

THE CHANGING IMAGE OF WOMEN IN SPORT

¹DR. GOPA SAHA ROY ²DR. PINTU SIL

^{1&2}Asstt. Prof., State Institute of Physical Education for Women Hastings House, Alipore, Kolkata, India

ABSTRACT

In mythology women have always been an object to beauty and love but women always performed as the power generator of the society. Today women are challenging male in all sphere in life as well as in sports field. The true beginning of participation of woman in sports occurred in the Victorian era - between the years of 1840 – 1901. Participation of women in sports and highly competitive sports has tremendously increased due to shift in the cultural expectation of what the women represent. Women differ from men in anatomical and physiological aspects but no difference exists between the male and female in their abilities to learn and perform skills as per the sports science. Studies also found women are not harmed by participation in rigorous exercise during their monthly menstrual periods. Competitive sports have a great appeal for women. Today's women athletes are strive for bigger challenges than ever. Even motherhood can't mark the end of sports performance line. Mother ship is regarded as an advantage for the sports training and performance now a day. So many excellent women are performing behind the screen in different super sports now. In today's society, it is acceptable for women to participate in any sports she desires. So, women are there in every sphere of sports and are showing excellent performance in this field. So, the role and image of the women in sports field should be re-valued and they should be given equal status. With this remaining all sorts of barriers in the sports arena must be removed for them.

Key Words: Women, Biological differences, Sportsfield, Changing Image, Equal status

INTRODUCTION:

Human identifies as the civilized and developed organism in a 21st century. In spite of having a role of male counterpart in the formation of the life, the female is the main source to create the mystery of life. In Greek and Indian mythology, women have always been an object to beauty and pretty^[1]. The myth still persists that participation of women in sports leads to loss of identity and femininity.

The true beginning of woman in sports occurred in the Victorian era - between the years of 1840 – 1901. In the Victorian era, the physiology of a woman was the prime factor of the study. Physicians agreed with the theory that all women were the frail and week and were unable to participate in sport. Despite the health warnings, women wanted the freedom to play sports. Due to 'higher educational opportunities, and increasing number in the workforce, technological advancement, urbanization and immigration, better financial and social status', woman had more opportunities to participate in social life^[2]. This wave of change in the Victorian era also

influenced sports participation. A great modification has been occurred during the last few decades. Participation of women in sports and highly competitive sports for women has tremendously increased due to shift in the cultural expectation of what the women represented.

BIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN :

Differences are there between two sexes from the birth which determined the power of sex. Practically women are weaker than their male counterpart concern to sports performance as per the sports science. Women differ from men in anatomical and physiological aspects. The genetic code determines the difference in male and female sex specific characteristics of the individual, these are body build (size), organ specification (sex organs), distribution of cells (fat cells), cell volume (muscle volume), cell composition (mitochondria), growth and development process etc. Table-1 and Table-2 shows the morphological and physiological difference respectively in respect of some specific parameters between men and women^[3].

From these particular points women are extremely differ from men morphologically and physiologically. But no difference exists between the male and female in their abilities to learn and perform skills^[4]. In other words “Let women swim, climb mountain peak, take risk, go out for adventure and they will not feel before the world timidity”. In spite of having some weak points on physiological parameters which not facilitate the sports performance as well as placed women a little bit behind than men but some parameters compel to stay ahead of men^[5]. In contrary to the old wives tale that participation in sports training during menstrual period is harmful for women but research studies found that women are not harmed by participation in rigorous exercise during their monthly periods. In fact, fit bodies seem to handle pre-menstrual tension, headaches and cramps better. Many world and Olympic records have been set at all stages of the menstrual cycle^[3].

WOMEN AND SPORTS PARTICIPATION :

In 1972 the most important piece of legislation for woman in sport was passed in India. Title IX, the Educational Amendment Act, stated that “federal money could not be given to public school programs that discriminated against girls”. Schools were force to have equal men’s and women’s

sports, equal scholarship funds, and equal equipments for both the gender. This legislation marked the beginning of modern sports^[6].

Competitive sports have a great appeal for girls. The women athletes of today strive for bigger challenges than ever. In today's society, it is acceptable for women to participate in any sports she desires^[7]. Presently women are involving in variety of sports events apart from gymnastics, athletics, swimming, basketball, volleyball, hockey, tennis etc. even in body building, power lifting, football, professional wrestling, boxing etc. The medical profession support the need of participation for girls in vigorous Physical activity. The researches and discoveries made by scientists help women athletes to know themselves better and disclose their hidden potentials^[8].

