500 – per T20

England & Wales Women £ 50,000 £ 1,000 – per test

£ 500 – ODI

£ 500 – T20

India Men US \$190,000 – Grade A US \$4,500 - per Test

US \$95,000 – Grade B US \$3,000 – per ODI

US 48,000 - Grade C US \$2,200 – per T20

+ 50 % – 300 % more in match fees

For winning various tests or ODIs

Individual performance bonus

Payments up to US \$10,500

India Women US\$ 22,500 (Grade A) Unable to source data on incentives

US\$ 15,000 (Grade B) ¹²(Tranter, R., Medd, R. and Braund, C, 2016)

These figures are not mere numbers but, the evidence of the pay disparity that looms large between two set of teams of the same game. It testifies the discrimination and the ongoing struggle of Women's Cricket to merely be recognized.

Australia's leading female cricketers will be the best paid of any women's team sport in the country after Cricket Australia announced so in 2015. It will almost double its commitment to Australia's elite female cricketers from AU\$2.36 million to AU\$4.23 million. Many Commonwealth Bank Southern Stars players will

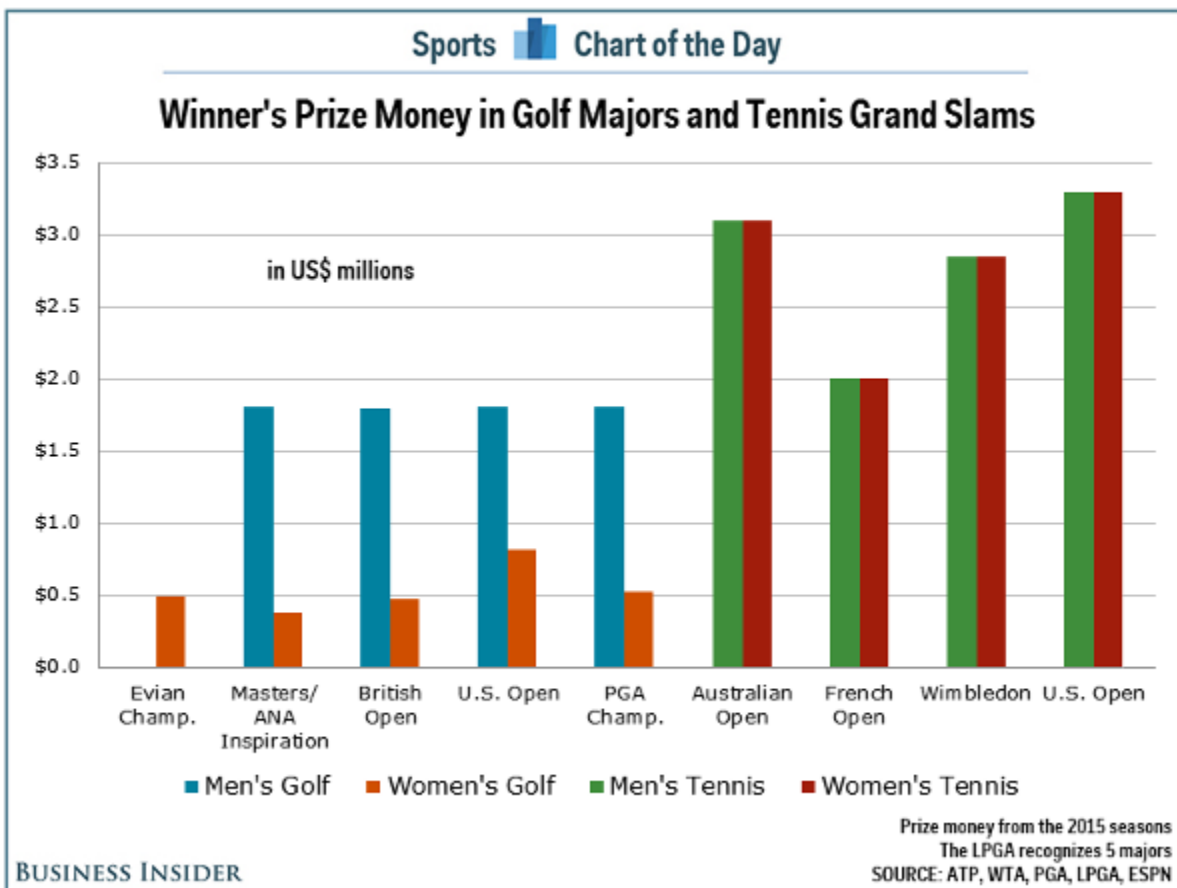
¹²Ruth Medd, Claire Braund. 2016. "Gender Balance In Global Sports Report". Women On Board. Caspia Consultancy Ltd , Windsor Jennings Ltd , Jones Creative Services and Newlink. <http://www.womenonboards.net/womenonboards-AU/media/AU-Reports/2016-Gender-Balance-In-Global-Sport-Report.pdf>

now be able to earn in excess of AU\$100,000 a year.¹³ It's time for India and other countries to follow the suit too.

