



Research Paper

## Women Empowerment: Tokyo Medalists Indian Women's Journey to Olympics (2020)

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### ABSTRACT

Olympics medal is a dream of every amateur player whether a male or a female. Every professional player he/she, wants to win a medal in Olympic which is the biggest multi-sports event in the world and organized by the International Olympic Committee in every four years in a city of a country. In the Olympics only top players from almost all countries in the world participate who have worked very hard for many years by sacrificing much of his/her life. But it is very difficult to participate in this biggest sports event and to win a medal is many times difficult. Every player has to undergo a long journey of many years in national or international stadiums, sports academies and sports centers under the guidance of many veteran coaches. All Indian whether men or women players/Olympians have passed such a long journey and after this they won medals in the Olympics. The journey to Olympics is more difficult for Indian women to men because in our country society is basically male-dominated which gives more career opportunities boys than girls but Indian women are not losing their hearts rather they are accepting all challenges in every fields. They have reached on this height after facing a lot of problems and challenges in life. In present times the Indian women are good wrestlers, boxers, weightlifters and so on. In sports the women of present times are bolder, more energetic and full of energy and modern thinking and want their independent name and fame in family, society, national and international level. Unlike traditional women who were not allowed to go out, the new modern women are free to go and participate in every kind of activity whether it is of political, social, cultural, sports and so on. Modern Indian women's progress can be assessed by the summer Olympic 2020 which postponed around one year later due to COVID-19 pandemic. The present paper is an attempt to highlight the journey of only three Olympic medal winner Indian women: P.V. Sindhu (Shutler), Mirabai Chanu (Boxer) and Lovelina Borgohain (Boxer) who bagged three medals for India at Tokyo Olympics 2020 which were organized from July 23, 2021 to August 08, 2021.

**KEY WORDS:** Olympics, women, journey, India, Tokyo

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Success in life is the dream of every person whether he is a man or a woman and success can not be achieved in one minute, one hour or a day. It takes a long time of years. It is absolutely true that Journey of thousand miles starts with a single step and nothing is possible in a in a second, minute, hour and day. Every achievement and success takes time and to attain goal one has to work very hard for a long times. Similarly winning medal in the Olympics by Indian women players was not possible in day, week or months but they worked hard for it many years. It is absolutely true that journey of thousand miles starts with a single step. Same can be seen in the journey of Indian women in Tokyo Olympics. Indian women have made much progress in every field including sports. There is no field in which Indian young women are behind to young Indian men. With the passage of time much change has come in the thinking of Indian women. The modern women are career conscious. They want to become part of progress of family, society and nation. They are accepting challenges at every step. They have recognized their power in fast changing time and society. The women of new generation are multi- talented. They are competing with Indian males not only in academics but also in the fields of sports. They are getting success in the fields which were only for the Indian men in past days. In present times the Indian women are good wrestlers, boxers, weightlifters and so on. In sports the women of

present times are bolder, more energetic and full of energy and modern thinking and want their independent name and fame in family, society, national and international level.

Unlike traditional women who were not allowed to go out, the new modern women are free to go and participate in every kind of activity whether it is of political, social, cultural, sports and so on. In Tokyo Olympics 52 Indian women participated and achieved success in boxing and weightlifting events which in past times were played by men's only. In Tokyo Olympics 2020 Indian women secure three medals out of seven. They have made it possible after a long and very difficult journey of many years.

What are Olympics or Olympic Games?

The Olympic has a long history. It has its origin in 776 in Olympia Greece and was celebrated until 393 A.D. but for a long time Olympic were discontinued. The Olympic game or Olympic is an international multi-sports event which is organized in summer and winter in every four years. The modern Olympic Games were started in 1896 Athens (Greece). Before the commencement of modern Olympic Games an International Olympic Committee was constituted which made a plan to restart the Olympic games and this committee first time organized the first Olympic games in 1896 which started on 06 April and ended on 15 April, 1896. In the first Olympic Games total 280 athletes all male from 13 various countries took part in 43 events.

When did India Participate in Olympic Games?

India first took part in the Olympic Games 1900 with one athlete Norman Pritchard (1875-1929) who won two silver medals in athletics 200 meter and 200 meter hurdles and after that many Indian male athletes won Bronze, silver and gold medals in Olympics.