Table-1: Difference in Morphological parameters between Male and Female

Parameters	Male	Female
Height	-	10 to 12 cm shorter
Body-mass	-	10 kg. lesser
Trunk	36%	38%
Shoulder	Wider	Smaller
Hips	Smaller	Wider
Muscle	41.8%	35.8%
Upper and lower extremities	Straight	X – Shaped

Table-2: Difference in Physiological parameters between Male and Female

Parameters	Male	Female
Heart Volume	500 – 800 ml	500 – 600 ml
Heart Weight	350 gm	300 gm
Cardiac output	-	55% of the male
Max. O ₂ uptake	3.1 Lit/min	2.7 Lit/min
Haemoglobin	More	Comparatively less

Types of breathing at rest	Abdominal	Chest
Lung Capacity	6.5 L	4.7 L
Vital Capacity	5.0 L	3.5 L

MOTHERHOOD AND SPORTS PERFORMANCE:

In an age when process of modernisation seriously threatened to disturb boundaries between sexes in everyday life, sports and the Olympic, since women no longer wanted to be submerged they stated to participate in every contest^[9]. From the 1900 Olympic Games in Paris, women were led to be participated in Olympic. After then number of women participating in Olympic Games are increasing. Even some of the women athletes became champion after getting motherhood. Table-3 shows some of the famous mother athletes who took part in Olympic Games.

Table-3: List of the mother athletes took part in Olympic Games

Mother Athletes	Country	Year	Performance
Sharly Srickland De La Hanti	Australia	1942	Took part in three Olympic, win 7 medals, Gold medal in 60 m & 4x100 m Relay race
		1952	
		1956	
Atiana Kajanakina	USSR	1976	Gold medal winners in 800 m & 1500 m race, 1500 m race (NOR)
		1980	
Vallery Brises Hooks	USA	1984	200m, 400m and 4x100m Relay Race (NOR)
Ivlin Asford	USA	1984	100m Gold medal & NOR
		1988	4x100 m Relay race Gold medal
Marry Kom	India	2012	Won Bronze Medal in Boxing

These women were aged and they have 2, 3 or more children, but in the sports field they shown their superiority in sports performance which can't be explained or believed according to the traditional way.

Some women athletes who took part in 24 Hours Ultra Runners World Championship in May, 2010 at Brive, Brazil are listed below. All these women athletes were aged and also mother of some children.

Suzanna Bon, 45, was a mother of five children and a former elementary school teacher. Her road ultra debut was a stunning 134.7 mile victory at the San Francisco 24 Hour Race in 2009. Jamie Donaldson, 35, Littleton, CO, was a middle school math teacher who has been the USA's top finisher at the 24- hour Run World champ. The past two years. She is a two time winner and women's course record holder of the Bad water 135 mile race across Death Valley. Amy Palmiero Winters, 37, NK, was the first amputee ever to be named to USA national team. After a 1997 motorcycle accident and 27 surgeries, Palmiero Winters had her left leg below- the- knee amputee world record holder in over a dozen events. Jill Perry, 39, NY, was a mother of five young children. She runs her own coaching service for running mothers when she was not in training. Perry won the 2009 USA 24-Hour Ultra Run National Championship with 136.3 miles, moving into the top 10 all-time U.S woman.

Motherhood is regarded as an advantage now a day. Evonne Goolagong Cawley has her child Kelly on tour, taking her minds of the tennis circuit. Debbe Brill set a world indoor record less than three months after giving birth to Neil, who enjoys watching his mother compete. So it might be concluded that motherhood can't mark the end of sports performance line.

CONCLUSION:

Women were always performed as the power generator of the society. So many excellent women are performing behind the screen in different super sports still now. Women are there in every sphere of life and women are excellent in sports performance also. Today women are challenging male in all sphere in sports events. At present more facilities and opportunities for the women are required in the sports field and arena. All sorts of barriers must be removed for

them in sports field. Their role and image in sports field have to be re-valued and they should be given equal status in each and every aspects of sports field.

References

- Nelson, Burton Mariah. "Who WE Might Become." Nike is a Goddess. Ed. Lissa Smith. New York: Atlantic, 1998.
- Powell, Braden Roberta. "Women and Sport in Victorian America." Diss. U of Utah, 1981.
- Noack, H.: Special problems of the female athlete: In Ryan, A & Allman F. (Eds) Sports Medicine, Academic Press, N. Y., 1974.
- Klafs, C. E. and Arnheim D. D.: Modern principles of athletic training, Saint Louis, 1977, The C. V. Mosby Co.
- Choi, Y. Precilla, L. Femininity and the Physical Active Women. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Das. L., Female Athletic Triad, Kriralok, 2002, P33-37.
- Davenport, Joanna. "Tennis." International Encyclopaedia of Women and Sports. Ed. Karen Christensen, Allen Guttmann, and Gertrud Pfister. New York: McMillan, 1999.
- SNIPES Journal 4:1 (January, 1981).
- Hult, S. Joan. "The Story of Women's Athletics: Manipulating a Dream 1890-1985." Women and Sport. Ed. D. Margaret Costa. Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1994.