• *Lawn Tennis: A Lesson To Learn*

In 1970s Women received only a quarter of the prize money received by men. In 1973 Billie Jean King refused to play in the US Open unless received equal prize money. It took 37 years for prize money to be equal. It happened in major ITP tournament for the first time in Wimbledon.¹⁴ (Tranter, R., Medd, R. and Braund, C)

Today, Lawn Tennis is known as one of the most equal in gendered terms amongst all other sports. A match featuring Victoria Azarenka and Serena Williams garnered a larger number of audiences than the match of Roger Federer and Novak Djocovic.¹⁵



¹³Ruth Medd, Claire Braund. 2016. "Gender Balance In Global Sports Report". Women On Board. Caspia Consultancy Ltd , Windsor Jennings Ltd , Jones Creative Services and Newlink. <http://www.womenonboards.net/womenonboards-AU/media/AU-Reports/2016-Gender-Balance-In-Global-Sport-Report.pdf>

¹⁴Ruth Medd, Claire Braund. 2016. "Gender Balance In Global Sports Report". Women On Board. Caspia Consultancy Ltd , Windsor Jennings Ltd , Jones Creative Services and Newlink. <http://www.womenonboards.net/womenonboards-AU/media/AU-Reports/2016-Gender-Balance-In-Global-Sport-Report.pdf>

¹⁵Ruth Medd, Claire Braund. 2016. "Gender Balance In Global Sports Report". Women On Board. Caspia Consultancy Ltd , Windsor Jennings Ltd , Jones Creative Services and Newlink. <http://www.womenonboards.net/womenonboards-AU/media/AU-Reports/2016-Gender-Balance-In-Global-Sport-Report.pdf>

This is a graph comparing the payment in Golf and Tennis which goes on to show that Tennis has become a game which pays equally for official purposes. This was not a result of few isolated efforts but, sustained efforts by participants and the stakeholders. Tennis is not at all less physically demanding than cricket but, women still compete and excel in the game at par with men. The abovementioned reason makes the argument that women are biologically unfit to play cricket fall on its face.

VIII. IS BCCI A STATE? - LEGAL ASPECT

BCCI has been the epi-centre of cricket control in India. Needless to say that, Cricket is accorded the status of Religion in India. Hence, the numbers of people that compete to play at a level are huge. The stakes of the game are high and BCCI gets to decide that, who makes the cut. It clearly indicates the magnanimous level of the function being discharged by BCCI. There have been various cases that challenged the status of BCCI as a State under **Article 12 of the Constitution of India which mentions that ‘State’ denotes the union and state governments, the Parliament and state legislatures and all local or other authorities within the territory of India or under the control of the Indian government.**

The aforementioned article encompasses the spirit of not only making the Governments responsible and accountable for upholding the Fundamental Rights but also, the other functionaries that discharge roles primarily relegated to the State. The same stance has been widened and interpreted broadly by a series of precedents and jurisprudence in the Indian judicial realm.

It was directly brought into question in the case of *Board of Control for Cricket in India v Cricket Association of Bihar*¹⁶, it was held that BCCI will fall under the umbrella of Article 12. The reason lies in the “nature of duties and functions” which the BCCI performs. It is common ground that the respondent-Board has a complete sway over the game of cricket in this country. It regulates and controls the game to the exclusion of others. It sells broadcast and telecast rights and collects admission fee to venues where the matches are played. This case is a testimony to the fact that the seriousness attached to the office of BCCI is no less than that of a State. Cricket is an occupation and a viable career option for youth in India. If an occupation and an entire sport is under the monopoly of one organization then, there seems to be no plausible reason for not holding them liable at par with the State.

In the case of *Janet Jeyapul v SRM University*¹⁷, it was held that imparting education is a public function and any such discharge leads to the authority falling in the ambit of other authorities under Article 12.

