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Invisible to visibility of contemporary Bengal's Women in Sports

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Abstract: *Sports uphold hegemonic masculinity. This includes reinforcing the idea that men are strong and competitive. Though Women are also in the modern societies play a significant role in the development of socio-economic and political-cultural life of each society. Sports is that important aspect of modern life, which has transformed the polity, economy and society is more than one ways from individual to collective, from locality to nation . Each identity is incomplete without the touch of the sport life like today. A healthy nation is born to a healthy mother. To get healthy mother from the nation like as gift physical activity of women is most important issues. Sports are that term which is completed through the various types of physical activities. In a developing nation, like India, the participation of women in sports is more negligible than other nation countries. However, in the last seventy years there is a rapid sign of growth, with the Indian women athletics bagging gold for India. The history of women Sports in Bengal during the second half of the twentieth century reflects a clear sign of growth of women in Sports. Bengal the site of British administration and trade developed as the sports capital of the colonial India. Here the colonized men took to the sports of the colonizers by the late nineteenth century in Bengal. In the modern Bengal society, erect a platform through the playground. But in this situation the women were not consider as the part of sport activity.under the patriarchal society, women were facing a huge obstacle in getting involvement in sports , which cannot overcome still now properly. The anti colonial nationalist movement started emerging in Bengal by the turn of the nineteenth century. Women took participate within this movement through different angles, and sports was one of the most important medium. This present paper seeks to plot involvement of women in sports. Sports impact and ideas prove to be inconsistent in national and international arena. We need to consider of women involvement with the importance of this.*

Key Words: Restriction on the Zenana, slow involvement of women in sports and invisibility.

Today, when we see Mehuli Ghosh, Apurvi Chandela, Hima Das, Saina ,Sindhu and others are bagging medals as the representative of a country in the international arena, we are happy to find out the invisible women from the world of Sports to the man visibility. The colonial state unqualifiedly and unconditionally acted on the behalf of the patriarchy in marginalizing the women, in sphere of politics, economic and sports. Rammohun Roy's (1772-1833) name is usually listed first among those of nineteenth-century reformers concerned with improving women's status¹.he tried to show the masses the light from the darkness world. Ras sundari Devi (1809----?), a Bengali women wrote a story of her life , *Amar Jiban* (My life),

that was published in 1876 where she rememorizes her early life and also share her experience as an house wife. This was the first autobiography written in Bengali and it as rich in its details of the period when reformers were attempting to change the lives of women. Dr. Vina Mazumdar, one of contemporary India's well-known feminist scholar, recalls that one of her great – great – grandfathers performed sati, after this custom had been prohibited. They accepted the blessing of the women about to become sati². Missionaries Reverend E. Storrow came to India in 1848 and pronounced Indian disunity a consequence of the low status of women. In nineteenth century, the 'Woman Question' loomed large. This was not a question "what do women want?" but rather "how can they be modernized"? It became the central question in nineteenth century British India because the foreign rulers had focused their particular attention on this particular society. Colonial domination set the change in motion; Indians reshaped the imported ideas and institutions to fit the social and cultural milieu. Tanika Sarkar in her 'The Hindu Wife and Hindu Nation' remarks that a number of Indian intellectuals praised their own culture's treatment of women. Within the all above the intellectuals writings and social works associated with the anti superstition work, Though they tried to show the cultural sides but the important of sports in women life is totally absent. It is true that life is incomplete without moving from physical and mental activity. Physical activity is not only meaning the daily work for our survivable life, but sports are the main domain of physical movement through our involvement of cultural activity. Sports are the demarcation line of civilization in our society in modern time. It focuses light on the nature of orders and social changes of the society³.The importance of sport not only from political, religious and economic purpose but also important as the cultural tool of emotional bondage for every nation. Sports as an integral part of national sentiment of a popular culture, which provides a legitimate space for examining the issues of national identity and regional cooperation in the relation of human being⁴. According to Debasis Majumdar, in india the cricket, football and hocky erected the nationalist conciousness and also regional identity from the political platform⁵. Sports is the not only the fit form physically mentally or for entertainment, but also a social issues to stand on cultural base. Kausik Bandhopadhyay discusses the sports as the 'cultural weapon' of a nation to fight against another culture⁶. Through the sports, the youth can build their confidence level on the concrete base. Regular exercise and friendship relationship can be developing through the sports. Within the sports, rules and regulation that teach the players and spectators many things, which are possible through sports and sports activity, Sports teach us respect to another. J.A Mangan judged the game based on the fundamental but complementary relationship of imperialism and sports on the question of social development in India⁷. Those issues are not negligible for women under patriarch Society.