Participation of Indian females in Olympics (1952) was only 4 in number while in 2020 it was 52. It was the year 1952 when Indian women first time started participating. In the summer Helsinki Olympics only four Indian women took part in various events. It is different thing that they could not win the Olympic medal but they broke the barriers and opened a new way to Olympics for Indian women.

In a country where sports is often dominated by men the Indian Olympic women stars accepted the challenge and paved a way for Indian women in sports and in present times Indian sports has seen a big rise in the number of its female athletes. Indian women waited for a long and struggled very hard to win a medal in Olympics. This long wait ended in summer Olympics held at Sydney (Australia). So the year 200 was the first glorious year when an Indian woman weightlifter Karnam Malleswari won Bronze medal for India. This huge success stirred a new energy and power in young women Indian female players. They started recognizing their potential to win Olympic medals for mother India.

As a result in the Olympic in 2020 the number of Indian women participants was 52 out of total 127 who bagged medals for the nation which is not a small number and these women participated in the games like boxing, weightlifting, free style wrestling, race and hockey, discuss throw, Judo, shooting, swimming, and archery etc. which were in ancient times were played by men. In the Olympic India won total seven medals out of these seven three were won by women. The Indian women who won Olympic medals and made the nation proud are Mirabai Chanu (weightlifter, Lovelina (Boxer) and P.V. Sindhu (Badminton).

Actually the fast journey of Indian women towards Olympic was started in the year in 2000 when Indian weightlifter Karnam Malleswari won Bronze medal in 69 kg category of weightlifting. Her gigantic success inspired thousands Indian young women athletes. It was like a dawn for Indian women who imbibed the sleeping energy and spirit of Indian women athletes. It was in Indian sports like the intellectual Movement Renaissance in European countries which came first in Italy and then it spread various parts of Europe.

Indian women who won Olympic medals at Tokyo are in detail discussed below:

Indian Women and Tokyo Summer Olympics (23 July -08 August 2021)

1. Purnsara Venkata Sindu (Badminton Player and Silver Medalist at Tokyo Olympics)

P.V. Sindhu (b. 1995) has a long journey to win her second medal in Tokyo Olympic. Sindhu is a big name in the world history of Badminton not only in India but in world too. She comes from Telangana. She was born in Nirmal district and brought up in Hyderabad. Her father P.V. Ramana belongs to Nirmal district (Telangana) and mother Vijaya comes from Vijayawara (Andhra Pradesh. Both were Govt. employees and volleyball players. Ramana was a member of Indian Volleyball team that won the bronze medal in 1986 in Seoul Asian Games and he was an Arjuna Awardee which was given to him for his contribution to the sports. Although her father and mother both professional volleyball players but their daughter did not follow the game of her parents.

The Indian shutter and badminton star P.V. Sindhu was highly influenced by her coach Gopichand Pullela and she started playing Badminton at the age of 8 under the coaching of Pullela Gopichand. Her coach was much impressed by her performance, punctuality and dedication. He recognized the talent of Sindhu from the very outset. In an interview in Chennai, with V.V. Subramanyam, the Chief –Editor of The Hindu, he tells:

The fact that she reports on time at the coaching camps daily, travelling a distance of 56 km from her residence, is perhaps a reflection of her willingness to complete her desire to be a good badminton player with the required hard work and commitment. (p. 8) <sup>(1)</sup>

He further says:

The most striking feature in Sindhu's game is her attitude and the never –say-die spirit. (p. 5) <sup>(2)</sup>

P.V. Sindhu at the age of just 17 years made her place into the top of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) in September 2012 and except 2015 she has won medal in every world tournament and championships. She is the second woman who has won continuously five or more medals.. She is the first Indian woman who became the Badminton World champion and only the second individual player from India to win two consecutive medals at the Olympic Games. A report of April 2, 2017 report of world Badminton player ranking declares:

Sindhu rose to a career high world ranking of no. 2. <sup>(3)</sup>

Two times Olympian and silver winner Sindhu has made her recognition after working very hard and after a very difficult journey of many years. She bagged a silver medal in Badminton in the Olympic game held at Rio in 2016 and 2020 at Tokyo and became the first Indian woman who won silver medal for the nation and made India proud. She became the youngest Indian woman who won an Olympic medal. In the year 2017 she was on number 1 player in Badminton in the entire world. It is also worth mentioning that she is the first Indian woman who became the Badminton world champion and the second only individual athlete from India who won medals two times in Olympic by creating a history and making the nation proud.

