



Women's Cricket World Cup Victory and a Lingering Doubt

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Abstract

Sports have undergone a transformative journey within Indian society, evolving from ancient traditions to a modern spectacle of athleticism and technology. The Women's Cricket World Cup Victory of 2025 stands as a landmark achievement in the history of women's sports, symbolizing resilience, skill, and the steady rise of women's cricket on the global stage. The triumph not only reflects exceptional on-field performance, strategic brilliance, and team cohesion but also underscores the progress made in institutional support, grassroots development, and visibility of women athletes. This victory has inspired millions, challenged traditional gender norms, and strengthened the narrative of equality and empowerment in sports.

However, beneath the celebratory surface lies a lingering doubt that invites critical reflection. Questions persist regarding the sustainability of this success beyond a single tournament. Issues such as unequal funding, limited media coverage compared to men's cricket, inconsistent domestic structures, and the pressure of heightened expectations pose significant challenges. The victory raises concerns about whether systemic reforms will follow or if the momentum will fade once public attention diminishes. Additionally, debates surrounding workload management, mental well-being of players, and long-term talent nurturing highlight the complexities of maintaining excellence in a highly competitive global environment.

This abstract examines the dual narrative of triumph and uncertainty, emphasizing that while the 2025 Women's Cricket World Cup victory

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Represents a watershed moment, it also serves as a reminder that sustained progress requires continuous investment, policy commitment, and cultural change. The lingering doubt thus becomes not a sign of weakness, but a call to action to transform a historic win into a lasting legacy for women's cricket worldwide.

Introduction:

Cricket is a sport with a legacy spanning hundreds of years. Sports and cricket are not synonymous rather cricket is a part of sports. Cricket is the most popular and successful sub-discipline of Indian sports culture. There is a perfect Cricket essence in our country. cricketers' capability, spectators' emotion, healthy infrastructure, publicity, media initiatives, sponsors cooperation, mass market, gambling and the huge public—everything combines to create an exciting cricket environment. Sports have consistently mirrored societal values, reflecting changes in culture, politics, and advancement in technology. In India, sports have transitioned from historical customs to embrace contemporary practices (Sreeji and Rajesh, 2025). Methodologies and worldwide patterns, a shift that reflects the country's wider socio-political development (Sreeji and Rajesh, 2025). The connection between sports and society is multidimensional, affecting physical well-being, national identity, and community unity (Pardeshi & Venkatesh, 2018 in Sreeji and Rajesh, 2025).

However, it's an ideal male-dominated sphere, yet, women play it against all odds. But the refined culture built on cricketing aristocracy is unsuitable for women (Ruth Medd, Claire Braund. 2016). Their presence is lifeless in our domestic sports. But yet, these women won the Cricket World Cup. Women! But who are you, Nandini? We haven't seen you before! (“কে তুমি নন্দিনী আগে তো দেখিনি...”) How can we see if the veil of conservatism isn't lifted? (ক্রিকেটে মেয়েদের বিশ্বজয় মেয়েদেরই অন্যান্য খেলাকে লম্বু করে দেবে না তো? 2025).

Now the entire country trembled with emotion. The greatest victory in Indian women's sports. A victory of undivided democracy. A tribute to Bharat Lakshmi (the goddess of prosperity). An unusual rise and its celebration. But this immense victory narrative somehow becomes a cliché in feminine contrast. The glory of the victory becomes dull in the face of the greatest success of women's unconventional achievements. As if it wasn't supposed to happen; victory of women! An unparalleled wonder. While constantly dwelling on about "women's victory," a hidden reverence for traditional patriarchy perhaps remains. Along with that, glimpses of fear, apprehension, and uncertainty (Wigmore, 2016).

The story of women's Cricket has been another tragedy altogether. Cricket originated in the British cricketing circles. It was an attempt to cultivate national identities by the way of promoting masculine identities. It was aimed at conditioning masculine traits amongst men and cultivates a sense of cultural superiority. It was not only the quest to develop a sense of sporting supremacy but the supremacy of man socially. It ensured that Cricket remains to be a game played by man at the exclusion of women. The aforementioned facts clearly testify the fact that the birth of Cricket can be accredited to political reasons and gains. Politics during those times was highly male dominated. There were fixed notions of beauty and grace of feminine women. In addition, there were rigid gender roles which provided for men to be strong and protective whereas, maternal and submissive qualities were considered to be an effeminate trait. If women chose to defy these notions, then they would have lost the effeminate identity, an ideal woman's tag who is not womanly enough in terms of features and her ways. Hence, these notions further obstructed women's participation in Cricket.

