

ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF WOMEN CRICKET WAITING TO BE EXPLOITED

M.M.K. Sardana^{*}

[Abstract: It is being pointed out that with the ascendancy of India controlling the affairs of cricket globally, the entire glory is being cornered by Men's cricket and the Women's cricket has been relegated to invisible space. In the cricket crazy nation like India Men's cricket is being perceived to be shaping Indian Nationalism, and its players are recognized as national heroes. As women cricket is marginalized, space for female heroines is reduced. It has been proposed that for increasing the visibility of women's cricket, it may be necessary to adopt positive affirmative measures and structured programmes including adoption of legislative measures. Despite advanced legal systems and strong feminist movements in England and Australia, equality even in basic perks like per diem is not being achieved. This paper argues that while affirmative action and structured programmes have a place, economic realities would require the women's cricket to develop a fan base who love to watch the sport as is played by them promoting it professionally under the Boards of cricket who are mandated to do it and have been having sufficient resources at their command. Boards have to open their mind and realise that women cricket, if promoted with modicum of investment and vision, is capable of being professionalized and commercialized with assured revenue streams. Once this vision dawns upon the Boards and particularly BCCI, the doyen of commercial Cricket, women cricket and women in general in India would have enough space to have heroines from amongst them and the resultant revenue streams would add to the sports economy to the advantage of economy in general.]

Sports economy in India has taken roots in India with the commercialization of cricket, Corporates, Media and Event Management companies have come to develop close links with the sport and have been having a say in making the sport competitive and formatted in a manner to suit and sustain the interest of viewers spread across the continents with the objective of maximizing revenue streams. Turn of events have benefitted the players and the Boards of all the Cricket playing countries so much so that a career in cricket has been incentivized to such an extent that even players of yesteryears are being benefited by liberal grants out of the surpluses of the Boards and also players at different levels in their career are being incentivised financially and also through the state of the art facilities to improve their skills under the expert advice of coaches and physios, who have, in turn, technical support at their disposal which was

^{*} The author is a Visiting Fellow at the Institute.

never dreamt of earlier. Corporates sponsoring the sport have an exciting instrument at their command to build brand of their products influencing millions of people glued to their screens. May be traditionalist supporters of the game are rueing the loss of associated grace with traditional format of the game; economic gains accruing from the new format and turn of bias towards commercialization has come to assume a decisive factor in laying down the revised tenets of the sport¹. Radhika Gupta² in her seminal work on the ascendancy of India in controlling the affairs of cricket globally on the trail of brilliant performances by the Men's Cricket teams and tremendous interest of Indians to the extent of craziness in this sport contributing handsomely to the revenue streams of organizers and sponsors, suggests that, Women's Cricket has been relegated to an invisible space while Men's Cricket has come to be perceived as shaping Indian Nationalism in powerful ways. Net effect, according to her, has been that gender inequity in sports and society has been sharpened. She observes that it is ironic because Men's Cricket embraces a "Unity in diversity" paradigm by contracting geographic and religion diversity, and yet women are functionally excluded from the sets of exposure that generate such a paradigm. It is surmised by Radhika Gupta that by neglecting to grant Women's Cricket substantial recognition, India fails to provide women with an equal opportunity to participation in a sport on an equal basis with men, but also to do all those things that men are able to do through their participation in cricket.

It weakens women's contribution to all that cricket represents leading to the construction of a gendered nationalism. If, being a great cricketer is what defines a national hero, and if women's cricket is marginalized, then India lacks space for female national heroines. Further Radhika Gupta proposes that women's visibility and participate on needs to be increased by ensuring the placement of equality measures e.g. equal salaries and equal media coverage for men and women cricket, and adoption of affirmative action and creating a set of structured programmes to promote equality.

¹ ISID Discussion Note, DN 2014/11 by M.M.K Sardana

² Bowled out of the game: Nationalism and gender equity in Indian cricket by Radhika Gupta, Berkley journal of entertainment and sports law, vol.2/ issue 1, 11-12-213.

