

HUMBLE BEGINNING TO MERRYBORNE CRICKET CLUB'S HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP: A CASE STUDY ON ARJUNA AWARDEE SANDHYA AGARWAL

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to analyse the professional career of Arjun Awardee Sandhya Agarwal, hailed as the first women superstar of Indian cricket. The central theme of a case study is to analyse the events that happened in a life of an individual. In the present study, a research design involving qualitative methods is used. The present research used this design to gain knowledge about Sandhya Agarwal's journey to international fame apart from her education, family background, personality and contribution to women's cricket in India based on information collected through primary sources and face to face interview techniques. The information related to Sandhya Agarwal's early life, education, professional career, awards and achievements as well as contribution to women's cricket are collected from primary sources such as newspaper reports, personal interviews, educational records, and pictorial pieces of evidence and letters. Analysis of primary sources revealed that Sandhya Agarwal has a distinguished international cricketing career spanning almost 16 years. Sandhya Agarwal became chief national selector of the Indian women's team for the 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-2010 seasons. She also served as chief coach of Railways women's team as well as team manager of Indian women's cricket team that toured England and West Indies. Sandhya Agarwal received the Vikram Award of the Madhya Pradesh government in 1984 and the prestigious Arjun award in 1987. Based on qualitative analysis it can be concluded that Sandhya Agarwal's contribution to women's cricket is immense. It can also be concluded that Sandhya Agarwal was not only the first global superstar of India in Women's cricket but her contribution to women's cricket is even greater in terms of a coach and an administrator.

Keywords : Sandhya Agarwal, cases study, women's cricket

INTRODUCTION:

There is no typical definition of a case study but it can be defined as extensive research on an individual or organization. Gustafsson (2017) also supported this definition of a case study. In a case study on individuals the researcher analyses the data based on several aspects. It can be descriptive, collective or explanatory. A single case study on sportsperson is meaningful because it highlights the

success story of sportspersons in the light of several circumstances and adversities. This is even more important in women sportsperson and that too in India where women's participation in sports is still inadequate. Thomas Bach, President of the International Olympic Committee quoted that sports can be a powerful medium to promote gender equality and women empowerment. This statement is relevant because sports participation has been known to inculcate self-confidence and a healthy lifestyle in girls and that also promote leadership quality in them. Sports develop determination and will to win that eventually helps provide a platform for girls to become team leaders or successful entrepreneurs in future. The backbone of the family and naturally our society are women. Hence it is essential to encourage them to take part in competitive sports so that they can break the age-old gender bias in a male-dominated society. In this context, it is worthwhile to study the struggle, achievement and other aspects of successful women sportsperson of India and that will encourage girls to pursue sports as a career. One such women sports personality is global superstar cricketer Sandhya Agarwal. In this single case study entitled "Professional Career and Contribution of Arjun Awardee Sandhya Agarwal to Women Cricket" a detailed analysis of hardship, successful story and contribution to women's cricket have been analysed by the researcher.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Extensive literature is available as a case study on eminent sports personalities and researchers namely Yadav and Pradeep Kumar (2012), Naveen Kumar (2013), Dutt and Singh (2016), Prasad and Dhapola (2017), Shukla and Vijay Francis Peter (2018) were able to highlight the contribution of sportspersons from various sports thereby proving the worth of case studies on the sportsperson.

OBJECTIVES:

The main objective of this case study was to assess the professional career and contributions of Arjun Awardee Sandhya Agarwal to Women's cricket.

METHODOLOGY:-

In the present study, a research design involving qualitative methods is used. The present research used this design to gain knowledge about Sandhya Agarwal's journey to international fame apart from her education, family background, personality and contribution to women's cricket in India based on information collected through primary sources and face to face interview techniques.

The information related to Sandhya Agarwal's early life, education, professional career, awards and achievements as well as contribution to women's cricket are collected from primary sources such as newspaper reports, personal interview, educational records, and pictorial pieces of evidence and letters.