There is still the belief that women are incapable of playing cricket because doing so deprives them of their beauty and grace. The way that people view the cricket icons in their daily lives reflects this idea. On the one hand, the male cricket legends are revered and compared to gods. On the other hand, most people are unaware of the female legends in the same game. Only if the men's team wins a series will the country's pride be restored. Despite having the same title, women do not receive the same blessings or greetings. For the straightforward reason that nobody gives a damn, they neither receive recognition for their successes nor criticism for their defeats. Despite the fact that both teams are from India and represent the same people in the same game, the players' gender completely alters their perspective. This raises the question of whether cricket is truly a religion and whether a player's commitment is altered by their gender. So, we cannot expect women's cricket to show the same quality without providing them the same treatment and facilities. Till then, the patience that we have shown to men's cricket is needed to be put on display again. Our Team India needs us, the game that we love needs us. But the only difference is that the players are from the other half population's gender which is the Female gender. Are we still willing to provide the same support? (Sharma,2018).

After the recent world cup win the scenario has changed and women cricket team now growing their popularity and women cricket team now get their name, fame and uplift a lot in socioeconomic point of view. Most of the champion team members got prestigious job along

with warm felicitations from different state governments. Now a days women IPL is popular sporting events in India.

The purpose of the study explores the evolving perception of sports in India, integrating historical significance with contemporary advancements emphasising recent women cricket cup victory and its role to minimise gender discrepancy and encouragement of women participation in competitive sports.

Methodology: The data of women participation in cricket and social-economic, cultural events of the society for male and female has been collected from the various databases and discussed critically.

Discussion: The discussion of the different levels is presented categorically with the help of the following tables and figures.

Table-1. Male responses about cultural events of our society

| Age group | Total | Preference for sports | | Preference for music | | Preference for dance | | Preference for fine arts | |
|-----------|-------|-----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|
| | | f | % | f | % | f | % | F | % |
| Below 30 | 151 | 16 | 10.6 | 66 | 43.71 | 48 | 31.79 | 21 | 13.91 |
| 30+-40 | 102 | 7 | 6.86 | 55 | 53.92 | 21 | 20.59 | 19 | 18.63 |
| 40+-50 | 124 | 13 | 10.48 | 74 | 59.68 | 25 | 20.16 | 12 | 9.68 |
| 50+-60 | 107 | 9 | 8.41 | 65 | 60.77 | 26 | 24.3 | 7 | 6.54 |
| Above 60 | 93 | 2 | 2.15 | 55 | 51.4 | 20 | 21.51 | 16 | 17.2 |
| | 577 | 47 | 8.15 | 315 | 54.6 | 140 | 24.26 | 75 | 13 |

The above table contains the cultural trends of our society by age wise made responses from general people.

To enter into the core topic, first of all it should discriminate the general socio-cultural tendency of our country because sports is a major stream of any culture. But the collected information is disheartening to our sports culture. Among other performing or visual art till date our national tendency has made it (sport for women) an inferior social event where music dance even fine arts are more acceptable than sports; which is the composite responses of Indian population (male). The cultural responses were collected from Indian public through questionnaire. The above table shows the percentage values of the responses also (Ghosh, P. 2018).

The previous Table - 1 shows the complete tendency of male responses about Indian cultural fashion in consideration of ladies' participation.

In total almost 55% male likes music for our women; 13% are interested among groups then it is very clear that all group preferences are same as the total responses. But in case of senior group (above 60 years) the responses that supports for women for sports are very surprisingly poor only 2.15%.

Table-2. Female responses about cultural events of our culture

| Age group | Total | Preference for sports | | Preference for music | | Preference for dance | | Preference for fine arts | |
|-----------|-------|-----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|
| | | f | % | F | % | f | % | F | % |
| Below 30 | 127 | 13 | 10.24 | 50 | 39.37 | 36 | 31.79 | 28 | 22.05 |
| 30+-40 | 74 | 8 | 10.81 | 35 | 47.3 | 21 | 28.38 | 10 | 13.51 |
| 40+-50 | 92 | 9 | 9.78 | 43 | 46.74 | 28 | 30.43 | 12 | 13.04 |
| 50+-60 | 90 | 9 | 10 | 44 | 48.89 | 30 | 33.33 | 7 | 7.78 |
| Above 60 | 73 | 3 | 4.11 | 39 | 53.42 | 19 | 26.03 | 12 | 16.45 |
| | 456 | 42 | 9.21 | 211 | 43.47 | 134 | 29.39 | 69 | 15.13 |

The above table contains the female preferences about cultural events of our society for our females.

