

Breaking stereotypes and empowering women through participation and leadership in sports

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: 15th Dec 2025 Accepted: 19th Dec 2025 Published: 20th Dec 2025 Keywords: <i>Women empowerment, Women's participation in Sport, Women's leadership, qualities, Breaking stereotypes and historical backgrounds.</i>	India is a culture-based country and historical evidence proves that human beings are trying to live their lives in social, family, political and natural contexts. Earlier, women were bound to social and family responsibilities by saying that they are the breadwinners and children, but in this paper, we will see that even in the 21st century, it is very difficult for women and girls in rural and urban areas to participate in sports and do sports with freedom and independence. The reason for this is that the generation that has been victims of cultural norms, traditional family responsibilities and restrictions, old ideological capacities, and to free women from them, to achieve equality, independence, and empowerment, as well as equality between men and women and physical, mental and intellectual difficulties among women, as well as encouragement to them, we are looking at this on the basis of argumentative, descriptive and previous written evidence.

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1. INTRODUCTION

India is not the only country, in other countries too, there are differences between women and men. But in the present time, the reason why the proportion of women in sports is increasing is due to social awareness and educational system as well as laws in various countries, on the basis of which women are able to show their contribution in the field of sports excellently. In the early 19th century, the 1900 Paris Olympics started including women in the field of sports. Since then, in the 21st century, many initiatives for the empowerment of women are being implemented by the central and state governments at the international and national levels, breaking the old customs and traditions among these women. In this, women empowerment, empowerment, giving priority to women in sports and jobs, and improving their overall physical and mental health are being done through the sports department in the field of physical education. Let us know some of the salient points in this regard.

- 1) Women empowerment programs
- 2) Avoiding gender discrimination
- 3) Providing equal opportunities in all sectors
- 4) Active participation in sports competitions and national interest work along with social and family responsibility.

It is known that women are moving towards empowerment by giving priority to women in such various programs...

2. METHODS AND MATERIAL

During The British Time in India & Women's In Sports

During the British rule in India for over 150 years, these were recreational games played by the upper class men. Over time, this improved and limited opportunities were available for women. In this, women participated in traditional games and elite games like tennis and badminton. After India gained independence in 1950, women's sports began to be given priority. In this, women from certain royal families started to be given government schemes and even institutional support. In this, women who were burdened with numerous traditional traditions opposed these things, but women took the initiative to participate in these.

Credit Performance of Women in Independent India Till 2020

From 1950 to 2000, the athletes who contributed to the participation of Indian women in sports and breaking the norms were the first women's Olympics in 1952 and the first Olympic medalist in 2000, Karnam Malleswari, who achieved historic milestones. In the 1952 Hellas Olympic, prominent women like Neelima Ghosh, Mary D'Souza, Sikera Dolly Nazir, and Aarti Saha, paved the way for achievements in the field of sports by breaking the norms. While in the 1980s, they dominated such track events and in the 1980 P.T. Usha became an influential figure in the track and field event and won the title of Queen of Track and Field. P.T. Usha won 23 medals in the Asian Track Championships, out of which 14 were gold medals, which inspired a new generation and today she is the current President of the Indian Olympic Association of India, IOA. Breaking the Olympic medal barrier, Karnam Malleswari won a bronze medal in the women's 54 kg weightlifting category at the Sydney Olympics in 2000. The historic women's victory was unforgettable as she became the first woman from India to win an Olympic medal and her performance ushered in a golden era for sports for women, breaking all conventions and traditions.

Developments in sports for women after 2020:

The National Sports Policy (1984, revised in 2001) – Aimed at encouraging women's participation in sports at all levels.

The Khelo India Program (2018) – Focuses on grassroots development, with special incentives for female athletes.

The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme (2015) – Though primarily aimed at education and welfare, it indirectly supports female sports participation.

Reservation in Sports Quotas – Various government jobs and educational institutions offer sports quotas to female athletes.

Khelo India Women's League / ASMITA League: (2021) This initiative, started in 2021 and later renamed the ASMITA League, has organized over a thousand competitions in 29 sports disciplines, engaging over 138,000 participants.

