

Cricket and globalization: global processes and the imperial game

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Abstract

This article seeks to reposition sport as a subject of analysis in 'global historical' processes. It examines the diffusion of cricket in the British empire, its appropriation by the colonies, and the subsequent commercialization of the sport. It asks the question: how did an elite English sport come to be one controlled by a former colony – India? With this as the substantive question, it seeks to develop theoretical insights about the nature of global processes and cultural transfers in the twentieth century. By way of conclusion, it asserts that, as a result of these global processes, there was a tangible shift in the 'cultural economy' of sports from the developed nations of the West to the developing nations.

Keywords cricket, diffusion, empire, India, sport governance

Introduction

What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?¹

This is the question that C. L. R. James poses to the reader at the beginning of his maverick examination of Caribbean society through the lens of cricket. There is a taunt inherent in the question, addressed to the British colonizers who brought the game to the Caribbean. The book was written at a time when the West Indies, a collective team representing the islands of Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and other islands, were dominant in world cricket. James saw cricket as more than a game; he saw it as a platform for political struggle. While we shall return to James and West Indian cricketers later, they did one important thing, which was to point out that cricket was no longer the preserve of the English colonialists.

The other dimension of James's taunt is that his book *Beyond a boundary* is probably the first and most significant analysis of the relation between cricket and society. James considers it a 'grievous scandal'² that academics and scholars the world over have neglected the importance of cricket in the interactions between the colonizer and the colonized. Aside from being a remarkably written and highly original piece of social commentary, James's work is also

1 C. L. R. James, *Beyond a boundary*, London: Yellow Jersey Press, 2005, preface.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 153.

a significant instance of what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls ‘returning the gaze’³: that is, returning the gaze of Western science by making the colonizer a subject of inquiry for the colonized.

Cricket, which spread with the British empire and was a preserve of the English and South Welsh elite classes, is a sport run today by Indian finances and political clout. This ‘Indianization’ of cricket over the twentieth century provides an interesting example of the rise of a non-Western power in the cultural sphere, to an extent that has led one writer to proclaim that ‘cricket is an Indian game accidentally discovered by the English’.⁴ The substantive question that I am asking in this article is therefore: how did an elite English sport come to be one that is today controlled by a former colony – India? In answering this question I intend to address a number of theoretical issues concerning the processes of globalization and cultural exchange in the twentieth century.

The successful ‘diffusion’ and ‘commercialization’ of cricket depended on how national and ethnic identities got tied up with the sport. This article will examine the factors that influenced the spread and diffusion of cricket, and how the imperial sport fostered a sense of national identity, in itself largely a result of the modernizing thrust of the Victorians. The second part will consider how, in the postcolonial context, the association of cricket with national identities in the former colonies played a major role in the commercialization of the game and the rise of the Asian bloc.

Sports and global history

Of late, several works have relocated the role of sports in global political economic processes, arguing that they are relevant beyond being mere pastimes. In the same vein, these authors rightly argue that studying sports is about studying diffusion, hegemony, assimilation and adaptation, discursive and disciplinarian practices, organizational practices, education, nationalism, ethnicity, and more recently the media and post-industrial, service-based economies. As Lawrence Grossberg implies in his aptly titled ‘Cultural studies vs. political economy: is anybody else bored with this debate?’, one cannot consider the developments in the globalized, capitalist world by simply sticking to pre-ordained fields such as cultural studies and political economy, and these fields have indeed had a significant impact on each other.⁵

The development and diffusion of global sports is bound to global processes. This has been true from the time of industrial modernization, considered to be the take-off phase of modern sports,⁶ when rules and regulations were formalized, leagues set up, and a calendar of competitions drawn up. This went hand in hand with the industrialization process in Britain, since the labour demands of the Industrial Revolution produced changes in the patterns of work and leisure.

The establishment of modern sport also closely correlates with the high point of European imperial dominance. The first international cricket match was played in 1877, the Olympics were reinstated in 1894, and governing bodies for soccer, cricket, and tennis were set up in 1904,

3 Dipesh Chakrabarty: *Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007, p. 29.

4 Ashis Nandy, *The tao of cricket*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 1.

5 Lawrence Goldberg, ‘Cultural studies vs. political economy: is anyone else bored with this debate?’, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 12, 1, 1995, pp. 72–81.

6 Wray Vamplew, ‘Sport and industrialization: an economic interpretation of the changes in popular sport in nineteenth-century England’, in J. A. Mangan, ed., *Pleasure, profit, proselytism: British culture and sport at home and abroad 1700–1914*, London: Frank Cass, 1988, p. 7.

1909, and 1913 respectively. The global governance of sport was drawn upon imperial lines, with major sporting leagues and tournaments representing (mostly British) imperial elite networks.⁷ Sports grew in stature and symbolism, having a profound effect on public life.

From the early twentieth century onwards, the association of sports with broadcast media added a new dynamic to global sports. Increased real income and leisure time stimulated a demand for commercialized spectator sport.⁸ Sporting events became more formalized, with their own governing bodies and sponsors. At the same time, sport became more aligned with the demands of the broadcast media, which in turn benefited greatly from sports. Subsequently, a whole economy has been set up around the manufacturing and marketing of sporting goods.

