

IMPACT ASSESMENT  
of  
JWALA GUTTA ACADEMY OF EXCELLENCE



By  
**Poverty Learning Foundation**

Hyderabad

June 2022

## **@ Aurobindo Pharma Foundation, Hyderabad, 2022**

Between April and June 2022, PLF has conducted the impact assessment of Jwala Gutta Academy of Excellence, Hyderabad, partially supported by the Aurobindo Pharma Foundation CSR under Schedule of VII Companies ACT. The assessment aims to understand the impact by interacting with trainees, trainers, and directors Ms. Jwala Gutta and Sri. Kranthi. Banking on the OECD impact evaluation methodology, the PLF team has collected the information from the selected members and the analyzed outcomes, which are presented in this report.

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### **Disclaimer**

The designations employed and the presentation of the materials in this report do not imply the expression or any opinion whatever on the part of the PLF and APF. The findings are based on the data and information shared by the APF and Jwala Gutta Academy of Excellence.

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Any remaining errors and omissions are entirely the responsibility of the authors.

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# Executive Summary

With a vision of producing world-class shuttlers, the World shuttle badminton champion and bronze medallist Ms. Gutta Jwala established the "Jwala Gutta Academy of Excellence" (GJAE) in 2020. It has thematic infrastructure facilities, including 14 indoor courts, an ultra-modern gym, a yoga center, and hostel facilities for trainees.

Its main aim is to develop a team of young talented badminton players who can compete nationally and internationally and train the next generation of aspirants.

At the formative stage, GJAE wants to strengthen its in-house equipment to train candidates to align their skills to international standards. In this process, on the request of GJAE, APF has come forward and supported establishing a gym in the academy by sanctioning one time grant of INR two crores under its CSR grants, as encouraging rural sportsmanship is one of the CSR commitments of APF.

## **Relevance:**

*Soon after the relief from pandemic disruption, GJAE initiated its scheduled training activities, and at the time of impact assessment, there were seventy-one trainees of different ages and educational backgrounds from eleven states across India. There are five trainers, including a female gym trainer, in the academy. It has senior-level trainees (16-22 years of age), followed by mid-level (11 to 15 years of age). Academy is also maintaining gender balance while selecting the trainees. GJAE has designed its training course in line with its vision, gradually gaining popularity across India.*

## **Coherence:**

*Along with its main activity, the gym is critical in ensuring the trainees' fitness. Academy has brought ultra-modern, state-of-the-art equipment into the gym that meets the fitness trainer's physical exercise module. Combining gym, yoga, and meditation boost trainees' interests, encouraging them to access the gym regularly and do yoga and meditation to improve their concentration, psychological strength, and physical fitness.*

## **Effectiveness:**

*Professional expertise of the trainers and the involvement of Ms. Gutta Jwala are the two critical parameters to justify the academy's effectiveness and influence over the trainees. Besides its infrastructure, its location and hostel facilities encourage the young to join. The equipment in the gym - weightlifting, cardio-machines, free weights, stretching areas, and power cages are the most accessed equipment by the trainees. These are, in fact giving physical strength to trainees.*

## **Efficiency:**

*Physical activities and fitness routines are the two central attractions in the academy. Most trainees are fully satisfied with the customized training modules (according to the trainees' age) and are confident of meeting badminton's national and international standards. Age-specific appropriate exercise models are improving the efficiency of trainees of all ages.*

**Impact:**

*Along with regular training, aspirations are increasing among the trainees, particularly senior-level trainees. Regular mentoring and monitoring by Ms. Jwala Gutta, individual-specific attention of trainers, including fitness trainers giving positive trends and their confidence level are improving. The well-established fact is that the gym's impact is visible as most trainees have explained the change in their fitness - flexibility and muscle strength and reduced the risk of sports injuries. Once the academy sends its selected trainees into national competitions, the actual impact can be viewed.*

**Sustainability:**

*This factor is not examined in this assessment, as the activities are at the formative stage, and operations started at the end of 2021. as long as the promoters mobilize sufficient operational costs, sustainability is ensured. Once the trained players enter the national-level competitions, the academy will have more visibility and growth.*

To conclude, financial support from APF is more appropriate, timely, and justifiable, benefitting the young aspirants undergoing professional training in GJAE, equipped with world-class infrastructure supplemented with an ultra-modern gym for shuttle badminton players.



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# Section ONE

## Main Report

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### 1

## Introduction

### **Context:**

As one of the philanthropic firms, Aurobindo Pharma Foundation (APF) aims to help create positive and enduring change in society. It is working with the partners, including the government and other stakeholders, to address the societal challenges. In 2020, APF gave INR two crore financial support to the Jwala Gutta Academy of Excellence (JGAE), established by Sudar Educational Society Sujatha School (SESSS), to improve its infrastructure and perform for better results. It is a one-time grant, and JGAE has invested funds to establish a suitable, ultra-modern gym with advanced equipment.

In this context, APF has handpicked Poverty Learning Foundation to assess the inputs and outcomes of the gym, in particular, the bird's eye view of other inputs in the academy and the opinions of the trainees, trainers, and directors. Accordingly, the PLF team initiated the work and completed the field work, data analytics, and report in two and a half months (between April and June 2022).

### **Core Objectives:**

Given the context, the core objectives of the impact assessment looks into:

1. The inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact,
2. Quantify the experiences and aspirations of trainees and trainers,
3. Synthesize the philosophy of the top management, and
4. Arrive at bottom-line conclusions.

It is to be noted that, much focus has been on gym, which is established with the support of APF.

These above four core objectives examined through the OECD<sup>1</sup> evaluation criteria:

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<sup>1</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.



Finally, it provides the information that is credible and useful, enable the lessons learnt to feed into decision-making process of APF.

#### **Research and analytical framework:**

Given the nature of assessment and key objectives, a combination of “exploratory” and “conclusive<sup>2</sup>” research designs were considered to draw framework and data collection tools.

In principle, this assessment addressed two types of questions:

- i. Descriptive questions ask about what is taking place. They are concerned with stakeholder (trainees, trainers and management) views.
- ii. Normative questions assess activities and whether or not the aims of APF investments are accomplished. It also apply to inputs, activities, and outputs.

While designing and validating the semi-structured questionnaires, checklists for Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and observations, the above two types of contextual questions were imbedded into the tools.

One-to-one interviews with trainees and trainers were conducted along with focus group discussions with the trainees. Checklist was used during the interviews with – Mrs. Jwala Gutta, President and Mr. Kranti Gutta, Secretary of the academy.

Impact assessment team has interacted with twenty-three trainees across all professional levels and age categories. Besides, to understand the quality of the equipment in gym, 2 trainers and 1 gym trainer were interviewed and synthesized their professional views on the benefits of the gym in providing holistic coaching to the trainees.

Data analysis for primary qualitative data and documents followed the structure of the assessment matrix, using the analytical ‘nodes’ that identified during the assessment (a structured approach as well as an unstructured approach to analysis), to code the evidence collected.

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<sup>2</sup> Conclusive Research Design (CRD) applied to generate findings that are practically useful in reaching conclusions or decision-making. It provides a path-way to verify and quantify findings of exploratory research. In general, exploratory research design explores the topic with varying levels of depth and it forms the basis of more conclusive research.



Assessment has taken a random sample framework and selected the informants for one-to-one interviews from the total trainees in the academy<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, the analysis in the report is based on interviews with 23 trainees and three trainers, including President and Secretary (the top management).

## 2

### Outcomes of the impact assessment

#### 2.1 Academy:



Jwala Gutta Academy of Excellence was established by World champions bronze medallist, and one of India's best women's double shuttler, Gutta Jwala in the year 2020 with world-class infrastructure, that includes 14 indoor courts. It has seating capacity for 600 spectators, an international standard ultra-modern gym and yoga centre.

The academy aims to teach discipline and serve as a prominent world-class training hub for young shuttlers from rural and urban backgrounds.