The Table - 2 statistically represent the thinking fashion of Indian ladies about ladies' attachment in any social events. The percentage values indicate the tendency of preferences of female population is symmetrical with male preferences just values are little bit different.

The Table – 1 & 2 both are just a glimpse of our periphery. Compare the thinking fashion of Indian male and female about women attachment in any social events. The percentage values indicate the tendency of preferences of female population is symmetrical with male preferences just values are little bit different and of course female responses little better than male for the particular factor. The data was collected before 8 years. But the present tendency is not changed at all (Ghosh, P. 2018).

Table 1 to 2 indicates the social tendency. The responses from both male and female almost same. Even there is a similar tendency among young and aged people or senior citizen groups. Without any hesitation from these responses, it can clear that our society doesn't interest about

female in sports. Rather they try to describe women as a perfect bride. They believe womanhood be spoiled about involving sports regularly and sports is contradictory with female physique. These types of thinking is a great hindrance for sporting culture. Public responses sharply indicate the test of our society. Music is the first choice for our women. Then dance, fine Arts obtained the third out of four category and sports is the last preference for women. It is the high indication of gender gap.

Global Gender Gap Index

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025, released in mid-2025, underscores persistent gender disparities worldwide. It finds that about 68.8% of the global gender gap has been closed – an improvement that shortens the projected time to full parity to roughly 123 years. India's situation remains challenging: its gender parity score is around 64%, with a 131st rank among 148 countries (down from 129th in 2024). This recent report highlights that, despite modest gains in education and health for women, India still lags many countries, emphasizing the urgent need to address gaps in workforce participation, political representation and social norms (Source: Global Gender Gap Index 2025: India's Ranking, Insights & Roadmap, 2025. <https://www.iasexpress.net/global-gender-gap-index-2025-india/>).

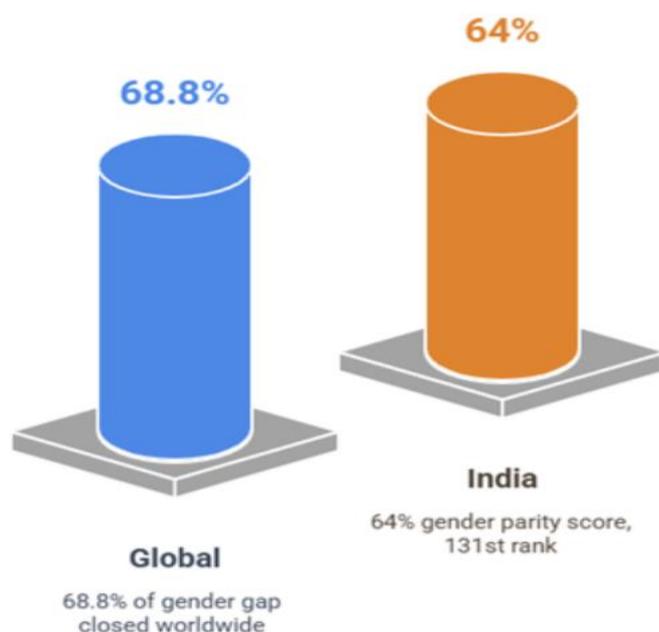


Fig.1. Global and India gender Gap Score, 2025.