The sociologists Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning were among the earliest to stress that sports should be looked at in their wider social context.⁹ These authors adopted a ‘figurational’ or ‘process’ sociological perspective, which – as opposed to positivistic approaches that conduct experiments on group behaviour under controlled laboratory conditions – stresses analysing ‘natural small groups’, such as sports teams, to develop understanding about human society. More recently, J. A. Mangan has explored the links between the British public school system and sports. In *The games ethic* he highlighted the ideology of athleticism that emerged in public schools. He pointed out that games were introduced in public schools to discipline the pupils, and filling leisure time with sports conveyed ideals about morality and character to them. Mangan also demonstrated that, since the public schools were the place where the governing class of the British empire was trained, the ideals of athleticism and imperialism were intertwined.¹⁰

The link between sport and late capitalism was largely unexplored until the mid 1990s, when works by Joseph Maguire and Toby Miller et al. highlighted the role of sports as a culture industry. Taking an interdisciplinary and critical perspective of the global sports industry, Miller et al. posit that ‘sport is so central to our contemporary moment’s blend of transnational cultural industrialization and textualization that it does more than reflect the global – sport is big enough to modify our very use of the term, “globalization”’.¹¹ Coming from a critical Marxist perspective, Miller et al. say that popular culture – notably televised sport – is a crucial means for populations to be targeted by different forms of governmental and commercial knowledge/power.¹² Drawing to a large degree on Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, they are able to demonstrate that the transformation of a sport from a practice to a spectacle, through the use of new media technologies, carries with it new exercises of power through both commodification and increasing government involvement. Their book can sometimes read like a polemical text against global sporting patterns, but it nevertheless

7 See J. A. Mangan, *The games ethic and imperialism: aspects of the diffusion of an ideal*, London: Frank Cass, 1998.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

9 Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for excitement: sport and leisure in the civilizing process*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. See also Norbert Elias, ‘The genesis of sport as a sociological problem’ in Eric Dunning, ed., *The sociology of sport*, London: Frank Cass, 1971, pp. 88–115.

10 See Mangan, *Games ethic*.

11 Toby Miller, Geoffrey A. Lawrence, Jim McKay, and David Rowe, *Globalization and sport: playing the world*, London: Sage, 2001 p. 1.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

contributes greatly to revealing the inherent structures of power and dominance within global sports. Joseph Maguire follows the ‘figurations’ concept in the study of sport pioneered by Elias and Dunning. To an analysis of the sports-industry and sports-media complexes, he adds an excellent analysis of how power and control in global sports are shaped by migration processes. Maguire examines a number of complex ‘local–global nexuses’¹³ in order to drive home his main point that global sports processes serve to ‘diminish contrasts and increase varieties’.¹⁴

Cricket, despite a plethora of books written about it, has a comparative lack of literature analysing it as a global phenomenon.¹⁵ Brian Stoddart and Keith Sandiford’s edited collection *The imperial game* analyses the ‘forms and fortunes’ of cricket in various parts of the British empire. It provides excellent accounts of diffusion and appropriation of the game in all the major ‘Test-playing’ nations. However, aside from an excellent introductory chapter, which charts the way that the game spread in the empire, the book is a compendium, albeit an excellent one, of chapters organized according to regional developments in cricket and following different timelines.¹⁶

The lack of literature on a ‘global history’ of cricket is more than adequately made up for by literature from the individual cricketing nations. Aside from significant primary literature that exists in the form of news reports and journals of cricket clubs, many historians have lately attempted to place the development of cricket in the context of the sociopolitical processes that informed them. In this regard the works of Richard Cashman, Ramchandra Guha, Hilary Beckles, Derek Birley, and Jack Williams have contributed immeasurably to the discussion of cricket as a global phenomenon.¹⁷

Arjun Appadurai’s concept of ‘-scapes’ when analysing global cultural flows is particularly useful in approaching this question.¹⁸ Appadurai refers to five dimensions within which to frame an examination of global cultural transfers: ethnoscapescapes, mediascapescapes, technoscapescapes, financescapescapes, and ideoscapescapes. He postulates that the global configurations of ethnicity, technology, media, finance, and ideology are central to any examination of global cultural flows. The suffix ‘-scapes’, he says, ‘allows us to point to the fluid irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles’.¹⁹ It also means that these terms do not represent objective, given relations that look the same from every angle, but rather are deeply

13 Joseph Maguire, *Global sport: identities, societies, civilizations*, London: Polity Press, 1999, p. 13.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 207.

15 In this regard Chris Rumford and Stephen Wagg, eds., *Cricket and globalization*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010, provides a good collection of papers that approach the transformations in cricket from a global perspective. The book is a significant attempt to put the game in a global context and seeks to contribute to the debate on the nature and dynamics of globalization using the changes in the global dynamics of cricket as a case study.

16 Brian Stoddart and Keith Sandiford, eds., *The imperial game: cricket, culture and society*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998.

17 See Derek Birley, *A social history of English cricket*, London: Aurum Press Ltd., 2003; Richard Cashman, *The paradise of sport*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; Ramachandra Guha, *A corner of a foreign field*, London: Picador, 2002; Hilary Beckles, *The development of West Indies cricket in the age of globalization*, Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 1998; Jack Williams, *Cricket and England: a cultural and social history of the inter-war years*, London: Frank Cass, 1999.

