

# **BOLLYWOODIZATION OF SPORTS: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

With the passage of time the Indian cinema has evolved and it is now considered as “the art of promoting a list of moving images where it tends to tell stories in a visual medium has been a concern for the feminists. Bollywood is known for its entertainment, drama, songs, dialogues It manifests a world of visualization where the characters try to portray the vision of the director, story writers, etc<sup>1</sup>.” “The changing trends in Bollywood bring new dimensions to the film making. One such trend is of biopics on sports personalities and the other sports based movies. The sports biopics and movies created a fantasy world between sports and its viewers which gives the viewers the idea about the life- struggles and the strenuous efforts the players did to set a benchmark at national and international sports events by adding some glamour and entertainment to attract audience” . The movies tend to deliver a strong message at work in these films where the women protagonist by embracing her “sports”, which manifests physical “feminism” in which the women challenges to the “Indian patriarchy”. This study has aimed to assess depiction of “sportswomen” in Bollywood movies namely “Chak De India” & “Dangal”. The paper provides an analysis on “depiction of sportswomen as a mode to promote women empowerment by analyzing the secondary data like movie reviews , articles on films, to understand the idea of film makers behind such project is to bring a record breaking movie with their goals towards commercialization” . “But we can see with the desire of making movie a huge success the team fails to concentrate on the actual idea behind the movie. The movies tend to change the circumstances according to the drama which needs to be presented before the audience. The paper focuses on the elements of feminism in in the sports based movies. The feminist view is that equality of opportunities should exist with both men and women.”

The paper explores to the hardships the sportswomen had to overcome in day to day life to reach their goal.

**Keywords:** Sportswomen, challenge, feminism, movies.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

The following hypothesis has been put forward in relation to sports and women's participation in sports.

1. That sports acts a means for women empowerment
2. That participation of women in sports can be achieved with collective support from family, society , coaches etc
3. That few movies tend to portray women as strong character

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research method used in the article is the methodical one. The author firstly identified the problem and then looked for the data in different movie reviews, reports and studies . Secondly, The author referred to journals , newspaper and articles to understand various dimensions attached with the problem to understand it in broader perspective and lastly the readings . The author discussed her findings and observations in the present article.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Sports are traditionally linked with men since time immemorial. Women have been discouraged from participating in sports. The main idea is that the patriarchal set up portrays women as weak and less competent. The social-cultural , biological, physical and psychological barriers never let the women to come out of the four falls and choose sports as a career option.

The stereotypes around sports becomes a reason for discouragement for women.

“The movies like “Dangal” and “Chak De India” re-decipher the gender through the feminist idea. The feminist movement paved way for right to equal opportunity to ensure gender equality. Sports participation demonstrates the idea of liberty an aspect around which all other rights revolve cannot be achieved until and women emancipates from all types of oppressions”.

The character of sports women is presented as a strong emerging character. In today's scenario women are just not picturised as a glamorous character, but the biopics and women centric movies tried its best to portray women as a victim tied in shackles, but with the zeal and talent she breaks the shackles and emerge as a winner. Though there are very few films which delivered the message of gender equality. The movies like “Dangal” and “Chak De India” shows the fight of women against the patriarchal system. On one instance “Dangal” shows the efforts made by a father to help his daughters to achieve equal position to men, whereas, “Chak De India”, the male coach provided training and encouragement to the women’s hockey team to achieve international medal in hockey. In both the movies whatever the males failed to achieve, they aimed to achieve the same through the women’s win. Part I of the paper deals with interrelationship between sports and “women empowerment”. Part II Of the paper provides an understanding on the barriers hampering participation of women in sports in context to “Dangal” and “Chak De India”.

## **INTERRELATIOSHIP BETWEEN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND SPORTS**

“Sports acts as a mode to empower women and girls “. “The various nations used sports to tear down the societal stereotypes giving rise to gender inequality. We can see that work are not weak they are capable to achieve a lot in there lives. Sports participation helps women and girls to build up self esteem. The existing barriers in participation of women in sports can be cultural barriers which includes the societal stereotypes , physical barriers includes lack of infrastructure, non availability of facilities like changing rooms and washroom in the sports academy which serves basic human needs.”