If cricket in India is perceived shaping nationalism, in England the sport has been a national symbol extolling comradeship and Christian virtues. Women's cricket has been played there at least since 1745 and its women's team has been playing international competitive cricket since 1934-35³. Equality in salaries and allowances with their men counterparts continues to elude them. In Sri Lanka, which hosted the ICC T20 World Cup in 2012, the per diem of women players was € 37 compared to the men players who were being paid € 62. The prize money for the match championship offered by ICC was just € 37,000 when the Men's event would have been for € 6,19,000. Though prize money may be linkable to commercial value of the event; yet discrimination in daily allowances stands out. Such a disparity is rankling and hurting when the achievements of England's women far surpassed their male counterparts in tournament held parallelly⁴. The Australian men cricketers continue to travel the globe in business class with sport dieticians, psychologists, therapists and staying at five star hotels while the women compatriots get pittance despite their supremacy in all the three formats of the game. In the recently revised pay hike also, the top woman player has potential to earn up to \$ 80,000 a year, the comparable figure for male counterpart is \$ 2,30,000⁵. Despite advanced legal systems and feminist movements in England and Australia, equality even in basic perks like per diem is not being achieved. Therefore while the path of advocacy among the Boards of cricket and crafting of legislative support have the objectives of persuading the Boards to realise that it is their responsibility to promote the game among women as much as they do for men and if they do not respond the state should have punitive measures to steer the erring Boards to routes ensuring equality. Such course of action does not necessarily ensure that adequate fan base would be created, who would exhibit matching interest in women's cricket as much as they do for men's cricket which would determine the extent to which TV broadcasters and corporate sponsors would participate and foresee emergence of

³ History of women's cricket: cricketforIndia.com

⁴ Mail online, after T20 World Cup: we must now start taking women's Cricket seriously by Laura Williamson. Oct 7, 2012. Dailymail.co.uk/sport/article-2214296

⁵ Often two jobs and paid a pittance, dailytelegraph.com.au/sport/cricket

attractive revenue streams⁶. Therefore, a realisation has to dawn on all the stakeholders that the Boards by not promoting women's cricket optimally encouraging followers and fans of cricket discover excitement and fun in women's cricket as much as they do in men's cricket are leaving potential revenues untapped. The potential of women's participants as players towards driving sports economy has to become visible. Until now in the events relating to cricket, women have come to be perceived as consumers particularly in the aftermath of the Indian Premier League and their role as producers have been masked. Corporates are yet to realise that enhanced participation of women with their skills on the field has the possibility of generating enduring demands. Women are the face of consumer power. Women have done traditionally most of the household shopping, and with more money in their hands their role as consumer gets enhanced. A survey suggests that women make perhaps 80 per cent of consumers' buying decisions- from health care and homes to furniture and food⁷. Engagement of women is critical to sustainable growth of every industry⁸. Sponsors in the corporate world and media have to be sensitized to the fact of the potential of the women's cricket to generate revenue streams comparable to the men's cricket so that they take a serious interest in the sport as played by women.

Admittedly, the responsibility of promoting women's cricket vests with the respective Boards of the countries playing cricket. For example clause 2 (a) of the object clause of the Memorandum of Association of BCCI reads. "To Control the game of cricket in India and give its decision on all matters including women's cricket which may be referred to it by any member association in India. Aim and objective of BCCI in promoting the game in India, framing the laws of cricket in India, selecting teams to represent India in formats internationally played and is a full member of International Council of Cricket (ICC); global governing body of the sport, ICC, is likewise responsible for promoting the sport globally as played by men and women. Cricket Control Boards including BCCI are

⁶ Cultivating a fan base is key to revenue generation by, Ram Tamara, Mint, Delhi, January 11, 2011

⁷ Women and the world economy: A guide to women economics, "The Economist 12 April, 2006

⁸ ISID DN 2011/15, Declining Sex Ratios will it impact economic growth; by M.M.K. Sardana

non-profit organisations and thus revenues obtained by these Boards are to be ploughed back into the game of cricket⁹. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that Boards would not only encourage the promotion of sport as played by men and women in equitable manner and also exercise positive discrimination in favour of women's cricket to correct the lags suffered by the women's cricket because of historical reasons and also reasons that are internal to the respective Boards and hence to ICC who should not have allowed visible gaps and lags to come to surface in the first place. Internal reasons resulting in the comparatively slack interest in promoting women's cricket can be attributed to the mindset of those who control the affairs of the sport i.e. BCCI in India and ICC internationally. BCCI's response to a Sports Ministry's suggestion to give at least 10 per cent of its total membership to women in the decision making bodies in the Board goes on to express that it is not possible to have women sitting in judgment of the men's team. Notably 24-member working committee, its decision making arm, does not have any woman on it. In its defence to its response in its 39 page note to the Sports Ministry on their proposal, BCCI goes on to state that admittedly women's cricket is conducted under the aegis of the BCCI, but (it) has never attracted even a fraction of popularity associated with men's team. It further states that BCCI would never accept such an illegal imposition of women having membership and voting rights over cricketing matters concerning the men's team and according to it the suggestion is downright absurd as far as BCCI is concerned. To another suggestion of the Ministry that it and other National Sporting Federations should put on their websites, measures taken to prevent sexual harassment of women, it claims that sexual harassment does not occur in Indian Cricket and it would not in future too and asserts that as all the officials attached with women's teams are always women, the possibility of an eventuality is ruled out¹⁰. Smugness of the BCCI should have been shattered with an allegation of a woman cricketer against the M.P Cricket Association Joint Secretary in November, 2013