#### 2.2 Relevance:

*Is the intervention doing right things?*

*The JGAE's main objective is to create a team of badminton players who can compete at national and international competitions and train the next generation of aspirants. The training module, policy, and priorities were drafted per the objective.*

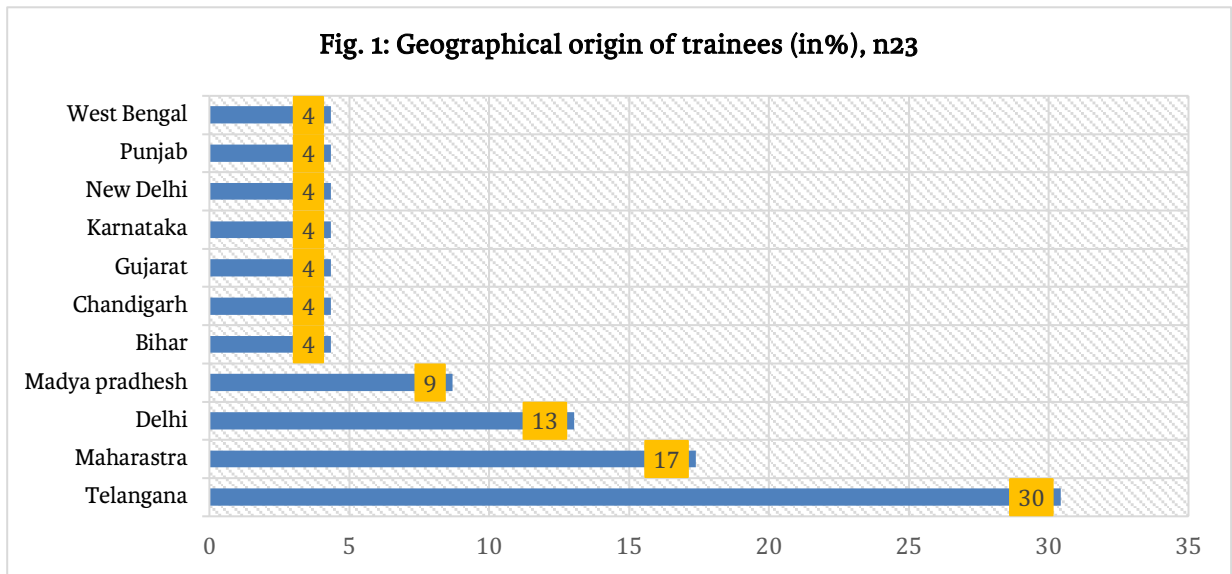
Since its inception (in 2020), the academy has gradually attracted young aspiring youth to take intensive coaching from professional trainers. As per the academy director, though the academy has been inaugurated in 2020, the academy has suffered from pandemic disruption. From December 2021, the academy scheduled its activities with a considerable number of trainees.

Seventy-one trainees<sup>4</sup> have different age groups and geographical and cultural backgrounds. Assessment has interacted with 23 trainees (32%) who were registered for long-term coaching. The location advantages are visible as 30% of the trainees are from the state of Telangana. About 17% are from Maharashtra, 13% from Delhi, and 9% from Madhya Pradesh (Fig 1).

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<sup>3</sup> In this report, "academy" refers to the Jwala Gutta Academy of Excellence.

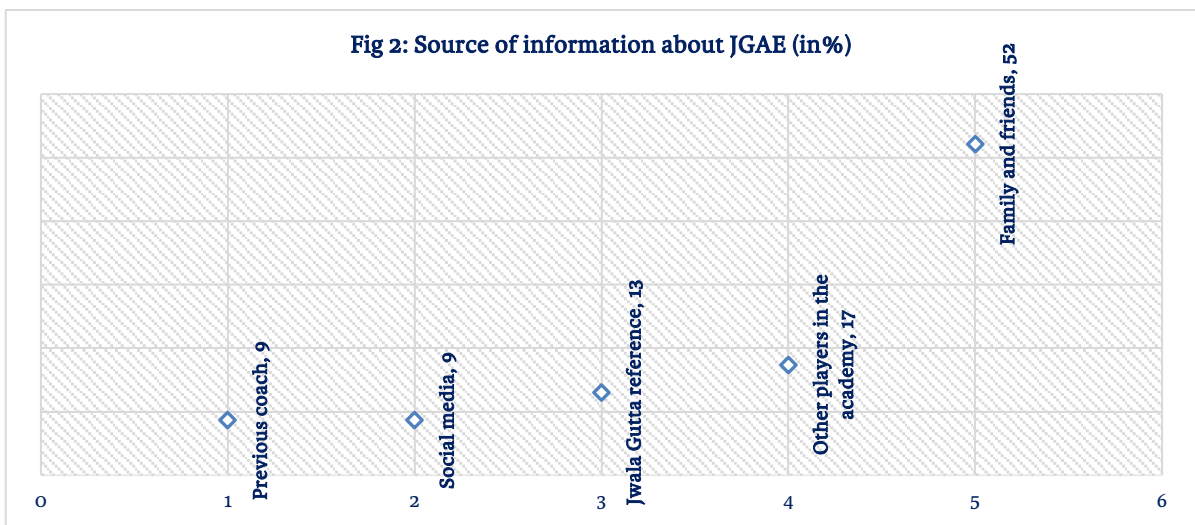
<sup>4</sup> During May 2022 – at the time of assessment by PLF. It includes 66 registered children, and quite a few children joined for summer camp.



The academy is attracting young aspirants. Of 23 trainees, 52% are in the senior age category (16-22 years of age), and the rest 48% are in the junior age category (11-15 years of age). About 43% are girls, and 57% are boys. The majority of the trainees (70%) are in secondary and higher secondary standards, and about 30% are doing their graduation and post-graduation.

*Together young aspirants are from eleven states across India. Getting young children within a short span indicates that the quality of training is getting popular and soon it may attracts many young aspirants from different states.*

Most of the trainees (52%) came to know through family and friends about the academy. Reference from other players (17%), and coaches/trainers who worked earlier in the academy are the other major source of information to the trainees. Social media (9%) played moderate role in sharing the information. As an influential sportsperson, Jwala Gutta attracted many young trainees to the academy. (Fig: 2).

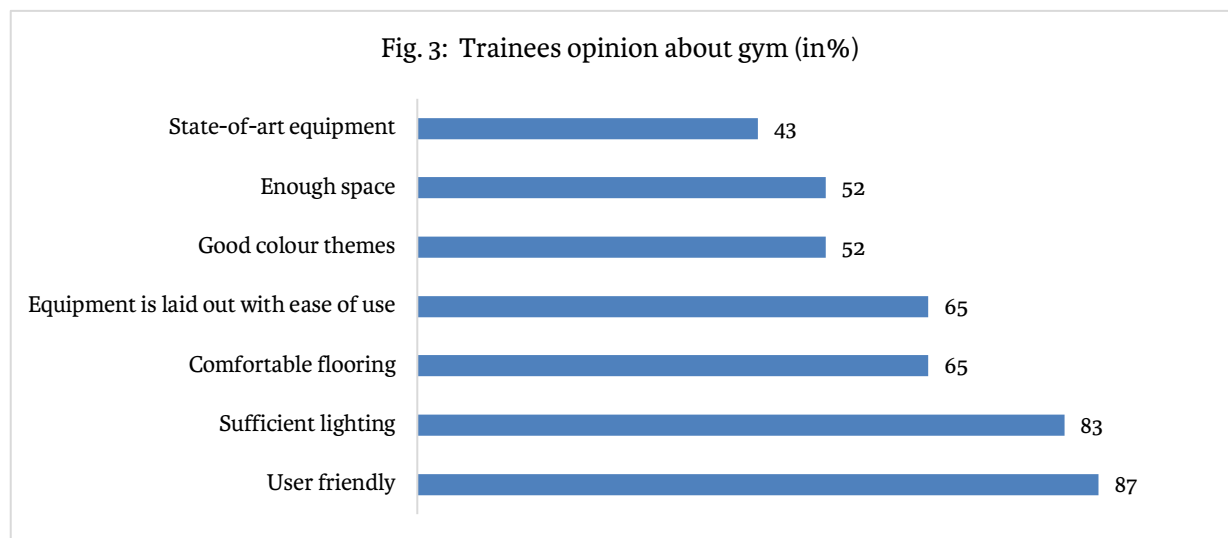


### 2.3 Coherence:

*How well does the intervention fits?*

*The compatibility of the training in the JGAE with other similar trainings elsewhere in the country, seems to be matching.*

Present assessment has found that 83% of the trainees were trained elsewhere before joining JGAE. To improve their fitness and skills, they opted long term training in JGAE. The remaining 17% are newcomers who desire to begin professional training in the academy. More trainees who have prior training indicate that the academy has gained its professional strengths across other similar institutions.