In the Olympic game held at Rio in 2016 two medals were won by India and even this time two girls made the nation proud. In that Olympic M.C. Mary Kom bagged Bronze medal for India. The third woman who won silver medal for the nation was P.V. Sindhu reached the final of the 2016 Olympics. She could not win gold medal but she won the heart of people in the entire world.

Sindhu, in present times, is a role model and guide for millions of badminton loving Indian male and female players who have a spirit of sportsmanship in their heart and who are determined to make India proud by winning medals in international championships and particularly in the coming Olympics 2024 which are to be held at Paris in the year 2024.

2. Mirabai Chanu ( 1994...) (Iron Lady of Manipur) and her journey to Tokyo Olympics 2020

Chanu comes from Manipur and a boxing star that covered a long journey of 23 years. She is the shining star of India. She won silver medal in weightlifting on the very first day at Tokyo Olympics and made India proud.. On her success on July 24, 2021 and in an interview with the famous newspaper the timesofindia.com, Chanu says: I dedicate this medal to my country and thank the billion prayers of all Indian. <sup>(4)</sup>

She was highly inspired by Kunja Rani Devi who is a national coach and seven time World Championships silver medalist. Chanu was born at a small village and she covered a long journey of years to win a medal in various championships. She became the glory of India by lifting total weight 190 kg in 48 kg women category. She was very strong since childhood. Her parents realized her power when as a child she used to carry a very heavy and big bucket of water on her head. Moreover one day when she was 12 years old she lifted very easily a bundle of firewood on her head while her brother struggled very hard to lift it on his head.

Chanu started weightlifting in 2007 at the age of 13. In the beginning she joined Khuman Lampark Sports Complex in Imphal 30 km away from her village where she got her weightlifting training under a weightlifting coach, Anita Chanu and Vijay Sharma. Her fast race of career started in 2009 when she won the Gold medal at State-level in sub-junior category and just two year after in 2011 she won the first national medal in Junior – Nationals and in the same year Chanu won the first International Gold medal at South Asian Youth Games and International Youth Championships. After that she never looked behind and focused on upcoming events and her only target was medal in Tokyo Olympics.

Chanu in the year 2013 won the Gold medal in 48 kg category by lifting 170kg (170 kg snatch and 95 kg clean and jerk. In the year 2016, she again won the Gold medal in the South Asian Games by lifting 169 kg. In the year 2017 Chanu created history by becoming the second Indian woman in the weightlifting event after Karnam Malleswari and won a gold medal by lifting total 194 kg at the world Weightlifting Championships at Anaheim in USA. In April 2019 Chanu lost her bronze medal in a very close contest to Zhang Rong, a Chinese weightlifter in 49 kg women's category and she stood 4<sup>th</sup> by lifting total 199 kg in the Asian Weightlifting Championships at Ningbo in China. In the month of September 2019, Chanu improved her performance in the World Weightlifting Women Championships at Pattaya in Thailand in which she lifted total 201 kg (87 kg Snatch + 114 kg Clean and Jerk).

In the year December 2019 she won the Gold medal at the Qatar International Cup by lifting 194 kg (83 Snatch + 111Clean and Jerk). After a few months in February 2020 during when COVID pandemic was spreading and just after lockdown, Chanu participated in the Senior Women National Weightlifting Championships in Kolkata and even her she bagged the Gold medal by lifting total weight 203 (88kg Snatch+ 111kg Clean and Jerk and made a record.

In 2021 the IRON LADY of Manipur (India), Chanu got the ticket of Tokyo in which she won silver medal by lifting total 202 kg (87 kg Snatch+ 115 kg Clean and Jerk) in 49 kg women category while Chinese weightlifter Hou Zhihui lifted total 210 kg in 49 kg women category. After her win in an interview with thehindu.com from Tokyo, Chanu says:

I am seeing a marked interest in weightlifting for the first time after her silver Medal feat in Tokyo Olympics.<sup>(5)</sup>

Chanu was the first who won silver medal for India and her grand success the Prime Minister Modi congratulates her for this grand success. The Olympic medalist Chanu, after her win on 24 July 2021 in her talk with thehindustantimes.com, she tells:

I don't just belong to Manipur, I belong to whole country.<sup>(6)</sup>

Thus Chanu is the second Indian woman weightlifter after Malleswari to win a medal in Olympics. She worked very hard and faced a lot of problem during the journey to Rio and bagging a medal for India. Now her condition is like the moon among stars similarly Chanu is a great star boxer not in India but in worldwide.