⁹ Case No. 61/2010 before the Competition Commission of India; Order dated 8.02.2013

¹⁰ BCCI will not share power with women by Qaisar Mohamad Ali, Mail Today- Jan-12, June 2012, yahoo Cricket today

who had to step down¹¹. Such an attitude of revulsion against women being on the decision making bodies has been exhibited by BCCI despite the fact that among its influential members are leader of opposition in the Upper House of Parliament and the Minister of State of Parliamentary Affairs both of whom represent the two main National Parties of the country who otherwise in their political discourses would be vying with each other for empowering the women. It is manifestation of such an attitude that it takes no responsibility on itself if women's cricket has not attracted even a fraction of popularity associated with men's team even though it itself is responsible for promotion of women's cricket. An enlightened mind frame would have made BCCI sit up and set it on introspection mode for an analysis into causes of the women's cricket remaining invisible despite the spark shown by women cricketers within the limited opportunities and limited recognition being made available to them. With its present frame of mind as exhibited by BCCI in its response to the proposal of Ministry of Sports for including women on decision making bodies, it is only to be expected that BCCI would, as it has done, lay blame on women generally for not popularizing the sports as much as their men counterparts and hence they remain deservedly invisible in the sport and thus unworthy of money, glory, honour and fame that the sport can confer on them. Even at a time when performance of men's cricket team was disgraced in the world cup in the Caribbean's in 2007, an eminent socialite and adman Prahlad Kakar ridiculed women cricketers stating that they even do not know how to play cricket and he could not watch them play even two hours¹². An adman in kakar should have made him put on his thinking cap that despite competitive performance of women's cricket teams internationally; how is it that their brand of cricket has not come up? Has it been marketed well? Whether an appropriate market hype has been built up in the media as a planned strategy? Whether the quality of game played by them has been technically analysed and commended and commented by experts who are masters of the sport and are media savvy and whose word builds up a fan base for the team and or for individual

¹¹ MPCA official steps down on sexual assault charges- ii Nov,28, 2013, India today .in

¹² Women's cricket team has a better performance record by Ashley Coutinho The Economic Times, April 11,2007

players. Anil Kumble has been one of the most successful bowler and an essential member of the winning men's cricket team of India whose personal contribution in bringing glory to his team was universally acknowledged, remained without significant endorsements. It is thus not about sporting success or winning medals but capturing people's imagination which accrues on successful marketing and packaging for gaining recognition. Story of women's cricket has been somewhat similar to that of Anil Kumble. Besides their good form in 2006 (They won the Test Series in England against England in August and the Asia Cup in December), the world cup track record of the women had also been better than their counterparts, they reached semifinals in 1997 and 2000 World Cups and the finals in 2005. The Board and the independent marketeers remained insensitive towards highlighting their achievements with any urgency or expediency. It was reasonable to expect that when BCCI took over the activities of the women's Cricket Association of India (WCAI), women's cricket in India would be discovering its rightful place. There was a promising beginning under the dispensation of BCCI. In October 2006, BCCI decided to start domestic cricket for women and host Asia Cup in December of that year and quadrangular Series in Feb/March 2007. Besides it took steps to promote live telecast of international women's cricket matches and had a vision to have level-1 special coaching exclusively for women cricketers. Better travel and accommodation facilities and enhanced daily allowances followed when the team participated in the international matches. On winning, the team and its supporting staff were incentivized with cash awards. In comparison to men's team, the match fees have remained pitiable. There have been no strategy of building a brand value for the women's teams¹³. To be fair to BCCI, in their attention to the promotion of the women's cricket, they are in the company of other Boards and their attitude to women being part of the decision making organs, may also not be significantly different. Women's cricket has universally remained amateur despite the belief that the MCC abolished cricket's amateur-professional divide in 1962. No woman anywhere in the world has ever earned her living by playing cricket. Their love of the game is worth a lot but it does not pay the

