Chapter- IV

Gendered Athleticism: Highly Feminine vs. Highly Athletic

Introduction:
The preceding chapter dealt with the rationale behind disparate athletic participation and continuance of athletic career among women/women athletes and men/men athletes. The amalgamation of various factors like pre-conceived notion about physiological differences between men and women, social expectations and social roles based on such pre-determined perception along with the control mechanism implied by the primary institution of family and secondary institutions of schools and peer groups together create a mesh of obstacles for women athletes that impede their athletic career. In continuity with the preceding section, this chapter attempts to examine how sports contribute to the construction of gender, gender relations, gender ideologies and gender differences. This section specifically focuses on how ‘gender’ and ‘gendered identity’ is constructed and reinforced through the institution of sports, how the segregation and stereotypical idea of so-called men’s sports and women’s sports, the differences in media exposure and the prevalent practice of unequal prize money all contribute to a gendered identity and finally fabricate marginalized identity for women athletes. This chapter begins with a brief account and analysis of the social construction of gender, i.e. identifying gender as a socio-cultural construct and medium of practising discrimination. Then gradually moving towards the analysis of sports and gender i.e. how sports also act as an agency of gendering which is followed by a consideration of physicality of women athletes as a key element of correlating athletic participation and gender. And finally this chapter examines the stratification of women’s sports and men’s sports and how this hierarchy is sustained, supported and accentuated by disparate media presentation along with unequal acknowledgement of achievements.
Gender as a social construct and Sports as a mirror image of society reinstating
gendered identity: The (gendered) Athlete performing Athletics or Gender?

*Gender is a way in which social practice is ordered.......Gender is social practice that
constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do, it is not social practice reduced to the
body.*


‘Gender’ as a concept has been an important matter of discussion and inquiry
not only among feminists but also among other branches of academics. Gender is
primarily understood as social/cultural differences between men and women based on
the perceived biological distinction (Connell, 2002). Gender as a social institution plays
a major role in how all people organize their lives. Lorber states that gender is so much
the routine ground of everyday activities that questioning its taken-for-granted
assumptions and presuppositions is like thinking about whether the sun will come up
(1994: 276). Though the term "gender" in its contemporary usage, is accorded to the
1970s feminist movement, but the word has a longer history, even as a reference to the
non-biological components of sex (Meyerowitz, 2008: 1353). Before the 1950s,
linguists used "gender" to refer to a form of grammatical classification like *le*
(female) and *la* (male) in French (Nicholson 1994: 80; 1998). By the mid-twentieth
century, anthropologists and sociologists wrote of "sex roles" to refer to the culturally
determined expected behaviour of women and men and "sexual status" to acknowledge
that different cultures prescribe different social rankings to women and men.
Psychologists used the phrases "psychological sex" and "sex-role identification" to
point to a person's acquired sense of self as female or male. However, a group of
researchers most prominent being psychologist John Money working on trans-sexuality
were one of the first to employ gender terminology as a way of designating the patient's
felt sense of herself or himself as a woman or a man. Also in 1968 psychoanalyst Robert Stoller in order to explain why some people felt that they were ‘trapped in the wrong bodies’, began using the terms ‘sex’ to pick out biological traits and ‘gender’ to pick out the amount of femininity and masculinity a person exhibited. For both Money and Stoller, gender referred to the particular balance of masculinity and femininity found in each person and it had "psychological or cultural rather than biological connotation” (Meyerowitz, 2008:1354). What is noteworthy in this historical analysis of ‘gender’ is that it has been conceptualized beyond the naturalized physiological/biological/organismic boundary and has been understood as a socio-cultural construct or rather as an externally prescribed, learned or acquired behaviour. Feminists too have argued that behavioural and psychological differences have social, rather than biological, causes. For instance, Beauvoir famously claimed that one is not born, but rather becomes a woman, and that “social discrimination produces in women moral and intellectual effects so profound that they appear to be caused by nature” (1972: 18). According to feminist Ann Oakley (1972), “Sex” refers to the biological division into male and female; “Gender” to the parallel and socially unequal division into femininity and masculinity’. Gender draws attention, therefore, to the socially constructed aspects of differences between women and men. However the term gender has since become extended to refer not only to individual identity and personality but also at the symbolic level, to cultural ideals and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity and, at the structural level, to the sexual division of labour in institutions and organizations. (Oxford Dictionary: 240). Rubin uses the phrase ‘sex/gender system’ in order to describe “a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention” (1975:165). Rubin employed this system to articulate that “part of social life which is the locus of the oppression of women” (1975:159). As Rubin claims
Gender is a socially imposed division of sexes. It is a product of social relations of sexuality. The kinship systems rest upon marriage. They therefore transform males and females into ‘men’ and ‘women’......The idea that men and women are more different from one another than either is from anything else is must come from somewhere other than nature......the idea that men and women are two mutually exclusive categories must arise out of something other than a nonexistent natural opposition (1975: 179-180).

According to Rubin, for gender to become operative and functional it requires ‘suppression of natural similarities’ and ‘repression’ in both male and female of whatever is the local version of feminine traits (for male) and masculine traits (for female) (1975:180). Rubin's thought was that gender differences are the oppressive results of social interventions that dictate how women and men should behave. West and Zimmerman claims

......gender like culture is a human production that depends on everyone constantly ‘doing gender’ (1987: 125).

According to West and Zimmerman gender is an achieved status: which is constructed through psychological, cultural, and social means (1987:125). Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micro-political activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine natures (1987: 131-132). Butler similarly examines ‘gender’ from a performative dimension i.e. ‘stylized repetition of acts’ that becomes real only to the extent that it is performed (1993: 59). Butler claims that gender continues to exist as long as one continues to perform, “gender is an impersonation......becoming gendered involves impersonating an ideal that nobody actually inhabits” (interview with Liz Kotz in Artforum, 1996). For Butler gender performativity is basically a repetition of manners,
conduct, way of life and very often the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms, which works as an illusion of freedom/choice but in reality individuals’ excercise liberty of performing their gender within a trapped gender binaries. Lorber likewise explains that the ideas about gender is conveyed through the everyday enactment of socially prescribed conducts that implicitly or explicitly express what it is to be (culturally defined) a male or female (1994: 276). The expectations of how women and men are supposed to act in their daily life produce ‘gender’. For instance the root of contemporary sport were laid in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Britain and North America via schools, where the main focus was given towards boys public schools which aimed to induce the prevalent version of masculinity comprising of vital traits i.e. competitiveness, aggression, toughness, physical domination (Theberge, 2000: 322). Whereas gymnastics was introduced as part of physical education programme specifically for female students with a different objective of promoting the concept of health and aesthetic feel of the body, safeguard reproductive health along with conservation of femininity (Hargreaves, 2000). Like for instance Lenskyj refers to sports in women’s colleges and universities in north-eastern Unites States and in eastern Canada was offered to female students primarily as health promoting exercise (1987: 65). Even the famous protagonist for women’s organized sports in Canada; Ethel Mary Cartwright also provided a conservative view on women’s athletic participation (Lenskyj, 1986). Cartwright’s position was that “girls should be impressed with the fact that physical education does not strive to make them men’s physical equal, but it aims at perfecting their womanhood” (Lenskyj, 1986: 63). Dubbert in this respect claimed that organized sports became increasingly important as a “primary masculinity-validating experience” that was consciously included within and imparted through formal education (1979: 164). Messner further adds that sports represented a male oriented homosocial cultural sphere that provided men with
psychological separation from the perceived feminization of society while providing symbolic proof of the “natural superiority” of masculinity over femininity (1988: 200). In this sense according to MacKinnon (1987: 120) then men are expected and trained to be strong and become men while women are expected and trained to be weak and become woman i.e. learn opposite of those things that is exclusively reserved for men. Also femininity is conceived as contrary to masculinity. Subsequently, the acceptable mannerisms and conduct via dress, language, posture, and body language for female are often different from male. Similarly sports is perceived as a breeding ground for providing the opportunity of doing/enacting gender i.e. displaying masculine attributes contrary to conceived feminine traits or rather sports itself prescribes such differential enactments to reinstate the existing gender dichotomy.

Lorber (1997) contends that it is important to recognize that the process of ‘gender’ allocation begins from birth and henceforth is constantly created and recreated through socialization, everyday human interaction, practices and social life. Greendorfer (1983) similarly sates that from birth, parents tend to handle their male and female infants differently, in response to society's gender stereotypes. For instance it is ‘NOT OK’ for boys to cry or express their emotions (both in public and private) as it threatens the ‘true manliness’, while girls are not restricted from pouring out their sentiments and feelings (both in public and private) as it celebrates their ‘vulnerable femaleness’. In case of gifting toys to children, it is noticed that girls are gifted dolls, kitchen sets, colouring sets whereas boys are given robots, sports specific items like football, bat or video games. Similarly it is considered courteous and chivalrous for a man to open doors (of a car), or pull out the chair for a woman, whereas it is considered impolite for a woman not to wait for a man to do the same. MacKinnon contends that gender is an inequality of power, a social status based on who is permitted to do what
to whom (1987: 08). Socialization via family, schools, media are said to create a differentiated world for its members supplementing this power relation of gender and sanctioning socially ascribed division of activities that map the expectations about gender-appropriate behaviour among individuals. As one of the respondents Rama Das (35 years, 200 m, 100 m Sprinter) shared: “It is true that sports and athletics are not considered as a career option for woman, nor is it considered suitable as a hobby or recreational activity. From childhood onwards young girls are motivated to join dancing, singing classes or drawing. Even today girls are seldom encouraged to join athletics compared to boys, rather they are asked to concentrate on studies, get married, be a mother and look after family”.