18 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 33.

19 *Ibid.*

perspectival constructs.²⁰ When looking at the transformation of cricket, one cannot ignore developments that took place in all the -scapes that eventually led to a major shift.

Why cricket?

Cricket began to be played in rural southern England in the sixteenth century, and by the end of the twentieth century was a mass sport with a global following. It travelled with the British empire, being played by soldiers and officers in reaches of the empire as far flung as the Caribbean and Australia. What followed was a process where an elite English game was appropriated by the colonized ‘natives’ and incorporated into their own cultural worlds.

The state of cricket in today’s world is best expressed by the noted cricket writer Gideon Haigh, who recently remarked: ‘It is no longer correct to speak of the “globalisation” of cricket ... we face the “Indianisation” of cricket, where nothing India resists will occur, and everything it approves of will prevail.’²¹ This represents a remarkable transformation: a game that was hardly played by the millions that inhabited the British colonial territories in South Asia in the mid nineteenth century, less than a century later turned out to be the most popular sport in these erstwhile colonies, followed with a passion that is in stark contrast with the popularity of cricket in England.

This development is also in contrast to most other forms of global sports and cultural industries, which are overwhelmingly controlled by Western countries. Although, through their sheer numbers the countries of the developing world have increasing influence in global sports (for example, in international sporting organizations such as FIFA), *power* within global sports – namely control of the financial and media structures of sport – lies primarily with the Western countries. In this context, cricket is a unique game whose power centre currently lies in India.

In this article I shall examine the dynamics of this shift from the West to the East. Specifically, I shall look at the social context and symbolism of cricket, and how the former colonies were able to subvert these for their own benefit. I argue that the transformation of global cricket is long rooted in social transformations under the British Raj and inherently linked to the rise of nationalist sentiment. The logic of this process reflects, in turn, on the growth of cultural industries over the twentieth century.

The Victorian code of cricket

Cricket grew from being a rural pastime to an organized sporting event favoured by the English landed gentry. During the nineteenth century, Victorians began glorifying it as the game that perfectly embodied the English system of manners, ethics, and morals. It was taken to be a representational force that symbolized the best in English society.²² This was linked to three dominant ideas during the Victorian era: Christian morality, the rural idyll, and the reverence for tradition.²³

20 *Ibid.*

21 Quoted in ‘Cricket, lovely cricket’, *The Economist*, Special report on the business of sport, 2 August 2008, p. 13.

22 Williams, *Cricket*, p. xiii.

23 See Martin J. Wiener, *English culture and the decline of the industrial spirit 1850–1980*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987.

As we have seen, Mangan identified the 'games ethic' of English public schools.²⁴ The Victorian system of public schooling emphasized 'sound mind, sound body'; the stress of physical education at the public schools was mixed with a belief that physical education shaped the moral character of an individual. Cricket became a significant part of the public school curriculum from the mid nineteenth century onwards, in the process becoming a preserve of the English elite.²⁵ Students of public schools went on to the elite universities of Oxford and Cambridge and took their enthusiasm for cricket there. As a result, many public figures and administrators were cricket enthusiasts and supported the game with fervour.²⁶

Victorian and Edwardian era cricket was fostered by public institutions such as the monarchy, clergy, public schools, and universities as an essential part of English life that contributed to the moral as well as the physical development of the players. The perceived role of sport within society can be gauged from this comment by Bishop James Welldon, formerly headmaster of Dulwich and Harrow, both among the cream of the public schools in early twentieth-century England:

It is not, perhaps wrong to say ... that the instinct of discipline and loyalty, the spirit of co-operation and the fine sensitive honour which is essential to a true sport, have been less clearly marked in the lower than higher social classes; and the reason is the deficiency of organised games ... For organised games create a fellow feeling among citizens of all classes; they promote good sense, good temper and good fellowship; they exemplify the principles by which an Empire may be knit together; and they are not the least important elements in the formation of that moral character which alone has enabled the British people, while all other Empires have diminished and decayed to maintain their own Empire in its world amplitude and majesty.²⁷

The history of cricket-playing followed different dynamics in different colonies, mirroring the strategic and economic importance that these colonies had to the empire. However, there are two things that are common to the introduction and promotion of cricket throughout the British empire: the role of educational establishments, and the assimilation of cricket among the indigenous elite. In the colonies 'the Victorians were determined to civilize the rest of the world, and an integral feature of that process as they understood it was to disseminate the gospel of athleticism', which was supposed to transfer vigour and manliness to the 'lazy native'.²⁸ As Arjun Appadurai notes in the case of India:

Cricket was one of many arenas in which a colonial sociology was constructed and reified. In this sociology, India was seen as a congeries [sic] of antagonistic communities, populated by men (and women) with a variety of psychosocial defects. Cricket was seen

24 See Mangan, *Games ethic*.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

26 The Viceroy of India Lord Harris, for example, was a fervent supporter of cricket. Cricket also enjoyed widespread appeal in the Houses of Parliament, testified by the fact that a portion of the Great Railways Bill of 1888 was killed off by cricket interests in Parliament when it threatened the famous Lord's Cricket Ground with demolition.