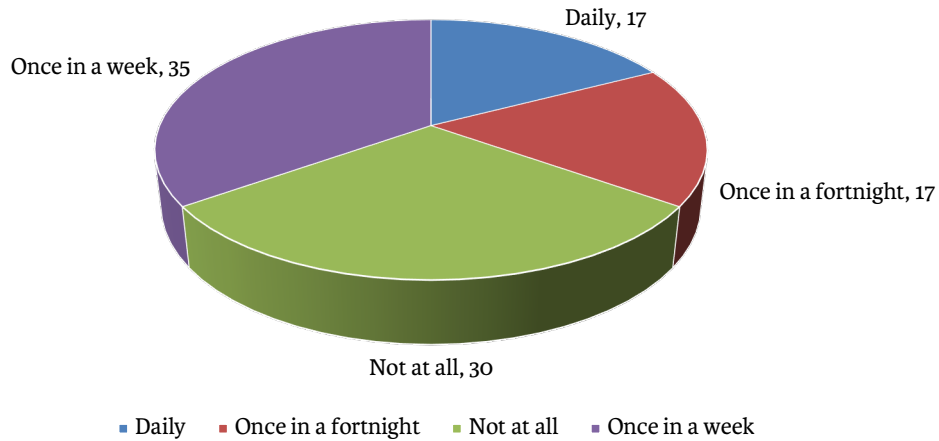


Having a well-equipped gym is a critical part of any sports academy. As mentioned elsewhere, with the financial support of APF, a well-equipped gym has been established in the academy. This assessment tried to know the opinions of trainees on the facilities/equipment available in the gym and found (see Fig. 3) that the majority of the trainees (87%) said that it is user-friendly with sufficient lighting (83%), comfortable flooring (65%) and arrangement of the equipment (65%).

Along with the gym, the academy encourages the trainees to do "yoga" and "meditation" every day to maintain concentration and balance their psychology and temperament. Of the total About 70% of the trainee's practice yoga and meditation. About 30% are not interested in doing yoga and meditation. This category needs proper counselling on yoga and meditation ( Fig 4).



Fig. 4: Trainees practising yoga and meditation (In %)



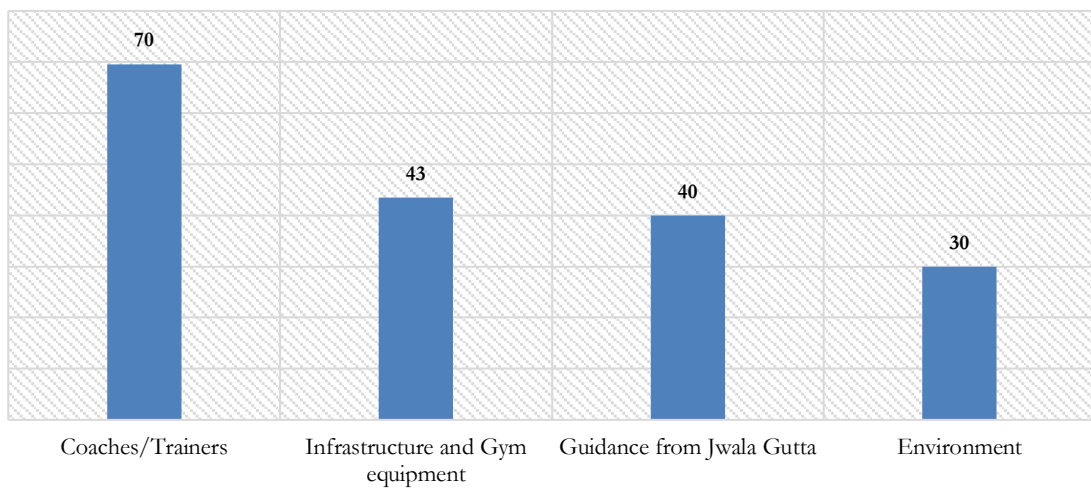
**2.4 Effectiveness:**

*Is the intervention achieving its objectives?*

*Effectiveness of the academy reflects on the extent to which the intervention is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results.*

The top-of-the-mind reasons<sup>5</sup>, among trainees, for choosing JGAE highlights that most of the trainees (70%) preferred it because of the professional expertise of the trainers and the presence of Jwala Gutta. Following it, infrastructure, including the world-class gym (43%) is the second top criterion for choosing the academy (Fig 5).

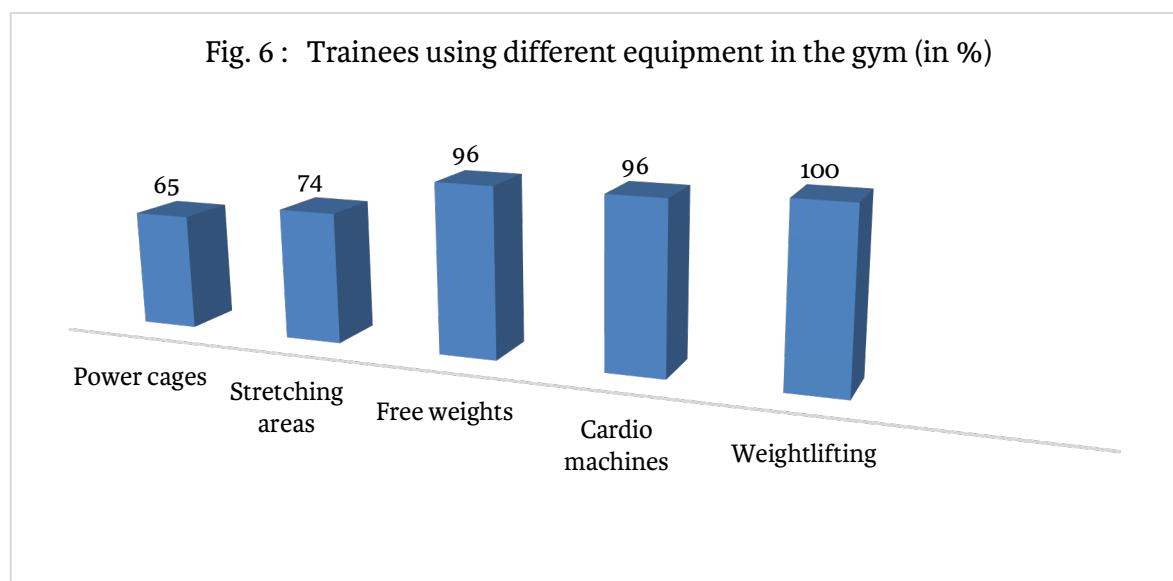
Fig. 5: Top of the mind reasons for choosing JGAE (in%)



One of the observations made by the team is that Jwala Gutta is spending most of her time mentoring and monitoring the trainees and trainers. It is one reason behind 40% of trainees joining the academy. Similarly, locational advantages - free from sound and air pollution - are another factor that attracted many (30%) into the academy.

<sup>5</sup> Multiple reasons expressed by 23 informants during assessment.

The assessment tried to find out the most used gym equipment (Fig 6).



Using equipment in the gym depends on the fitness trainer's advice and goes on the trainee's age. It is evident that except for power cages and stretching areas, more than 95% of the trainees use free weights, cardio machines, and weightlifting. One trainer said that whatever equipment available in the gym benefits the trainee to improve his/her muscle and bone strength. Depending on age, gender, present body flexibility, and physical strength, trainers allow the trainees to use different equipment, for instance – training bench, dumbbells, treadmill, stationary bicycle, barbell set, rowing machine, low-impact treadmill, and ellipticals.

Confirming the advantages of the gym, one of the lady fitness trainers said that - training at the gym has immensely helped the trainees build endurance and strength for their game. She said that while the gym facilities are ultra-modern and play a significant role in the players' training, some additional equipment such as more ladders, rods, and swiss balls are currently necessary for the gym.