Saraswati Saha (30 years, 200 m Sprinter) expressed: “Seldom do we hear parents saying that they want their daughters to become an athlete or a successful sportswoman. While, most parents want their sons to become successful sportsman like Sachin Tendulkar, Dhoni, Kohli. In fact academics is considered as the best career option for women since it provides ample time to balance family life and job”.

Greendorfer explains that "early child rearing practices ... perpetuate myths about play, games, and Sport” (1983:03). Kosfsky (1993) claims that ‘gender’ is taken as a weapon of restricting opportunities as well as creating prospects through sports, where women have few opportunities (both as women and as professional athletes) in comparison to the number of opportunities for men. Likewise the ‘social rationale’ as put forward by Kay and Jeanes suggests that activities and behaviour associated with sports is contrary to women’s real femininity has always been applied to restrict women’s participation in sports or activities that are purely reserved for exercising masculine traits (2008:131). Infact the very concept of ‘gender’ has been employed as a vital raison d’être for designing such ‘restrictions’ or ‘constraints’ for women/women
athletes that in turn reinforce the prevalent gender identity, roles and expectations. Gender socialization is considered as one of the central and most powerful weapon that transmits gender specific instructions to its members, and orients them into gendered individuals by prescribing the DO’s and DO NOT’s. Parents play a key role in conveying these gender appropriate performances as they themselves adhere and enact their gender.

The above narratives actually support social constructionists’ view that gender is not only socially constructed but also that it is performed. Here we can refer to Butler’s (1993) analysis of ‘constraints’ as productive and not repressive in nature. In her work *Bodies that Matter*, Butler claim how constraints or preventing individuals from not performing outside the allocated normative gender dichotomy sustain ‘gender’ (1993: 60). According to Butler ‘constraints’ are productive in this sense that it facilitates the construction of gender hierarchy by prohibiting any activity outside the prevalent gender system. Consequently, such constraints impel ritualized production of gender, reaffirming who is legitimized to do what. Therefore from the above narratives it becomes clear how family exercises constraints through socialization (in the form of do’s and do not’s) on its members from a young age that reproduce gender, reinforcing what a girl and a boy is expected and permitted to do based on the perceived social capacities. In this case one can see how prohibiting/discouraging girls from engaging in or pursuing athletics (i.e. perceived male specific action) by providing them with alternative gender appropriate career options is in reality impelling them to execute their gender i.e. femininity while restricting boys from engaging in perceived female specific activities is encouraging in producing the opposite gender i.e. masculinity.

Historically, sport has been a fertile ground in which gender differences were established and celebrated (Cahn 1994; Lenskyj, 1986). Sports feminist researches
(Lenskyj, 1986, Theberge, 1993; Vertinsky, 1994; Birrell, 1994; Cahn, 2000; Scraton, Flintoff, 2002) have persistently questioned the conventional gender ideologies practiced within sports resulting in reproduction and sustenance of gender order. One such example would be the absence of legitimizing women’s team sports ‘except for gymnastics’ in major international events including Olympics not before 1964 compared to men’s team sports which was introduced in 1900. Similarly women’s 400 metres relay race was officially introduced in 1928 compared to men’s 400 metres relay race which was sanctioned long before in 1912. The history of women’s participation in team sports or individual athletic sports reflects various forms of gender segregation that maintained and legitimized distinctions between men and women. These restrictions included restricted playing time for women, segregated club houses, shortened course distances, and especially in case of Golf women players were prohibited on wearing trousers and shorts in order to highlight differences between male and female. Like for instance, in 2011 Amateur International Boxing Association wanted their female boxers to wear skirts instead of shorts to differentiate them with male boxers as well as provide a ‘womanly impression’ (http://www.bbc.com/sport/boxing/15452596-accessed on 26.10.2015).

In ‘Gender and Sport’ (2000) Theberge contends that one of the cultural practices most significant in the construction of gender is sport. Historically, sport has been organized as a male preserve, in which the majority of opportunities and rewards were endowed on men and this arrangement is both the basis of, and a powerful support for an ideology of gender that ascribes different natures, abilities and interests to men and women. According to Todd Crosset (1990) and Michael S. Kimmel (1990) sport has historically been a setting for the development and display of traits and abilities that signify masculine power and authority. At the same time, women's exclusion from
sport or their admission on a restricted basis has been one way in which the myth of female frailty has been realized (Theberge, 1989). Despite recent increases in women's participation, sport remains a setting in which ideas about gender and gender differences are powerfully constituted. Previous analyses on sports and gender has shown how for men, "sport is, all considered, astonishingly important" (Connell 1983:18) in the development of masculine ideal. Horowitz (1986) also pointed out that sports participation for males tend to conform masculinity whereas female athleticism is viewed as conflicting with the conventional ethos of femininity, leading towards to virulent opposition to women’s growing athleticism. Consequently, Messner doubts whether the presence of female athletes pose a threat to the hegemonic ideology of male athleticism, virility, strength and power, since questions arise ‘can a woman be strong, aggressive, competitive like men or can a woman be equated with being athletic?’ In this context many respondents have agreed that women athletes are always described in reference to a male athlete and her strength, ability is always described in words which are generally used for representing a male person.

According to Bidisha Mondal (27 years, 100 m Sprinter): “Women in sports/athletics is always seen differently from men in sports. We have noticed that whenever we, women athletes go out in public many people stare at us, especially at our face and body to determine our sex i.e. whether we are male or female. And most often we hear remarks about our physique, i.e. chhele der moton chehara (look like boys). Our athletic appearance is denounced since we resemble a male physique and not a ‘normal’ womanly physique. Whereas for boys this athletic physique is praised and is considered as an ideal quality”. When asked what the respondent meant by here by ‘normal’, she replied, “meye ra jerokom hoye i.e. like a woman with womanly (body) features".
Here majority of the respondents used the term ‘normal’ to refer to the conventional standard of femininity that chiefly includes bodily features, mannerisms prevalent in the present society. Majority of the respondents expressed how they are constantly referred to as ‘masculine’ or ‘male like’ for possessing an athletic physique. It was also observed that the respondents themselves were aware of possessing ‘not so normal’ physique as their appearance did not conform to the socially approved ‘normal womanly physique’. Hargreaves (1994) and Theberge (2000) in their respective studies have revealed that the acquisition of strength, muscularity and athletic skills have always been disempowering for women athletes since it deviates from the cultural expectations of gender performance, whereas for men such qualities are highly placed and regarded as valuable since it functions in accordance to the traditional prescriptions of masculinity. Consequently, for female athletes who are thought to have drifted away from acceptable femininity are negatively labelled as ‘non-feminine’ or ‘masculine’ corroborating the stereotypical notion that sports is exclusively a male domain. Similarly Birrell and Theberge (1994) claims that the effort to discredit women athletes by disparaging their appearance and reconstructing them as unnatural women has been one of the main weapons employed in the effort to maintain sport as a masculine preserve. As Kidd states ‘strong and powerful’ are two adjectives that are seldom used to describe women in sport (1983: 62). Together with aggressive, competent, and self-sufficient, these words are most often used to describe the male athlete. So synonymous is sport with the traditional male role that physically active girls are still called tomboys, and the greatest respect accorded to any female is to say that she performs like a male.

Another respondent Shefali Das (23 years, 100 m, 200 m Sprinter) shared: “When a male athlete performs well in any event he is praised and identified as ‘strong’, 
‘powerful’ ‘able’. Whereas, in case of a successful woman athlete she is often identified as ‘masculine’, her ability, strength and all her athletic qualities are recognized as analogous to masculine qualities”.

Puja Das (22 years, 100 m, 200 m Sprinter) expressed: “We are purposely trained with boys to increase our capacity to perform. As boys perform better than us or possess better physical strength we are trained together so that we can judge our present position in relation to a better athlete (that can also be another woman athlete) and meet those requirements that are needed to be successful athlete”

Likewise the above narratives not only reveal that recognizing athletic capability, skills and success of women athletes by relating it with masculine qualities in turn acknowledge and re-establish the stereotypical conception about inherent male physical superiority in sports but also refutes to accept the ability of women athletes to develop a strong, active, aggressive and competitive characteristic necessary for pursuing an athletic career. This narrative also suggests that unless and until female athletes emulate or adopt the masculine qualities exclusively found in males she cannot achieve success or cannot be considered as athletic in this genre. This suggests as MacKinnon claims

...being female and being athletic have been socially contradictory and that being male and being athletic have been more or less socially synonymous. Femininity has contradicted, masculinity has been consistent with, being athletic. Women get to choose between being a successful girl and being a successful athlete (1987:120).