In the British era the relevance of national identity in sports in the midst of growing popularity of transitional club football league⁸. Because from the sports football played an important role, which was borrowed from the British and through this game they have to face strong competition against the indigenious people. In

Colonial and Post-Colonial India, sports has been closely linked within the wide to wider process through the society, economic and Culture from the late nineteenth century⁹. before the second half of nineteenth century india followed their traditional game like Lathi Chora (Throw Stick), danguli(play of long picces of wood), Kit-Kit (girls famous game), Goli (Marbels or Glass ball), Lattu (Top), Luko-Churi (Hide and seek), Rumal Churi (hanky Thief), Ghuri (Kite Flying) and so many traditional games¹⁰. But after the second half of the nineteenth century indigenouse people of india bending towards the foreign outdoor game. Among the foreign outdoor game football and cricket were associate with mind of indigenouse people. Football is call as the ‘blood game’ of Bengali people. In colonial India Football and Cricket were discussed from different aspects. However, the role of hockey was also most important¹¹. Histories of Sports gain its prosperity in the late twentieth century. Nevertheless, in India, writing of Sports History was started within the limited area. History of Sports in India dealt mainly about history of Football and Cricket¹². In 1988, Soumen Mitra through his M.Phil dissertation discussed firstly History of Football in Colonial Calcutta. He published his thesis as book on the name of “in search of an identity: History of football in Colonial Calcutta” and discussed Sports as the aspect of nationalism¹³. Ramchnadra Guha through his book A Corner of a Foreign field: the Indian History of British Sports discussed the sport politics from different angles another edited book is ‘Cricket’ deals about the cricket from different point. After that the prominent Journalist and historian Boria Majumdar traced on the cricket. His one of the famous book is ‘Twenty two Yard to Freedom’ and ‘Eleven Gods and a Billion Indian: The on and off the field story of cricket in India and beyond’. In Bengal another sports Historian is Kausik Bondyopadhaya through his Bengali book ‘Khela jokhon Itihas’(When Sports is History) discussed purely how a game became a History? After, he wrote many books and published article about indian football and culture. He mainly traces the importance of the I.F.A Sheild of 1911 and politics of the three prominent club, Mohunbagan, Mohammedan and East Bengal Club. And Ronojoy sen through his book ‘Nation at Play: A History of Sport in India” discussed the Calcutta Maidan Politics. After that Debasis Majumdar, Navo Capadia also discussed the sports from different angles. Nevertheless, all of them unconsciously avoid the position of women in sports in Bengal is very absent. Position of women, relation to health and sports of women is a major lacuna in the field of Sport culture. This present paper would try to find out the position of women, health of women from the angle of sport.

During this century, women have been able to break out of the traditional female mold. Women have broken the chains that bond them to the home and have emerged into all sorts of male dominated arenas, including sports. Women have become athletes in their own right. In the last twenty years there has been validation for the female athlete. By the second half of the nineteenth century there were reform groups in all parts of british india. They focused attention on sati, female infanticide, polygamy, child marriage, purdah, and prohibition on female education, devadasis, and the patrilocall joint family. Their activity acted as a stimulus and encouragement

to reform minded individuals in other areas, and gradually reformist organizations with an all India Identity began to emerge. All the organizational work based on the social work. The cultural activities were ignored by those social activists. They did not consider the importance of culture seriously especially sports were the out of imagination of society. There was no single recommendation about the involvement of women in sports. Where girls in the society do not have the opportunity to the study, sports was only like as comedy. Late twentieth century slows involvement of women in sports started which is still now progress. Here slow involvement means where before a century hundred of male dominated sports organization were established but women dominated organization were not available.

