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## Epilogue

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## Chapter 8 Epilogue

In her seminal work on the rights of women, Wollstonecraft (1792) urged women to liberate their bodies by engaging in those ‘bodily inconveniences and exertions that are requisite to strengthening the mind’ and taking part in sports which were considered the exclusive preserve of men. How she would have cheered at the sporting achievements of women today. As was noted in the prologue, the International Olympic Committee, which started out by excluding female athletes, now actively promotes women’s achievements through its charter and supports the promotion of women in sport at all levels; so much so that, since 1991, all new sports wishing to be included in the Olympic programme needed to also feature a women’s event.

Cricket has been part of the tidal wave that has propelled women to participating in all manner of sports with the result that women cricketers today are taken as seriously as their male counterparts. An indication of this is the fact that cricket tournaments have begun to treat their women’s and men’s competitions equally. A case in point is the recently concluded Hundred tournament in England which featured a women’s and a men’s competition. As well as equal prize money for both competitions, the Hundred offered equal media opportunities to men and women; equal exposure of men and women in its promotional materials; games run as double-headers at the same venue with the same facilities; quick turnarounds between the two matches to ensure audience retention; and live broadcasts of many of the women’s games (Westbury, 2021). Although several obstacles remain, some of which have been detailed in this book, before complete parity can be said to have been established between women and men cricketers, the emancipatory attitude of tournaments like England’s Hundred — and prior to that, Australia’s Big Bash League — is to be welcomed.

A particular sticking point is salaries. In a profession in which men and women, rather than being individual contractors as in tennis, are employees of their cricket associations, the salaries paid to women cricketers everywhere are woefully less than those paid to their male counterparts: even in the context of the enlightened attitude of the Hundred, the lowest paid man earned more than the highest paid woman. This raises the question of the speed at which one should progress towards gender parity in cricketing remunerations. The reality is, as Katherine Brunt of England has pointed

out, equality does not happen overnight and in attempting to achieve instant parity with men there is the danger of tripping up by trying to go too far, too fast, and too soon (Miller, 2021). While recognising this danger, one should not be oblivious of the considerable progress that has occurred in the remuneration to women cricketers. Starting from a position in which all that they received for playing was their expenses, several country cricket boards now offer their women cricketers lucrative contracts — though admittedly not as lucrative as the contracts offered to men — and many employers offer jobs to women as professional cricketers.

This trend is consistent with the general awareness of the importance of establishing gender parity in the economic and social life of countries. The unequal treatment of women is not just bad for women; it hurts men too. On one estimate, gender imbalance in participation in employment and entrepreneurship costs the world about 15% of its GDP (Cuberes and Teignier, 2016) and a ‘best in region’ scenario, in which all countries matched the rate of improvement in gender imbalance of the fastest-improving country in their region, could add as much as US\$12 trillion, or 11%, to annual GDP in 2025 (Woetzel *et al.*, 2015). So, the goal of gender parity can be commended not just on grounds of social justice but also because it makes economic sense. If this argument commands sympathy, then the only question is the speed of travel towards this goal. Making haste slowly may be a prudent strategy. But, in striking a balance between speed and caution, one should not overemphasise the latter to the detriment of the former.

In conclusion, the aim of this book was to appeal to those cricket lovers who were bored with books about the game which were little more than a litany of anecdotes. The arguments set out here were all backed by quantitative evidence. The overarching theme of this book was inequality in its various manifestations in cricket: inequality in the distribution of luck; inequality of access to the game; inequality in tournament outcomes; inequality in the quality of umpiring in men’s and women’s cricket; between men and women in their respective remunerations as cricketers; inequality in performance between players. But underlying this, a related and equal purpose of this book was to shine a light on women’s cricket which, notwithstanding its growing popularity, continues to be eclipsed by the men’s game.

## References

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