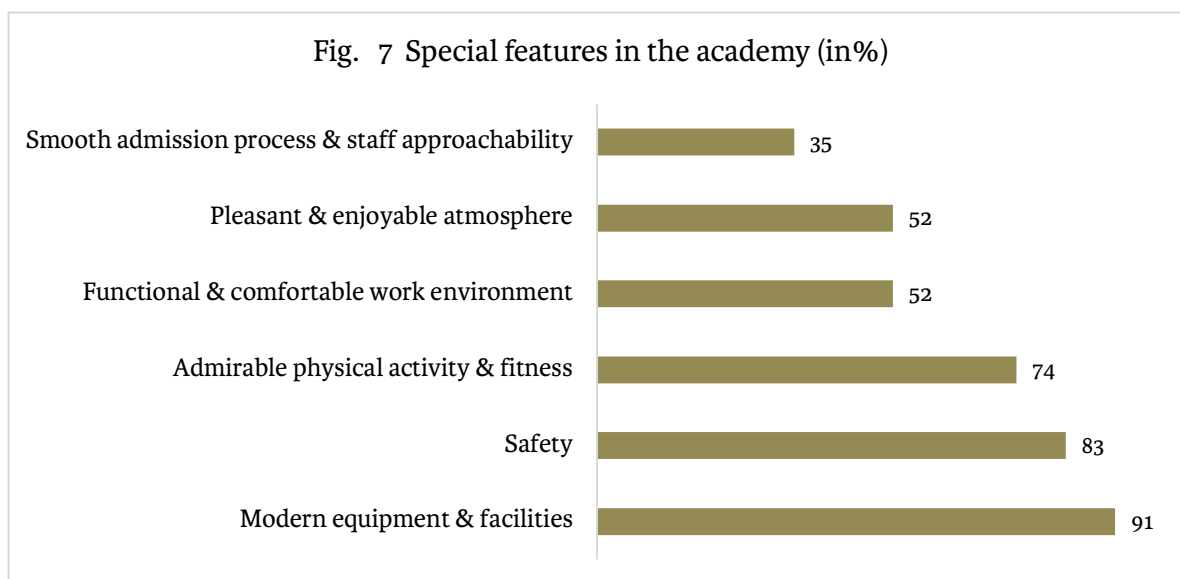
## 2.5 Efficiency:

*How well are resources being used?*

*Currently, JGAE delivers results in an economical and timely way by having professional trainers who have established their professional expertise at the national level, using space and time more efficiently and ensuring high input standards in training.*

The academy offers advanced equipment, modern facilities, and reasonably well-maintained accommodation to encourage trainees to stay active throughout their training. About 91% of the trainees expressed their satisfaction with the facilities available.

Fig. 7 Special features in the academy (in%)



Most of the trainees (74%) are comfortable with the physical activity and fitness routine. Similarly, a safe environment, including the hostel's location, is considered by most trainees (83%). Quite a few (35%) are satisfied with the admission/entry process followed by the academy's administration. Half of the trainees (52%) believe that the academy has a delightful atmosphere (Fig 7).

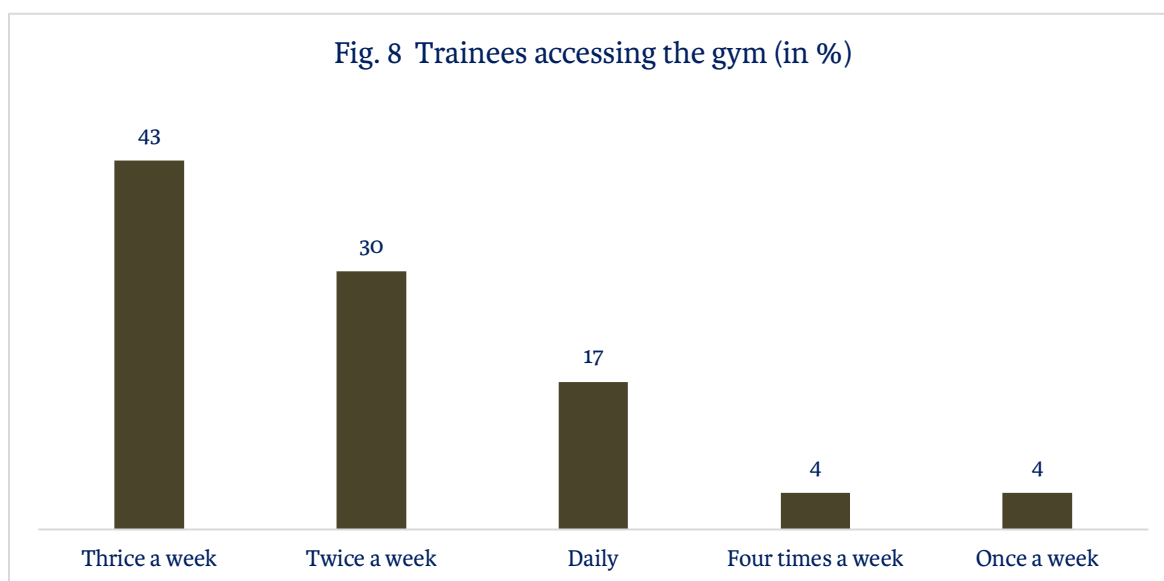
Of the trainees interviewed, about 91% did not receive any sponsorships (generally, sponsorships will come once they prove their talent at State/Centre level). It is to be noted that about 9% of the trainees are getting either sponsorship or concessions.

The assessment team interacted with three trainers. According to them, the academy is potentially utilizing its physical resources, including the gym, badminton courts, meditation hall, and open ground adjoining the main building (training arena), for training purposes.

The customized training modules and time schedules are well planned to utilize the trainers fully. Each trainer spends 5 to 6 hours with the group of trainees. Besides improving the skills and providing tips to trainees, their main focus is ensuring body and mind fitness, concentration, and quick adjustments to the surrounding environment, which are critical for players.

Jwala Gutta Academy of Excellence appointed qualified fitness trainers to ensure the trainees' efficient training and strength building. Two full-time and one part-time trainer take training sessions for trainees depending on their level of preparation. While students have expressed that the training sessions are critical to building their game techniques, they also said they interact with the trainers daily to discuss individual concerns and queries.





Trainees to keep fit must spend considerable time in the gym doing different exercises under the supervision of a professional fitness trainer. JGAE has professional fitness trainers who coach the trainees using different equipment in the gym and play badminton with the trainees. It is mandatory that all trainees, irrespective of their age, must do gym exercises.

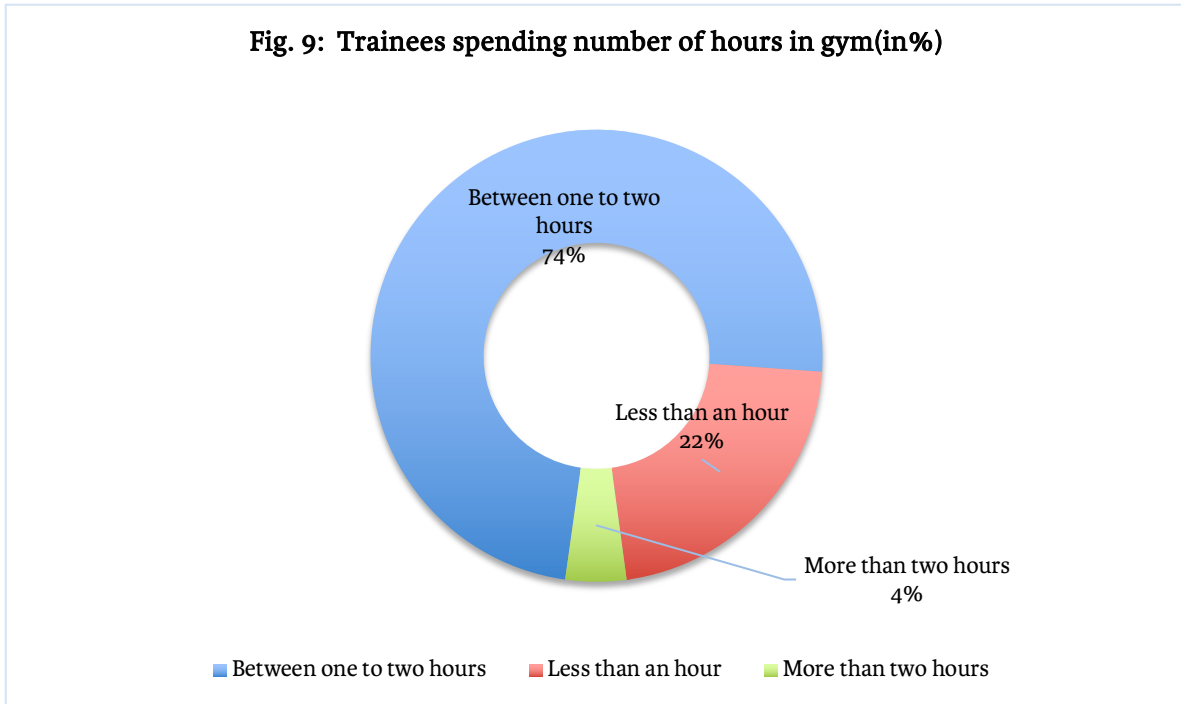
All the trainees must take fitness training in the gym under the mentorship of a fitness trainer. Not all trainees access the gym daily; it depends on their individual needs and fitness trainers' recommendations. It appears that most of the trainees, that is 43% are accessing the gym thrice a week, 30% twice a week, 4% four times a week, and 4% once a week. In this category, all are young children—about 17% access the gym daily, all in the senior category (Fig 8).