It is reasonably clear that football and cricket came to india with the british east india company. They played football in their lesser time. The indigenous people imitation this game, and after few decades it become as the pathological game of Bengali as well as Indian. Though In India the Football, Cricket Hockey, Table Tennis etc which were, began in the nineteenth century, introduced by British regimental teams and missionaries during colonial rule¹⁴. Though the traditional games were present which were replaced by the modern game mainly in colonial Bengal, which were introduced as the activity of enjoyment. India had its traditional game and sports but the football and cricket quickly replace the traditional game. After few days the aim of the sports became changed, where the sports mainly football was started as the enjoyment of lessiere time of the British Army. Only the British soldier would able to play the sport, which were associate with their culture and Indian, would avoid by the game. In addition, they consider their game and sports as the reflection of their cultural society. Macaulay who was the Secretary to the Board of Control under Lord Grey from 1832 until 1833 described the Indian as typical uncultured society¹⁵. The Indigenous Bengali people imitation the British and their sports football to be involve with the British. Kausik Bandhopahyay through his thesis showed that with in short time after imitation the football game became as the medium of nationalism through the competition of football Game. Though it not properly and completely nationalism but inspired the national identity and movement from the sports ground. It was for not only the men but also limited participation of women within the sports activity through many ways. Though direct involvement of Indian women became late than the western women but it was appraisable because as colonial country it was also a very important for participant of women within sports. Using a complex analysis, Stevenson showed that increasing girls' sports participation had a direct effect on women's education and employment¹⁶. She found that the changes set in motion by Title IX explained about 20 percent of the increase in women's education and about 40 percent of the rise in employment for 25-to-34-year-old women¹⁷.

From the socio historical background sports became as one of the most popularized which fascinated as the mirror of the society. Sports are also considered as the issues of good health. It is impossible to achieve good health without sports, game or movement of body organ¹⁸. Not only it important for only male, but from the

ancient to modern period female are conscious about their health. The question of women good health and physical activities within sports are less important in this masculine outdoor game. Almost four decades after the federal education law called Title IX opened the door for girls to participate in high school and college athletics, a crucial question has remained unanswered¹⁹: Do sports make a long-term difference in a woman's life? Sports is essential contributor to life style of exercise and also an alternate way of life to fit from physically and mentally. Physical inactivity is a serious threat to a healthy and balanced for lifestyle in modern time. Increasing health enhancing physical activity can significantly benefit the physical, psychological, economical, political and social wellbeing of girls and women throughout the whole life span. Globally sixty three percent of women are not doing sufficient activity to achieve the zenith benefits and levels of participation of the activity particularly among adolescence are major concern²⁰. However, it is also a great challenge of women to maintain their physical activity, especially during the critical phases of their lives namely puberty, motherhood, menopause, old age, periods and the time of acting as family care and during intensive career development. Healthy lifestyle can be promoted, for instance, by cooperating with the other sectors in the society to address physical inactivity and other priority health issues that women face such as sexual and reproductive health, as well as the prevention of cancer, and other impairments²¹. According to Suparna Bhattecharya the first half of twentieth century women were not within sports activity properly. Though very few women were took active part in colonial Indian society, most of them were Anglo-Indian. But the entry of Bengali women within sports started during 1980s²². It is also important that growing of the participation of women from few Hindu Cultured and anglo Indian family²³. Muslim and most of the higher class women were not given this chance to participate within Sports. Women of elite class hindu and muslims belongs from 'Zenana Quarter', naturally they were not able to take active part with in outdoor game. It was very important that in the Helsinki game indian women were largely absent from the sport history from the colonial india. Only two women Nilima Ghosh and Mary D'Souza represent them from india in Helsinki Olympic Game²⁴. Though it was also an inspiration for the indian women because that time participation of women in Olympic from india was a great emancipation. In the year of 1918 the anglo indian women Jeni Sandison from Khargpur, Bengal represent the country at Wimbledon though she lost in first round, and another Anglo Indian girl who represent the Country at Wimbledon was Leela Row who won the Cup in the year of 1934²⁵. After the independence of India Rita Davar, in 1952 was the runner in Women's Wimbledon²⁶. in 1954 Manila Asiad won the Gold medal in Indian's Women realy²⁷, and after next Game Stephie D'Souza the anlgo indian women won the Silver medal in the year 1958 which was held in Tokyo. According to Ronojoy sen in colonial period Hockey and basketball were popular game among the indian women. Women's Hockey Association was formed by lady Kathleen Tegart who was the wife of Charles Tegart, Commissioner of Calcutta in 1928, and first hockey tournament was held in the 1947, the first international hockey tournament was held in England²⁸.