In this context we can also refer to Foucault’s concept of ‘docile bodies’ (1972). Foucault conceived docile bodies as an outcome of strict, regimented, disciplinary act
which controls individual like for examples monks, soldiers. Similarly female (athletes) in sports are conceived as ‘docile’ ‘inactive’ due to the regulatory practices already employed on her by the larger society (via family, schools) as a female. And in order to be regarded as an athlete the femaleness needs to be oriented and transformed to masculinity (which is dynamic) to make it compatible with sports/athletics. In other words female athletes are conventionally perceived as ‘docile’ without masculine qualities. Therefore it becomes evident how sports ideology that treasures and endorse natural physical skills and capacities like strength, power, and virility interact with the prevalent gender ideology that upholds natural physical differences and socially defined capacities for men and women to facilitate and create gendered identity.

**SPORTS IDEOLOGY AND GENDER IDEOLOGY INTERACTING WITH EACH OTHER TO PERPETUATE THE DOMINANT IDEOLOGY OF FEMALE FRAILTY IN SPORTS:**

Similarly respondents also expressed that their achievements are described by recognizing or referring them as the female version of a successful male athletes. For instance Asha Roy (24 Years, 100 m, 200 m Sprinter) shared: “When I returned from
Pune after winning silver in 200 metres sprint in Asian Games I was referred to as ‘lady Bolt’ (after world’s fastest athlete Usain Bolt) by many of my fellow athletes, seniors and friends”.

Lenskyj claims that women athletes who engaged in the traditional male reserved sports were identified as “imitating masculine machismo” – a label that reinforced the stereotype of male supremacy and women’s inferiority in sports (1987: 114). Related instances have been found like when tennis player Dominika Cibulkova referred to Samantha Stosur as a ‘dude’ and justified her loss to Stosur in 2011 U.S. Open by making a public statement saying “I have to say that she played unbelievably today. Her topspin and her serve, I mean, she played like a man, and it’s really hard to play against a man. It was driving me crazy on the court today.”

What can be understood from the narratives and real life incidents is that sportswomen or athletes who become successful in their own respective fields are easily labelled as masculine in order to justify their (world) record breaking performance & success. By relating women athletes’ physique and ability to masculine qualities it is overtly expressed that women are incapable of delivering athletic performances unless they infuse the ‘ideal male’ trait within themselves. Therefore such labelling reinstate the stereotyped notion that women are unsuited for sports while men are best suited for sports/athletics.

The next section will discuss how the institution of sports stratifies athletics into male version and female version through various means, creating a hierarchy placing women’s athletic/sports in the inferior position and positioning men’s event in a superior rank.
Differences in Men”s and Women”s Sports: Separate but not Equal

“The only real Olympic hero, as I said, is the individual adult male. Therefore, no women or team sports”

-Pierre De Coubertin (Le Journal, Paris, 27th August, 1936)

Once one’s identity becomes gendered, it can also be said that this identity guides everyday behaviour/activities with reference to the particular constructed gender i.e. either as male or female. As a consequence, there arises what we can call as ‘men’s activity’ and ‘women’s activity’ that locates both the genders on a social scale based on the perceived notion of ‘gender appropriate activity’. Similarly the arena of organized sports and athletics have become a dynamic gender producing agency that not only separates sporting practices into feminine appropriate and male appropriate but also stratify these activities as superior and inferior. McDonagh and Pappano (2008) suggest that one of the real problems that occurs due to the established gendered identities is the very notion of dividing the athletic/sports universe into ‘male sports’ and ‘female sports’. Since the very supposition about inherent physiological differences between men and women is expressed through differential social and biological expectations, women and men athletes are conceived as two different entities with contradictory attributes, where male athletes indubitably occupy a superior rank than women athletes. Consequently, as argued by McDonagh and Pappano (2008: 02) dividing sports by sex, segregating organized athletics based on gender enforces the belief that men’s activities, power and men’s sports are the real thing and women’s sports like women’s power are inferior, second-class.

One such living example would be the field of gymnastics. That is rhythmic gymnastics and synchronised swimming are only performed by female participants accompanied by music, dance and props (ball, ribbon, hoop, clubs) which emphasise on
grace, artistic/aesthetic appeal, flexibility, balance i.e. qualities predominantly associated with ‘femininity’ and men are barred from participating since these two events do not display the conventional or real sporting prowess like football, rugby they are thus considered too feminine and humiliating for any man to perform. Conversely, men’s floor exercise is devoid of music and priority is given to strength, tumbling passes, power i.e. attributes primarily identified with masculinity. Similarly the criteria for ‘the best gymnast’ title differs for men and women, where the qualities demanded for a woman incorporates feminine poise, playful theatrics with techniques, while men are told to be explosive and judged on the basis of techniques, passes, multiple twists and difficulty (McDonagh, Pappano, 2008:13). In reference to the concepts of ‘doing gender’ (West and Zimmerman, 1987) and ‘gender performativity’ (Butler, 1993) then one can say that female athletes and male athletes perform and enact their gender instead of gymnastics and based on which they are judged and appreciated.

Sport feminists (Lenskyj, 1987, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994; Cahn, 2000; Theberge, 2000) argue that as pre conceived ideas recognize women as less violent, less aggressive and unsuitable for sports compared to men, consequently any sports in which women engage in assumed to display femininity, yield less excitement and interest than men’s sports. As a result the average attendance of audience in a stadium for any men’s team always surpasses the average attendance for women’s team. Similarly the fan following for a male athlete is far more than a woman athlete and the ticket price for a women’s team match is always lower than men’s team match. Like for example in Australian Open 2017 Tennis tournament the starting price of tickets for final match in men’s single category was $403 (for adults) whereas the starting price of tickets for women’s single final match was $199iii.
Same Sports Unequal Rules

According to the respondents within the same genre of sports women and men athletes experience difference with respect to game rules, style of presentation, unequal acknowledgement through unequal prize money, unequal media coverage as well as unequal prospect of coaching after retirement. One respondent Mona Biswas, married (30 years, Heptathlete) said: “Yes there are several subtle differences between men’s and women’s athletic events. First of all the time set or what we say the target time is different for male athletes and women athletes. Like for example in the 100 metre sprint, male athletes are given a lesser target time to get a chance of training under SAI (Sports Authority of India) while women athletes are given an additional 2 to 3 seconds to qualify. Though these different targets do not affect the training quality among the athletes, nor does it suggests that women athletes are incapable of sprinting within 12 seconds (target time for male athletes), but somehow the difference in the target does suggest that men are faster than women athletes. Then women athletes are not allowed to compete in Decathlon but male athletes do participate, there is 100 metres hurdle race for women and 110 metres hurdle race for men. Then there are differences also in terms of weight, height of various equipments”.

As majority of respondents have considered participating and winning in Olympics as their ultimate goal, they consequently follow the standards and qualifying criteria in their practice schedule mentioned by IOC.
Criteria for women athletes and men athletes approved by The International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>ATHLETIC EVENTS</th>
<th>CRITERIA FOR WOMEN ATHLETES</th>
<th>CRITERIA FOR MEN ATHLETES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>SHORT PUT(^{iv})</td>
<td>Weighs 4 kg</td>
<td>Weighs 7.260 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>DISCUS(^{v})</td>
<td>Weighs 1 kg ; Diameter: 18 cm</td>
<td>Weighs 2 kg ; Diameter: 22 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>JAVELIN(^{vi})</td>
<td>Weighs 600 gm Length: 2.2m-2.3m</td>
<td>Weighs 800 gm Length: 2.6m-2.7m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>HAMMER THROW(^{vii})</td>
<td>Weighs 4 kg; Diameter: 95-100 mm</td>
<td>Weighs 7.26 kg; Diameter: 110-130 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>110 Metres HURDLE(^{viii})</td>
<td>Not entitled</td>
<td>Height of Hurdle: 3 ft 6 inches (107 cm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>100 Metres HURDLE(^{ix})</td>
<td>Height of Hurdle: 2 ft 9 inches (83.8 cm)</td>
<td>Not Entitled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>400 Metres HURDLE(^{xx})</td>
<td>Height of Hurdle: 30 inches (76.20 cm)</td>
<td>Height of Hurdle: 36 inches (91.40 cm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>50 Km RACE WALK(^{xxi})</td>
<td>Not entitled</td>
<td>Only for Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>DECATHLON(^{xii})</td>
<td>Not Entitled</td>
<td>Only for Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>HEPTATHLON(^{xxiii})</td>
<td>Only for Women</td>
<td>Not Entitled</td>
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Theberge (1997) claims that male and female athletes who play the same genre of sport often encounter ‘male’ and ‘female’ versions of rules, which reinforce prevailing norms that women are athletically inferior to men. Apart from athletics, sex segregation within sports, sex-segregated rules are still prevalent. Like till date in hurdle races men’s hurdle height (107 cm) is higher than women’s hurdle height (83.80 cm), in tennis women players play 3 sets while men plays 5 sets, in cricket women’s field lay out is restricted in terms of size and boundary distance from the crease while no such rules exist for men’s cricket. Such institutionalized segregation between men and women athletes belonging to the same genre of sports fabricates unequal identities that naturally translate into unequal/discriminatory treatment and experiences of women athletes both within and outside the arena of sports. Like for instance in 2009 sprint queen P.T. Usha (retired) one of India’s best known athlete also known as the ‘Payyoli Express’ was denied a separate accommodation and was asked
to share room with other junior participants during her visit to the 49th Open National Championship held in Bhopal (http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/PT-Usha-breaks-down-after-denial-of-decent-accommodation/articleshow/5094787.cms).

