

How and Why Cricket Has Killed Other Forms of Sport in India

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Abstract – Cricket has turned into the most prevalent diversion in India. The quantity of its fans is expanding step by step. Individuals of all age bunches appreciate it. In urban areas as well as, the diversion is getting to be plainly prevalent. It's over notoriety is harming different amusements. At whatever point the cricket coordinate arrangement are sort out at national or universal level, the young men and young ladies and even elderly individuals leave their normal work and continue watching the match on the TVs. Then again, if the hockey match or badminton matches are held, no one makes a fuss over them. They are bound to few daily paper sections or radio and TV news. The precept that little plants don't become under a major tree is suitably relevant here. It implies that cricket resembles a major tree and it doesn't permit the little plants of different diversions to develop under it. It has rather finished shadowed them. A few people are exceptionally disparaging of this amusement since it is moderate and time squandering. A large portion of the general population in India are jobless. They don't have anything genuine to do. In this way, they can without much of a stretch bear to sit around idly on watching it.

Keywords: Cricket, Other Games, Sports in India.

INTRODUCTION

Few had heard of Yuvraj Walmiki till Hockey India made a disastrous mistake. In what is well known by now, HI announced a 'reward' of Rs 25,000 each for the members of the team that won the Asian Champions Trophy. The players rejected the paltry reward, following which the Sports Ministry and some state governments endeavoured to do damage control by offering reasonably decent cash prizes. It was during the course of such frantic fire-fighting that many heard of the 'other' Yuvraj, who is among the most talented hockey players the nation currently has.

One doesn't need to be a hockey fanatic to know that the game's administration is in a mess. Indeed, it has been in a mess for quite some time. That the game is our 'real' national sport is highly disputable, unlike, say, peacock, whose identity as our national bird is beyond questioning. Whether or not some agree, cricket is the king of Indian sports, a Sachin Tendulkar having more devotees in hamlets than a Rajpal Singh in the biggest of cities.

Cricket is what most kids want to play. Many wish to be become a Tendulkar, or a Rahul Dravid. It is fatuous to compare the game with any other, and that will continue to be the case even if our cricket team gets humiliated by many others – post the England debacle – in the coming ten years. The game has produced superstars who have captured popular

imagination with their performances and media coverage, the result being that even minor players who struggle to find a regular place in the side have a larger fan following than their counterparts from any other form of sport.

Is that the reality? Yes. Is that fair? No. For, sports persons with dazzling achievements – be it Abhinav Bindra in shooting, or the untiring and reunited tennis-playing duo of Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathi – are accustomed to getting eclipsed in a cricket-obsessed India. Vishwanathan Anand might be among the best chess players in the modern era. He is as big, if not a bigger, achiever than Tendulkar. But, with cricketers hogging all the media space, Anand's fame in many countries exceeds his recognition in India. What a Leander or an Anand can be somewhat satisfied with is that they have made money: in fact, their income through the game alone surpasses what most cricketers make through theirs and advertisements. But that is not the case with players of many other forms of sport, who struggle to meet their ends meet and continue to live in barbaric neglect.

Cricket's growth as a nation-uniting game hasn't happened overnight. The game always had its share of dedicated followers in huge numbers, but its fan following increased after Kapil's Devils won the World Cup in 1983. The Indian team's surprising triumph led to incessant coverage, the television's reach ensuring that everyone got to see the famous Balwinder

Sandhu delivery that castled Gordon Greenidge or Kapil Dev's running catch to dismiss Vivian Richards a 100 times, and more. Courtesy one-day cricket's ability to satisfy those who did not have the patience to sit through five-dayers, and the media's coverage of the World Cup triumph in every possible way, cricketers became common proper nouns for those who weren't diehard followers of the game earlier.

Cricket has grown because of great strategising. When Mandira Bedi emerged as an attractively dressed host whose understanding of the game was hopelessly bad, purists frowned. But Mandira created a new constituency of cricket watchers, as many magazines reported. Ladies with nothing better to do in the afternoons gravitated towards cricket to watch her outfits, resulting in many new followers. As time by, many started enjoying the game: with or without Mandira. No move so apparently out of place yet subtly effective has been made by the administrators of any other sport in India. Hardly surprising, then, is why they have suffered even more.

Cricket had been the biggest Indian sport before the emergence of visual media. But the latter made its bastion absolutely impregnable. Lalit Modi is yet another person who made a defining change to the popularity of cricket. Although his image has been tarnished today, Modi took the game to the realm of pure entertainment through T20. Purists frowned like they had when one-dayers came into being. But T20's boom-blast-bang formula led to many new devotees who didn't give a damn to the critics' contempt-laden view of the game's shortened, strategy-less, bowler-killing version.