While discussing the significance of the gym, coach Yusuf Jauhari says –

*"Gym training is starting to become very important to the players' performance. A few years ago, in badminton, we relied on running and other forms of fitness to build strength, speed, and game player techniques. Gym training not only immensely helps build the strength required for badminton, but also helps improve the confidence and agility of the player, ..... I believe two days of gym training for the players is more than sufficient to improve their game".*

Along with the number of days trainees are accessing, the number of hours doing different exercises in the gym matters. Most of the trainees (74%) use the gym for about 2 hours (on average). According to the fitness trainer, this much time is enough for a badminton player to keep himself/herself fit and flexible. About 4% of the trainees use it for more than two hours, and most juniors use it for less than an hour (Fig 9).

**Fig. 9: Trainees spending number of hours in gym(in%)**

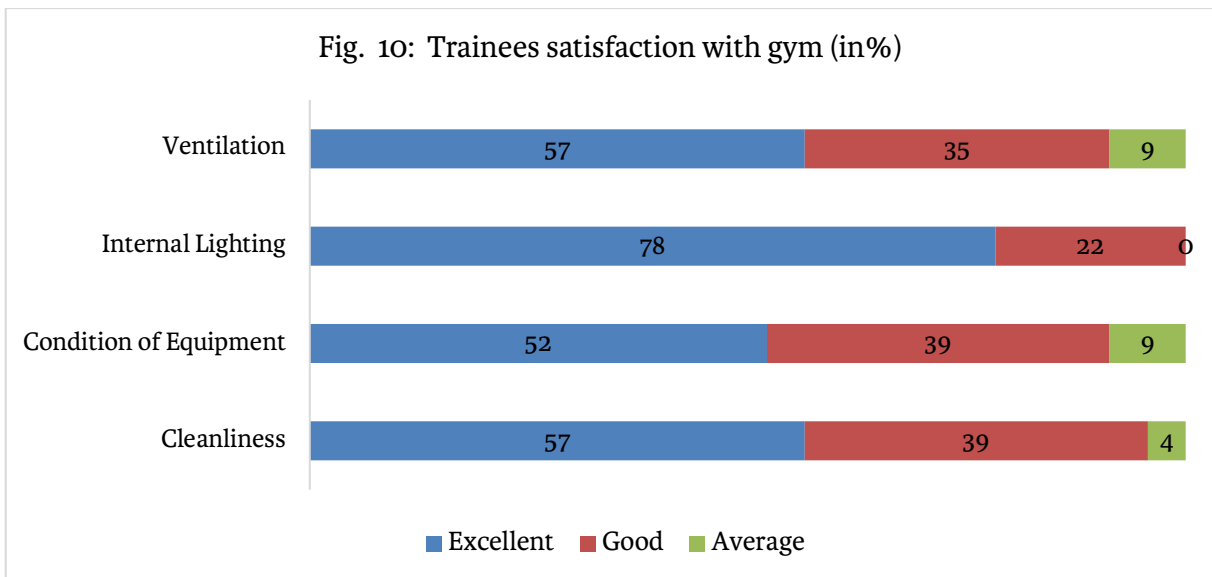


The satisfaction levels of the trainees were assessed by considering the quality of equipment, lighting, space, floor and fitness trainer.

- Excellent Ventilation: says 57 % of the trainees.
- Excellent internal lighting: says highest majority, that is 78%
- Excellent Equipment's and their conditions: says 52%
- Excellent cleanness: says 57%

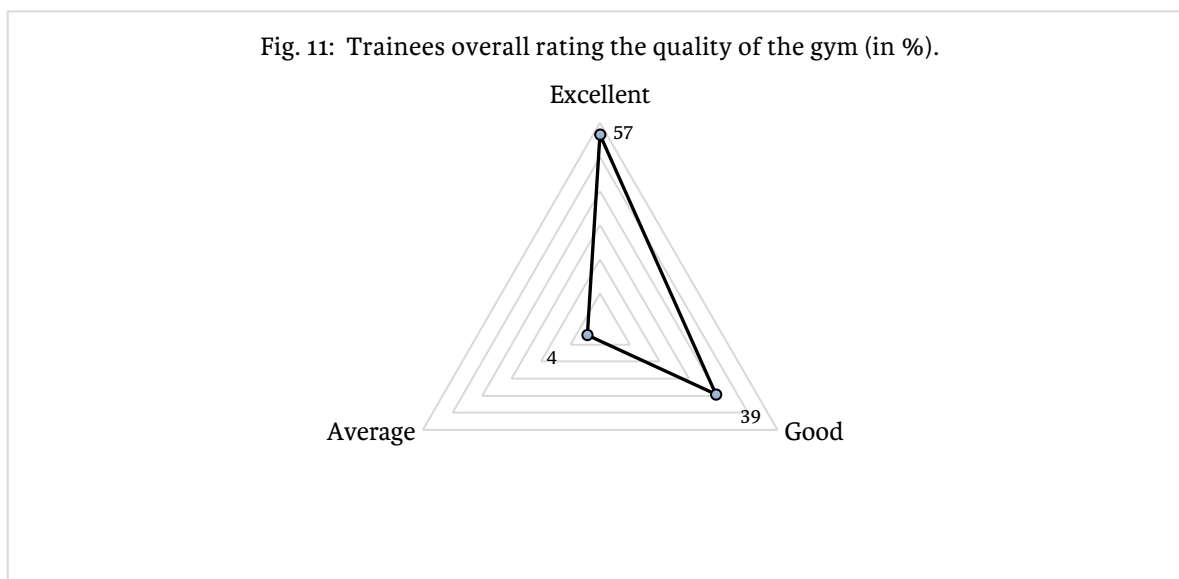
Few trainees (6% ) expressed dissatisfaction with the above parameters (Fig 10). According to them, the gym hall should be bigger than it is and have attached washroom facilities, and their main concern is the space in the gym.

**Fig. 10: Trainees satisfaction with gym (in%)**



The respondents seemed to be extremely satisfied with the internal lighting of the gym. 78 % of them rated the same as excellent. In terms of ventilation in the gym, 57 % of the respondents indicated that

it was excellent and 9 % of them said that it gets congested when a large group of people access the facilities together.



The synthesis of the overall satisfaction levels of the trainees indicates that most of the trainees are satisfied with the gym equipment and the fitness trainers. The trainers give the rating – 56% rated it “excellent”, 39% rated it “good,” and 4% rated it “average” (Fig. 11). Those in the last category are not fully satisfied with the space and placement of the equipment. The overall satisfaction with the gym also seems to vary across levels of preparation and age of the trainees. Trainees at the professional level are more satisfied with the gym than others, similar to beginners.

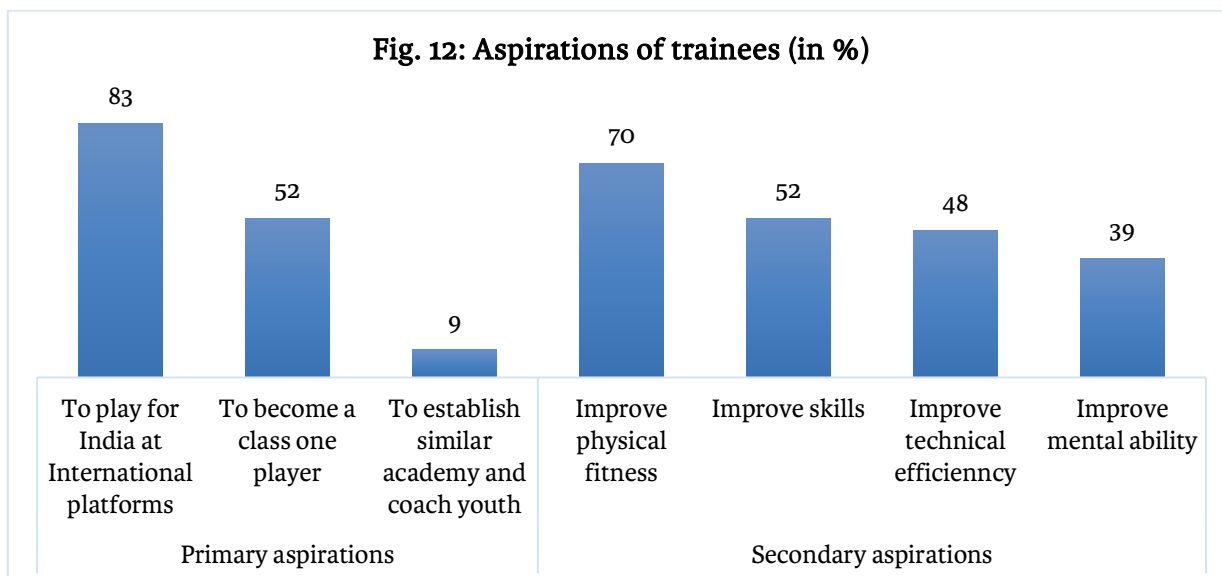
## 2.6 Impact:

*What difference does the intervention make?*

*The support by APF has generated significant impact by attracting many young aspirants across the states and rising higher levels of aspirations among the trainees.*

For any intervention, the impact can be attributed to two levels – (1) mid-level and (2) end-level. Since the academy started its entire operations in December 2021, it will take time to assess the end impact only after releasing the first batch of trainees into national and global competitions. As of now, this assessment examined the mid-level impact by assessing the critical parameters such as – aspirations of trainees, how the best gym supports the trainees in improving their physical strengths, and to what extent trainees are mentored and monitored by the trainers, including Jwala Gutta.

In general, trainees visualize high aspirations and always look for better coaching facilities that drive them towards success. The present assessment examined the primary and secondary aspirations of the trainees (Fig 12).



**Primary aspirations<sup>6</sup>:**

Most trainees (83%) said they aspire to play for India on national and international platforms. Similarly, 52% aspire to become class one players at the state and India levels. Quite a few (9%) aspire to improve their professional skills and establish a similar academy to train more numbers of young.

**Secondary aspirations<sup>7</sup>:**

Particularly for young trainees, along with skills, maintaining fitness is a more critical part of their destination pathway. This assessment found that a more significant majority (70%) aspire to improve their physical fitness through regular exercises in the gym, meditation to ensure concentration, and yoga. About 52% said that their secondary aspiration is to improve their skills. Improvement of technical efficiency (48%) and mental ability (39%) are the tertiary and quaternary aspirations expressed by the trainees.

All those trainees interviewed expressed that the conditions (coaching schedules, modules, gym, and yoga) in the academy are aligning with their aspirations, boosting their confidence and driving them towards their expected goals – it can be considered as one of the parameters to judge the mid-term impact of the academy.

Trainers highlighted that the most critical advantages for trainers with a well-established gym are –

- i. regular exercises in the gym minimize the risk of sports injuries,
- ii. increase bone and muscle strength,
- iii. faster neuro-muscular activation, and keep the player fit.

It can be considered one of the gym's outcomes and impacts.

<sup>6</sup> Primary aspirations are those aspirations in the top of the mind of the trainees. During the training their focus will be on improving professional skills to reach their target/goal.

<sup>7</sup> Secondary aspirations are those supplements primary aspirations of the trainees. These are the bottom-line strengths for trainees.

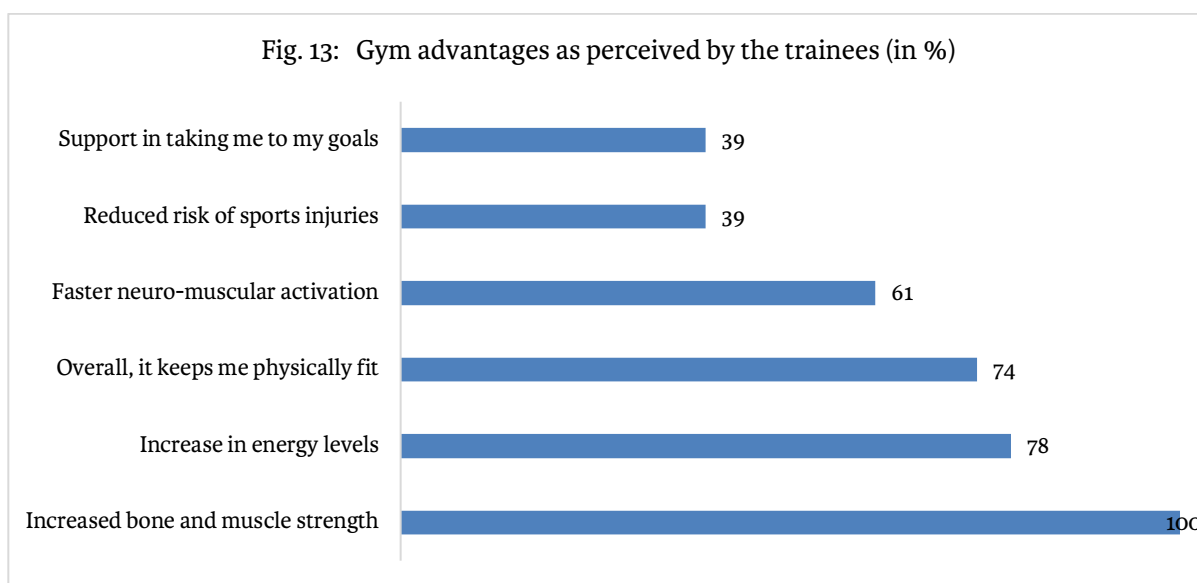
What does it mean to trainees? – is essential to justify the impact. To quote the reflections from trainees –

*"The JGAE is a stunning facility with neat, clean, and comfortable architectural features. The well-built courts with quality equipment and an amazing viewing gallery. We love meeting peers from different states here and improving our badminton skills. The directors, trainers, and managers are friendly and very accommodating".*

*"I get excellent coaching at the academy, and it is so much fun to play with other senior and junior players".*

Such opinions/perceptions will go around the peer groups elsewhere, and it helps in attracting many young shortly.

Nearly half of the respondents have indicated that they approach gym trainers to seek suggestions regarding sports injuries and pain. They also expressed that the trainers constantly advise them on improving strength, speed, and endurance during the game. They provide diet suggestions and motivate the students to improve their performance and game techniques.



All those trainees interviewed said that using the gym regularly has increased their bone and muscle strength. 78% said their energy levels have gone up, and 74% said that they were able to keep fit. About 61% said that their neuro-muscular activity has improved. Some believe that maintaining fitness by going gym reduces the risk of sports injuries – muscle sprain, rotator cuff injuries, and knee injuries (Fig13).

A female gym trainer is an added advantage in the academy, specifically for girl trainees who are more comfortable with a female trainer.

As said by a coach at the academy:

*“training in the gym comes with several benefits to the students and their game. I have noticed that over time students not only become physically stronger but also mentally stronger in the game. They gain strength, confidence, endurance and start to trust their capacities”.*

## **2.7 Sustainability:**

*Will the benefits last?*

At this point, the sustainability of the JGAE may not arise and not be relevant to examine, as the facility started its operations in December 2021. Besides, month by month, the number of trainees is gradually increasing, and among all other advantage factors, the presence of Jwala Gutta makes the difference.

## **2.8 Conclusions:**

Overall the academy is progressing in line with its core mission and vision. The management<sup>8</sup> is investing much of their time and financial resources to bring more visibility to the academy, and it is evident that it is gradually attracting more young aspirants across several states.

Precisely, Jwala Gutta, is the center of attraction for most trainees who join the academy for long-term training.

The facilities, including a world-class gym, design, architecture, and hostel facilities, are the critical parameter attracting the majority of the young aspirants.

With the support of the Aurobindo Pharma Foundation, the academy has brought appropriate, world-class gym equipment and appointed a fitness trainer, including a female trainer who has good experience in training the young trainees to improve their physical fitness. Irrespective of their age and level of training, trainees are using the gym and are satisfied with its equipment.

The financial support from APF is more appropriate, timely, and justifiable, benefitting the young aspirants to maintain physical fitness, which is critical for shuttle badminton players.

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<sup>8</sup> Jwala Gutta, President & Kranthi Gutta, Secretary.





