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**Gender, Sports and Social Exclusion: A Critical Survey of Moti Nandi's
'Koni' and Rudraneil Sengupta's 'Enter the Dangal: Travels through
India's Wrestling Landscape'**

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Abstract:

A look at the history of the world reveals that sports have had a profound effect on society, culture, politics, and even the economy beyond mere leisure. Literature is a reflection of the overall life of the people. It has never been possible to keep sports alienated from the realm of life and literature. The continuation of the Olympics from Ancient Greece to contemporary times, as an important international event, justifies the importance of sports in human culture. Therefore, sports literature has the potential of being developed as a specialized domain of literature where its own canon can be constructed. Social exclusion is a tag when people or organizations endure a variety of correlated difficulties and discrimination that exist in the improper or prejudicial procedure of numerous sectors of species or elements, particularly on the surfaces of race, sex, ethnicity, and color. It is awful human behaviour consisting of society. We generally perceive the sporting world to be full of amusements, healthy competition, and fair play bound by rules, norms, and rigorous eligibility criteria. However on closely scrutinizing the sporting world through its various modes of articulation is discovered the underline fractures. This paper intends to explore the social exclusion faced by the persons belonging to the sports world in India and their deprivation as they are the victims of various social rejections in the texts of Moti Nandi's *Koni*, and Rudraneil Sengupta's *Enter the Dangal*.

Keywords: Sports Literature, Gender, Social Exclusion, Culture, Politics.

Introduction:

The evaluation of sports literature mainly has its roots in Western Culture. The eminent British commentator and historian E. J. Hobsbawm commented on one particular occasion that the Industrial Revolution created a popular culture throughout Europe which later played a significant role in organizing the Labor Party in England. The sports culture is one of them. The organized play that had happened in England and Europe dates back to the time of the Industrial Revolution. People get tired of the monotonous work in closed places like factories, offices, and shops for hours and start organizing games to move the body and require mental refreshment. Since then, sports have become a profession to entertain people. Attempts are also made to become more efficient to earn more. Hobsbawm called the game one of the most important new social practices in European life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A look at the history of the world reveals that sports have often had a significant impact on human culture, society, politics, and even the economy, beyond the traditional notion of leisure. Literary life as a whole, literature touches life and life touches society and this connection between life and society is the foundation of literature in a broad sense. It is not possible to keep the sports world away from the realm of literature. Therefore, sports literature became one of the literary works written in different languages in different parts of the world. Numerous sports literature has been written in different languages of the world including English. Stories, novels, poems, essays, memoirs, and autobiographies have been written in sports. Standing in this vast arena of literature, sports literature has taken a special place in the on-going trend of world literature. The various conflicts, fears, successes, and failures in Europe and America have become the ingredients of the sports literature of those countries and India is no exception to this trend. In various sports, one who is proficient in that part can earn fame, prestige, money, and higher social status. So there is fierce competition, intense desire to impress oneself, inhuman pursuits, crew intrigue, unimaginable success, and incredible fall. As a result, sports and players occupy an important place in literature, art, and the public mind. Numerous authors like Ernest Hemingway, Bernard Shaw, Willa Cather, Norman Mailer, Don DeLillo, Tom Stoppard, Joyce Carol Oates, and David Foster Wallace have not only written about sports but also made an immense contribution and has infinite importance to the evaluation of sports literature.

Social exclusion is a practice when people or organizations endure a variety of correlated difficulties and discrimination that exist in the improper or prejudicial procedure of numerous sectors of species or elements, particularly on the surfaces of race, sex, ethnicity,

and color. It is awful human behaviour consisting of society. We generally perceive the sporting world to be full of amusements, healthy competition, and fair play bound by rules, norms, and rigorous eligibility criteria. However, on closely scrutinizing the sporting world through its various modes of articulation be discovered the underline fractures.

This work intends to explore the social exclusion faced by the persons belonging to the sports world in India and their deprivation as they are the victims of various social rejections. They face discrimination on linguistic grounds, their feelings of alienation as they don't belong to the civilized region, and their experience of gender discrimination and marginalization. Researcher has selected two texts, Moti Nandi's '*Koni*', and Rudraneil Sengupta's '*Enter the Dangal*', to deal with such topics.