As cricket grew, other forms of sport became more and more obscure. The game gave rise to random celebrity-hood, while protagonists of other forms of sport needed to be incredibly lucky to get one or two ads. A case in point is Bhaichung Bhutia, a football player whose skills surpassed his mediocre football-playing counterparts in India. Bhutia wasn't a player of international class by any yardstick of judgment: if we don't choose to believe that his insignificant stint with a second-rate English club was a testimony of greatness. But he had a bit of that X factor, which gave him a bit of visibility beyond the football field.

From the day when Kapil Dev smiled a 32-all-out smile in an ad, saying *Palmolive da jawab nahi*, cricket has come a long way. The media's non-stop support – the balance has been extremely unfair, but media houses are guided by what people want – has taken cricket players to a level in which their only competitor is Bollywood. The game's telecasts, the way it has been reported, and the ads that have cricket-playing protagonists have made it what it is. Why have so many advertisers come into the picture? Simple. Advertisers do not invest in persons, no matter how brilliant they might be. They invest in personalities created out of persons by an over-attentive media.

When there has been an aberration, with advertisers moving away from cricket, the creation has been Sania Mirza. Sania, a good-looking girl and a decent enough tennis player when she started out, became an advertiser's delight because she was the only woman player competing in the highly competitive international circuit. So, when she started out, she was besieged by attention: leading to ads, and many believe, her decline as a player as well. Sania flattered to deceive, leading to hugely diminished focus on women's tennis in general. Cricket will never face any such concern: since even if the team gets demolished, the odd player will always stand up and battle for the country. He will be the new hero, before others come along.

What makes cricket a great success story is that the game, despite its ups and downs, has been managed and marketed very well compared to others. The media has been kind to it, but then media houses being businesses understand what sells and what doesn't. Such is the nation's focus on the game that insignificant matches get space on some channel or the other. In contrast, the finals of the hockey championship which has made news because of non-playing reasons wasn't telecast on a single channel: barring a half an hour discussion on Doordarshan.

The consequence of such indifference is nothing short of alarming. Today, if you bump into an ordinary sports lover and ask who Mary Kom is, the answer could very well be: Mary kaun? Should the answer surprise you, you are not an Indian.

Cricket! Cricket! Cricket! Cricket has become the religion of India and the national anthem of the country, so much so that the word "sports" has become synonymous with cricket. Cricket runs as the life flowing blood through the veins of the multitude. The madness with which it has gripped the ignoramus masses of our country is evident from their complete capitulation to its god-like worship.

Yes, cricket is the "god of sports" in India. I am not being even the least sardonic when I say this, but unfortunately this is the sorry state of affairs in our country. Cricket has sounded a death knell to the growth of other sports. Traditional Indian games like hockey, kabaddi, kushti have been relegated to a bygone era. Even international sports like tennis, badminton and football have not been shown any mercy despite us being so "West-crazy". We hail cricket as the be all and end all of all sports.

Hockey, time and again has shown features of atavism. This so called National Sport of India has shown the most inconsistent progress, if it can actually be called progress. There was a time when India did win the Hockey World Cup in 1975 and people showed a keen interest in the sport, but not so anymore. The sport has died a natural death from lack of leadership and sponsorship. (Rather, it would

be more apt to say due to a diversion of sponsors to cricket)

We do have a Sania Mirza, a Leander Paes and a Mahesh Bhupathi bringing laurels to the country in the field of tennis; a Vishwanathan Anand in the field of chess. Then why have chess and tennis not been accorded their true status as cricket has been? Why aren't they put on the same pedestal and worshipped as cricket?

Millions throng the cricket stadium when there is an India-Pakistan match to boost the morale of their country but where does this "morale boosting brigade" disappear when sportsmen other than cricketers need them. Don't Mirza, Paes, Bhupathi and Anand also play for their country just as cricketers do?

Prime time on television is given to cricket. Even a toddler is able to enunciate at length, the rules of this sport but how come do all suffer from "alogia" or "selective amnesia" when it comes to other sports.

Abhinav Bindra too, who won the first ever individual gold medal for India at the recently held Olympic games at Beijing, didn't shy away from this life plaguing question. That India's medal tally at all international game festivals is so low and shameful is evidence enough for our turning a blind eye to other sports.

All ace cricketers are forever in the news, be it for their promotion of various brands which has regrettably become a second money minting business for them, or for their liaison with some damsel from Bollywood. How disgusting!

I would want to ask a question, how many of us actually know the captain of the Indian hockey team? Alas! Not many.

What have we done with the state of sports in our country! There is not one single person reprehensible for this, but the nation as a whole is responsible for only nurturing one seed and murdering its fellow counterparts.

I am in no way a "cricket-hater". Neither am I against any sort of privileges being given to cricket. In no way am I trying to malign the game, but I am wary against any form of 'step-motherly' treatment being given to other games at the cost of cricket. Instead, let's take inspiration from cricket and allow sportspersons from other fields to have the same opportunities, earnings and affections as well.