Furthermore, discrepancies also exist in using the gymnasium to getting a slot for practice and using the racing track within the sports academy. As confessed by Asha Roy (24 years, 100 m, 200 m Sprinter): “We i.e. women athletes were asked to fix a time for using the gym since it would provide ample time for the boys to exercise and use the gym. We were also asked to fix a time for practice and use the track within that fixed time so that we do not interfere with boys practice. Though there is no difference in the technique the amount of labour put into practice, there still exist a wall of division between male and female athletes. But during national and international camps both women and male athletes are made to practice together”.

What has been observed from the narratives is that women athletes are not only treated as second category members compared to their male counterparts, they are also made to realise and believe that their involvement in sports and their identity as a woman athlete is secondary and is less important than their male counterparts. Infact, as Hargreaves (1994) writes that male athletes are always praised and respected for engaging in sports, for their strength and skills that can be in the form of encouragement, providing financial help or providing the best training facilities possible. Conversely, women athletes are under-acknowledged, underestimated and continuously compared with male athletes’ achievements for engaging in the same activity. Such differential treatment creates a natural hierarchy not only between masculine or feminine sports but also between the genres of sports with respect to who is engaging in which sports. Like for instance men’s decathlon, hammer throwing, weight lifting, wrestling, boxing, football, cricket which are primarily associated with
strength, force, toughness and power (masculine traits) is always kept above women’s events; whereas sports like figure skating, gymnastics which are related to grace, flexibility, smoothness of performance (feminine traits) are kept secured only as a female preserve and are placed above men’s event in the same genre. Consequently, such segregation supplements to the existing stereotyped understanding of women’s and men’s sports confining female athletes to their gender roles while liberating male athletes through their gender roles.

Unequal Pay

Besides having separate rules and practices within the same genre of sports, respondents have also expressed that unequal acknowledgement of athletes through unequal prize money also reinstates the notion that women athletes and women’s sports are inferior to men athletes and men’s sports. For instance, the female winner of the 1989 world triathlon championship received $11,000, while, that same year, the male winner received $12,000 and a Jeep (Kosofsky, 1993: 213). According to the Association of Road Running Staticians, female runners received almost as much prize money as their male counterparts in 2015: $11.5 million to men's $12.5 million. Not alone in athletics this pay gap exists in numerous genres of sports. For instance Roger Federer earned $731,000 and Serena Williams made $495,000 after winning singles titles at the Western & Southern Open in August 2016. In 2014 World T20 cricket tournament Australia Women’s cricket team were paid £44,000 in prize money as winning team while Sri Lanka's men who defeated India by six wickets were rewarded £690,000. A study conducted by BBC in 2014 on equality of prize money revealed that men receive more prize money than women in 30% of sport. What has also been examined in this study is that though International Olympic Committee (IOC) along with International Association of Athletic Federation have equalized the prize
money for men and women athletes in track and field events of athletics from 1995 onwards, there still lies a huge pay gap at the local and national levels. According to Mallika Mondal (26 years, Long Jump athlete): “Firstly in India and especially in West Bengal the government along with sports academy does not give adequate prize money to its athletes (i.e. both male and female athletes). That is why sometimes we represent other states where the prize money is more. But in both cases men are always paid more at least by Rs.20,000-Rs.30,000 than us (Women athletes) for sharing the same position and playing the same event.”

Most of the respondents complained that the government of India as well as the government of West Bengal does not take any initiative to raise the price money in the genre of athletics. Also the sports academy with which they are associated does not make any effort to improve this condition. Gillespie in her work ‘Unequal Pay: The role of Gender’ (2014) states that ‘gender’ as a social category plays a vital role in distribution of opportunities as well as allocation of wages. Similarly within the arena of sports ‘gender’ plays a dynamic role in not only compartmentalizing sports on the terms of ‘who plays the game’ but also legitimize the distinction between the gender and the associated practices with it including the ‘gender pay gap’. Such continued, sanctioned discriminatory treatment not only reflects a key aspect of gender discrimination but underscores the belief that women athletes are less than male athletes (Whiteside, Hardin, 2012). Just because women are conceived to be incompatible with sports, specifically with ‘masculine sports’ and as women athletes are given leverage over men in terms of ‘target time’, reduction in the weight of various athletic tools like shot put, javelin, hurdles it is assumed that women are investing less energy and labour than men. And also men’s events are believed to be tougher and more competitive than women’s events since the total number of participants in men’s
category surpasses women participants. Consequently, as McDonagh and Pappano (2008) claims many presume that women are not worthy of equality both in terms of prize money and social recognition since ‘women in sports’ has nothing more to offer other than imitating male athleticism.

Below is given an advertisement that came out in the Times of India, August 11th 2015 on „6th World Cup Kabaddi” organized by Sports Council of Punjab along with the list of Prize Money for Male and Female players.

The above advertisement clearly declares that top three Men’s Team will receive prize money of Rs. 2.00 Crore, Rs. 1 Crore and Rs. 51 Lacs respectively. While, top three women’s team will receive prize money of Rs.1.50 Crore, Rs.75 lacs and Rs.41 lacs
respectively. It can be observed how the prize money for women players is significantly less than men’s prize money in each of the category and within the same genre of sports. It is also evident how the State legitimizes such gender pay gap among men and women within and through sports thus reinforcing the stereotyped assumption that men’s sports is superior, more important than women’s sports.

**Media and Sports: Separate but not equal**

In addition to unequal prize money and gender pay gap, uneven and gendered media coverage of women’s sports as well accentuate and contribute to the existing disparity between men’s sports and women’s sports. Researches reveal that the media construct sports as masculine and feminine through a series of strategies such as exaggerating the strength and power of male athletes, ignoring women’s sports in sports publications, or overemphasizing feminine traits when reporting on sportswomen to countervail the assumed masculinity in sports (Acosta & Carpenter, 2010; Whiteside, Hardin, 2012). Apart from portraying sports as masculine and feminine, sports media disproportionately cover women’s sports event and men’s sports event (both individual and team sport events). Respondents in this study have revealed that except for international events, women’s athletic sports gets minimum media coverage compared to other genre of sports like Tennis, Badminton, Cricket and Football.

*Like Himashree Roy (24 years, 100 m and 200 m Sprinter) shared: “except for Olympics or some other prestigious athletic events, women’s athletics are seldom covered by media (both print and visual). Compared to other genre of sports like cricket, tennis, badminton, athletics gets the least media exposure. Among women’s sports Tennis receives the maximum media attention, and then comes badminton,*
cricket, and hockey. Even in newspaper only if we win medals then only we appear in the sports section. Athletics does not interest media much like other sports.”

Wanta in his work “The Coverage of Sports in Print Media” claims that men’s sports received more coverage than women’s sports; furthermore sports photographic coverage also is dominated by male athletes (2006:107). Additionally researches (Lumpkin, William, 1991; Hargreaves, 1994; Lopiano, 2000; Wanta, 2006) have roundly criticised sports media for its disparate and lack of overall coverage of women’s sports thus further marginalizing and trivializing women athletes’ achievements. Like for instance below is given disparate news coverage of women and men athletes’ achievement in 2016 summer Olympics, both in terms of weightage given to the achievements as well language used to describe the athletes’ success.

The first (1.) news came in the front page of West Bengal’s leading newspaper „Anandabazar Patrika” while the women’s result (2.) was printed in the last page on the same publication date: August 24th 2016. The language used to address both the athletes is different. In the first news Usain Bolt is described as „World”s Best” (without any category like in men”s event), while in the second news Shelley Price is addressed as „female bolt” and is described as „fastest among female category”.

![Image of newspaper page](image_url)
Apart from unequal coverage and printing of men’s and women’s sports news discrepancy also exists in the language involved and used by the print media. Various instances can be found in newspapers where a woman athlete has been being referred to as the female rendition of a successful male athlete. For instance in 2016 summer Olympics Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce of Jamaica who won gold in 100 metres sprint was also described as ‘Female Bolt’ by a leading Bengali newspaper of West Bengal (ABP: 24th August 2016: 18). Such male-centric label for acknowledging success of women athletes both covertly and overtly eclipse the achievement of the women athletes and create a pseudo masculinised identity reinstating the universal ideology of male superiority in sports. Similarly sportswomen from other disciplines are also subjected to ‘gendered remarks’ by the print and visual media which either recognizes them as
‘women’ first and athletes second or reinforce male supremacy within the domain of sports. Below is given an instance where Indian sportswomen (Women cricketers) are referred to as ‘eves’ rather than using the term ‘cricketers’ which is a gender neutral term, hence reflecting media’s construction of gendered identity through language.