Gender in Sport and Social Exclusion:

Women have recreated a grand position in the world of sports. Women are among some of the most prestigious athletes the world has ever glimpsed. Women's participation in sports dates back a long time. It is an old phenomenon drawn by division and inequality but is the foremost triumphs by female athletes and important progress for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

This work is going to initiate the common associations between women's participation in sports, gender equality, and different social exclusion. There are lots of reasons for the study of the associations between gender and sports. As far as the societal norm is concerned the participation of women in sports is less prominent than in men's and especially those who legitimately belong to a poor family and are affected by poverty. The empirical analysis and ideological link between the participation of women in sports and their experiences of the isolation of society are that in the-two cases women are discriminated against by the prevalent gender policies. The review of these principles may insinuate either a speculative dimension of investigation or the extremity to explore how women are excluded from social amenities and sports and to survey the interrelation between these two.

The regimen of women in the society originates from an elemental gender policy and doctrine that primarily considers women as child bearers and imposes all domestic roles on them, and secondly relegates these roles to minimum wage work. These correct gender principles are noticeable in sports, where expectations of sex-relevant behavior are strongly significant. Sports is chiefly placed to emphasize the fundamental aspects - that women are not so high-powered and are subservient to men, and that these divergent are natural because as society considered they are biologically inferior in comparison to men, rather than legacies

of social procedures. This phenomenon however makes sports an exceptional locale for questioning gender norms, and therefore significantly a site for stirring up engagement by the considerable delegitimized women.

Feminist criticisms broadly defined how literature fortifies or sabotages the oppression of women not only economically but also politically, socially, and psychologically. Traditional gender roles distinguish the position of men and women in society and radiated men as strong, protective, and rational. According to them, women are emotionally weak, nurturing, and submissive. These gender roles created biases in society that men have successfully used to justify the discrimination that still occurs today in sports. They exclude women from decision-making positions and equal access to leadership and remunerate men exorbitant wages than women for doing the same job, and convince women that they are not fit for careers in sports. In the present scenario, many people assume such inequalities are a thing of the past because 'anti-discriminatory' laws have been passed and this law guarantees women equal pay for equal work. Despite the implementation, these laws are frequently circumvented. Since gender disparities are evident in different expertise on the well-being of the sexes, we assert that sport contributes to these divergent cordial associations, advancing men's experiences relative to women's in particularly strong and observable ways. Sports, therefore, is an arena in which women's experiences of social exclusion are constructively promoted by heteronormative social interaction.

The gender socialization process propagates from a very young age and inculcates different sports-related knowledge and mind-sets. Research in the field of child development has established that even at the early age of a girl, she has been treated and motivated to be less self-reliant and adventurous and that this stereotypical categorisation of sex becomes more prominent when the children grow up and develop older. During their schooling, children develop an association between sports and virility, and a gap from feminine behavior is created.

Rudraneil Sengupta is one of the lead writers and the deputy editor of Lounge. He was awarded the Ramnath Goenka Award for Excellence in Journalism for a documentary on river rafting in India. He won the Society of Publishers of Asia award for excellence in reporting on civil rights issues in 2015. His famous novel *Enter the Dangal* depicts the history of Dangal in India. In the chapter 'Six Sisters' of the novel, we come across gender discrimination in sports in Indian society. The significance of becoming India's top female wrestler is Geeta Phogat who qualified for the Olympics and finished at the London Games in 2012, two years after the death of Chandgi Ram. Geeta probably belongs to the most

extraordinary family in wrestling in India and her father is Mahavir Singh Phogat. He was also a very good wrestler who went to Delhi to acquaint himself with Chandgi Ram from his village Balali, a remote territory of Haryana state at a very young age when he was only sixteen years old.

Mahavir Singh Phogat has four daughters Geeta, Babita, Ritu, and Sangita – they are international wrestlers and two nieces, Vinesh and Priyanka. His brother was killed due to some land skirmish and he later adopted his two nieces as his daughters and began training them. They are international wrestlers too and he ran all this not from the city, but from his village. Mahavir's Balali is a backward village in Haryana state; it is still framed and staggered at the center by the frenetic pace of urbanization in Haryana and poses hazed amidst the guava, grain fields, and lemon furrows. "In the afternoon, you can walk around Balali's slim tracery of cobbled streets and meet not a single person" (Sengupta 167). In front of Mahavir's house, we could see a square flat land where wrestlers were busy with their post-midday activity.

