

Achievement of Women Football in India- A Review

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Abstract: *The purpose of the present study was threefold i.e., to investigate and document the history of women's football in India, tracing its evolution, milestones, and key developments over the years, to contextualize the study within the broader landscape of women's football in India, examining the challenges, successes, and unique aspects of the sport in the country and to analyze the achievements of women's football, including the accomplishments of individual footballers, and assess their impact on the sport's growth and recognition in India.*

By addressing these objectives, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the history and status of women's football in India, shedding light on its past, present, and the contributions of players to the sport's development. This research can be valuable in promoting awareness and facilitating further advancements in women's football within the Indian context.

The Indian women's national football team is under the control of the All-India Football Federation and represents India in women's international football competitions. After a nearly year-long hiatus, the women's team resumed playing on 7 September 2012. The team operates under the global jurisdiction of FIFA and is governed in Asia by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). Additionally, the team is a member of the South Asian Football Federation.

During the mid-70s to early 80s, the Indian women's national team was among the best teams in Asia. They achieved notable success by becoming runners-up in the 1979 and 1983 AFC Women's Asian Cup. These achievements highlighted their competitiveness and skill on the Asian football stage.

In more recent times, the Indian team achieved a significant milestone by winning its first gold medal in the 2010 South Asian Games held in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Players like Bembem Devi and Ansha were standout performers during this period, contributing to the team's success.

This history underscores the rich legacy of women's football in India and the potential for future growth and success on both the Asian and international stages. The Indian women's national football team continues to inspire and pave the way for future generations of female footballers in the country.

To find out the data and various information Researcher reviewed different websites, Google, Wikipedia, Newspaper, Sports magazines, Books, etc.

Initially, the author went through literature related to women's sports. Further, he shortened his area of focus and restricted it to the area of Women's football in the Olympics and other sports. He went through all sorts of information available in the form of secondary sources like books, journals, articles, magazines, newspapers, the internet, etc., and accumulated all important data relevant to the topic and presented in the thesis.

In conclusion, while progress has been made in the realm of women's football, there is still much work to be done to ensure that female athletes receive the same rights, recognition, and opportunities as their male counterparts. It is imperative that stakeholders in the football world and society at large continue to push for greater gender equality in sports, fostering an environment where female football players can thrive both on the field and in their social lives..

Keywords: India, Women's Football, Achievement, History

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian women's national football team is controlled by the All-India Football Federation and represents India in women's international football competitions. The women's team resumed playing on 7 September 2012 after nearly a year-long hiatus under the global jurisdiction of FIFA and governed in Asia by the AFC, the team is also part of the South Asian Football Federation. The team was one of the best teams in Asia in the mid-70s to early 80s, when they became runners-up at the 1979 and 1983 AFC Women's Asian Cup. Presently, the Indian team has won its first gold medal in the 2010 South Asian Games held at Dhaka Bangladesh in which Bembem Devi and Ansha were star performers.

The team has yet to participate in the FIFA Women's World Cup and Olympic Games and failed to participate in the last 5 Asian Cups since 2003 at Thailand, as their last participation. The present ranking of the team according to FIFA Women's World Rankings is 57 and 13th among the Asian countries

The essence of soccer is its simplicity, known as Football in much of the world, it is still a game of the masses, speaking a language that knows no international barriers. The object of the game is to get the ball, by any means except using the hands, into the rectangular goals at each end of the field. The team scoring the most goals is the winner.