## Section 2

# Case Story

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### The Social Face of Shuttle Sport- Firing the Zeal and Inspiring the Posterity: *Jwala Gutta Academy of Badminton*



#### I

*The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton*, thus goes the adage. The mighty Napoleon Bonaparte met his end on the Waterloo war fields at the hands of the young chaps rigorously trained on the playing fields of Eton school in Britain. Among others, the oft-quoted maxim denotes ideal training components and sporting spirit of the young. An ideal combination of these two qualities makes the young girls and boys strong enough to face challenges, determined enough to work for the set-goals and prepared enough to give their best in trying to reach the goal. In other words, it is also a kind of academic spirit with which the young learners present themselves before the



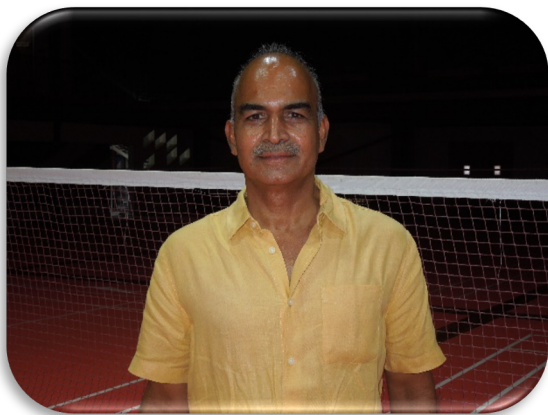
competing world. Jwala Gutta precisely belongs to this category of sporting personalities who sees sporting as an academic activity.

Jwala Gutta stands apart from other sporting legends of modern-day shuttle-sport in India when she shares her mind: *the domain of sports teaches a way of life. Training for sports is not about winning only, but it is about inculcating a fighting spirit sans flak, fear and feebleness. That's why my Academy is equally academic while being a world-class studio for badminton training.* She sounds philosophic as well as pragmatic in declaring her mind about her passion, goals and approach. For her, it is a kind of holistic approach to badminton sport where trainers are coached and coaches are made. She has plans to conduct a six-month diploma course for coaches from her Academy.



Running the Academy is not pure business for her and her family. She has cut out a role for her in the Academy as a mentor more than a coach and, she would like to be an essential link between players, coaches and parents. For her *the real beauty of the badminton game is strength, stamina and technique.* Whether she plays aggressively or talks passionately, her performing stage is the badminton court. Jwala Gutta, it is common knowledge, is a sensation that ushered the golden period of badminton in India after winning medals at the Commonwealth Games, Thomas & Uber Cup, BWF Championships etc. during late 1990s and early 2000. At the peak of her career, Jwala Gutta, a doubles player, was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> worldwide.

Aurobindo Pharma Foundation (APF) is in the habit of providing support to many rural sportspersons and training institutes every year. The primary guiding principle is to **facilitate training of young kids and enable them to participate in national and international tournaments for sporting events**. As part of the Foundation's CSR mandate, the APF provided funds for establishment of *Jwala Gutta Academy of Excellence* at Moinabad, Hyderabad, Telangana state. The funding went into the make-up of establishing fourteen badminton courts of international standards along with facilities such as gymnasium, weight training etc. JGAE is expected to benefit 1200 sportspersons over a period of time.



According to Kranthi Gutta, the man behind the maintenance of the Academy, **lion's share of funding from the Foundation was utilised in the establishment of a modern gymnasium with world-class facilities**. Importance of the Academy is more pronounced now. Testifying his statement Jwala Gutta says, **Indians have started taking badminton seriously. Our academy will help in scouting young talent, nurturing and training them**. Her optimistic attitude and hope are ideally manifest in the pan-Indian nature of trainees in the Academy today. As in May 2022, around 95 children (mostly under 18) are under training.

Around 70% of them hail from North Indian states (Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra), and the rest are drawn from South Indian states (Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamilnadu etc.).



The Academy also has a seating capacity for 600 spectators, international standard gym and a yoga centre to serve as a one-stop destination for the young and aspiring athletes. The coaching panel is headed by her mentor and Dronacharya Award-Winner, S.M. Arif.

## II

Fitness and control over play/volleys are two crucial elements in the badminton game. Every sporting activity is subject to certain ground-level variables that have a direct bearing on the players' performance. In shuttle badminton the variable of **drift** influences the progress of the play. It is admitted by sport research scholars that racket sports 'require higher-order cognitive processes to execute complex actions to achieve successful performance' on the court. 'Action inhibition' or 'inhibitory control' (over the drift factor and shuttle) denotes the ability of a player and is 'crucial to achieving higher levels of sports performance'. Drift is the action of air currents on the shuttle. In badminton, the shuttle is such a light object that its flight can be changed by an air current.

According to most sport-coaches, ability to master the drift factor holds key to success and fame. No player can hope to ignore this element if she or he desires to excel. Commenting on this, Jwala Gutta feels that the physical fitness of a player can easily overcome the drift factor.





She adds further, *the disabling factors like drift can ideally be controlled by individual sportsperson. It is more subjective than one thinks. It depends on the rigorous fitness drills undertaken by the person. The role of fully equipped gym is a catalyst in the process. Aurobindo Pharma Foundation's contribution to the Academy in the establishment of an ultra-modern gym is a game-changing intervention.* The fitness trainer - S. Sujatha, and badminton coach - Sathiya Moorthy are of the considered opinion that *the gymnasium in the Academy is second to none in India today.*

According to them there are three USP features of the Jwala Gutta Academy:

- i. Facilities in the Academy are the best in India at present (*especially gymnasium and cardio gym*)
- ii. Training and coaching equipment is of world-class nature
- iii. Badminton courts are the best in the country (fourteen courts, the highest number in India)



Fitness  
Trainer  
Ms.  
Sujatha



Badminton  
coach Mr.  
Sathiya  
Moorthy

Both the fitness trainer and badminton coach refer to the no-injury training sessions in the last one year. According to them it tells on the most precarious and protective care employed by the Academy and its trainers in training the young adults. For them, world-class gym is as important as injury-less exercises and training drills by trainee students. The spacious gym in the Academy provides enough activity-space for students while being trained. It is mandatory for every student in the Academy to attend fitness sessions three times a week (each session is of 1.5 – 2.5 hours duration).

Fitness trainer, S. Sujatha takes special reference to Jwala Gutta in the present context. She informs that Jwala Gutta *is aggressive on court, assertive in life and supportive in sport*. These three attributes of the legendary doubles-shuttler are certainly responsible for the student-friendly training sessions on the court and in the gymnasium.

Profile of the students under training is diversified. Most of them (more than 70%) took admission in the Academy out of their own choice. Interestingly many parents are influenced by the success of successive badminton players in the contemporary period. These parents (around 30%) send their



children to the Academy with hopes pinned on success of their wards on the courts. There is one common feature. All of them, students and parents, have consciously chosen Jwala Gutta Academy after a thorough enquiry. Added, some of the students had brief stints in other such badminton academies of Hyderabad before finally joining the Jwala's Academy. In a free-flowing conversation some of the girls (Sonali Mirkhelkar, Vedika Siddheshwar and Vanshika Chhipa) and a few boys (Chirag Seth, Kabir Varma and Dhruv Chandani) who are currently under training at the Academy shared their experiences.

They have a unanimous declaration that *Jwala Gutta Academy has excellent facilities for training. World-class infrastructure, technical perfection, international coaches, stringent discipline and personal attention have attracted us here.*

Another attractive feature of the academy is its location in pollution-free atmosphere. Ambience of the Academy is such that it was actively run even during the peak covid-19 period. It was permitted to run the sessions since stringent protocols guiding the covid-19 pandemic were observed and there was prevalence of virus-free conditions on the campus. The trainers, students and coaches were all free from virus contamination during the entire period. It is a testimony for Academy's utmost care and concern. While most other gyms in the city were shut down during active covid-19 period, Jwala Gutta Academy's gymnasium was bubbling with activity and training sessions.