¹³ Ibid

bills. Cricket Australia has taken a lead in 2013 enabling its top contracted players to earn up to U.S. \$ 77,500 annually in comparison to their counterparts from England, who make on an average of \$ 26,800. Cricket Australia has brought the women cricket players at par with the best-paid female athletes in Australia and they also become best-paid female cricketers ever. England and Australia have been having women players on contract since 2008 and New Zealand has also advanced in 2013 in creating first semi-professional contracts. Such incentives will enable the women cricketers in these countries to stick to the sport somewhat and there would be stability of the playing elevens^{13a}. Pakistan, Sri Lanka, South Africa and West Indies have also placed in position arrangements offering their women cricketers annual contracts. Sri Lanka ensures employment for the women, with the army or in other government jobs, and the English Board, runs a programme called 'Chance to shine' offering cricketers coaching assignments if they are not representing England. BCCI has yet to see the merit of introducing the system of contract players for the women's sport. One of its vice Presidents, Niranjan Shah, stated that he sees higher payments as unnecessary for improving the women's game in India. It is obvious where the BCCI stands on the issue. The performance exhibited by the women players in the international contests has been comparable to the best in the all departments of the game.¹⁴ BCCI, which boasts of having its members from the highest echelons of opinion makers of the country need no tutoring that in our country women come up in sporting activities overcoming a host of prejudices and hurdles; a favourable biased approach in promoting the sports among the women would be in order and the BCCI may have to work out special strategies to take media and market developers to increase the visibility of women's sport. BCCI has necessary financial means and clout to invest in this task overcoming their own indifference to the sports as played by women. BCCI needs to enlarge its vision beyond the dazzle of men's cricket and discover the potential of the sport that women's cricket has. Steps taken by cricket Australia and the Boards of England and New Zealand have

^{13a} A women's world? Not quite, Anjali Doshi, Wisden India, 5 Feb, 213

¹⁴ What price amateurism? Raf Nicholuson, women's cricket struggles to keep up in an age of professionalism: The Cordon, May 13, 2013 [espnricinfo .com/blogs/content/story/638455.html](http://espnricinfo.com/blogs/content/story/638455.html)

the potential of leading the Women's cricket league to commercial domain if a fan following can be built up among the Indian viewers. BCCI and the Corporates need to acknowledge that with proper media exposure and recognition by sponsors women have drawn eyeballs in numbers more than their male counterparts in number of sports like Badminton and Tennis even though the women players of these sports also may not be as fast players of these games as their men's counterparts. Their sponsors and media have been able to build a fan base around the women players of these sports. The turning point in favour of the women teams in these sports has been that women teams have successfully competed in international levels in these sports and many viewers have identified them as national icons which the sponsors and media have exploited for building the image of their own brands among women particularly.

Before the 1983 win of India in the World Cup, BCCI did not imagine that its men's team could be a cash cow for it. With this victory everything changed for the Board. As on date, BCCI has become the richest Board of cricket and controls the levers of the game the way it is being played in the world. Sponsors and media are chasing it. Cricket playing has become a rewarding profession. A success in T-20 Championship in South Africa in 2007 was another booster which established the commercial supremacy of the Board when it was to launch the Indian Premier League.

BCCI has to have a self belief that it can reinvent the women's cricket team which can repeat the trajectory of men's cricket in having a fan following of its own when sponsors would fall in and the media attention would naturally come giving rise to its own set of revenue streams. Despite the relative indifference to women's cricket; knowledgeable commentators of the game have been enjoying the experience of their job of watching the women's cricket. Admittedly no serious comparison can be made between men's and women's cricket, for various reasons, but watching women's game up close has been instructive for the knowledgeable men of the game-for its contrasts with the men's game and what it tells us about the evolution of men's game. Commentators have discovered women seem to swing the ball more than men do, they also do not

need turners to spin the ball, all they need is a 22 yard cricket pitch pointing out in, essence, that how swing and spin are less and less evident in the men's game now. Experts of the game have been startled by the fact of the capacity and skill of women's player to extract spin from the bouncy pitch of the Cricket Club of India in the morning hour, where 2013 World Cup games were played. It is asserted that, men would have found it difficult to match the skill displayed by the women players. Such a special skill among women players has been possible because they bowl differently by flighting the ball more and bowl it a lot slower than their counterparts, with their average speed being 65-70 kph. Mail spinners bowl around 80kph, and their trajectory is much flatter. This is why women can find turn even on a pitch with no soil exposed, to get spin advantage. As the women's capacity to hit the ball out of the ground is limited, it gives an opportunity to the women bowlers to give full length balls which gives them advantage of trapping the players leg before or bowl them out; a feature which distinguish their play from men's play.