Although the number of the participation in the games from Bengal increasing gradually day to day, but participation maximum from higher educated caste or from town area not from lower caste or rural area. The rural area women are going away from the game and sport. Some peoples' and authority's narrow mentality and in difference responsible for not being included women in game. in example before few days ago Anandabazar reported that in Mohunbagan Stadium include of women participation are increasing but the Mohun Bagan club established in the year 1889 but there is not a single toilet for the women²⁹. So that women can't take participate in this maidan also. This type of various indifference of Authorities and People has women kept away from the game. Actually, dominance of patriarch society is the crucial factor behind the women health, social activity and fear of not going out of Zenana. Though now days involvement of women in sports and social activity are increasing day by day from local level to international arena, but not in huge which we want.

We know that women and girls account for more than half of the world's population and although the percentage of their participation in sport and physical activity varies between countries, in almost every case it is less than that of men and boys in case of Bengal more less. If we consider the women as the important element of sports in previous century that is time we can understood the situation. The inclusion of women in Sport became marginalized group within masculine sports area. They could not participate through the share space in the stadium or outside the sports ground. Now day's women share their culture outside of the field as spectators by supporting their team and flying their flag. Now days In case of rural areas, women are totally difference than the women of town. Women of rural area are negligible for their sports but women of town and from elite class cannot comes out from their 'Zenana Quarter' to masculine 'Sport Capital' in the main stream of Sports activity. Not only in sports but the women have to competition in economic line; women leaders commented favorably on the absence of economic competition between man and women³⁰.

Where, In ancient Sparta, girls were favored with an exceptional educational system that included training in most of the same athletic events as boys. The aim was eugenic: healthy women produced healthy citizen-warriors. The contests were restricted to unmarried girls, who competed either nude or wearing only skimpy dresses. Boys were admitted as spectators, a practice intended to encourage marriage and procreation. Some Spartan maidens ran a special race for Dionysos, god of adult females, and this athletic ritual may also have celebrated their communal rite of passage³¹. Today's society is far away from the original issues of introducing the Sports. In our society the women are neglected from various issues.

However, Well-shaped body is also most need of sports for the women through physical activity. Physically active people can keep their body and lungs healthy. following a healthy diet and by avoiding smoking heart and lungs can keep healthy. If we consider the women as the reproductive of generation then to get a disease less and strong baby, mother should be strong from mentally and physically to

give the gift of diseases less society for next generation³². In modern time the western societies were more advance than the eastern societies. When India could not strait its backbone in men sports thus contemporary time Dorothy Edith Round Little as a women was leading the team in England and Helen Hull Jacobs from America in the tournament of Wightman Cup³³.

