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Ms. Radha Krishnaswamy

1972 - 1975 B.Sc. Chemistry

## *The fitness coach of India's women's cricket team*

At the age of 60, fitness expert Radha Krishnaswamy is still capable of running full marathons. She has attained celebrity status today, as the fitness coach of the Indian women's cricket team which reached the World Cup final at Lord's and went down fighting against England. Her long years of hard work on the road to relative fame started right from her student days at Stella Maris College, Chennai.

"I was always interested in sport and was very fond of volleyball while in school, but later shifted to athletics when I was at university," says Radha. "I never knew that I would become a fitness trainer at such a high level." Radha and her sister were fond of sport and both were supported by their parents to pursue their interest, though they came from a conservative South Indian family. Radha's marriage to Tamil Nadu opening batsman V. Krishnaswamy did not, however, make her an instant cricket fan.

Her husband's career took the family to many different cities, and Radha managed to continue her training wherever they moved. She also tried to develop as a physical training

instructor. In the 2000s, when Krishnaswamy was transferred to Mumbai in his Indian Overseas Bank job, she got the opportunity to work as a trainer at the Mumbai Cricket Association. But that was for a short while as her husband's job soon took them to a new posting.

Radha was eager to put her talent and training to constructive use, and the eventual relocation of the family to Chennai helped her, as her association with the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) began then. Krishnaswamy encouraged her to do whatever it took to fulfil her dream. "My husband has been extremely supportive and has helped me out many times. As a sportsperson himself he can understand me better than most, though my children never got interested in sport, which is fine."

Radha is particular about people getting her designation right, as many times people mistake her for a physio. She explains the difference, "A physio manages injuries during a match, while we train the players before the start of the match and are free during the course of the match. This year's World Cup contingent had a strength

of 22 which included both a physio and a fitness coach."

The journey of the Indian women's team to the final of the World Cup was a very taxing one for the players and also for the support staff. "Before the

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World Cup, we had a camp in India and one in England to get acclimatised to the conditions there. We knew that the matches against Australia, England and New Zealand were going to be the toughest, but beating England in the opener of the World Cup was a big boost to our confidence. The losses against South Africa and Australia were a bit discouraging but we were still confident of making it. The semi-final against Australia was probably the game when we were most nervous, but Harman's blistering century changed all that."

The loss in the final against England was a heartbreak for the team, but Radha says that all that was made up after receiving an unexpected roaring welcome back home. After this

performance she believes that there will be an increase in the participation of girls in sports. "I believe that women's sport will benefit a lot in India. We experienced the change when we were handed business class tickets after the final. I hope that a women's IPL tournament will come soon."

This was the first time that the Indian women's team got the chance to play a match at Lords and to their delight the final took place in front of a packed stadium. It was a dream come true for the girls to get the feel of the historic Lords balcony. "The team was extremely excited to play at Lords. For me, it was my second trip to the historic stadium; I had gone there previously with my husband when we visited London to watch Wimbledon matches, but I had never experienced the Lords dressing room until the final."

The invitation by the Prime Minister Office (PMO) for a dinner was something very hard to believe for the girls. "The team dressed well for the event at the PMO and we were awestruck by the arrangements made for us. The hospitality of the PMO staff was excellent.



Radha Krishnaswamy.

Prime Minister Modi was in no hurry and chatted with us with a sense of calm and composure. He interacted with every member involved with the team, but later admitted that he was unable to watch a single match of the World Cup."

The epitome of physical fitness herself, she is respected by cricketers as someone who wants to do her best for them, genuinely concerned about each player's fitness, and keenly aware of individual requirements. She spent several hours with women's cricket coaches in Chennai, to try and understand the biomechanics of the game and address the physical demands of the game, as in all her years as a fitness expert, she had never worked with cricketers before. She earned their appreciation for her thoroughness and eagerness to learn. And learn she did, helping her to turn out a very fit set of women cricketers.