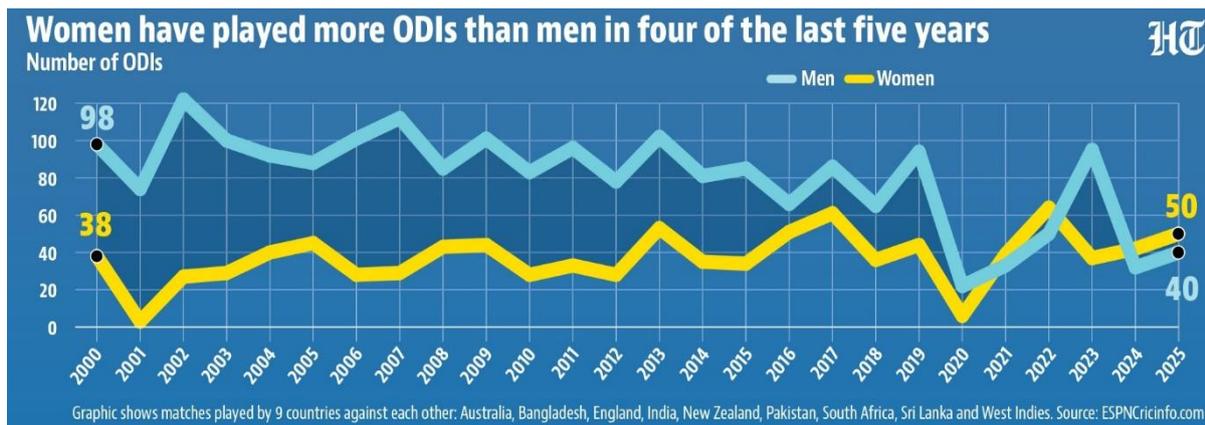


Fig-2. The comparison between men and women ODI cricket

Source Hindustan Times, 2025.

In the running year, 2025 India ranked 131 among 148 countries in the list of gender gap index. It's a negative social status. So, how can we expect that there will be healthy sporting culture in our society. Table-6 prominently focus on the gender gap in Indian most popular game cricket since 2000.

Critical Analysis:

Let come to the present scenario. The Women Indian Cricket Team make a history. History of joy. But this victory is the sign of fear. This victory might even be the sign of decay. A survey conducted about ten years ago showed that families prioritize music above all else for their daughters. After that, dance and fine arts. Sports were at the very bottom of the four choices. In the subsequent part of the same survey, parents, grandparents, brothers, and boyfriends ranked eight sports according to their preference for their daughters, granddaughters, sisters, and girlfriends. Cricket was at the top of that ranking, and Kabaddi and football were tied for seventh and eighth place. This trend has probably not changed in a decade. And this victory in cricket will certainly encourage parents of baby girl to pursue cricket even more.

That's good news. However, it must be remembered that equal rights or success for a select few women in specific fields does not constitute women's empowerment. The empowerment of women rests on the secure lives, freedom of choice, financial security, civic dignity, social safety, and equitable distribution of social benefits for females at all levels. Based on this logic, sports are a very strong means of women's empowerment. But sports doesn't just mean cricket. For girls from impoverished backgrounds, establishing themselves through cricket is even more uncertain

at this moment. Many girls, burdened by financial and cultural deprivation, possess physical capabilities. These poor, marginalized, and underprivileged daughters, raised amidst the hardships of malnutrition and daily struggle for survival, have consistently sustained the country's sports culture. These girls, who live hand-to-mouth, play football, kabaddi, kho kho, and volleyball free of charge. They participate in state and national level competitions. From there, some manage to secure their livelihood and permanent employment. Although, in many states, appointments under the sports quota are no longer as prevalent as before. It is at precisely such a moment that our daughters have conquered the world in cricket. Now, perhaps, the dominance of women's cricket will completely shatter even the minimal general possibilities for women's sports and, through it, their empowerment.

These thoughts are merely a display of profound foresight. In the 2025 Global Gender Gap report, our country's ranking is 131. In this context, this massive victory for women in cricket is raising the flag of equal rights in a sophisticated democracy. It is a source of immense satisfaction. The daughters of India have achieved a universally beneficial outcome after half a century of dedicated effort. Every Indian has the right to enjoy this fruit. Or, in a broader sense, it is for every person around the world who is rebelling against adversity. But there is a fear that the capitalists might snatch away the profits! The equality fostered through sports will be scattered. Women in cricket have overcome the barriers of gender discrimination. Now, the market economy will invest in their success. Just as men's cricket has launched an all-consuming aggression in our country, crushing and distorting the sports culture. In colonial India, football was the people's game. Indian emotions resonated with football. Alongside this, hockey enjoyed long-term success. Swimming, racket sports, athletics, archery, boxing, wrestling, and weightlifting were practiced across the country. And smaller, indigenous games thrived in villages, towns, and even urban alleys. The picture was the same in every corner of the country. However, in some places, football was played more, in others, hockey, and in still others, only individual sports. Initially, this depended on the climate and geographical environment. It was a healthy and balanced sporting landscape in the context of vast India. This diversity had its own unique character and sincerity. There was no sense of obligation, either for the players, spectators, or officials. But in the last quarter of a century, the social appeal of sports has changed. A sports-centric homogeneity has emerged. However, this is not merely a gender-based uniformity. It's something much bigger, a sense of nationalism. Collective patriotism is overflowing onto the cricket field. The game is incredibly popular in markets and bazaars. This

is a consequence of winning the World Cup. Since then, a market has gradually developed. In this market, everything related to cricket—the fields, matches, Man of the Match awards, victories, defeats, diplomatic fears, political provocations, talent, or revenge—is marketable. With the Indianization of cricket, the country's indigenous sports culture has collapsed. Therefore, our position in world sports is like a cricket chirping incessantly from behind a bush outside the field. This country was not always so devoid of sporting prowess.