Women's 50 over match gets over within the allotted time because their bowlers have shorter run up and the fielders do not 'mill around' while taking their field position as much as their counterparts even on a hot and humid day – such desirable traits emerge out of the habit of women generally over the men to get on with their job in a businesslike manner¹⁵. Highlighting such unique feature associated with the women's play aggressively as a concerted strategy by the BCCI through knowledgeable commentators in the media certainly would be towards building up the brand image of the game as played by women.

Since the BCCI took over the affairs of women's cricket in India, in 2006, the women's team has not played test matches. They play only ODI's and T-20 matches. Women's team at the most has been having two international series a year. For the rest-of the time, the team is very much cooling its heels. Thus Indian women players get very little

¹⁵ Look to women's cricket for the game's best pleasures, Sanjay Manjrekar, EspnCricinfo, Feb, 16, 2013

opportunities to get recognition by the public which is the first ladder for the way up for any sport. Ardent fans of the game of cricket can hardly name a few players among the playing eleven and would not be able to recall the feats of players of yesteryears; who exhibited their mettle despite heavy odds. Imposition of ban on players other than the captain and the coach during the run up to international events has been counterproductive as a strategy¹⁶. A build up of the personality of players by exposing them to media through interviews and talk shows before and during the event would be desirable for giving an exposure to the team and the players comprising it. Through such exposure, public at large gets to know the specialisation of the respective players and the contributions they are expected to make in the combined efforts of the team. If a few of the players perform well, earlier build up of their personalities, immediately gives boost to their image and the intensity of their build up is enhanced. Increased participation of the players in the domestic and international matches would keep their visibility high and as their performance improves, some of them may start drawing the attention of sponsors which would encourage such players to perform still better.

It is rather disturbing to note that there is very little domestic women's cricket limited to only one T20 tournament and one 50-over tournament. There are no longer format matches and no test matches. There is a little bit of long terms cricket at U-19 level, nothing at under-16 level¹⁷. In contrast, in the seventies of the twentieth century, when women cricket was organised under the aegis of Women's Cricket Association of India, sub junior tournaments and junior tournaments were held for the under-15 and under-19 players. There were hierarchy of tournaments ranging from women's Inter-state, Nationals; inter-zonal, limited over tournaments – the Rani Jhansi Trophy; inter-university tournaments etc. the winner of each zone played the Indra Priyadarshan Trophy and the winners of the national played against the best of India Team for the Rao's Cup.

¹⁶ BCCI orders Indian Women's Cricket team to salience, first sport, Sept, 26, 2012

¹⁷ It is an insult to women's cricket to be treated this way; Interview of Diana Eduljee, by Abhishekh Purohit, January 29, 2013

India hosted International women's cricket match in 1975 when Australian under-25 team toured India to play a three "Test" Series and played at Pune, Delhi and Calcutta. Further international contests took place with New Zealand, England and West Indies both in this country and overseas. Visiting teams were surprised to see large audience wherever they played as in their own countries there were hardly any crowd watching their encounters. India won its first test match in Patna in 1975 in the presence of a crowd of 25000. India won a One Day series for the first time in 1995 when they played in New Zealand in the centenary celebration of New Zealand cricket. On their visit to England in 1999, the Indian teams won the one day series and drew the test series. Shanta Rangaswamy, Diana Edulji, Sudha Shah and Sandhya Aggarwal influenced the game with their sterling performances. Shanta was the first Indian Woman Cricketer to score a century in international Cricket while Sandhya made a world record by scoring 190 runs in an innings in a test match in 1986. Neetu David's 8-53 against England in 1995-96 was the record bowling effort in a test match innings. Many of the women players were recognized by Government of India when they were conferred with Arjuna Awards. India took part in the World Cup competition in 1978, 1982, 1993 and 1997 and the competition in 1978 was hosted by India even though it had no major sponsorship. India hosted 1997 World Cup when 11 countries took part. Hero Honda sponsored this tournament, which generated considerable interest in the country. The final played between Australia and New Zealand at Eden Gardens in Calcutta witnessed a record crowd of nearly 80,000.¹⁸