Other instances (around the globe) are presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sports/Women Athletes</th>
<th>Remarks made by Print Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England Women’s Football Team</td>
<td>‘I feel sorry for the England team’s husbands and boyfriends – because they must be hungry and walking around in creased clothes’ (The Daily Mirror, 25 September 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corey-Cogdell-Unrein (Trap Shooting)</td>
<td>‘Corey Cogdell, wife of Bears lineman Mitch Unrein, wins bronze in Rio’ (Chicago tribune, August 8, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelly-Ann-Fraser Pryce (100 m sprinter)</td>
<td>‘Female Bolt’ (Ananda Bazar Patrika, August 24th 2016 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sania Mirza &amp; Martina Hingis (Tennis)</td>
<td>‘Beautiful Pair wins their First match’ (Ananda Bazar Patrika, March 22nd, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia Vins (Body Builder)</td>
<td>“Muscle Barbie”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tanner in her work ‘Marginalization and Trivialization of Female Athletes and Women’s Sports through Commentator Discourse: A Study of ESPN’s Sports Center’ state that women athletes not only battle stereotypes associated with participation but also with ‘languages’ used by commentators and media which represents women athletes as sexualized and objectified commodity (2011: 06).

Furthermore, respondents have also expressed that women athletes are seldom hired and called for endorsing commercial products compared to both sportswomen and sportsmen belonging to other celebrated genre of sports. Like for instance in this study all respondents have agreed that majority of advertisements are endorsed by and majority of media coverage is focused towards sportsmen especially from the genre of cricket, while sportswomen belonging to the genre of Tennis and Badminton dominate sports media and commercial advertisements. As Sunanda Sarkar (24 years, 100 m sprinter) states “We women athletes are never approached by the media for endorsing any products. Even successful athletes, like those who have women gold or silver in any international events are seldom called for inaugurating any functions. Whereas sportswomen from Tennis, badminton and sportsmen from cricket are frequently hired for commercial advertisements. This is another reason that people do not know that we exist in the world of sports”.
The tables below reflect respondents’ view on hiring women athletes for commercial endorsements.

**Table: 02**

**Whether respondents have been approached by visual media to endorse any commercial product:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above represents that none of the respondents (i.e. women athletes) have been approached to endorse commercial products for advertisement by visual media. Majority of respondents have confessed that athletes especially female are never considered eligible for any advertisements since their physique and outward appearance does not conform and match to the beauty standards of commercial media. Infact the respondents feel conscious of their own appearance when it comes to present themselves in front of public. From this is can be understood that women athletes irrespective of them being an athlete and irrespective of their success and achievements they are considered as ‘woman’ who are expected to conform to the socially sanctioned standards of beauty or desirability/ attractive for making an appearance in the field of visual media.
Table: 03

Whether respondents have witnessed any women athletes endorsing products in commercial advertisement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table represents that all the respondents have never witnessed any women athletes endorsing any commercial products in visual and print media. All the respondents have accepted that women athletes are seldom hired for any commercial advertisement by visual media since they do not conform to the socially prescribed ‘appearance’ for female. They also shared that women athletes’ body are not attractive enough for the mass audience as well as for the media which exists on what the mass approves and which in turn strengthens, legitimizes that predominating notion of the majority. Similarly Cormick in her article ‘Athletic Endorsements and Their Effect on Consumers’ Attitudes and Consumption’ (2013) have approved that athletes’ ‘physical appeal’ and ‘likeability’ play a valuable role in enhancing and influencing the audiences view about the product. Cormick further add that endorser’s physical attractiveness is congruent with the product he/she is endorsing, the “match-up” hypothesis would predict a positive impact on the product and the advertisement evaluations; if there is incongruence, those evaluations would decline. Likewise in the research women athletes did not qualify in the list of ‘top five athletes with lucrative commercial endorsement’ (https://www.nsga.org/globalassets/management-conference-archives/2013/karla-mccormick.pdf). It can be inferred that media not only represents or uphold the gendered ideology of the larger society but also act as an
institution which ‘labels’ and construct identity for women athletes as ‘fit’ or ‘unfit’ for the socially enviable image. Finally, media inspite of focusing on the athletic success, athleticism of the women athletes, they are concerned with the ‘womanliness’ and ‘socially approved image’ of woman athletes. Consequently women athletes (despite of their success in their respective genre of athletic sports) are not conceived as ‘athletes’ but as ‘woman’ who is expected to abide by the prevailing culture in order to be accepted within the desirable framework of media, especially visual media.

Table: 04

Reasons mentioned by respondents with respect to hiring women sportsperson for commercial advertisements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Looking</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popularity of The Sports They Play</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Popularity (Fan Following)</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Majority of women athletes (respondents) have confessed that along with success ones physical appearance, especially how one looks play an important role for appearing in the visual media as well as receiving offers for endorsing commercial products. This portrays how instead of looking at athletic skills and abilities and success, the media focus their attention towards the physical attractiveness of women athletes which constructs an image of how a feminine woman should look like and how that is considered acceptable in the eyes of society, hence, articulating the idea of the types of
sports that is acceptable for men and women to participate in. Furthermore such discriminating practice also suggests that women athletes are stripped off from their ‘sports person’ identity and are represented as a socially desirable ‘woman’ in turn reinforcing their socially approved identity. Abraham (2016) in her article ‘Media Discriminates the Female Athletes’ provides an example how leading sports media (print and visual) engage in such discriminatory practices. Abraham cites how ‘Sports Illustrated’ (a reputed sports magazine) has placed a total of only five per cent (5%) women athletes on their covers. This too, more for their looks which is “socially acceptable” than their sporting prowess. Hence it can be said that Media acts as a purveyor of the dominant ideology regarding the prevalent gender order where appearance for women is still preferred over their success while vice versa for men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scaled Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>11.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>88.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=35

1 means any one reason mentioned by respondents with respect to hiring women sportsperson for commercial advertisements
2 means any two reasons mentioned by respondents with respect to hiring women sportsperson for commercial advertisements
3 means any three reasons mentioned by respondents with respect to hiring women sportsperson for commercial advertisements
4 means any four reasons mentioned by respondents with respect to hiring women sportsperson for commercial advertisements

**Glass Ceiling in Sports: Separate but not equal**

The legitimate existence and practice of separate rules, women’s and men’s prize money within the same genre of sports, unequal media coverage does not only characterize the institution of ‘sports’ as gendered, but also label women and men athletes as ‘others’ or ‘different’ from each other and positions them separately in their own society as well as in their world of sports. Similarly such disparities are also visible in athletic administration that is manifested through the process of ‘glass ceiling’ (Galloway, Shan, 2012: 51).

Hymowitz and Schellhardt first used the ‘glass-ceiling’ metaphor in their article ‘The Glass Ceiling: Why Women Can't Seem to Break The Invisible Barrier That Blocks Them From the Top Jobs’(1986) to describe an impediment in organizational hierarchies, just below the top management level, that prevents or constrains women from rising into the ranks of senior management (Dreher, 2012: 542). Whiteside and Hardin in their article ‘On being a “Good Sport” in the Workplace: Women, the Glass Ceiling, and Negotiated Resignation in Sports Information’ claims that sport continues to remain as a domain that is tightly guarded by men through their nearly exclusive hold on participation, rules framing and organizational responsibilities, authoritative, decision making positions, and public voices (2012: 52). As Simmons states “A woman’s main role has always been to be a wife, and then to be a mother. Women have been stereotyped for years as being the less intellectual and weaker sex” (2011:02). Majority of respondents in this study have expressed that athletic administration is still a male dominated terrain and there appears to be discrimination against women athletes, creating a gender gap that prevents the advancement of
women/women athletes into top-level administrative, decision making positions. Like Chaitali Kar, (26 years 100 m and 200 m sprinter) shared: “There is lack of women holding strong authoritative positions within the domain of athletic administration. I have been associated with SAI, Kolkata centre for 12 years, till now I haven’t seen any women director here.”

Similarly when asked what can be the future prospect of women athletes after retirement, majority of respondents stated that “coaching or opening up a new academy” will be the best option since there is “scarcity of opportunity to occupy any administrative position”. Lack of women representatives in such important decision making positions also reflect male control over women’s sports. Galloway & Shen Shan posits that since decision making ability is equated with leadership skills and as women are considered incompatible with this attribute, women within leadership roles face many more barriers than men (2012: 57). Effective leadership rewards assertiveness, aggressiveness and independence, which are typically recognized as “masculine” characteristics. Societal norms expect women to “take care” and men to “take charge.”

As Pushpa Das (25 years, 200 m sprinter) expressed: “It is not that women athletes are less successful than male athletes in West Bengal, in fact the picture is opposite i.e. women athletes are more successful than male athletes, still there are no women representative in the top level administration of our athletic association. It is always the men who makes and takes all the decisions”.

It has been seen that despite having identical or superior educational, athletic attainments, ability, commitment to work, women make a slower progress than men in top-level administrative positions. Galloway and Shen Shan claim that gender plays a
vital role in the underrepresentation of women in top-level managerial positions since managerial/administrative roles are conceived as “masculine,” and women in managerial/administrative positions being seen as inappropriate, negative due to gender stereotyping ideology (2012: 52). Previously conducted studies (Carpenter, Acosta, 2012, Lapchick, 2013) have also confirmed the disparity between males and females in the athletic administration field.

Like for instance the ministry of youth affairs and sports in India has been male dominated for the past 30 years, with men taking charge and control of the arena of ‘sports’ while excluding women (athletes) from occupying top-level power positions.