Today we are talking about gender discrimination in sports. Gender-based attacks are rampant both on and off the field. Certainly, women have achieved success in cricket, overcoming countless obstacles. This is undoubtedly a huge achievement, an achievement for the entire country and the entire nation. But this is nothing new. This preparation began fifty years ago. If the cup had remained elusive this time too, would the self-reliance of Indian women over these long fifty years have been rendered meaningless? In reality, we are interpreting sports in terms of statistics of winning and losing. This is self-deception. Vinesh Phogat didn't win a medal. Is she not a fighter? She fought equally hard both on and off the field for the sport and for the safety of future female athletes. They had to take their fight to the streets because they represent a marginalized sport. Wrestling does not have the same prestige as cricket. We have never properly paid attention to the Indian women's football team. For years, they have silently written an epic saga of struggle, regardless of whether anyone praised them or not. The country's women's hockey team delivered a formidable performance at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, securing fourth place. This achievement of the women's hockey team at the Tokyo Olympics was far more difficult than winning the Cricket World Cup. Hockey is widely popular in the world of sports; it is not confined to a region or a few countries. In that respect, cricket's reach is not yet globalized. Rather, the success of the women's hockey team in securing fourth place is even more conducive to women's empowerment. There is no medal for fourth place. But that doesn't mean the effort of coming fourth is a failure. Rather, between winning and losing, fourth place represents the harsh reality of life. PT Usha also finished fourth in an international track event. The success of women in individual events over a hundred years is also a formula for women's empowerment. Ila Mitra, Nilima Ghosh, Mary D'Souza, Arati Saha, Shiny Abraham, Mary Kom – none of them are any less significant. Centered around them, serious practice of women's sports has gradually developed across the country, creating a robust sporting environment. Alongside this, there is also a strong tradition in racket sports. However, this is an individual achievement, as the substantial financial support required is impossible without affluent families.

In various states of India, such as Punjab, Haryana, Jharkhand, Bihar, and West Bengal, regular sports events for girls are being organized in several marginalized areas. In some places, it is considered merely a form of entertainment. Perhaps this doesn't provide much benefit to promising players, nor does it truly establish the rights of women. Yet, this is a sign of social progress. The lives of many Kashmiri girls have been transformed by the powerful influence of these sports and recreational activities. The biggest example of this is Afshan Ashiq. Furthermore, administrative activism in several regions is creating a barrier against negative social practices. Human trafficking of women is decreasing in border areas. Child marriage among adolescent girls in marginalized regions is declining. Young girls are attending school. In various districts of our state, the administration is organizing various sports and games for girls as part of social welfare initiatives. This culture will create a window for women's empowerment.

Therefore, even though the state of Indian women's sports at the international level is not very satisfactory at the moment, this situation is not bad considering our societal trends. Moreover, this world cup victory by the women's cricket team is quite encouraging. However, this victory is a double-edged sword for the future of sports culture. Firstly, it has challenged gender segregation on the playing field. Secondly, it is encouraging girls, their families, and the wider public to participate in sports. But the third aspect is a cause for great concern. Is this victory a surrender to the market economy? If women's cricket becomes commercialized, the potential for empowerment that had been created within women's sports will be suppressed. The reliable tool for social reform will also be destroyed.

Conclusion:

We talk of Gender Equality and are very well aware of the fact that a nation can never develop if, the other half of the population is not contributing. We need the women of our country to contribute for its development. Hence, Cricket is no different as it can never be completely developed without women's participation. It's not only the deprivation of women but, also a hindrance for cricket which stops this wonderful game from being accessed by everyone. Now the female players of the winner team got huge amount of money as prize and surely their socio-economic status is uplifted. No doubt this achievement of Indian Women Cricketer influences other female sports. But parallel doubt is lingering there. Presently the corporate and marketing attitude of Cricket captured complete sporting culture of India. May be this great victory of women Cricket will encroach the female sports of our country!

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