“Women still face discrimination when it comes to access to sports as athletes and spectators.<sup>ii</sup> It is found that men’s sports get good media coverage, sponsor-ships etc whereas the women’s sports do not get such response”<sup>iii</sup> .

But with time we can see participation of women in sports is much more prevalent. The women had the right to play sports “since the “1900 games in Paris” ,though the number of women participants was very minimal and the range of sports covered was very less but with the passage of time women participation increased in various other sports be it in athletics, swimming, badminton, etc.”

“Women were allowed to take part in boxing programme in “2012 London Olympics” . “The women got chance to take part in the “FIFA Women’s World Championship” but they were supposed to play on artificial turf instead of natural grass.

There exists disparity in terms of media coverage, sponsorships, tournaments, accessibility to sports, salaries, training , etc.”

## AN UNDERSTANDING OF BARRIERS IN WOMEN SPORTS PARTICIPATION THROUGH MOVIES

### ❖ “Dangal [2016]”

“Directed by:- Nitesh Tiwari

**Sport involved:** Wrestling

**Type:-** Biopic”

“The movie narrates the struggle of father to train his daughters with a aim that one fine day his daughters will win gold medals in the commonwealth games and make the nation proud. The movie portrays the real life of the Phogat sisters who won 2 gold medals for India in the “commonwealth games.”

“The Phogat sisters under the training of their father “Mahavir Phogat” emerged out to be India’s first female wrestlers who won gold in commonwealth games.”

“The movie shows the passion and determination of the girls which helped them to succeed as sportswomen despite the preconceived idea of the society that wrestling is a male sport. But the achievements of the girls paved away for women’s participation in wrestling sport, also it changed the postmodern idea of gender discrimination. They did not accept to live under the shell of gender template as decided to make their career in wrestling”.

“This act of girls not only breaks the gender stereotype as the sisters embraced masculine traits and did not follow the old practice which sets the notion that the women are born to do domestic chores and take care of the elderly. “

“The first instance of fight they entered was with two boys who teased them when they were coming back to home after school . this incident made them realize that they are powerful and they have strength to fight back against wrong. when the parents of the boys complained about the same to the Girls father he got the idea that if a man an do wrestling and win medal for the nation why cant a women do that . “Mahavir Phogat” yearned for a son to fulfill his dream of winning gold in international wrestling championship . but the act of girls made him realize that even he can fulfill his dream by providing training to his daughters. He was of the view that sports are not only meant for men ,even women can participate in sporting activities. . The fearless act of daughters of beating the boys who mocked them shows that they wont remain silent because of societal expectations.”

The society accepts women as inferior so they must remain silent.

“But the father of girls decided to go beyond societal stereotypes so that he can empower his daughters to live a good life by making professional career in sports. The viewers were also impressed with such act of father encouraging his daughters. “The second instance of transforming the lifestyle of girls into that of boys in terms of attire, haircut shows that the father had no difference in his eyes between girls and boys when it comes to training his daughters he acts as a strict coach controlling his fatherly emotions for his daughters. Initially the girls were against their father as they had no interest in wrestling but slowly and gradually understand the concerns of their father for his daughters future.”

“Judith Butler” in her book “Gender Trouble” puts

A question as to “what are the parameters that actually led to classification of women as a different category from men.”<sup>iv</sup>

“The father approached to the trainers nearby ,who denied the request saying that they cant teach this sport to girls as girls are weak and they will get injured very badly” .

“The girls felt isolated in schools because they were getting trained for wrestling. This made the girls to opt for few manipulative tactics so that their father himself asks them to stop doing wrestling.”

### Cultural barriers

The reason behind the same is that the girls accepted social conditioning and had no interest in wrestling because of the treatment they received from neighborhood.