27 *The Cricketer Annual 1922–23*, quoted in Williams, *Cricket*, p. 124.

28 Keith Sandiford, *Cricket and the Victorians*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994, p. 81.

as an ideal way to socialize natives into new modes of inter-group conduct and new standards of public behaviour. Ostensibly concerned with recreation and competition, its underlying quasi-official charter was moral and political.²⁹

The establishment of colleges for the training of the colonial elite was a significant step in the diffusion of the Victorian ideal of sportsmanship. From the mid nineteenth century onwards, the British started establishing public schools in various parts of the empire to train local administrators. Some of the earliest and most prominent among these were in India – the Rajkumar College in Rajkot and Mayo College in Ajmer. This in itself was the result of profound changes in imperial ideology following the uprising of 1857.³⁰

These schools were administered and run by the British government in India; their headmasters and chief administrators were usually European. It is interesting to note, as Mangan does,³¹ that the British decided to court the Indian aristocracy and not the merchants, industrialists, and entrepreneurs who were later to form the backbone of the nationalist movement. This reaffirmed the imperial ideology that laid emphasis on social order where the elites stay in control. At any rate, the public schools in India provide a fascinating example of the diffusion of an educational ethic arising from imperial conquest.³² Here too, as in the English public schools, cricket was considered to be an important instrument in moral training and so was promoted by administrators.

Schools in other parts of the empire also caught onto the ideal of athleticism. In relation to West Indian cricket Brian Stoddart writes:

the colonial élites maintained and established cultural primacy through cricket as much as through economic and political power ... these élites established and maintained their position by determining that their values and standards be accepted by the populace at large as the cultural programme most appropriate to the community, even though the community had no access to the institutions through which this programme was inculcated. ... agencies such as the church and the élite schools became as important in the Caribbean as they had been at home in fostering the skills and traditions which carried in them the imperial messages of cricket.³³

Schools in New Zealand and South Africa also carried on these traditions, with a significant difference that, being settler colonies, there was no developed comprador middle class there to emulate the colonial masters, and the elite institutions were kept away from the hands of the native people.

Cricket was hence actively promoted as part of the imperial system. It had a place of honour in imperial culture, and also found its champions outside the schools and among the viceroys and governors in the colonies. In these colonies, cricket was supposed to be the highest form of development of imperial culture. Its place in the minds of the colonialists has

29 Appadurai, *Modernity*, p. 93.

30 Mangan, *Games ethic*, pp. 122–41.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

32 *Ibid.*

33 Brian Stoddart, 'Cricket and colonialism in the English-speaking Caribbean to 1914: towards a cultural analysis', in Mangan, *Pleasure*, p. 251.

been aptly noted by the famous cricket writer Cecil Headlam, who was part of a team of cricketers that toured India in the year of the Coronation Durbar in Delhi in 1903:

First the hunter, the missionary, and the merchant, next the soldier, and then the politician and the cricketer – that is the history of British colonization. The hunter may exterminate deserving species, the missionary may cause quarrels, the soldier may hector, the politician blunder, but cricket unites – as in India – the ruler and the ruled. It also provides moral training and an education in pluck, nerve and self-restraint that is valuable to the character of the ordinary native.³⁴

Cricket's role as an educating and civilizing device found many supporters in colonial administration. Given that most colonial administrators were the product of English public schools and elite universities, it is no surprise that these individuals committed immense resources and time to the playing of cricket in the colonies. Prominent examples include Lord Harris in Bombay and Pelham Warner in the Caribbean, both of whom were also leading figures in cricket governance, as well as prominent imperialists. However, the colonial promotion of the game had to be matched by an indigenous enthusiasm for it. The next section will therefore consider the motivations behind the appropriation and rejection of cricket by various cultures around the world.

Indigenous appropriation

From the moment that cricket was introduced in the colony, one sees evidence of the game being taken to enthusiastically by the indigenous populations, prompting Richard Cashman to ask:

Where does the promoting hand of the colonial master stop and where does the adapting and assimilating indigenous tradition start? Is it merely adaptation and domestication or does it go beyond that to constitute resistance and even subversion? And how far can the colonial acceptance of cricket be seen as superior colonial salesmanship and successful exercise of social control using the highly developed and subtle ideology of games and colonialism? Or was it that many colonial subjects chose to pursue a game, because of the ideology, or even in spite of it, because it suited them to take up cricket for their own reasons? Or was the ideology of colonialism the starting point for the adoption of cricket but once the game was launched other factors came to bear which led to its spread and consolidation?³⁵

Cashman raises an important point. The promotion of cricket in the colonies was not solely because of the British zeal to spread the game. In fact, as we shall see presently, in many places the British actively discouraged the game or were the chief threat against it. The agent of globalization of this game was not the British as much as local zeal for the game. So what drove people in the colonies to adapt a long, complicated, and sometimes tiresome form of entertainment, even in the face of opposition from the colonizers? Why did countries and cultures such as pre-partition India take so readily to cricket while fighting against other

34 Cecil Headlam, *Ten thousand miles through India and Burma: an account of the Oxford Authentics cricket tour with M.J. Keys in the year of the Coronation Durbar*, London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1903, p. 168.