List of Ministers in charge of Youth Affairs & Sports in India in the past 26 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of Ministers in charge of Youth Affairs &amp; Sports in India</th>
<th>Tenure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R. Dhanuskodi Athithan</td>
<td>1996 - 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smt. Uma Bharti*</td>
<td>2000 - 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri. Sunil Dutt</td>
<td>2004 - 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri. M.S Gill</td>
<td>2009 - 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri. Ajay Maken</td>
<td>2011 - 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri. Jitendra Singh</td>
<td>2012 - 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Sarbananda Sonowal</td>
<td>2014 - 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Jitendra Singh</td>
<td>23rd May 2016 - 5th May 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Vijay Goel</td>
<td>5th July 2016 - 2nd September 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore</td>
<td>3rd September 2017- Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Smt. Mamata Banerjee* and Smt. Uma Bharti* respectively were the only women ministers to have taken charge of Youth Affairs & Sports in India in a span of 30 years,
though they themselves do not come from any athletic or sports background. Whereas, till date the entire ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports in India were and are still dominated by male representatives.

Table: 05

Future career prospects for women athletes in West Bengal after retirement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career prospects</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coach</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government job</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To set up an academy</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisor in any athletic association</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>04.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked regarding the future career prospect of women athletes post-retirement, the respondents have either referred to becoming coach, taking up government jobs, set up an academy or act as an advisor for any athletic, sports association. Many respondents have expressed their desire to be part of higher administration and decision making body but have also expressed that there is no adequate scope for women athletes to acquire such positions. When probed regarding joining administrative body or politics, most women athletes replied that there is handful of athletes in administration and none of them are woman and if present they are not at decision making level but are restricted to a certain level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scaled Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>05.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=35
Sports as a medium of upholding the concept of „Fit and Feminine”

Foucault’s account in Discipline and Punish (1979) of the disciplinary practices that produce the "docile bodies" of modernity is a genuine ‘tour de force’, incorporating a rich theoretical account of the ways in which instrumental reason takes hold of the body with a mass of historical details (Bartky, 1997: 95). Yet despite his preoccupation with power and its effects on the body, Foucault’s own analysis was curiously gender-neutral (King, 2004). Susan Bordo points out that it was feminism that first inverted the old metaphor of the ‘body politic’ to talk about the politics of the body (King, 2004). The feminists conceived the body as an over-determined site of power; a surface inscribed with culturally and historically specific practices and subject to political and economic forces. Feminists identified how women have been subjugated primarily through their bodies, and how gender ideologies and sexist reasoning stem from perceived biological differences between the sexes (King, 1994). King also suggests that gender manifestation especially femininity is a discipline that produces bodies and identities and operates as an effective form of social control (2004: 29). Similarly in sports various modern disciplinary techniques are imposed especially on female athletes’ physique to confine them within the prison of gender stratification and conceive them as the weaker sex. Cahn (1994) claims that conventional ideologies
posed challenges to women’s athletic participation since the acquisition of strength, skills, muscularity has always been associated with ‘loss of femininity’. Consequently, as Theberge (2000:323) claims sports became another institution of constructing, manifesting gender differences that restricted female athleticism to gender appropriate sports.

Hargreaves (1994) argues that the rationale behind restricting women in general and sporting women in particular to certain sport that was conceived as feminine in nature was to make women athletes physically fit for motherhood and accentuate other womanly properties. The demand to extract womanly/feminine properties through approved physical activities that run parallel if not equal to organized sports also included what Helen Lenskyj states ‘the display of heterosexuality’. For instance aerobic exercises provided, by natural means the glow, grace and desired feminine features that replaced the old version of decorative feminine heterosexuality (i.e. using cosmetics) by a modern concept of ‘strong but beautiful’. Like make-up and clothing, aerobic dance exercise produced more prescriptions of heterosexual appeal where the new, modern requirements included thinness, feminine muscles and shape enhanced by fitness fashion industry was satisfied. Barky hence claims women’s body is an ornamented surface of patriarchal power and disciplinary measures, where women are deliberately prevented from becoming massive, muscular and compelled to possess male defined heteronormative (i.e. sexually attractive) feminine body. As the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sport (U.S.A) announced in 1975 that

Modern girl’s participation in fitness activities- swimming, tennis, track, skiing-was producing ‘beautiful results’- Her healthy glow, well-coordinated charm and educated grace come from physical fitness....The new ideal was

Therefore this section will focus on how the institution of sports adopts various modern disciplinary measures like introducing gender verification test to institute and reproduce the prevalent gender hierarchy and promote the ideology of compulsory heterosexuality that very often invites sexual exploitation of women athletes.

i) Gender Testing and Sports: Perfecting or rejecting the imperfect

As women athletes’ participation, exposure, strength and confidence grew, some observers began to wonder whether fast, powerful athletes could even be women. For years, international sports organizations have been policing women for ‘hidden masculine’ qualities, turning their athletic dreams into a battle for perfecting the inherent flawed attribute. Although these ‘unfeminine’ or ‘masculine’ qualities are considered to provide a leverage to women athletes they are also subjected to strict scrutiny and discipline in order to sustain their femaleness, the gender division as well as maintain male supremacy within the institution of sports. As discussed in the previous section that ‘gender’ is the social division of sexes and it is produced and reproduced through various practices within sports, gender or sex test for athletes provides another means of instituting, validating existing gender relations. Lenskyj claims that gender/sex test were introduced to prevent athletes (especially women athletes) from committing ‘gender fraud’ i.e. it was a test for measuring and reassuring ‘real femininity’ of women athletes (1987: 87). As Schultz (2012) contends that initially the alarm was not for men competing in women’s sports, but that sport would masculinise women, a fear entangled with sexism came into existence in the form of requirement of ‘gender verification test’. History of sex/gender testing in organized sports dates back to 1950 (Lenskyj, 1987: 87; Ballantyne, Kayser, Grootegoed, 2011:
where women athletes were the first to be examined for their sexual identity and check for ‘Hyperandrogenism’ \cite{xxv}. The rationale behind introducing gender/sex test into athletics was to examine the biological source of strength and power that was considered atypical for a woman. Furthermore, any unusual characteristics which did not seem conforming to the feminine ideal like having flat chest, facial hair or possessing ‘man-like features’ were put to inspection. Originally, women athletes were asked to parade nude before a panel of doctors i.e. female gynaecologists who conducted visual examinations to confirm whether athletes’ external genitals sex was, in fact, female \cite{Lenskyj:1987}. The argument was that these unnatural women athletes should be disqualified from female competition on the grounds that their strength was abnormal for a woman. In other words gender/sex test questions the ability of any woman athlete who has the potential to outshine or outperform male athletes. For instance South African track & field athlete Caster Semenya \cite{xxvi} became the leading face of controversy regarding high testosterone levels (Hyperandrogenism) among women Olympic athletes soon after she won the 800 meter run in the 2009 Field and Track Championships setting a world record with an astonishing and seemingly effortless four second lead on her rivals. But this victory was followed by a “gender verification test” to establish whether she was actually a woman and that any medical condition was giving her an unfair advantage. Specifically there was an expressed concern that she does not meet the requirements to compete as a woman. Till that period she was not allowed to compete for 11 months’ time. Similarly in India, Santhi Soundarajan \cite{xxvii} (track & field athlete) had to face similar gender test for performing beyond expectation for a girl in her genre and faced a severe setback in her athletic career. Both these athletes were considered guilty of ‘masculinity’ until proven innocent. It has been observed that sports organizations and authorities through its rules
and regulations help in reconstituting the gender dichotomy as well as perceived biological differences between men and women. Haggie (2010) claims that sports ideology till date resides on the existing gender dichotomy i.e. male and female. Consequently, sex/gender testing in (international) sport reflects a great deal about social attitudes toward gender, and how the co-option of medical science in sport can act to essentialize gendered social categories. As the activities which is recognised as sports are overwhelmingly those which favour a physiology that is consider ‘masculine’, the competitor who is taller, has a higher muscle-to-fat ratio, broad shoulders, flat chest and larger heart and lungs (plus some other cardio-respiratory factors) having the sporting advantage will be likewise related to masculinity. It is thus inevitable that any woman athlete who is engaged with sport will tend to demonstrate a more ‘masculine’ physique than women who does not practice sport. Therefore, the sex/gender test provides an upper limit for women's sporting performance; a gradation where there is a point at which the masculine-style body is declared either ‘too masculine’, or ‘favourably feminine’ regardless of the athlete’s personal gender identity. Also if woman athletes surpass the prescribed physiological limit/criteria their identity and validity as an athlete is questioned and put under disciplining gaze or other mechanisms to restore the lost femininity. Sporting organizations have also employed mechanisms like ‘gender verification test’ to check women athletes’ growing masculinity so that it does not surpass and claim superiority over ‘real masculinity’ and in turn preserve femininity. Sometimes those disciplinary techniques could be self imposed in order to be accepted within the league. Like for instance female body builders in order to become muscular and enhance their muscle definition they have to adhere to strict diets and specialized exercises. But in the process majority of women body builders lose their breast definition (an important symbol of female physicality)
and in order to balance muscularity along with sex appeal (essential requirement for competition) some contenders undergo silicone breast implants to artificially meet the criteria (Hargreaves, 1994: 168). Conversely, as stated by Haggie (2010) for men there is no equivalent upper physiological limit – no kind of genetic, or hormonal, or physiological advantage is tested for, even if these would give a ‘super masculine’ athlete a distinct advantage over the very athletic ‘normal’ male.