In the earliest evidence of soccer dates from about 200 B.C. in China, where a form of the game was played that emphasized the ability of players to dribble a leather ball. The Greeks and Romans also participated in a variation of soccer that permitted ball carrying. The modern-day outgrowth of soccer is known to have started in England, and the first ball reportedly was the head of a dead Danish brigand. Although King Edward III prohibited soccer in 1365 because of its excessive violence and for military reasons - playing took time away from archery practice - the game had become too popular to be curtailed. The earliest organized games were massive confrontations between teams consisting of two or three parishes each, with goals as many as 3 or 4 miles (5-6.5 km) apart. By 1801 the game had been refined, requiring a limited and equal number of participants on each side and confining the playing area to between 80 and 100 yards (73-91 meters), with a goal at each end. The goal was usually made of two sticks a few feet apart. The first crossbars were merely lengths of tape stretched between the two goalposts. In 1875 the Football Association made the bar mandatory. In the 1850's the rules still varied from place to place, and consequently the number of players on a side ranged from 15 to 20. The current 11-player teams were formally established in 1870, with 9 forwards and 2 defenders-the most common formation. Not until the 1880s was the goalkeeper formally distinguished from the other players, and at that time he was designated as the only player allowed to touch the ball with his hands. In 1857 the first soccer club was formed in Sheffield, England. This set the stage for one of the most significant dates in soccer history. Oct. 26, 1863. On this date, 11 clubs met in London to form the Football Association, which laid the foundations for the nearly 140 modern national associations. With the advent of a national association in England, any soccer played under its jurisdiction was called "association football". As time passed the word association was abbreviated to "asset", which eventually gave way to the word "Soccer," which is the common name for the game in North America. In 1913 world governing body the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA) was created to coordinate all of the national associations in the world. The result has been the development of spectacular international competitions such as the World Cup. Which has sparked soccer's growth into the world's most popular sport.

The purpose of the present study was threefold i.e., to investigate and document the history of women's football in India, tracing its evolution, milestones, and key developments over the years, to contextualize the study within the broader landscape of women's football in India, examining the challenges, successes, and unique aspects of the sport in the country and to analyze the achievements of women's football, including the accomplishments of individual footballers, and assess their impact on the sport's growth and recognition in India.

By addressing these objectives, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the history and status of women's football in India, shedding light on its past, present, and the contributions of players to the sport's development. This research can be valuable in promoting awareness and facilitating further advancements in women's football within the Indian context.

II. METHODOLOGY

To find out the data and various information Researcher reviewed different websites, Google, Wikipedia, Newspaper, Sports magazines, Books, etc.

III. DESIGN OF THE STUDY

A review study was considered appropriate to explore a piece of in-depth information on various aspects of the subject matter related to the study, designed in which historical, analytical and interpretive methods were utilized to collect the relevant data.

To accomplish the study the scholar collected data from secondary sources like the internet, newspapers, TV channels, Wikipedia, magazines, etc.

Plan of work: Initially the author went through literature related to women's sport. Further, he shortened his area of focus and restricted it to the area of Women's football in the Olympics and other sports. He went through all sorts of information available in the form of secondary sources like books, journals, articles, magazines, newspapers, the internet, etc., and accumulated all important data relevant to the topic and presented in the thesis.

IV. METHOD OF DISCUSSION

For discussion and presentation of the information in a systematic manner, the following headings were adopted:

1. Brief history of football in India.
2. Development of football in different states; Railway Sports Board, Services Sport Control Board, and AIU Board and famous clubs of football in India.
3. Recent achievements of women football and footballers in India.

A brief and valuable criticism along with comments was given regarding the achievements in football. Criticism and comments of some of the learned persons experts and of the research workers were also given along with the opinions of the football lovers.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 BRIEF HISTORY OF FOOTBALL IN INDIA.

The game of football was introduced in India by the British Govt, in the last century and the first recorded game took place at Calcutta in 1854. Indian clubs were first admitted into organized competitions towards the latter part of the 19th century. In 1911 marked a historic sporting and colonial occasion for India. Indian Football Association was formed in 1893 namely All India Football Federation (AIFF). First Club of Football was formed in 1889 in Calcutta which was sponsored by TATA TEA. Mainly football was originated from the state of Bengal.