35 Richard Cashman, 'Cricket and colonialism: colonial hegemony and indigenous subversion', in Mangan, *Pleasure*, p. 261.

imperialist encroachments into the local culture? These are some of the questions that this section sets out to answer.

The first people to start playing cricket in India were the ‘middleman’ Parsi community. The Parsis were, according to Cashman, ‘a wealthy entrepreneurial group who acted as cultural brokers between the British and Indian society’.³⁶ The Parsis derived great social and economic benefits by collaborating with the British in trade and services. However, the Parsis experienced a significant struggle in their attempt to play cricket in colonial Bombay. As the accounts of Shapoorjee Sorabjee indicate, the Parsis had to litigate with the colonial authorities to find a playing space for themselves.³⁷ The civil society movement that Sorabjee and his colleagues of the Parsi Cricket Club were able to build preceded the early attempts of the ‘moderates’ in the Indian National Congress in Bombay to win rights through litigation with the colonial authorities. One of the supporters and main litigators of the Parsis’ attempts to find a place where they could play unhindered was Dadabhai Naoroji, who went on to become a prominent figure in the Indian National Congress.

The involvement of Parsis in cricket soon led other communities in the subcontinent to take an active interest in the game. Other groups in Bombay who had a significant stake in the benefits of colonial trade decided to take up the colonizers’ game as well. Hindus and Muslims soon formed their own clubs, and the Bombay Pentangular tournament was founded with teams for Europeans, Hindus, Muslims, and Parsis, and an ‘Others’ team formed of players from several different religions.³⁸ Most of the patrons of the sport came, once again, from the wealthy Gujarati merchant bankers who had gained ascendancy by allying themselves with the colonial state.³⁹ Muslim cricket had been pioneered by prominent Gujarati Muslim families, the Lukmanis and Tyabjis, while the Hindu cricket club was set up by contributions from a Hindu Gujarati merchant, G. P. Jivandas.⁴⁰ Essentially the Indian mercantile and entrepreneurial class took the game out of British hands and started practising it independently. This was significant in that there were now both non-British organization and finances behind cricket in India.

A large part of the patronage for cricket in India also came from small princely states; the princes were the earliest patrons, and did the most ultimately to popularize and democratize the game. Cricket provided princes with the opportunity to exercise more clout in the council of princes by ingratiating themselves with the British in the field of sports. Thus small princely states such as Baroda, Nawanager, and Scindia rose in prominence through their involvement in cricket.⁴¹ Indian princes taking up the game also meant the opening up of

36 Richard Cashman, ‘The phenomenon of Indian cricket’, in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan, eds., *Sport in history: the making of modern sporting history*, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1979, pp. 190–1.

37 See Shapoorjee Sorabjee, *A chronicle of cricket amongst Parsees and the struggle: European polo versus Indian cricket*, Bombay: published by the author, 1897.

38 See Guha, *Corner*.

39 See C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars: north Indian society in the age of British expansion 1770–1870*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

40 Guha, *Corner*, pp. 60–1.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 106.

opportunity for lower classes of the indigenous population. The princes, much like the elite ‘amateurs’ in England, would rarely bowl or field, and were ceremoniously carried to the pitch by their servants.⁴² They perhaps saw in cricket another extension of their royal spectacles, which played an important part in the obligations and mystique of Indian royals towards their subjects. However, they also provided both direct and indirect support to many cricketers from humble families in the Indian heartland, who would later find their way to bigger cities, such as Bombay, and more important teams.⁴³ And they imported coaches and players, usually ‘professionals’ from England and Australia, to train their teams and make them more competitive, increasing the effectiveness in matches of teams composed entirely of Indians.⁴⁴

In Australia and South Africa, cricket was essentially a game played by the white settlers and guarded from the aborigines and blacks who inhabited these lands. Cricket here contributed a ‘cultural bond of white imperial fraternity’ of instrumental use to the dominant elite.⁴⁵ This imperial brotherhood was fostered by old-boy networks of public schools and graduates from Oxford and Cambridge. In many cases, colonial officials were hired on the basis of their abilities on the cricket field.⁴⁶ This coupled with imperialistic ideology and the exigencies of a settler society led them to practise extreme forms of social exclusion. South African whites, for example, consistently displayed frontier behaviour, insisting on religious, moral, and cultural barriers to distinguish themselves.⁴⁷ South African cricket was hence put beyond the reach of immigrant Indians, who were brought to South Africa as indentured labourers or came there as traders, and of local Africans. This does not mean that they did not play cricket, but that recognition was reserved for South African whites.⁴⁸ The links between sport and empire are highlighted in the offices that famous cricketers held in the early twentieth century. Sir Abe Bailey, for instance, was regularly feted by the English as being responsible for the admirable position of South Africa in the cricket world; he was an imperialist, Rand magnate, and a British sympathizer during the South African wars.⁴⁹ Cricket tours were essentially connected with the social life of the British imperial elite: players were hosted by the prominent personalities in the colonies, and imperial conviviality formed the backdrop to most cricket matches.⁵⁰

The Australian scenario was not very different from that of South Africa. For example, the cricket grounds attempted to replicate the names of famous cricket clubs in England. Mandle also points out that cricket provided the vehicle for an emerging Australian nationalism

42 *Ibid.*

43 Appadurai, *Modernity*, p. 95.

44 Like Walter Brockwell, Wisden Cricketer of the Year in 1895, who was hired by the Maharaja of Patiala, Rajendra Singh: see Guha, *Corner*, p. 105.