During the course of the nineteenth century, the pattern of women's lives to began change. In reality, the concept of the 'perfect wife' was being redefined³⁴. In this changing movement, sports were also included. However, still then, adult women were prohibited from attending the men's Olympics on penalty of death. The laws of Elis, the city that hosted the games, dictated that any woman caught entering the Olympic assembly on the forbidden days or even crossing the river that borders the site was to be hurled to her death from the high cliffs of Mount Tropaion opposite the stadium. There is no evidence that such executions were ever carried out. Kallipateira, who attended disguised as a trainer and leapt into the stadium to congratulate her victorious son, went unpunished out of respect for her illustrious family. But to prevent such a violation from happening in the future, trainers thereafter had to enter the stadium naked. Yet maidens could attend the men's games, probably to familiarize them with the world of men. The only married woman permitted to watch the Olympics was the priestess of Demeter, whose privilege probably derived from the location of an ancient altar and sanctuary of that goddess in the middle of the stadium seating area. This was the colonial time, but still now numbers of women each and every sector of sports increasing but not like the men. The limited number of women mainly who are belongs to town area or educated family they can took active part as the competitor is sports. But the women of elite class family are totally negligible. In case of rural area, this condition is very poor. Consciousness among the lower family and rural area are avoidable.

Some of the questions address will rise against the gender equality or gender differentiation. However, I support to use the word equity against the equality. Because gender equity has been an issued in society since the beginning of Ancient Time³⁵. In recorded history, one can find many accounts of where women faced issues of equity in relationships, their career, education, and athletic opportunities. The purpose of this paper is to explore the history that surrounds the issues of gender equity in sport, what actions have been taken to provide equal opportunity for women in sports, the current issues facing women in sports today, the research surrounding the issues pertaining to gender equity in sport, and also to discuss the findings and present recommendations for further research in this area .As was previously mentioned, women face gender equity issues as athletes and as sport governance officials. There is a lack of women in leadership positions in sport due to the fact that sport is a gendered institution and that all processes operate within a hegemonic masculine norm. Furthermore, sport institutions have institutionalized masculinity as the operating principle within sport, which identifies male activity as privileged, and reinforcing masculinity and masculine behavior as acceptable leadership qualities required in sport. Therefore, it is said that gender inequality has become an

institutionalized practice within sport organizations³⁶. Those institutions which were established in colonial Bengal based on the dominant power of men like..like as Dalhousie Club, Wellington Club(1887) Sovabazar Club(1887), The Jubilee Club(1887), Mohun Bagan Club(1889), Mohammedan Sporting Club (1891)Howrah Sporting Club (1889) Chingsugra Sporting Club(1893) Kumartulai and Aryans Club(1889) East Bengal Club(1921) etc³⁷. The main aim and object of those clubs were established for physical activity and sports also. Because sports and physical activities are an integral aspect of the culture of every nation. But never a single sports institution is not established still now by the power of women or for the women.

With the involvement of female in sports activities, a new issue also emerged simultaneously, the women's health. Women and their health is an important factor since the last second half century to still now. We know food is needed to provide energy for doing work, protein for building tissues and vitamins and minerals for the overall utilization of energy and protein. Energy requirements have been based on body weights, sex, climate and work done. There is a minimum amount stipulated for both men and women to survive to ensure a bare existence. During pregnancy a woman is required to consume at least 2500 calories per day. Indian women need 40mg iron but actually get only 0.2 mg. We demand a strong baby from a mother but never demand a strong mother who can gift us a strong society³⁸. Sport and physical activity can make a substantial contribution to the well-being of people in developing countries. Exercise, physical activity and sport have long been used in the treatment and rehabilitation of communicable and non-communicable diseases. Physical activity for individuals is a strong means for the prevention of diseases and for nations is a cost-effective method to improve public health across populations. Sport has been one of the most important socio-cultural learning experiences for boys and men for many years. Those same benefits should be afforded our daughters. It is important for all of us. High school girls who play sports are less likely to be involved in an unintended pregnancy; more likely to get better grades in school and more likely to graduate than girls who do not play sports. Girls and women who play sports have higher levels of confidence and self-esteem and lower levels of depression. Girls and women who play sports have a more positive body image and experience higher states of psychological well-being than girls and women who do not play sports. Sarala Devi Choudhroni (1872-1954), a Bengali woman from the famous Tagore family, is an excellent example of the 'New Women'³⁹. She established 'Akhara' for the women for physical activity. Physical activity is the part of sports. So here the women's health is associated with sports.