The state of Bengal to be specific, its Calcutta has been at the heart of Indian Football. Although, Still power full Calcutta has strong competition from other location

Durand Cup was the first tournament which was started in 1888 at Shimla. It is the third-oldest tournament in the world at present. After that many India cup and Shield tournaments were started in India.

Mohun Bagan Soccer Club was formed in 1889 and is the first club in India. After that, more than a Dozen clubs of football were formed in different regions of India.

Football was introduced originally in National games in 1975 for women group. All India Electricity Board also introduced a football competition in 1975 in India.

5.2 RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF WOMEN FOOTBALL AND FOOTBALLERS IN INDIA.

1970–2009: RISE AND FALL

Football for women in Asia started later compared to their female counterparts. The seed of women's football in India was planted in the early 1970s. The first manager was Sushil Bhattacharya, in 1975, and from 1975 to 1991, the administration of the game was in the hands of the Women's Football Federation of India (WFFI) which comes under the Asian Ladies' Football Confederation (ALFC) had recognition from neither Fifa nor AFC (Asian Football Confederation). Both organizations continuously tried to dissuade Asian countries from sending teams to these tournaments for which the first few editions of the AFC Women's Asian Cup and other unofficial tournaments saw very

few teams participate thus the 1980 Calicut edition of the Asian Championship featured two Indian teams (India N & India S), Western Australia, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Malaysia. India did well enough in all these unofficial tournaments under Sushil Bhattacharya and India S became runners-up at Calicut. In the next edition of 1981 India achieved third position, defeated by Thailand, and again became runners-up in the 1983 edition losing to Thailand again. This was the best chapter for the Indian women's team in the Asian platform as since 1983 the performance declined along with mismanagement in the federation and failure to promote the games at all levels in every state of India. The game was administered by WFFI from 1975 until the early 1990s when they were absorbed into the AIFF as despite their impressive display at the Asian level, women's football in India went into a state of gloom by the end of the eighties due to the previous federation failure of promoting the women's football to the level it had deserved.

But the AIFF too did very little to lift the women's football from their meager condition. It was the time when FIFA conceptualized and organized the FIFA Women's World Cup in 1991 and the International Olympic Committee started the women's competition at the 1996 Summer Olympics. Time and again, the AIFF officials stated that lifting the standard of women's football to the level of their Asian counterparts was their chief aim but they never backed up their words with actions. AIFF was treating women's football as an extra burden a fact that was hidden from anyone but it became evident when they failed to sponsor the team's first foreign trip in 1997 to Germany before the Asian Championships. Eventually, the trip was made possibly with the help of the German Football Association and NRI's living in Germany.

The 1998 Asian Games was the first participation for the national team but came out to be a nightmare as they were defeated by Chinese Taipei with a score line of 1–13 in the second match and again in the 3rd match they faced the biggest defeat in the history by China PR with an embarrassing scoreline of 0–16.

The women's game reached a new low in June 2009 when FIFA delisted the side from its world rankings for being out of action for more than 18 months. From 1991 to 2010 the performance of the Indian team was very poor, participating in just 5 editions of the Asian Championships, with 2003 as their last participation in which they faced a repeated embarrassing defeat with a 0–12 scoreline from China PR. FIFA Women's World Cup and Olympics participation is yet to be a reality for the Indian team.

2010 TO PRESENT SCENARIO

After the 2009 sanction by FIFA, the AIFF started to put their minds in place to better the condition of the national team and women's football, which led to commencing the SAFF Women's Championship and also including women's football in the South Asian Games. Indian team earn massive success in SAFF competitions. Winning the SAFF Women's Championship four times in a row without losing a single game. Additionally, they won two gold medals at the South Asian Games.

On 17 December 2014, AIFF Secretary Kushal Das stated that the goal for women's football from 2014 to 2017 was to increase the ranking of the India senior team to the top 40s and the top 8 in Asia, start a professional women's league by 2015, and to qualify for both the U19 and U16 versions of the AFC championships. This is now far from reality as India is 60th by FIFA World Rankings and 13th among the Asian countries and has yet to qualify for the AFC Women's Asian Cup since 2003, FIFA Women's World Cup, and Olympic Games.