Procedure:

Information collected through primary sources were arranged according to early life, education, participation in sports, professional career in cricket, awards and achievement and contribution towards women's cricket as an administrator respectively. Information and facts based on primary and secondary sources were qualitatively analysed and interpreted.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Sandhya Agarwal was born on 9th May 1963 in Indore. Sandhya Agarwal did her early education from Jagdale School, Indore. She then pursued her B.A. degree from Devi Ahilya Arts and Commerce (Jagdale) College. She was felicitated with the Gold Medal of Best Allrounder from Indore University. After this, she cleared M.A (Economics) first year exam from Mata Jijabai Government Girls Post Graduate College (Old GDC). Sandhya then got admission in Gujarati Law college and cleared first and second year. Due to recruitment in Indian Railways, she could not appear in the third-year exam. She learnt the basics of cricket from Madhukar Soman and Gopal Tare at Happy Wanderers Club.

Sandhya Agarwal made her international Test debut against Australia at Ahmedabad on 3rd February 1984. She opened Indian innings in this Test with Gargi Banerjee and scored 71 runs. Sandhya smashed her first Test century (134) in the next Test against Australia at Mumbai. Next year, Sandhya scored her second Test century against New Zealand at Cuttack. She made 106 runs. Sandhya scored two back-to-back centuries in away Test series against England. She scored 132 runs in Blackpool. She created history in Worcester on 14th July 1986, where she broke Betty Snowball's 51-year-old world record. Sandhya scored 190 runs and surpassed Snowball's 189 runs highest individual score Test innings record.

Sandhya played three more Test series against Australia, New Zealand and England. She also led the Indian team against Australia in Melbourne Test. She also led India against Australia in two-test home series, but this series was recorded unofficial as visitors send their Under-25 age group team.

She played her last Test match against England at Kolkata in November 1995. She represented India in 13 Test matches and made 1110 runs with an average of 50.45. She smashed 4 centuries and 4 half-centuries. She still holds records for most Test runs and most Test centuries by an Indian female cricketer.

Sandhya made her debut in Women's ODI against Australia at Chennai on 23rd February 1984. She played her last WODI against England at Guwahati on 14th November 1995. She played 21 WODI and made 567 runs with an average of 31.50. She was not that successful in limited-overs cricket and managed only four half-centuries.

Sandhya holds records for most Test runs (1110) by an Indian women cricketer. She had 360 runs more than second-placed Shantha Rangaswamy (750 runs from 16 Test matches). Shubhangi Kulkarni made 700 runs from 19 Test matches and is placed third in this list of elite cricketers.⁹

She also holds a record for most Test centuries by Indian women cricketers. She registered 4 centuries in 13 Test matches. Hemlata Kala stood second in the list with 2 centuries from 7 Tests.

Sandhya Agarwal received the Vikram Award of the Madhya Pradesh government in 1984 and the prestigious Arjun Award in 1986. Sandhya Agarwal got Indira Priyadarshini Award in 1987. She received this award from Rajiv Gandhi. Sandhya got the International Leo Award for her immense contribution to women's sports in 1987. Sandhya received the best sportsperson Award from the Sports Journalists Federation of India in 1988. For her world record performance of 190 runs, Sandhya Agarwal got a place in The Guinness Book of Records 1988. Sandhya Agarwal got a place in the Limca Book of Records in 1990 and 1992.

She then coached the Indian Railways Women's team. Sandhya was Women's Cricket of India (WCI) national selector in 2004-05. After WCI's merger with BCCI, Sandhya became chief national selector of the Indian women's team for the 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-2010 seasons. Sandhya also served the Indian women's cricket team as manager. She was the manager of the Indian team on the 2008 England tour and 2012 West Indies tour. She was also manager of Women in Blue in the 2012 home series against Australia. She was a chief selector of the Madhya Pradesh senior and junior women's team from 2006 to 2018. She performed as chief coach of the Madhya Pradesh women's team in the 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons. Sandhya retired from cricket in 2000. Sandhya Agarwal had the honour of having Indore's Holkar Stadium gate named after her. Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association (MPCA) has named stands, pavilion and gates of Holkar Stadium after prominent cricketers and Sandhya Agarwal is the lone women's cricketer to find a place in it.