45 J. A. Mangan, ed., *The cultural bond: sport, empire, society*, London: Frank Cass, 1992, p. 6.

46 Christopher Merrett and John Nauright, ‘South Africa’, in Stoddart and Sandiford, *Imperial game*, p. 73.

47 *Ibid.*

48 See Ashwin Desai, Krish Reddy, Goolam Vahed, and Vishnu Padyachee, *Blacks in whites: a century of cricket struggles in KwaZulu*, Natal: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2003.

49 Jon Gemmel, *The politics of South African cricket*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 52.

50 Merrett and Nauright, ‘South Africa’, pp. 63–4.

through which the peripheral colony could ‘thrash the motherland’.⁵¹ Tours to Australia were frequently used in the press as a barometer of colonial development or imperial decline,⁵² and cricket remained a popular vehicle around which Australians created their national identity.⁵³

Successful diffusion

We have seen earlier how, in response to imperial rule, the colonized organized themselves along ethnic lines on the sporting field. Why then did this not happen in other places? Why did cricket never become popular in continental Europe or North America? These countries had closer cultural bonds with Britain than, say, India. In the United States, cricket was popular until the mid nineteenth century as an important link to British cultural heritage.⁵⁴ Similarly, Canada was a prominent part of the cricket world until the late nineteenth century. Indeed, some of the first international matches were organized against teams from Canada and the United States. However, there was a noticeable decline of the game in North America from the early twentieth century onwards.

A nineteenth-century sports writer offers this explanation: ‘We fast people of America, call cricket slow and tedious while the leisurely, take your time my boy people of England think of our game baseball as too fast. Each game, however, suits the people of the two nations.’⁵⁵ But, as we have seen above, cricket was able to find roots in cultures far more incompatible with Victorian Britain than the nineteenth-century United States. The cultural difference argument for the non-diffusion of cricket to the Americas assumes that there is a cultural predilection to cricket, which decides whether the game is successfully appropriated or not. However, the appropriation of cricket in cultures from the Trobriand Islanders to the Dutch in South Africa belies this theory. Neither the Trobriand Islanders nor the Boers shared any of the cultural code that cricket brought with it, yet they took enthusiastically to the game. In both these cultures, the appropriation of the game by the dominant elite was a crucial aspect for the successful diffusion of the game.

In this regard the work of Jason Kaufman and Orlando Patterson on cricket and social mobility in North America provides us with an explanation as to why cricket successfully diffused to certain areas and not to others. They point out that the key differentiating factor was the social mobility in USA and Canada, in contrast to the rest of the British empire in the late nineteenth century. The elites in USA and Canada ‘captured’ a cultural innovation and made it their own so that they could mark out certain forms of culture as being exclusive to them. In other places, the elites actively aided in the propagation of a new cultural form, since they were themselves secure at the top of the social hierarchy and hence had no ‘class anxiety’.⁵⁶

51 W. F. Mandle, ‘Cricket and Australian national identity in the nineteenth century’, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 59, 4, December, 1973, pp. 225–45, quoted in Richard Cashman, ‘Australia’, in Stoddart and Sandiford, *Imperial game*, p. 39.

52 *Ibid.*

53 See Jared van Duinen, ‘Playing to the “imaginary grandstand”: sport, the “British world”, and an Australian colonial identity’, pp. 342–364 in this issue.

54 Brian Stoddart, ‘Other cultures’, in Stoddart and Sandiford, *Imperial game*, p. 135.

55 Quoted in Jason Kaufman and Orlando Patterson, ‘Cross-national cultural diffusion: the global spread of cricket’, *American Sociological Review*, 70, 1, 2005, p. 90.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

Early twentieth-century Canada and the United States were places of increasing class mobility. At the same time, in both these societies, cricket was an extremely elitist game. As Kaufman and Patterson point out, this caused the biggest damage to the diffusion of cricket in the Americas.⁵⁷ For the North American elites, 'cricket had become something precious, part of their heritage, an elite pastime more akin to ancestor worship than play'.⁵⁸ In both countries elite cricket players retreated to small, elite clubs competing among themselves;⁵⁹ these elite centres were mostly East Coast cities with rich English heritage, such as Philadelphia.⁶⁰ This goes to show how the roots of successful diffusion depend on the socioeconomic make-up of the society rather than obscure factors such as 'culture', 'heritage', or American exceptionalism. An important factor may also be the character of European immigration to the Americas: owing to competing European cultural influences, British culture was not able to establish a hegemonic position in the Americas.