It is essential to draw parallel lines between the two functions of imparting education and regulating an entire

¹⁶(2015) 3 SCC 251

¹⁷(2015) 16 SCC 530

sport of Cricket in India. If imparting education is considered to be public function then along the same lines, regulation of sport and imparting education related to it also comes under the umbrella of Public function.

The case of *Ajay Hasia*¹⁸ would further crystallize my view a sit held that, authority falling within the expression “other authorities” is, by reason of its inclusion within the definition of ‘State’ in Article 12, subject to the same constitutional limitations as the Government and is equally bound by the basic obligation to obey the constitutional mandate of the Fundamental Rights enshrined in Part III of the Constitution.

It is pertinent to note that the Apex Court has expressed its view that the nature of BCCI’s office is such to fall within the ambit of Article 12 of the Indian Constitution. It has also been established in the above given case that any such authority is to be bound by Constitutional provisions which also includes the Fundamental Rights and Article 14 of the Indian Constitution i.e. Right to Equality. The act of BCCI not giving enough funds, facilities, opportunities, exposure and broadcast to the women players is in breach of Right to Equality and Equal pay for Equal work. For all the above discussed reasons, a judicial intervention is now needed more than ever before. It is true that ICC stepping in has changed the face of Women’s International Cricket. However, it has a dual identity attached to it with domestic cricket being the linchpin of quality women’s cricket. The paper has analysed it above in various facets the hurdles that does not let women’s cricket see the light of the day. A judicial intervention will ensure equal treatment and restoration of fundamental rights.

IX. STRATEGY AHEAD

Aforementioned accounts are the example of the misogynistic attitude of the society which reaches its peak in the form of discrimination in cricket. It’s not one factor that will help make it a gender neutral game rather, the removal of cultural and social beliefs which stop us from visiting Women’s game even for free of cost, better attitude of the cricketing organizations, more acceptance of these Women in cricket academies, more financial security and a positive institutionalization. Institutionalization involves a proactive attempt of reviving and recreating Women’s cricket by making it a part of the school and college curriculum and encouraging more women to take it as a main career option to tap the talent. These women should then be provided with better coaches and facilities. To sum it up, it has to be made a lady’s game now. This would not be possible without proper sponsorship hence; some men’s cricket sponsorship needs to be diverted in this direction too. Cricket is a joyous game and women should be provided with an equal opportunity to play for the nation and before doing so, it only sounds unfair to conclude that women cannot play quality cricket. There are women like Elyse Perry and Sarah Taylor who are playing with the men’s team in the County Cricket hence disregarding the biological explanation that, Cricket is not a game to be played by Women.

¹⁸(1981) 1 SCC 722

X. CONCLUSION

We talk of Gender Equality and are very well aware of the fact that a nation can never develop if, the other half of the population is not contributing. We need the women of our country to contribute for its development. Hence, Cricket is no different as it can never be completely developed without women's participation. It's not only the deprivation of women but, also a hindrance for cricket which stops this wonderful game from being accessed by everyone. Cricket will truly become famous, loved and international when more and more people will be able to play it. It's time that women come out of Spectators' stand and start participating in the real business of playing. It's time that instead of cheering and supporting, they step on the field to be cheered and make the country proud. All this not to be done in isolation but, in front of the world cheering them up and praising them. The view of the spectator's stand being full in a Women's cricket match is the view that will truly mark the end of this gender biasness. The development cannot be so gradual and it has to be speeded up or else, Women's cricket will never see the light of the day. Cricket will then continue to be a mere tool in the hands of Patriarchs.

We live in a dynamic world and every sector has to update itself with the changing needs and the sector which fails to do so struggles for an identity. Cricket has to be updated according to the increased participation of women in public life. Alternatively, it would disappear in the absence of flexibility. It's a long road to be travelled ahead and it can be possible by putting in collective efforts. In the meanwhile, we shall take lessons from games like Tennis and Hockey which are far more gender neutral and have a huge crowd watching women's matches too with the same enthusiasm and zeal. This is the dream that every true cricket fan should hope and pray to be a reality. It's not only about women's development but also about the world wide acceptance of our beloved game. Sooner or later, there will be a female cricket star receiving 'Bharat Ratna' with same respect and honour as Sachin did. It's a utopian point of view which is very difficult to achieve but not impossible. We can make it happen because Cricket which unites us as a common religion should not be curtailed by the boundaries of Gender. As it is made to unite not to divide. Cheers to the Gentleman's game soon to be transformed into a Lady' game.

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