Dus ka Dum" Competition: A special event launched in (March 2023) saw more than 100,000 women athletes participate across 1,500+ events to mark International Women's Day.

Olympic Success: Indian women have won numerous medals across various sports, including weightlifting, boxing, badminton, and wrestling, with a significant number of these medals coming in the 2010s and 2020s.

Increased professionalization: The establishment of professional leagues, most notably the WPL, has made sports a viable career for women, leading to better financial security and motivation for aspiring athletes.

Rising global profile: Indian women athletes are increasingly dominant on the global stage. This includes multiple Olympic medals for PV Sindhu, the success of boxers like Mary Kom, and the rise of weightlifters and Shooters. Improved infrastructure and support: While still facing challenges, there has been an improvement in facilities and coaching for women in sports like cricket. Clubs are seeing an increase in participation, with some offering free coaching to girls.

Commercial growth: The commercial value of women's sports in India is projected to reach significant heights, driven by soaring viewership and sponsorship for leagues and individual athletes.

Overcoming social barriers: Despite facing societal resistance and traditional norms, female athletes have broken through these barriers with their talent and determination, inspiring a new generation to pursue sports without gender bias.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on 2020 research by the BBC, fewer than 30% of Indian women play any sports or engage in physical activity, compared to 42% of men.

the future of Indian sport in female as a different points for womens in a sports India for decided the narrative way one of struggles and limited opportunities but that's all changing we seeing fundamental shape from may will and how and that future is incredibly bright just look at the number commercial value of the women's sport in the India is a projected to reach and astrodome is 70 or 100 crores by 2030 this isn't just about a Total perform means it's about a growing ecosystem as per WPL proof there is a massive market for womens sports and a huge sare ine public and sponsorships creating a valuable career path of aspiring athletes this revolutions isn't limited to cricket we see the rise of the legends like Indians women's legends in a football and women's Kabaddi league more important womens athletes global P.V Sindhu become a two time Olympic medalist in a badminton Meri com and Mirabai Chanu broken barrier growth from medals in boxing and weightlifting incredible by Manu Bhakar become the first Indian shooter 2 time win at one Olympic medals

B. Preethi Pal (Para-Athletics): Became the first Indian woman track & field athlete to win two medals at a single Paralympics or Olympics, securing bronze medals in the 100m and 200m events in Paris.

Divya Deshmukh (Chess): Became the FIDE Women's World Cup champion, defeating veteran Koneru Humpy in the final. This was the first time two Indian women reached the final, and India's first-ever Women's World Cup title.

Smriti Mandhana (Cricket): Smashed the fastest ODI century by an Indian woman (in just 70 balls) and became the first Indian woman to record 10 ODI centuries.

Pooja Tomar (MMA): Made history as the first Indian woman to win a UFC fight.

Himanshi Tokas (Judo): Became the first Indian judoka to top the world junior rankings in the women's 63 kg category, following a gold medal win at the Asian Junior Championships 2025.

Indian National Women's Cricket Team: The team won the World Cup in 2025.

Indian Para-Athletics Team: Clinched a historic total of 17 medals (including six golds, with women contributing significantly) at the World Para-Athletics Championships in Kobe, Japan, marking the highest medal tally the country has ever won at that event.

These achievements, along with historical milestones

4. CONCLUSION

In India, steps are being taken at the central and state levels to create awareness among women athletes, especially in rural areas, against the prevailing traditions and practices and to encourage more women to participate in sports. But it is very important to implement initiatives at the local level to prioritize and encourage women's participation at the social and cultural level. This can help the country to develop leadership qualities and empower women, as well as increase the participation of women. This can help the country to get a new impetus for women's empowerment and leadership qualities. Also, the increase in international and national medal tally in India helps the country to develop. As the study in this research project has shown, the implementation of various historical and ongoing women's sports priorities and sports equipment encourages women and girls in the future. And the country has become stronger and has started to maintain gender equality and social equality. And it is seen that women's sports participation is awakening a new energy among them and strengthening empowerment.

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