India has been one of the most consistent nation in women's cricket since its international debut in 1976-77. The country has produced several maestros who rose to legendary status in women's cricket, like left arm spinner Diana Eduljee, batswomen Rangaswamy and Sandhya Aggarwal. One of the stars of current times is Mithali Raj, who in 2002 scored the third double century in Women's Test Cricket. She went on to

¹⁸ The history of Indian Women's Cricket by Shubhngi Kulkarni, Sept, 8, 2000

surpass 209 of the Australians; Karel Rolton's and became the highest individual scorer in test cricket. Her record was surpassed in 2003-04 by Pakistani Kiran Baloch¹⁹.

Thus when BCCI was obliged to take over the women's cricket in India as per norms which uniformly became applicable to all the Boards of Cricket, it had a rich material available to it which was to be nurtured to reach commanding heights particularly when the Board had vast resources at its disposal which included its reach over media and sponsors. Women's team had the history of drawing the sponsors like Hero Honda when Women's World Cup was hosted by India in 1997. It had also the history of attracting large spectators to the venues when it played against visiting international teams. So if the officials of the Board and Board itself remark that the contribution of women's cricket has remained invisible, it has to take the blame of having limited its own vision of being content with the revenues generated by Men's team despite the consistent failure of this team consistently at venues outside the country largely because of absence of a competing interest among the Indian Diaspora who remain glued to the game on their screens out of sheer habit. An enterprise, on the constant lookout for exploring fresh revenue streams would not let off the opportunities coming in the way as the BCCI has done in not carrying the women's cricket forward in a meaningful way. Rather it has allowed to dry up its potential by denying it recognition by not even offering the status of contracted players while Boards of countries like Pakistan and Sri Lanka have joined the league of several other Boards by granting such a recognition. Such would be a small step towards professionalizing the game as it is played by women and would set process of encouraging the sport as a career option among women which in turn would encourage enthusiasts of the sport to play. The sports economy would get a boost with the emergence of fresh demands from the increased participation by women in the sport cricket. A strange gender preference phenomenon is witnessed in the countryside of boys of all age groups playing the game of cricket, organised or not, in the open space and gullies whereas hardly one comes across of girls displaying any

¹⁹ History of Women's cricket, cricketforindia.com

inclination of indulging in the fun of cricket²⁰. Such differentiation has come about because of the large visibility attached to the men's cricket at the National level and the myth of glorification of India through its exploits in defeating the teams of other countries at least on the Indian soil. Media, spurred by the corporate interests, keeps on building the brand of the team and players by airing day and day out their exploits and their affairs. There is not an iota of visibility of women's cricket team which should serve as a role model for the growing girls to take on to the game. Resultantly, despite somewhat improved playing conditions of the players of women's cricket at national level, the basic instinct of getting attracted to the sport to emulate an icon is missing around the young girls. Since the affairs of women cricket have come under the control of BCCI, girls are playing less domestic and international level games. There is no more long term form of cricket comprising of four day or five day cricket. In comparison, other countries have domestic four-day competition for their women's teams and the English and the Australian women's team take part in an ashes-style test series every two years; while the India team does not have even a single such opportunity during a calendar year²¹. Even if they play International Tests, they would hardly be able to compete as the longer form of the game is not played domestically. A team which can neither win nor play competitively can hardly claim visibility and enthuse the members of public. Prior to the world cup in 2013, the Indian women played a One-Day International (ODI) series in July 2012, almost six months before the commencement of the world cup tournaments whereas Australia and New Zealand played each other in December 2012 just on the eve of the world cup event. Not surprisingly, India finished seventh in the tournament after failing to qualify for the super six stage with just one victory from the group phase. Chairman of the Women's Committee in ICC blamed the BCCI for India's poor showing and found that standards have slipped in India while there have been improvements all around including in Sri Lanka and West Indies. Chairman of the Women Committee in ICC faulted BCCI for the falling standards of the women's cricket