They participated in the qualifiers for the 2012 Olympics in March 2011. In their first match they beat rivals and group hosts Bangladesh 3–0. In the second round, India Women played Uzbekistan where they tied the first match 1–1 but lost the second leg 1–5 and were officially knocked out. Again, for the Rio 2016 Olympics, they participated in the AFC qualifiers, the first match was a win defeating Sri Lanka with a score of 4–1 then a shocking defeat from Myanmar with a score line 0–7 which led the way out from the qualifiers.

India participated for the second time at the Asian Games in 2014, but the condition was not better than the previous participation, 16 years back in 1998. Though India defeated Maldives easily with a 15–0 score, a similar fate of Maldives was faced by them in the next two matches where they were defeated by both South Korea and Thailand with the same score of 0–10.

In August 2018, the Indian women's national team was invited to participate in the Cotif Tournament which clubs and national and autonomous teams have participated every year since 1984, held at Valencia, Spain. 2018 Cotif was the 35th Anniversary of the tournament. At this tournament, they faced 3 Spanish club teams and Morocco. First lost

to Foundation Albacete, 1–4, then to Levanter UD, 0–5, then the Moro ccan side defeated India with a score 5–1, but in the last match, India played with maturity, though lost to Madrid CFF with 0–1 score.

In November 2018, India qualified to the second round of 2020 AFC Women's Olympic Qualifying Tournament for the first time since the qualifying tournament started for the 2008 Summer Olympics.

In preparation for the 2020 Olympics 2nd round qualifiers India played two matches each against Hong Kong and Indonesia winning all four of them 5–2 & 1–0 against Hong Kong and 3–0 & 2–0 against Indonesia respectively. Following these matches India played at the Women's Gold Cup organized at home, where they won their first match against Iran by 1–0 but lost the next two matches to Nepal and Myanmar by 1–2 and 0–2 respectively, and failed to reach the final.

Sexism is one of the longstanding issues faced by women in society and it runs deep in Indian football too. The notion that the women's game is far inferior and a secondary version compared to what men play continues to exist. On the back of it, is the huge gender pay disparity that is now coming to the fore globally. The winners of the ongoing Fifa Women's World Cup will receive a cash prize of \$4 million. Although the cash prize is double from the previous edition that took place in 2015, France was awarded a total of \$38 million for winning the 2018 men's World Cup, almost ten times as much.

TOP WOMEN FOOTBALLERS OF INDIA AND THEIR ACHIEVEMENT

SHANTI MULLICK

During that time, the Women's Football Federation of India (WFFI) played a crucial role in organizing and promoting women's football in India. However, the fact that the Asian Ladies' Football Confederation (ALFC) wasn't recognized by FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) had implications for the official status of matches and competitions involving the Indian national women's team. The matches played under the ALFC might have been considered unofficial in the eyes of these governing bodies.

Despite these challenges, the Indian women's team performed remarkably well in Asia. They finished as runners-up in the 1979 and 1983 AFC Women's Championships (which later became the AFC Women's Asian Cup), showcasing their talent and competitiveness on the continental stage. Additionally, their third-place finish in the 1981 edition in Hong Kong further highlighted their strong presence in women's football in Asia during that era.

Captain Shanti Mallick stands out as a significant figure from this period. Her prowess as a prolific scorer and natural leadership abilities made her a legendary figure in Indian women's football. The remarkable fact that she was never booked during her entire international career speaks to her skill and sportsmanship on the field.

In 1983, Shanti Mullick was **an Arjuna Award winner in a football game**. Shanti Mullick is a former Indian national footballer and coach, and she is the only woman to receive the Arjuna Award in football. She is the former Indian Women's National Team captain.