Geeta, the central character of this novel recalls the day her father woke them up in the morning. It was then five o'clock when father said to Geeta and her sister Babita, "I want to see how well you two run" (Sengupta 170). Geeta was her tender age only ten years old, Babita eight, and both of them were slightly confused "It was fun though, Geeta says. We ran laughing through the fields when everyone else was sleeping; it felt like a secret game" (Sengupta 170). Within a few days, Mahavir found a flat land near his house, built a wrestling arena, and raised a very simple infrastructure of it, covering the roof with tin because he thought the infrastructure is not so important but only the land where they can easily take part in their game. He made the soil very soft, the arena was ready with a simple format and the practice is continuing. But the climax starts when people say, Mahavir has lost his mind. Thus patriarchy or masculinity is, axiomatically, sexist, meaning it advocates the acceptance order that women in liberal societies are inherently subservient to men. They are creating such a position that is a hindrance to women's expansion in any case. According to their belief, it is the innate inferiority of women is called biological essentialism because they are not physically strong and it is based on biological differences between the sexes that are considered part of our unchangeable essence as men and women. The villagers also said, "He is destroying the village, he has no shame, and he is making an exhibit out of his own girls" (Sengupta 170). But they have no other options and there was only so much the villagers could do to fight this phenomenal expansion of his daughters' wrestling because Mahavir possessed a prestigious post of it, he was the sarpanch of this village and the family

had power, influence, and property. Daya, the simple housewife and the mother of these girls say, "So we were spared the worst of it" (Sengupta 170). My girls couldn't get close to me and put these words in my mouth that they are not interested in this manly game. Daya told her husband many times, "Your daughters will become like boys, their faces will get messed up, they won't be able to bear children, their ears will get mangled, and who will marry them?" (Sengupta170). The 'so-called orthodox society' doesn't bear the physical expansion of women who are wrestling because it creates the physicality and muscle power of a person who is connected to this game. It hampers the patriarchal societal norms. Mahavir sensed the tension but he felt annoyed and very sad that there was so much despondency for the girls who are doing something different, so he was determined that he desired to see the fight at the end.

Geeta and Babita shed some light on the harassment they faced during their training time. When they started training in the Akhada villagers came and watched this game with annoyance. They thought Mahavir not only destroyed his daughters but also made worse of the atmosphere of the village. They have stopped talking to the sisters as if it hindered the so-called male ego in orthodox society. They didn't want to look at them and even make eye gaze with the sisters. A few months later there appeared some boys who listed their names in the Akhada life and Mahavir Phogat started guiding them jointly. The people in the village began to think Mahavir is not doing this right because while wrestling both boys and girls had to fight together. Mahavir encouraged his daughters to wrestle together with the boys because he wanted to break the shame of wrestling as it is such an intimate sport. For most people in the village, it was a far-fetched task. These things were not well received by them. There was an ongoing problem at the time.

Despite the stereotypes of society, the Phogat daughters loved the power and robustness of the wrestler's life. Gradually the sisters enjoy the life of wrestling very much - the hardship, the thrill, the scuffling, sleeping tired from the struggle they did during the training time, the extricating venture of wearing wrestling dress like shorts and t-shirts, and all the debates regarding their food because for wrestlers diet is very important. In 2010, when Geeta secured India's first Commonwealth gold in women's wrestling, the villagers move frenzied. They were overjoyed for the achievement Mahavir's daughter procured and for her, the festivities stayed ten days in the village. The gossip circulated to nearby villages that Mahavir's daughters won gold. Inspired by this phenomenal adventure of the sisters, many girls from the nearby villages came to Mahavir for training and for them he had constructed a hostel.

Even after the anti-discriminatory laws have been passed why such laws don't give women an equal place in society and equal pay for equal work? According to feminism the word 'sex' depicts male or female, which is our biological structure, and 'gender', refers to feminine or masculine, which is our cultural programming. So we can't say women are not born feminine and men are not as masculine rather these gender classifications are formulated by society. This view of gender classification is called social constructionism. Feminists have observed that according to the traditional outlook of society, men thought they are superior to women and they put their thought into society to continue and justify the masculine lordship of orientation in the economical field, political, and organised power. Consequently, to keep women impotent and subjugated, by suppressing their desire and denying them for acquiring knowledge from the educational and occupational sector through obtaining economic, political, and social power. Hence, the situation of women in the patriarchal society is always taken lightly and inferior to men and it is not biologically but socially structured. It is a matter of concern for women to secure their place in society.