Most of the respondents who participated in International events and went through the gender test confirmed that the gender verification test sets a boundary for women athletes within which one is expected to perform both athleticism and femininity. Like one of the respondent Srabani Nandu (23 years, 100 m and 200 m Sprinter) expressed: “Yes I think majority of gender verification test that has taken place till date has tested more women athletes than male athletes. It is like a certificate of one’s gender or femaleness/maleness i.e. how much female or male you are based on hormones, chromosomes, reproductive organs. It is like a second birth certificate for us (athletes) which re-confirms the gender or sex of an athlete. It is important in this sense that it is a ticket to participate in any International athletic and those who fail gender test are either banned from participating in any athletic events or they are stripped off from the honour”.

Another respondent Rinky Pramanik (29 years, 200 m, 400 m sprinter) shared: “I personally think that gender verification test is mainly focused on women athletes than male athletes. Though both male and female athletes have to undergo this test, but somehow I think that women athletes are made to feel that they should remain under a limited physical condition set by the authorities and that these conditions are also consciously created by the sporting authorities telling us (women athletes) that we cannot have common characteristics (in terms of hormonal composition) like male
athletes nor can we be equal to male athletes. But I support this rule because it tries to remove corruption and unfair participation in sports/athletics”.

What has been noted from the respondents’ narratives on gender verification test in sports mainly targets women athletes over male athletes to unearth the ‘hidden masculinity’ in women athletes and subject them to strict regulations that can range from temporary to permanent banning of the athlete. Furthermore, a ‘second identity’ is constructed through the gender test that situates and stratifies athletes irrespective of their ability, achievements. Besides, the test identifies and labels women athletes either as ‘legitimate athletes’ i.e. who successfully balance both femininity and athleticism based on the permitted limit or as ‘illegitimate athletes’ i.e. who fail to fulfil the prescribed criteria. In this context we can refer to Foucault’s concept of ‘discipline and punish’ where gender verification test symbolizes ‘modern disciplinary techniques’ imposed on women athletes by the patriarchal power to restore ‘male defined femininity’ and sustain the male hegemony over female docility. Gender verification test hence approved by the institution of sports validates and reproduces the existing gendered identity i.e. from an ‘athlete’ to a ‘feminine athlete’ who is sanctioned to pursue athletics within the permissible boundary of pseudo femininity and desired femininity. Additionally, Foucault criticised the ‘totalising’ theories that claimed to offer the ‘truth’ through ‘scientific’ explanations. Feminists espousing Foucault’s ideas similarly engaged with critiquing the notion of science (with particular regard to their ‘pathologizing’ of the female body), its claims to objectivity and the idea of guaranteed truth. Norbert Elias’s concept of ‘civilizing process’ (1976) that suggests how maintaining distance from something that is conceived to have defiling property is a way of refining ones action/behaviour can also be applied here. Elias’s example of using fork, knife and spoon that helps to create and maintain a distance from the food
(which has polluting properties) while eating indicates civilized behaviour contrary to uncivilized behaviour i.e. eating with bare hands. Similarly women athletes were and till today are prescribed to maintain a strict distance from any activity that would masculinise them (i.e. defile their femininity) through certain prescribed rules and regulations. Hence such routinised disciplinary/civilizing practice implants the culture of ‘compulsory femininity’ among women athletes who are not only compelled to adhere to socially approved femininity but also to heteronormativity.

ii) Compulsory Heterosexuality

Kidd observes “the character traits necessary for sport are so incongruent with the stereotypical female role that sportswomen have had to counter numerous attacks on their sexual identity. Women at many international Olympic events still have to submit to the notorious sex tests, tests given only to women to affirm their biological sex” (1986: 63).

Schultz in his work “Disciplining Sex: Gender Verification Policies and Women Sports” (2012) contends that sex/gender test is synonymous to disciplinary practices imposed on women athletes to counter the fear that sports would masculinise women. Lenskyj (1987) similarly claims that most medical experts, educational and sports professional too helped to perpetuate the “loss of femininity” myth and the dichotomy between ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ sports and accused (masculine) sports for making female athletes unfeminine. Subsequently, the ‘unfeminine athlete’ becomes a matter of concern since it poses a threat to the existing gender hierarchy and productive heterosexual culture. Hargreaves argue that the surfacing of ‘muscular women’ puts the ‘natural order’ of gender under threat and so are female athletes with a distorted masculinised body upon whom symbols of femininity is imposed (1994: 168). Griffin (1998) states that in reality femininity or the concept of ‘real women’ is a thinly
disguised code word for ‘heterosexuality’. Lenskyj claims that the concept of heterosexuality invoked criticism of women who did not meet the prescribed standards of femininity. Then women athletes are not alone forced to adhere to male defined femininity but also practice compulsory heterosexuality. Rich identifies heterosexuality as a political institution and a “beachhead of male dominance” (1980: 02). Historically and cross-culturally there has been a strong relationship between female athleticism and lesbianism (i.e. female homosexuality) since women’s engagement in sports was considered detrimental to womanhood and which could convert a woman to man. As a result women’s participation in sports was limited and kept under strict gaze while men were allowed to participate without prohibition. Hargreaves suggests that sports celebrate and make sexuality, especially female sexuality public. Since men’s engagement in sports is conceived as natural, inherent that is contrary to an idealized women’s quality, any female who challenges this categorization through active participation in sports runs at a risk of being labelled as a ‘lesbian’ (1994: 173). In this context one of the respondent have confessed to have been a victim of such labelling through social networking site i.e. Facebook where unknown people made several derogatory comments on some pictures pertaining to sexuality of the athlete. Like Asha Roy (24 years, 100 m and 200 m Sprinter) shared “Whenever I post any picture of myself wearing sports gear or engaging in any athletic activities, I get extremely offensive comments pertaining to my body especially chest part, like I have been called BPL (Buk Pet Level- a derogatory comment made to address women who has flat chest or no properly defined breast). Though I ignore them but it does feel humiliating”.

Women athletes’ sexuality has historically been under supervision and control. Since controlling female sexuality legitimizes male authority, it has always been a domain of exercising patriarchal power. Female homosexuality i.e. lesbianism has been
and is still conceived as a resistance and threat to patriarchy that could replace men’s prevailing sexual superiority. As a consequence female homosexuality is seen with distaste and is subjected to regulation or criticism since it does not depend on men’s sexuality nor does it reproduce womanhood through which men’s power over women is manifested. In other word female homosexuality is not positively functional or productive for male hegemony. Therefore sports become an important medium like other institutions where the construction of heterosexual femininity becomes a powerful form of control and manifestation of patriarchal power.

For male athletes

Enhancing & reinstating masculinity

Camaraderie in sports

Pseudo-feminine, alleged as lesbians

For Women athletes

The concept of ‘stigma’ as presented by sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) can also be referred in this context. Stigma can also be conceived as a ‘negative labelling’ based on an undesirable differentness possessed by any individual whose social, physical and cultural attributes are contradictory to the stereotyped or authorised characteristics. Goffman has explained stigma to refer to

....those attribute which are incongruous with our stereotype of what a given type of individual should be”. A stigma as Goffman further explains “.....then, is really a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype (1963: 03).
Goffman delineates three different types of stigma first being ‘abominations of the body- the various physical deformities’, second being ‘blemishes of individual character- imprisonment, addiction, homosexuality’ and third being ‘tribal stigma which includes race, nation and religion’(1963: 04). In this study it has been found as well as from the above narrative it can be said that women athletes’ physical attributes like possessing muscles, having flat chest, facial hair which do not conform to the socially sanctioned feminine traits has always been translated as ‘physical abomination’. Consequently, possessing such physical trait paves way to a blemished character which is further interpreted for women athletes as ‘more the muscularity more is the probability of losing femininity (i.e. heterosexuality). All these characteristics both physical and social are conceived as a negative deviation from the expected or what is considered as ‘normal’. Goffman explains that based on such constructed notion of ‘stigma’ and ‘normal’, society constructs a ‘stigma -theory’, an ideology that explains the inferiority and rationalizes the disciplinary practices imposed on the perceived ‘deviants’ (1963: 05). Therefore women athletes are stigmatized for not complying to the conventional mode of social life and are deliberately subjected to benevolent social action like in the above case ‘verbal abuse’ that is designed to ameliorate or control their life chances as a deviant athlete. Lenskyj (1987) similarly contends that in sports the femininity of women who play traditionally male sports is suspected of being a lesbian unless they make deliberate efforts to meet male-defined standards of attractiveness and to assert their heterosexual orientation. Like for instance women body builders/wrestlers made to walk the fashion ramp wearing sari (a traditional Indian dress for women) that represents and reconfirms their heterosexual femininity. Sports media also becomes an important purveyor of instituting compulsory heteronormativity by raising questions regarding women athletes’ relationship status,
focusing on their (heterosexual) family life or representing them as a sexually attractive woman. Like one of the respondents Sushmita Singha Roy (30 years, Heptathlete) said: “I have been asked several times during interviews about my plan to get married or whether I have any special person in my life with whom I am planning to get married”.

Similarly Rinky Pramanik (29 years, 200 & 400 m sprinter) revealed: “Media has directly questioned me regarding my sexual orientation and has also asked whether I am engaged with anybody? And if yes then with whom I am engaged with?”