²⁰ The problem with women's cricket in India, Ananya Upendran. Feb 13, 213

²¹ BCCI does not view women's cricket as an obligation, but as a liability by Aditya Shyamalal
Cricketcountry.com

in the country where there is tremendous passion for the cricket. According to her the players in India are not getting the much needed support from the BCCI even for the international event of the World Cup hosted in India. She found that the BCCI had not pulled its way as much as it could have done for the Indian Women's team and to support the profile and exposure of this tournament. The objective of ICC for bringing the event of World Cup in India was in the belief that the market for women's cricket in India is massive and it was an effort to engage the cricket mad nation so that the people support the Indian Women's team more and the game as played by women grows. Another objective was to throw up role models aspiring women to play towards the highest level. She hoped that overtime passion for the game as played by women would grow with more high quality cricket being played and BCCI had huge finance in terms of backing the game and the tournament would have gone towards opening up some minds that were closed towards women's cricket in the past²². Event of the world cup held in 2013 did get support from commercial partners like Reliance, LG, Pepsi, Emirates, Reebok, Castrol, Money Gram and Hyundai. Star Sports produced High Definition live coverage of all the ten matches played at the ground of the Cricket Club of India that ensured a global audience of millions in more than 150 territories to witness the best of best of best in women's cricket. The TV ratings shot up seven and a half time as compared to first five televised matches of the earlier world cup held in 2009 and the number of people who saw the event live on TV in 2013 was six times more than in 2009²³. If Indian eves had managed to qualify for the super six and further, the event would have been towards building the brand for team India and brought the possibility of vision of commercialization of women's cricket closer to reality. That was not to be particularly when the Indian team had not been through the rigors as would make champions out of them.

²² India lack BCCI support –Connor Espncricinfo, Feb. 18, 213

²³ ICC thanks BCCI for women's World Cup success Rediffcricket, Feb 18, 2013, rediff.com.

In sports, missed opportunities of the past need not deter the management from looking ahead particularly when there is proven potential available. Controller of the game needs to take its task with a purpose particularly when the possibility of commercial gains benefitting players and stakeholders with a modicum of investment is on the horizon.

BCCI has a rich experience of building up of formidable teams for boys and men who have established their supremacy in the international area and also have served the commercial interests of the BCCI; needs no external advice for the manner for rising teams of girls and women to rise to the occasion and establish their supremacy in their own right. BCCI has to realise that women's cricket is unique in its display of the game with somewhat age old grace associated with cricket and has already established that broadcasters and sponsors would be interested in exploiting its potential as demonstrated by them in the 2013 World Cup. As pointed out by the Chairperson of the women's committee of ICC; the need is the minds which have remained closed to the women's cricket to open up. BCCI needs to correct itself and believe that investment would be needed by the BCCI in reinventing the women's team in India in creating pools of national and international players incentivized enough to become full time professionals by arranging to create conditions towards having year around play of the game at home and abroad and talent hunt is made in a sustained manner from grassroots onwards. Such a task is mandated on BCCI and to re-establish itself as a non profit organisation in face of growing surpluses, it needs to plough funds for promoting the game among girls and women. Such an investment would not only be perceived as empowering women but also would be towards making them equal partners in sharing glory, fame, honour and finances that the game of cricket is capable of bestowing on its players. BCCI would also recall that a part of its intended investment would have to be set apart for building the image of its promising players and also of the national team by commissioning professional agencies who would develop strategies for accomplishing this task. It needs to be reminded that IPL had taken the assistance of professionals in popularizing the concept and does so even after it has gone through several seasons.

BCCI is in a position to do advocacy as appropriate with franchises participating in the enterprise of IPL. Almost all the franchises have powerful women of strong minds who can be a partners in the endeavours of BCCI to give a boost to women's cricket in India by creating teams of women players from within India in their respective jurisdictions and participate in a tournament under the aegis of BCCI. Such an initiative besides building the morale of women players would be towards enhancing the brand value of the franchises targeting the women for their products. Such would be a new forum for creating awareness suiting their commercial interests Broadcasters would also not be left wanting in showing their interest. Besides BCCI and franchises would have hands on experience to determine the feasibility of foraying into the contest designed on the lines of IPL in future. Thus investing in women's cricket has immense possibilities of commercial spin offs for different stake holders including BCCI and the players. The risk is worth taking and BCCI is in a win-win situation. If its investment in women's cricket yields commercial opportunities as envisaged, it has additional revenue streams and if investments do not yield commercial returns as envisaged, it would be perceived as an institution empowering women and fulfilling its mandate of promoting the game among women. Sports economy gains either way as the demand for sport related goods would get a boost and the overall economy would get benefited.