From Utmost and Proximate Poverty to Social Exclusion:

Pete Alcock provided an opposing concept of poverty. He talked about how; there is no accurate, research-based, and certain definition of poverty because it is inescapably a controversial political idea and thus naturally challenging (1997: 3). Charles Booth (1882) and Seebohm Rowntree (1901) were the two significant sociologists, who assisted in the foremost investigations into the reasons and importance for poverty. Both laid out a foyer that depicted the conditions under which people were called poor. Rowntree differentiated poverty into two types, 'primary poverty' and 'secondary poverty'. Primary poverty is that which lacks basic food, shelter, proper clothing, and physical necessities, and secondary poverty is the result of people's lack of basic knowledge or intelligence.

Moti Nandi (1931-2010) was one of the finest authors in the world who created all his fiction associated with sports. The sports journalist and the significant author of sports narratives come from Kolkata. He worked as a Sports Editor in Ananda Bazar Patrika and wrote twenty-five novels in Bengali for adults and children. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award and also the Lifetime Achievement Award in Excellence in Journalism in 2008. The setting of almost all of his novels are in Kolkata, depicted sporting events, and meticulously captured the life, struggle, and success of those protagonists who are associated with the field of sports like- football, cricket, tennis, swimming, and boxing. His novel Koni was published much before the film based on it was made. Soumitra Chatterjee

acted in this movie and won the National Award for best film in 1985. The story of *Koni* was a very moving one, and his depiction of a poor and often hungry but determined girl and the swimmers' world was very authentic and touching.

The story broadly captures the life, struggle, and success of *Koni*, a teen girl from a poor family. If we go ahead with this text we can see one-day Khsitish Sinha, an experienced swimming coach glimpses *Koni* swimming on the river to collect mangoes from others boys. Khsitish notices *Koni* swimming and considers emotionally that the activities she did and her body language all look like she would be an excellent swimmer. *Koni* has the potential to be a good swimmer, but she needs some improvements and consequently, she has to appoint a coach for her. Belonging to a poor family she has not had the capacity to employ a coach. The generous man Khsitish Sinha determines to coach her for free with only a condition, Khsitish Sinha's family is not also rich and that's why he adopts her and puts her to work in a tailor shop. After struggling in her training on how to swim competitively to become a competitor, *Koni* strengthens her place and name in the Bengal National Swimming Team. She was not given the chance to take participating in any events until a team member is injured. *Koni* won the competition and stands first. She is a great stimulant for children and adults. The main themes of this book revolve around the love for sports, hard work, dedication, and the role of a teacher in the course of a student's success. *Koni* with all her power and hard work fights against all the obstacles and made the whole of Bengal proud whereas the character of Khsitish Sinha as her trainer showed the role of a perfect teacher. In the story, she has been suffering from intense poverty. As belongs to a poor family she has not the ability to manage a proper diet for herself. She is a talented swimmer and she has the potential to adjust herself in swimming competition, she fails not by her performance but by the inhuman activities created by various social norms. Despite that at the end she wins the championship and showed that the societal norms are nothing, all these are created by the beneficiary upper-class people for the betterment of their security and nothing else. Society excludes her in various ways but her determination and strong will lift her to the highest peak of respect in the so-called society.

Adam Smith (1776), the economist, and philosopher of the Scottish Enlightenment put on a rough definition of poverty. According to him, defining poverty beyond subsistence is the acknowledged criterion a civilization demands for the betterment of living and alternatively the traditions of a nation. Conventionally people are poor when they lack support to acquire the minimum necessities of food, shelter, and clothing for their survival. The poor people try to survive on their own with very few resources in society.

Even if they try to sustain their existence through this but society neglects them every moment. They are kept quite away from society and are least encouraged to participate in any conventional event. In most cases, a very in-depth study reveals that exclusion is seen as the outcome of low income, joblessness, or unemployment, which dictates exclusion from the rational allocation of common goods and resources with the appearance of difference, earning, and work. Through champion Koni, the prime mover of Moti Nandi's wonderful novel *Koni* illustrates how poor people are mistreated in society. But their wisdom and compassion take them to a great height.

Conclusion:

In this article, researcher has discussed the issue of women's involvement in sports and how they are marginalized by society. It is fair to say that sports literature not only mirrors the participation of women but also describes how they are socially and culturally excluded in the vaster society. It ranks sport as a domain where the segregated consequences of marginalization or gender detriment can be significantly encountered. There is considerable factual information on how women emphatically acknowledge sports, how much they gain an advantage from accepting involvement, and what measures are needed to motivate their participation. However, it is additionally evident that those women who are socially marginalized are not spontaneously uniform recipients of sporting efforts that address gender inequality in sports. Perhaps a more specific emphasis on this multiplies disadvantaged group is needed to recognize the possibilities that sports put forward offer to these women.

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