In India marriage is considered as an important indicator of heterosexuality since homosexual relations and marriage is criminalized i.e. not yet legalized. So asking questions pertaining to marriage overtly implies the imposition of heteronormativity.

Below is a picture of wrestlers Shilpa Sharon and Divya Kakkar walking the ramp in saree during the inauguration ceremony of Pro-Wrestling League 2015.
From the above narratives and the picture it is observed how sports media along with sport institution help in the construction and reinforcement of ‘heteronormative culture’ among athletes. Various attempts and techniques are therefore inflicted on women athletes to feminize them and make them sexually appealing for satisfying male desires as well as sustain ‘homonegativism’ in sports. Hence imposing heterosexual ideology through certain practices that are conceived primarily as gender appropriate is like what Elias states ‘civilizing process’ (1976). Elias used the concept to emphasise the various mechanisms of social control used by the society to refine/civilize the behaviours of its members. Likewise sports along with the patriarchal ideology act as a medium of civilizing (feminizing) the uncivilized masculine/man-like (unfeminine) female athlete into a civilized heteronormative feminine object. That is an object that represents male desire and where dominant patriarchal power is invested.

iii) (Sexual) Harassment/abuse of women athletes: Outcome of compulsory heterosexuality and Power

It has been rightly pointed out by Lenskyj in her work “Unsafe at Home Base: Women’s Experiences of Sexual Harassment in University Sport and Physical Education” (1992) that there exist a strong relationship between compelled heterosexuality and vulnerability towards sexual harassment of women athletes. Majority of respondents have agreed that women athletes are susceptible to sexual harassment as well as verbal, physical harassment that may tantamount to murder or suicide. Like for instance on December 12th 2016 when women athletes entered the washroom of Kanteerava stadium in Bengaluru, they found a note which said they should masturbate before practice every day. The obscene message was posted in four places in the washroom with detailed instructions of the procedure.
Rinky Pramanik (29 years, 200 m and 400 m Sprinter) shared that: “There were a group of boys and men who used to regularly make offensive comments related to my sexual preference on whatever picture I uploaded. Comments like 'homo' (short form for homosexual), 'moga' (Bengali word for effeminate males), 'hijra' (Bengali word for eunuch) along with slangs were also used for me. I ignore them or block them”.

Similarly another incident of sexual abuse was reported in 2015 when allegations were made by Sri Lanka’s national women’s cricket team that they been forced to provide sexual favours to higher officials in order to earn or keep their places in the squad. (https://in.reuters.com/article/sri-lanka-cricket-sex/sri-lanka-probe-finds-evidence-of-sex-bribes-in-womens-cricket-team-idINL3N0YD4W320150522 accessed on 23.10.2016).
Foucault provides his argument regarding sexual violence or sexual crime as not only a expression of power but also instituting sexuality with and within the body. In the same way Foucault conceives ‘rape’- as a form of sexual violence that does not confine itself only to the use of physical aggression but also amounts to the manifestation of sexuality rather manifestation of power through sexuality (1972). Tomlinson and Yorganci in their work ‘Male coach/Female athlete relations: Gender and Power relations in competitive sport’ (1997) argues that there exist a gendered nature of female athlete and male coach or sport authority relationship along with dynamics of power and control that perpetuate such relationships. They further stated that the vulnerability of young female athletes towards sexual harassment is nothing more than the manifestation of various form of sexist ideologies (that also include compulsory heterosexuality) and the prevalent gender power relations underpinning male coach, male sports authority, male senior or any other male figure/ female athlete dynamic in any genre of sports. It has been observed that majority of respondents has affirmed that there exists a power relationship between the (male) coach and the athlete since coach is in-charge of training and overall development of the athlete. They have also affirmed that the coach might take the advantage of being superior and powerful in the form of sexually exploiting female athletes. What the respondents also confirmed is that women/women athletes are always exposed to sexual abuse/harassment for possessing a ‘female body’ and since males are the usual perpetrators the obvious target becomes a female. But they themselves were reluctant to cite any real incidents of sexual harassment or abuse.

According to Himashree Roy (24 years, 100 m and 200 m Sprinter): “Yes women athletes are more prone to sexual harassment than male athletes by male coaches, seniors, administrative personnel. Infact I have never heard of any male
athletes being sexually exploited. Even in news we hear only about women being sexually targeted and attacked. It is because of women’s body and as males sexually exploit women they will never do this with another male”

Likewise Sumi Das said (29 years, 200 m Sprinter): “Women athletes are extremely vulnerable to sexual harassments and exploitation because they are women and not males”.

From the above narrative it can be observed that the respondents have not only internalised the prevalent gender binary i.e. male and female dichotomy but also believe in the existence of power relation between the gender categories and the manifestation of heteronormativity as natural. Brownmiller (1975) claims that men are always conceived and positioned as violent, aggressive subjects unconscious of their own vulnerability while women are positioned as universally vulnerable and hence anchored in their own fear. Henderson (2007) states that indeed these conceptions supplements what Foucault conceives as the ‘productive capacity of power’, retain their salience and furthers the reification of masculinist dominance. Brackenridge in this context contributed significantly through her work ‘He owned me basically: Women’s experience of Sexual Abuse in sports’ (1997) where she argues that sexual harassments and abuse arise from the opportunities for exploitation of power and authority that can either develop through socially institutionalised differences like gender differences or through the combination of both personal and institutional issues. Brackenridge in her work has illustrated the sexual discrimination/abuse continuum that explains how sexual violence is a product of institutionalized sex segregation as well as personal manifestation of power through coercion (1997: 116-117).
However what has been also expressed by the respondents is that sexual abuse, exploitation or harassments are class specific in this sense that female athletes coming from a poor economic and powerless background are more exposed to sexual violence since they are compelled to give sexual favours in returns of rewards or opportunities in job market. Like one of the respondent *Surjamoni Murmu* (20 years, 100 m and 200 m Sprinter) expressed: “*Yes women/women athletes are more vulnerable to sexual exploitations. But not all women are exploited; in sports, female athletes coming from a poor financial background are easily targeted. Coaches, authorities or sometimes colleagues take advantage of the poor condition of the athlete and make false promises of providing chances in international events, giving jobs and in return they do demand sexual favours.*”

In this context the concept of intersectionality can be applied. Here the intersection of class and gender together interact to make the position of these women athletes more vulnerable to sexual abuse. Not alone gender but the class position of women athletes i.e. their lack of adequate financial support and lack of power together disable them and expose them to abusive situations to which they are compelled to surrender. Conversely, athletes coming from a sound financial background seldom face such situations since their class structure over determines their gender structure and empowers them not to become a victim of abusive situation. Like one of the respondents *Mallika Mondal* (26 years, Long Jump Athlete) said, “*It is easier to attack a weaker person than a stronger one, and women are physiologically weaker than males. Additionally we athletes come from a poor economic background where one of*
the main purposes for coming and performing in sports is to get a job though sports quota. Thus it becomes easy for others (powerful people) to take advantage of this situation and exploit poor women athletes in the name of giving a job, or chance to participate in a prestigious athletic event. Sometimes senior athletes also exploit their juniors and threaten them to end their career if they don’t abide by their proposal and complain it to the higher officials”.

Conclusion

This section has specifically focused on the gendered practices within sports and how gender is taken as a focal point for rationalizing and structuring the pre-existing hierarchy/differences between men and women through sports. Absence of equal rules for similar athletic events and absence of certain specific events for women leads to the Partial acknowledgement of women athletes as an athlete. Additionally followed are various other discriminatory practices confessed by the athletes themselves are unequal pay for the same genre of sports which in turn reinforce the fact that women athletes invest less effort than male athletes and that women sports person winning an event does not bear the same weightage as a male winner, while the latter’s achievement is acknowledged with a higher remuneration than the former’s. Likewise women athletes are also not considered competent enough for administrative positions in sports management. Women athletes/women become victims of gender based stereotypes, and gender based job segregation that prevents them from exercising their decision making and leadership skills. Similarly women athletes’ achievements are under covered by both visual and print media. Despite the prolific advancement of women sports and female athletes and the potential for women athletes to be positive role models, the portrayal of these athletes in the media (both print and visual) has been subjected to objectification and invisibility compared to male athletes or men's sports. Though there
has been a gradual growth and acceptance of women sports, female athletes are still considered inferior to male athletes and that compared to male athletes there is still an obsession with the body of female athletes rather than on her athletic skills. Such practices are manifestations of power especially patriarchal in the form of social control which aims to impose ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ among women athletes as a disciplinary mechanism to prevent any deviant form of sexuality i.e. homosexuality. Since alternative sexuality rejects the traditional gender hierarchical relationship, fails to reinstate the institution of gender roles and does not comply with the power relation between the binary opposite i.e. men and women, such practices are conceived as detrimental to the institution of patriarchy and hence needs to be countered. This invites sexual harassment of women athletes who does not conform to the socially sanctioned image of ‘desirable femininity’ as well as those who conform to the socially prescribed feminine image. However such discriminatory practices are not same for all sports women since experiences differ and are shaped not only on the basis of gender but also is accentuated due to ones class affiliation, religious identity as well as one sexual orientation. The next chapter will hence concentrate on the plurality and multiplicity of causes of discrimination on women athletes based on their diverse social identities along with gender.