“When Geeta was taken for participation for her first local wrestling match. The committee members ridiculed the father and the sibling. The members stated that when we’ll organize cooking competition then please bring Geeta.

So here we can observe the classification of gender in terms of fields and events they are made for.”

“Even though the committee members ta last permit Geeta to chose her contender and take part in the competition, we can see that the referee before the starting of the round clearly asks the boy to go easy on her as she is a girl. So here we can see that the trainers, coaches too failed to abridge the gender gap as they also believe that girls lack capabilities and have certain limitations” .

“The belief that women are weak, emotional, feminine and the men are strong headed and powerful itself curtails the participation of women in sports.

Geeta did lost that match but she won the hearts because the boy did not get a easy win. But after this fight she worked harder and then won various local wrestling matches establishing the fact that women are not weak. The female masculinity can be seen in the sisters which is something beyond traditional framework of the society in terms of masculinity.”

“Jack Halberstam” in her book “Female Masculinity” is a relaxation on the gender conformity and gender identification. Sports as a discipline acts as a space for gender transgression.<sup>v</sup>

The movie delivers the message that the voice of talent is something beyond gender. The movie is stating that women can become successful with the feminine qualities.”<sup>vi</sup>

**“Chak De India [2007]”**

“Directed by- “Shimit Amin.”

Sport targeted- Hockey

Type: sports movie”

“The movie is about 16 women hockey players who have certain achievement at local levels . They struggle to prove that they are part of the world of sports. Kabir khan [The coach] tries to teach them sportsmanship, the importance of collective team efforts to win any tournament . the women struggle to get approval from the committee to play at international level representing India. They face gender discrimination and denial of opportunity due to lack of moral support.”

- “Komal Chautala” from “Haryana” “has to argue with her parents to seek permission for playing hockey and to be part of the Indian hockey team. The movie shows the how the male attitude towards women create obstacles in women participation in sports”.
- “The team captain “Vidhya Sharma” was asked before the tournament to quit the sport and perform her duties of wife and daughter-in-law. This shows the male on his interest will decide when you can or cannot play the sport.”
- “The vice captain Preeti:- her fiance being a cricket player himself did not support Preeti in her sport due to his personal insecurity”.

“The lack of interest of the coach to provide coaching to the women players shows the that even the promoters of sports themselves have no interest in empowering women for sports participation.”

“The authority head Mr. Tripathi stated that its better to not spend unnecessarily money on the women’s team as he had no hoped from the women . He believed women can only do household works like cooking, cleaning.”

“The coach of women’s team challenged that the women team can represent India . they need encouragement so he challenged the authorities to conduct a match between women’s hockey team and the men’s hockey team. They lost the match but the men’s hockey team respected and encouraged women’s for there efforts. The women has to fight against her own people and the opponents who doubt her abilities. The discouragement from the society have impact on the self confidence of the women. The fear that the women’s team had due to the distrust of society in them. The film shows the hurdles that women need to overcome to live her dreams

the women fight alone and win. One must not discourage women as women have capabilities which gets covered due to the biasness created by the society and the sports committee itself. The coach supports his team in all the odds they faced which shows that to break the stereotypes the men need to pitch for women as stereotype creators are stereotype breaker. Stereotype. This movie is one of the classic example of women empowerment which prove that women are not inferior to man.”<sup>vii</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Cinema is now a global phenomenon. It encourages physical liberation of the women. The success of the movies like “Dangal” and “Chak De India” reveals the chance that the gender stereotypes Can be reconstructed in accordance to the current scenario. “The creation of the term female masculinity Proves that feminity and masculinity is not a singular term anymore rather they are a mix concept”. With time the participation of women in almost each and every sport but the work is not done yet. Still the disparities related to salary, tournaments, media coverage, etc needs to be addressed so that the efforts of the sportswomen can be recognised by the people in India and across the world.

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## ENDNOTES

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