OINAM BEMBEM DEVI

Padma Shri and Arjuna award winner Bembem Devi holds the status of a legend in Indian women's football. The former national team skipper has had a tremendous contribution in the development of the sport in the country.

Bembem Devi was called up for the senior national team at a very young age of 15 in 1995 and eight years later she went on to become the captain of the side. In a national team career that spanned more than 15 years, the midfielder helped India earn the status of heavyweights in women's football in Asia. She led the Blue Tigresses to three SAF Cup titles and two South Asian Games gold medals.

NGANGOM BALA DEVI

In 2019, when Bala Devi signed a professional contract with Scottish club Rangers, she set an example for many young players in India. Coming from Manipur, Bala Devi's journey began with the Northeastern state's U-19 team. After winning the 'best player' accolades consistently at age-group level championships, the striker went on to represent the Manipur state senior team. She helped them clinch the Indian Women's Football Championship in 2014 after scoring a whopping 29 goals in seven games. The two-time AIFF Player of the Year went on to become a national team regular.

LOITONGBAM ASHALATA DEVI

The current skipper of the Indian women's football team, Ashalata Devi is a four-time winner of the SAFF Women's Championship and a two-time winner of the South Asian Games. Playing for Sethu FC in the Indian Women's League, Ashalata Devi also led them to the title in the 2018-19 season. She was also awarded the AIFF Women's Player of the Year that season.

Selected for the U-17 national team at the age of 15, Ashalata Devi's dreams knew no bounds and she quickly went on to make a case for the senior team. Over the years, she has been a dominant figure in the team and at domestic level. She now hopes to fulfill her dream of playing abroad. Moreover, the defender will be a key player for the Blue Tigresses in the upcoming 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup.

ADITI CHAUHAN

Aditi Chauhan's journey in football has been nothing less than inspirational. She has excelled not just on the pitch, but also earned accolades off it. Starting her journey as a youth player in Delhi, Chauhan rose up the ranks and established herself as the No. 1 of the Indian women's national team.

She went on to pursue an MSc in Sports Management at Loughborough University in England and was simultaneously selected to play for West Ham Ladies – becoming the first Asian woman to play competitively in England. After spending two seasons with the Hammers, she returned to India and led Gokulam Kerala to the Indian Women's League (IWL) title in the 2019-20 season.

SASMITA MALIK

Coming from the Kendrapara district of Odisha, Sasmita Malik's journey in football saw several obstacles. However, she worked her way past each of them and went on to establish herself as a regular in the Indian women's football team. At 17, Malik made her national team debut and there was no stopping her. In over a decade of playing for the Blue Tigresses, she captained the side to many important victories. She was also part of India's squad in their consecutive SAFF Women's Championship wins. In 2016, Sasmita Malik was adjudged the AIFF Women's Player of the Year for her marvelous displays on the pitch.

SOUMYA GUGULOTH

It's wonderful to hear about Soumya Guguloth and Jyoti Chouhan signing a year-long contract with Croatian club Dinamo Zagreb. Such international moves are significant milestones for women's football, and it's great to see emerging talents getting opportunities to play in foreign leagues.

Soumya Guguloth's signing with Dinamo Zagreb is particularly notable, given her reputation as a sublime finisher and an upcoming star. Her performances for the Indian women's team at the 2022 SAFF Women's Championship in Nepal showcase her potential and abilities on the field.

Scoring her first-ever international goal in a 3-0 win over Pakistan and adding another goal in a 9-0 win over the Maldives is a fantastic achievement for a 21-year-old player. It not only demonstrates her scoring prowess but also her ability to perform at the international level.

These kinds of opportunities for Indian women footballers to play in overseas leagues can contribute significantly to their development and the overall growth of women's football in the country. It's an exciting time for Indian women's football, and Soumya Guguloth's journey with Dinamo Zagreb is undoubtedly something to keep an eye on in the coming year.