The experience in the United States and Canada is in stark contrast with the nature of the diffusion of the game in South Asia and the Caribbean. The elites in these areas were willing to 'share' the game, allowing talented non-elites to play the game and in the process making it a truly mass medium. The question of why elites in certain parts of the empire were more willing to 'share' the game than those in other parts is one that cannot be answered comprehensively. However, Kaufman and Patterson point towards an interesting trend. Cricket was adapted successfully in societies with high levels of social segmentation and comparatively rigid class structures. The game was taken up by elites since it offered them an entrance into imperial culture, allowing them to 'curry favour' with the colonial administration. At the same time, the popular appeal of the game was reinforced because of the symbolic value of defeating social superiors or asserting their own identity. In the Americas, and to a certain extent in Britain, the elites closed off cricket from the general populace, treating it as a marker of class and social hierarchy. Similarly, it can be argued that, while cricket was popular in Europe up to a point, particularly in elite schools, the association of the game with a closed cultural space did not make it a cultural commodity that could be easily assimilated.

Further, as Sandiford points out, 'the story of cricket is about the colonial quest for identity in the face of the colonisers' search for authority'.⁶¹ The era of colonialism was one where different political identities were fashioned, and the sporting field was the stage for the earliest expositions of these identities. Defeating the colonizer, and not moral wellbeing (which the Victorians had perceived cricket as achieving), was the driving force behind the success of cricket in cultures very different from that of its origins. Wherever cricket offered added symbolic value to the idea of a community, it was successfully adapted. Inherently, this process involved the opening up of the game to larger groups in the colonies, while at the same time it remained restricted to a certain social milieu in England.

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

60 See Tom Melville, *The tented field: a history of cricket in America*, Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1998.

61 Keith A. P. Sandiford, 'Introduction', in Stoddart and Sandiford, *Imperial game*, p. 1.

The anti-colonial response usually came not from the promoters, who used cricket as a tool to build social contacts among the colonial elite, but from the spectators. In this context, another Indian cricketer, C. K. Nayadu, is significant. Nayadu started playing for the Hindus in the Bombay Pentangular, which was by now a popular spectacle. His innings, particularly those against European sides, were held up as nationalist responses to the colonialists. As one memoir put it:

Every sixer hit by 'C.K.' against the slow bowlers of the visitors was as good as a nail in the coffin of the British Empire. I remember a shot that he hit against James Langridge which sailed over the pavilion at the Lahore Gymkhana Ground in what is now called Bagh-i-Jinnah. We madly cheered each shot past the boundary not only as a cricket performance but also as an assertion of our resolve to throw the British out of India.⁶²

Postcolonial cricket

While it is clear that socioeconomic factors were responsible for the successful diffusion of cricket in South Asia, it is not entirely clear how India became a major market for cricket. To understand this we must look at how cricket was perceived in the postcolonial context, as well as at the history of the development of the media in South Asia.

A good place to begin this discussion would be the former British colonies in the Caribbean. Here, as opposed to the situation in South Africa, cricket was a game that was accessible to both whites and 'coloureds', provided that they had the economic resources to take part. The West Indian elites followed the same distinction between amateur and professional cricketers as their English counterparts. This allowed large numbers of 'coloureds' to participate as professionals. If we apply Kaufman and Patterson's reasoning to this scenario, then it can be argued that South African elites (a combination of English and Dutch settlers), unlike the white Caribbean elites (who were mostly English), were anxious to preserve their monopoly of imperial cultural institutions. The West Indian white elites, on the other hand, looked upon cricket as their *own* culture, and subscribed to the Victorian notion of cricket as a 'gentleman's game'.

In the hands of 'coloured' people in the Caribbean, cricket became 'the focus around which an intensive civil rights war was waged as they sought the democratization of social culture as well as organizational autonomy'.⁶³ West Indian cricket has hence been accurately described as 'resistance' or 'liberation' cricket, since it challenges, undermines, and finally refashions imperial cultural practices towards being an expression of political autonomy by the colonized.⁶⁴ This movement was influenced to a great extent by black nationalism, which became a dominant force in the West Indies in the 1930s. In 1938 great numbers of blacks confronted the local whites and the imperial states in a series of rebellions in which they demanded the political franchise, social reform, and access to economic resources. Empowered by these revolutions, West Indian blacks organized clubs of their own, which

62 Quoted in Guha, *Corner*, p. 205.

63 Beckles, *Development of West Indies cricket*, vol. 1, p. 11.

64 See Chris Searle, 'Race before cricket: cricket empire and the white rose', *Race and Class*, 31, 3, 1990, 343–5; Hilary McD. Beckles and Brian Stoddart, eds., *Liberation cricket: West Indies cricket culture*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995

took over the game by sheer force of numbers. The formation of black cricket clubs such as Spartan and Empire meant that there was a steady financial and organizational force supporting black participation in the game.

Cricket's popularity immediately made it the centre of political discourse. Learie Constantine, a prominent black activist of the mid twentieth century who became the first black man to be made a peer, began his career on the cricket field, where he was part of the West Indies cricket team that played an instrumental part in defeating England in 1934–35. Constantine, together with C. L. R. James, championed the cause of black captaincy of the cricket team, saying that white captains could not feel the same intensity of purpose when leading the West Indies side, especially against England. In his memoir on cricket he wrote:

Of all the test playing combinations the West Indies is alone composed of men of different race. And there lies the difficulty which I believe few of the West Indian selectors recognize themselves. As I shall have reason to point out more emphatically in a moment, Test Match cricket to-day is no sort of game. It is a battle. And to win you need the strenuous effort of individual players: the work of each player must be backed by a sense of solidarity, of all the others supporting him, not only actually, but so to speak, in the spirit.⁶⁵

The Caribbean is significant, because it was here more clearly than anywhere else that the Victorian code of cricket was subverted to local political sensibilities. Cricket was no longer a gentleman's game, but a field where the colonized could assert themselves and prove themselves superior to the British.