POPULARITY OF CRICKET

There is always an increasing interest among media to keep cricket news as the center of attraction. Be it the infamous slap on Sreeshanth's face or the antics of

Virat Kohli when he smashes a century on the field, they easily become the headline every now and then! But these doesn't matter when we actually see the development of sports in India. Until the man from Chandigarh lifted the world cup in 1983, Cricket was just like another game in India. Even a below par then! The likes of Sunil Gavaskar, Kapil Dev wouldn't have got their names registered in media until 1983. And then the "fortune" of cricket in India changed in paramourly. When the World Cup in 1992 became the first occasion where coloured clothing was allowed, those 'colours' had a greater impact in Indian media too! And M.S. Dhoni's lead team magnificent World Cup 2011 win increased the people's attention to the game.

But just think as suggested by many if cricket is making an adverse impact on Indian youth participation in other games, then there wouldn't have been a Deepika Pallikal, Yuki Bambri, Pankaj Advani, Tintu Luka, Saina Nehwal to hog the limelight when they win championships. Even P.T. Usha and Viswanathan Anand are equally known icons compared with Sachin Tendulkar and Kapil Dev. The point is that the youngsters are more exposed to cricket but definitely cricket has not over-eclipsed other games.

The passion for cricket comes naturally for Indians since, the streets are ideally suited to play Cricket than a Hockey match. It will be an awkward reaction from the public, if someone tries a Hockey or Football friendly in a street! It has probably taken 30 odd years after 1983 for Cricket to get a wider reach among the minds of youth. Thanks to Hockey India League, India Super League and Chennai Open, sports like Hockey, Football, Tennis are catching the imagination the people in India. The packed stadiums during the matches suggests the same.

So the game of Cricket has no effect on other games but only on some marketing firms and fans. I am sure this will also change in few years as media is ready to encourage the achievers of other games. Also it won't be too far when an icon from India in other games similar to Sachin in Cricket will conquer the minds of an entire generation. Recognition is the only aspect which should be looked into, not a complaining views on cricket's popularity over other sports.

There are certain reasons for the over popularity of this game.

- The first reason is that it has vast magnitude. Its field is much bigger than those of table tennis and badminton. A large number of people can witness it on the ground. The hockey ground is equally spacious but it has not received much media support. The cricket has been more officially blessed. It is

often sponsored by several voluntary organizations and agencies which have popularized it at the cost of other sports. In this way, cricket has become more popular than other games.

- Another reason for its popularity is that Indian cricket team is really a strong team. It is really a better than the teams of other sports. It can create thrills and excitements on the ground while other teams remain dull and their performance are poor.
- Still another reason is that our Government is not take interest in it, its fans and followers in India have assumed the crowd dimensions but the big biggest attraction for young sportsmen to join cricket is the stupendous prize money.

No doubt, it is the process of killing other sports but it has not killed them. If the Government, media, voluntary organization and sports loving people at large, begin to patronize other sports, these also can become equally important.

Why is cricket much more popular than other sports in India?

Keep it straightforward senseless

To play the session of cricket, you simply require a bat and a ball and at least two players can without much of a stretch play the amusement. It can be played even in the littlest of littlest measurements, similar to a street, a road partner or even in a room!

Better foundation

Contrasted with different games, cricket has more number of training focuses in the whole nation. This factor is immensely capable in drawing increasingly youthful kids, who seek to be future cricketers.

A power to figure with

India till now has won two ICC Cricket World Cups, two Champions Trophies, one T20 World Cup. Also, with years India's execution in the cricketing field has enhanced surprisingly which without a doubt makes India a retribution compel in the present cricketing crew.

Physical remainder

A noteworthy motivation behind why Indians can't rival different nations in sports like football, hockey, games or tennis is that we are not skilled with critical physical quality, great tallness and generous match wellness. The conspicuous explanation for this is the hereditary qualities which at last has a major effect in these games which are physically difficult.

WORLD CLASS CRICKETERS

India throughout the years have delivered a group of world class cricketing legends who sooner or later or the other have surprised the cricketing scene. Batsmen, bowlers, all-rounders, skippers comprising any semblance of Kapil Dev, Sachin Tendulkar, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Sourav Ganguly, Yuvraj Singh to give some examples. Their photos and notices are glued over dividers and are adored by various young men and young ladies.

A solid overseeing body

Cricket in India is represented by BCCI, which is a proficient, rich, efficient and deliberate board. The BCCI, throughout the years have found a way to ensure and flourish the cricketing interests of India. It has been exceedingly fruitful in building up itself as an overwhelming body in world cricket.

Cash matters

Cash and cricket have nearly turned out to be synonymous. Cricketers in India have dependably been the wealthier type of sportsmen contrasted with their associates. Be it the pay, prize cash or government activities. The cricketers have dependably been ahead in the cash race. With the approach of IPL, it was simply one more open door for them to get significantly wealthier.

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