ANJU TAMANG

Anju Tamang certainly sounds like a versatile and talented player in the world of Indian women's football. Her ability to play multiple roles in midfield and even as a forward adds depth to her skills on the pitch. At 26 years old, she has already made a significant impact on the field and is a valuable asset to the Indian women's football team.

Scoring four goals in a single game against the Maldives at the 2022 SAFF Women's Championships is an outstanding accomplishment and showcases her hunger for goal-scoring, a quality that is highly sought after in attacking midfielders and forwards.

Beyond her playing abilities, Anju Tamang's role as an inspirational figure for many female footballers in India is also noteworthy. Players like her who excel on the field can serve as role models and motivate the next generation of women footballers to pursue their passion and dreams.

Her involvement with Sethu FC in the Indian Women's League 2021-22 season, where the team finished second in the final standings, highlights her contributions to club football as well. Anju Tamang's success both at the national and club levels underscores her importance in the development and promotion of women's football in India.

PYARI XAXA

Pyari Xaxa's talent and accomplishments in Indian women's football are certainly impressive. Her ability to dribble with intent and finish with precision makes her an exciting player to watch on the field. Scoring 12 goals in the Indian Women's League 2022 season for Sports Odisha is a remarkable feat and showcases her goal-scoring prowess.

Moreover, her achievement of scoring against the United States of America's U23 team highlights her ability to perform against strong international competition. Such experiences can be invaluable for player development and confidence.

Joining Odisha FC is a significant move in her career, and at 25 years old, she likely has a promising future ahead in football. Her skills and contributions as a forward will undoubtedly make her a valuable asset for the team and add to the growth of women's football in India.

Pyari Xaxa's success and her journey through both domestic and international football serve as an inspiration for young female footballers in India, showing them what can be achieved with talent, dedication, and hard work.

MANISHA KALYAN

Manisha Kalyan's achievements in 2022 are truly remarkable, and she has rapidly established herself as one of the best Indian forwards. Her performances both domestically and internationally highlight her skill and impact on the field.

Scoring 14 goals in the Indian Women's League 2021-22 for Gokulam Kerala FC is an outstanding achievement, not only contributing to her team's success but also showcasing her goal-scoring abilities. Helping Gokulam Kerala FC win the league title is a significant accomplishment in her career.

Her recognition as the winner of the 2020-21 AIFF Emerging Player of the Year award underscores her potential and the impact she has made in Indian football. Playing as a midfielder for Cypriot First Division club Apollon FC demonstrates her versatility and ability to compete at a higher level.

Additionally, scoring the winning goal in a 1-0 win over Jordan in an international friendly further highlights her ability to perform on the international stage and contribute to the success of the Indian women's national team.

Manisha Kalyan's journey and achievements serve as an inspiration for aspiring female footballers in India and illustrate the growing strength of women's football in the country. Her continued success in both domestic and international competitions will undoubtedly be closely followed by football enthusiasts in India and around the world.

VI. CONCLUSION

In light of the data obtained, it is evident that female football players continue to face significant challenges in achieving equal rights and recognition compared to their male counterparts as of 2023. Despite the strides made in recent years to promote gender equality in sports, it is clear that women in football have not fully overcome the barriers present in both the male-dominated football world and their social lives.

These findings underscore the fact that gender equality remains an unfulfilled goal in the world of sports, even in environments that should ideally prioritize fairness and inclusivity, such as sports. The social studies conducted in this area reveal that the demands and aspirations of women in football are not being adequately met, indicating a need for more substantial efforts to address gender disparities and provide equal opportunities for female football players.

In conclusion, while progress has been made in the realm of women's football, there is still much work to be done to ensure that female athletes receive the same rights, recognition, and opportunities as their male counterparts. It is imperative that stakeholders in the football world and society at large continue to push for greater gender equality in sports, fostering an environment where female football players can thrive both on the field and in their social lives.

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