Lovelina Borgohain (b. 1997...) and her Journey to Tokyo Olympics (2020)

Lovelina Borgohain is the star welterweight boxer of India won bagged bronze medal for the nation at Tokyo Olympic 2020. She was born in 1997 at a small village Bara Mukhia in Golaghat district of Assam. In the beginning Lovelina started playing kickboxing but later she changed her game and adopted boxing as her career. On day The Sports Authority of India held trials at the village Girls High School where she was a student. In the trial Lovelina participated and she was selected by a boxing named Padum Chandra Bodo who suggested Lovelina to join SAI Centre Guhawati in 2012. In this way Lovelina comes to SAI and starts her boxing training under the guidance of Padum Chandra Bodo till 2012 and later she joined and started her boxing training at Netaji Subhash Regional Centre in Guhawati and was coached by Sandhya Gurung. Lovelina covered a long journey of 23 years to win the Olympic medal for India.

The Indian star boxer and Tokyo Olympic bronze medalist was highly influenced by boxer Vijender Singh who won bronze medal in Beijing Olympic (China) in 2008. Her second source of inspiration was Mary Kom who bagged bronze medal for India in London Olympics 2012. Lovelina's journey to Tokyo is not so easy rather she worked very hard and won many international women championships. In the year 2018 and 2019, she won bronze medal in All India Women's World Boxing Championships in 69 welterweight categories. She also took training at Assisi in Italy from October 15 to December 05 for World Olympic qualifying event scheduled for May / June 2021. She defeated the boxers of German and Taiwan in July 2021 which in her a great confidence but in semifinal she was defeated by World Champion boxer. While talking to the Olympic channel sportskeed.com on August 3, 2021 Lovelina says:

I know the two world Championships bronze medal is a good effort but I wanted to win a god at the international level. I realize the need to work harder for that.<sup>(7)</sup>

So Lovelina won third medal after Mirabai Chanu and P.V. Sindu. In 2020 she became the 6<sup>th</sup> person from Assam to win Arjuna Award. After her bronze medal in Tokyo Olympics the Govt. of India many State Governments, BCCI and BYJU gave her millions of rupees. Govt. of Assam and Govt. of Uttar Pradesh gave as reward 1 + 1 = 2 lakh rupees.

## II. CONCLUSION

Indian women first time participated in Helsinki Olympics in 1952 but could not win medal. They waited for a long and struggled very hard to win a medal in Olympic and to make India proud and to prove their potential that they are not behind in any field especially in sports. This wait ended in the Olympics 2000 when an weightlifter Karnam Malleswari bagged bronze medal for India. This success became motivation for Indian women and they recognized their potential to win Olympic medals for mother India. As a result in the many Indian in every Olympic participate in the events like men. In present times there is no field which is beyond the reach of Indian women. They are taking part in the games which were in ancient times were dominated and played by men only. But in present times the Indian women athletes are taking part in every Olympic events in which Indian male athletes are participating. Every morning and evening a huge crowd of Indian young players can be seen working very hard and sweating many hours untirelessly in stadiums, boxing rings and badminton academies and so on. It is absolutely right that journey of thousand miles starts with a single step. Thus the journey Indian women in participating started in 1952 but they got success in winning Olympic medal in 2000 with the winning of Malleswari's bronze medal in weightlifting. The first moment of glory ignited the fire in the body of millions of athletes, sports loving followers and sports fans. So we can say that the actual journey of Indian women for Olympics started in 2000 in Sydney when Indian weightlifter Karnam Malleswari bagged Bronze medal for India and became the first Indian woman to win an Olympic. Malleswari's Olympic medal inspired the next generation of Indian female athletes like M.C. Mary Kom, Saina Nehwal, P.V. Sindhu, Sakshi

Malik, Lovelina and especially Mirabai Chanu and millions of other Indian young women. It reminds us the famous English Poet Robert Frost's lines:

..miles to go before I sleep.  
So some is done but much is yet to be done.  
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