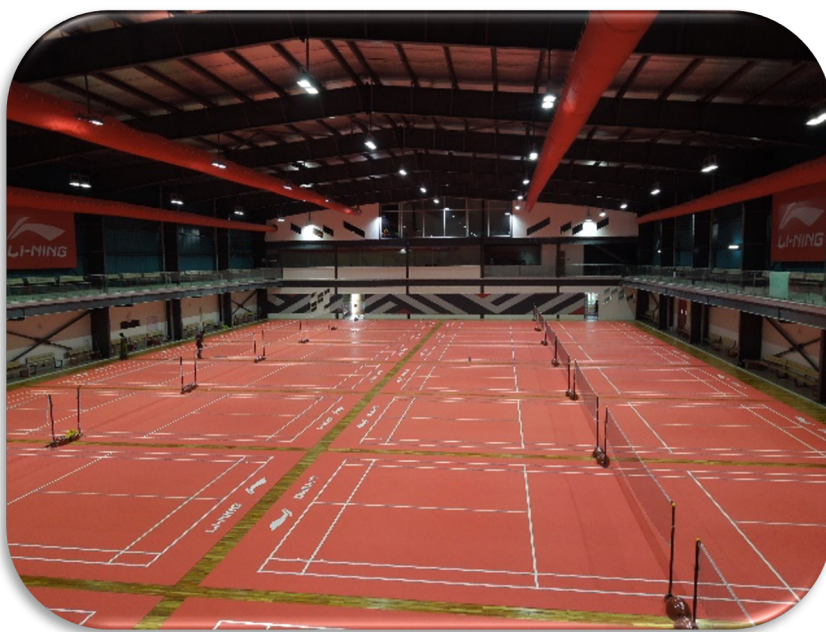
### III

In a long-timed dialogue and conversation Jwala Gutta details on her thoughts and future course of action. She does not want to delink court-based sports coaching from room-based academic training. Her Academy has a tie-up with the reputed educational institution of the twin cities (Hyderabad and Secunderabad), Sujatha High School. Students under long term badminton coaching are necessarily admitted in the high school and stay-put in the school's hostel. This is a non-negotiable element in the transaction. Of course, this does not apply to crash courses or short-term (holiday) training sessions.

In the present day of technological developments, young students in their formative adolescence are diverted by deviating-gadgets such as tabs, phones and unnecessary browsing or Googling. It is only sports that could beneficially divert the youngsters from devastating influences, which Jwala Gutta loves to describe, *seeding from the chips* (reference to chip-based technology and gadgets).



She prescribes a quick remedy for parents, students and teachers: *let the gadgets be replaced by rackets. If this is accomplished, every single youngster will become a champion either on the badminton court or in the theatre of life. Both ways are beneficial for all the stakeholders—parents, students and society.* That's the precise reason why she bats for *inclusive sports* (academics and sport-training going hand-in-hand) than *exclusive sports* (delinking classrooms from badminton courts). Future programmes of the Academy are being chalked out keeping these considerations at the back of her mind.



One innovative plan in this regard is the loud thinking about organising training sessions for students under different and differing atmospheric conditions of the country such as dry, humid, cold, sultry and mountain climatic conditions.

The proposed innovative plan endeavours to shift and train students of the Academy under these conditions so that they are easily accustomed to diversified playing conditions and can cope with different badminton courts. *If sponsored, this innovative proposal, declares Jwala Gutta,*

*will give the country a few Olympic champions in the next decade to come. I would like to call them future warriors of shuttle sport.* Her confidence flows from her conviction, and her conviction is based on command over the racket sport. Confessions of the student-trainees in the Academy attest her views.

There is an innate social angle in the Academy's approach to badminton sport. It is all about free coaching offered to talented youngsters hailing from economically poor background. They have already put into practice two measures: *first*, accommodating talented students from the Telugu-speaking states whenever they get references or whenever they come across them in media. They have thus identified and admitted a few students in the recent past.

Jwala Gutta goes highly sensitive and passionate when she informs that *magnanimous bodies such as Aurobindo Pharma Foundation have, out of social concern and considerations, come forward to strengthen our resolve to establish and run a world-class badminton training academy. The Foundation's contribution has a lesson and cue for us. It is about our role in giving back to society on our part.* Jwala Gutta, in declaring so, seems to have perfectly imbibed the spirit of donations to her Academy by CSR wings of companies like APF. *Secondly*, the Academy conducts tournaments for young children (mostly under 10) and identifies spark in talented persons. Some of the selected children, if found hailing from poor economic background, are accommodated freely in the Academy including food, hostel, academics and sport coaching. In a moving declaration, her father, Kranthi Gutta refers to their current effort as *socially-anointed approach to sporting activity in contemporary India.*

On her part, Jwala Gutta forwards a sensible and self-appreciative social gesture: *when I was trained before 1991 in SAP, Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh, the coaching was economical and cheap. After liberalisation of country's economy, sporting activity became a commercial commodity for sale. Having benefitted from contributions (taxes paid to public exchequer) of my fellow-citizens of the country, I should pay back the due. And it is about contributing to society through free coaching extended to poor kids. I try to accomplish this task to the best of my ability. I am on the way.*

These spirited words mouthed by her are reflective of a spirited player who is *aggressive on court and supportive in sport.* She feels highly obliged that Aurobindo Pharma Foundation is one of the very,

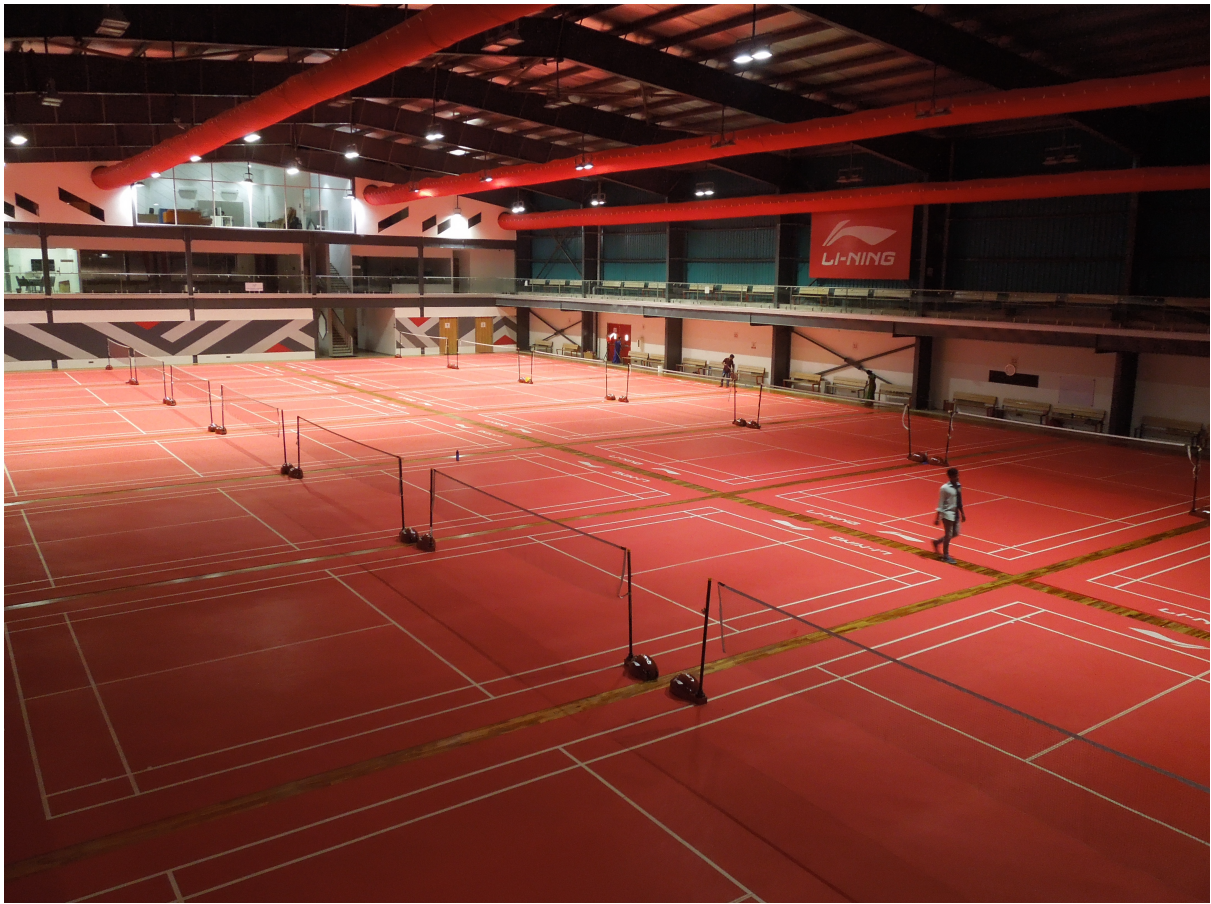
very few humanitarian bodies that have really appreciated her approach and supported her goal. As a conclusive remark Jwala Gutta feels satisfied that *the gymnasium funded by APF is not merely a non-reactive physical equipment. For me it symbolises a responsive and supportive training tool guiding young kids and talented poor students.* In a symbolic sense, the gymnasium represents the personification of socially responsive approach of the Academy to the shuttle sport.





Inside Pictures











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