About the involvement of women in sports many conferences and seminars were arranged like. The first international conference on women and sport brought together policy and decision makers in sport at both national and international level, in Brighton, UK from 5 – 8 May 1994. The 280 delegates from 82 countries representing governmental and non-governmental organizations, national Olympic committees, international and national sport federations and educational and research institutions, endorsed the Brighton Declaration, which provided the principles to guide the action

intended to increase the involvement of women in sport at all levels and in all functions and roles. Aim was of the convention were the overriding and to develop a sporting culture that enables with values, the full involvement of women in every aspect of sport and physical activity⁴⁰. Government and non-government organizations should incorporate the promotion of issues of gender equity and the sharing of examples of good practice in women and sport and physical activity policies and programmes in their associations with other organizations, within both domestic and international arenas. Both in international and national arena we should give the chance to women in the share space, because share space is witness of our cultural society⁴¹. In case of Bengal we should influenced the women towards the outdoor games to develop our cultural society. It is not our duty to involve the women within sports but it is their right to associate with the outdoor game. We should breakdown the restriction of zenana by considering the women health through the involvement of sports. We should not consider them as marginalized group in the field of sports. To improve our society in sports, women must be taken out the invisible world to given visible space to the world. Because whatever the beautiful and truth in the world, half contributed by the women and half by the men.

Conclusion: If we consider the condition of women in colonial Bengal, we can understand the position of women from the angles of education, politics and sports also. From all the angles, they were marginalized group under the masculinity domination. They were the permanent residence of invisible world. They knocked in several time on the door to door of the visible world. Sports was the one of the most important door, where women knocked and partly successful in the first half of twentieth century. However, which was started before a century, till now it is not fully successful. The evolution of women Sports in Bengal took place at that time when Bengal was caught in a surge of the nationalist movement the battle between the colonizers and the colonized⁴². The women crossed the boundaries of political and educational arena, and entered to the world of sports⁴³. From a long time, women had spend their time under the masculinity power. Though Women of Bengal came forward from this time to establish their identity on the base of sports within this visible world, but many social obstacles prevented them from obstructing their path, it is true that the women entered the world of the sports through their political consciousness. The *Mahila Rastriya Sangha* was the first formal organization which was established by Latika Ghosh to mobilize women for political life⁴⁴. After 1947, this condition was partly changed and started of slow involvement of women into the state of sports. If we work in conjunction with the governmental and NGOs organization, involvement of women will increase in a greater range in the field of sports. With the help and cooperation of muscle power, women can enter to the world of men sports and can touch the zenith point of sports' world from the women *Zenana*. In the final analysis it can said that the dualistic definition of masculine and feminine created a paradox the female athlete.

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- ¹⁴ Novy Kapadia.(2017): 'Barefoot to Boots: the many lives of Indian Football', Peguin, Hriyana, P.8
- ¹⁵ A. R Deshi.(1987): 'Bharotiyo jatiyotabader samajik potvumi', K.P.Bagchi, Kolkata.P.119. Macaulay describe the Indian society as typical uncultured from the sides of cultural activity and superstition. Sports was including with it's also
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- ¹⁷ Parker-Pope, Tara (February 16, 2010). "As Girls Become Women, Sports Pay Dividends". New York Times. February 16, 2012
- ¹⁸ Movement of body organ means movement of all organs of human body which is also include of daily work. But not only daily work but also need as athletic feat.
- ¹⁹ On June 23, 1972, the President signed Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. Â1681 et seq., into law. Title IX is a comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded educational program or activity.
- ²⁰ 6th IWG World Conference on Women and Sport 2014 – The Legacy Document.P.1
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³⁹ New Women: The New Woman was a feminist ideal that emerged in the late nineteenth century and had a profound influence on feminism well into the twentieth century.

⁴⁰6th IWG World Conference on Women and Sport 2014 – The Legacy Document, P. 5

⁴¹ Share Space means space in the gallery where the spectators share their cultural activity.

⁴² Suparna Ghosh.(2013): Sporting Nationalism in Twentieth Century Bengal: The Gendered Perspective. (Edit), Amitava Chatterjee. People at play Sport Culture and nationalism, Situ, Kolkata. P. 124

⁴³ Ibid; P.124

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