During a personal interview session with the researcher, Sandhya Agarwal shared quite a few interesting incidents which reflect her basic human virtues being of the highest order.

Sandhya shared one interesting incident on Inter-varsity Women's Cricket Tournament held at Indore in 1981-82. Host Indore defeated Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU) Amritsar in the final and retained the title. Amritsar was a much stronger team on papers having players like Shashi Gupta and Manimala Singhal and so they were upset over the loss. Amritsar players took out matting to check whether the pitch was up to the mark or not.

Sandhya gave credit for building Indian Railways women's cricket team to the late Madhav Rao Scindia and Diana Edulji. On request of Diana, then Railway minister Scindia recruited women cricketers and formed the Indian Railways team in 1985. Sandhya, who made her international debut in 1984 was also recruited in Indian Railways.

Karnail Singh Stadium is the headquarter of Indian Railways cricket teams in New Delhi. Railway cricketers live there for nearly 6-7 months a year. Sandhya utilised the facilities and practised for 10 to 12 hours daily. After women's nets, she used to play against men bowlers. She was so determined that even after waking up at 5.30 am, she used to practice till 6 pm.

Sandhya feels that if you want to be in the Indian team, you have to perform regularly. She realised the importance of physical fitness after her first series against Australia in 1984. Sandhya started working out in the gym and continues that. Sandhya feels that if a player wants to get success, he/she should have more passion than the coach. The player should reach the ground before the coach arrives. Self-confidence is the key to success. If a player gets scared of the opponent, then she will not be able to perform well, instead the player should get motivated against a strong opponent. Sandhya also believes that players get added pressure due to the money involved in the game.

One of the basic human virtues of Sandhya Agarwal is grit and determination. She narrated an incident during a personal interview with the investigator. When Sandhya Agarwal was around three years old, she was bitten by a poisonous insect. In those days, she used to reside in ginning factory in Khandwa. She is the youngest amongst seven sisters. It was the day of engagement of the third eldest sister Shakuntala and Sandhya was with the house help. There was a garden in front of her home. She was playing in that garden during which the insect might have bitten her. She didn't realize that and peacefully dozed off. After the function, her mother enquired about her to the house help to which he replied that Sandhya is asleep in her room. When mother checked, she found that Sandhya's right leg was extremely swollen. She had bite marks of two teeth on her leg and was taken to the hospital where the doctor told her that the swelling is due to pus. Pus was removed by cutting a small incision, but after two to three days, the leg was again swollen. This went on for 15-20 days. The doctors in Khandwa believed that they will have to cut the leg. After this, her father brought her to Indore where they consulted Dr Murthy in Robert Nursing Home. Dr. Murthy suggested that since Sandhya was very young, we could polish her bone and keep it in plaster for two three years, there are chances that her leg might recover. They used to visit Indore every 6 months for a check-up. Dr. Murthy had made a small incision in her leg to check the progress of healing. After the follow-up, her leg would be plastered each time. This treatment went on for about four years, after which her leg had recovered but it had become weak. Despite this Sandhya Agarwal achieved laurels in the international arena.

CONCLUSION

Based on qualitative analysis following conclusions are drawn :

1. Sandhya Agarwal's contribution to women's cricket is immense.
2. Sandhya Agarwal was not only the first global superstar of India in Women's cricket but her contribution to women's cricket is even greater in terms of a coach and an administrator.

3. A success story of Sandhya Agarwal inspired girls to pursue cricket as their career choice.
4. Sandhya Agarwal is instrumental in popularizing women's cricket in India through her scintillating knocks at the international level.
5. Sandhya Agarwal is a champion of women empowerment and lead from the front in promoting social changes and a motivator towards gender disparity.

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