In India, too, the development of cricket after independence followed very nationalistic lines. The Indian nation-state was extremely receptive to cricket: the nationalist movement was led by leaders who had a proclivity towards the game, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, a product of Harrow and himself an avid cricketer. Nehru instituted an intra-parliamentary cricket match as an annual fixture between the lower and upper houses of the parliament. The support of nationalist, yet Anglicized, elites brought to the game a certain level of glamour in the years immediately following independence, adding to its mass appeal. At the same time, with the abolition of the Bombay Pentangular tournament shortly before independence (on the accusation that it was fostering disunity in the Indian 'nation'), the domestic game never found as much support.⁶⁶

The patrons of cricket were now state-owned corporations, such as the State Bank of India and the Indian Railways, or rich industrialists such as the Tatas.⁶⁷ These firms employed cricketers as a form of advertisement and/or social relations exercise, allowing them access to easy marketing and popularity.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, it should be remembered that soon after the British left India, cricket was not the most popular game. Football and hockey, in which India had won an Olympic gold in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, were just as popular. Cricket's strength was in the elite urban centres such as Bombay and Delhi.

65 Learie Constantine, *Cricket and I*, London: Allan, 1933, p. 170.

66 See Ramachandra Guha, 'Cricket and politics in colonial India', *Past & Present*, 161, 1998, pp. 155–90.

67 Appadurai, *Modernity*, p. 105.

68 *Ibid.*

Cricket gained much from the interest of the wealthy Bombay industrialists, making that city the centre of Indian cricket. Other places such as Calcutta, where cricket-playing started earlier than in Bombay (by British officers stationed there) lagged behind, for lack of significant investment. The wealth and glamour associated with the Indian elite also made it possible for cricket to gain massive media coverage in relation to other sports. A complaint in *Link* put it clearly:

Why this partiality for Test cricket, the running commentary of which is on the national hook-up. It is difficult to understand. Or is it? Occasionally, the final of a premier football or tennis or badminton final get time on AIR [All India Radio], but it is mostly not on the national hook-up. Thus a large number of sport lovers do not get the benefit.⁶⁹

Appadurai stresses the role of language and mass print media in India in popularizing the game among the masses: radio commentary and sports magazines in vernacular languages were the key to ‘socializing the Indian mass audience into the subtleties of the sport’.⁷⁰

Furthermore, studies in cultural anthropology have revealed that cricket spectators in the subcontinent remember contests not in terms of statistics and quality of play but rather in political terms: a victory of ‘us’ over ‘them’.⁷¹ ‘Thus club-level cricket or even inter-provincial competition of the Ranji Trophy variety fails to generate “memorable” episodes in the same way in which the county game does in England, or club sports do in much of the world.’⁷² The formation of this sort of ‘national memory’ related to sporting contests is a process that is possible through cricket’s portrayal as something that the nation experiences together through the media.

The late twentieth century: media, governance, and migration

Cricket was never a profit-making game. In England in the early twentieth century, other sports such as football and tennis paid for the upkeep of cricket grounds.⁷³ County clubs ran on money donated by rich aristocrats.⁷⁴ As we have seen earlier, in the colonies cricket was run by wealthy businessmen or the service elite. In the course of the twentieth century, these were the people who took the lead in commercializing the game and making it a profitable enterprise.

Sports and the media shared a close relationship almost from the time of the inception and standardization of sporting forms in the nineteenth century. Both have shaped and transformed each other in the course of the twentieth century. Cricket leagues, for example, were organized subsequent to the idea of comparing and ranking teams coming up in the local press in Britain.⁷⁵ In the late twentieth century, sports and media developed

69 Quoted in Richard Cashman, ‘The subcontinent’, in Stoddart and Sandiford, *Imperial game*, p. 130.

70 Appadurai, *Modernity*, p. 100.

71 See Satadru Sen, ‘History without a past: memory and forgetting in Indian cricket’, in Stephen Wagg, ed., *Cricket and national identity in the postcolonial age*, London: Routledge, 2005, pp. 94–109.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

73 Sandiford, *Cricket and the Victorians*, p. 71; see also Birley, *Social history*.

74 Sandiford, *Cricket and the Victorians*, p. 71.

75 See Birley, *Social history*.

simultaneously and symbiotically, supplying each other with the necessary resources for development: capital, audiences, promotion, and content.⁷⁶

Perhaps the most significant step in commercializing cricket was taken by Kerry Packer, an Australian media mogul. Packer's Channel 9 networks launched a cricketing revolution in 1977 in the form of World Series Cricket (WSC), a breakaway series that was innovative in both its format and its marketing strategies. The root of WSC lay in the decision by the Australian Cricketing Board not to give exclusive broadcast rights to Channel 9 for the home Tests. The Australian Cricket Board turned down Packer's higher bid for the traditional ties with the Australian Broadcasting Company. This snub by the 'old-boy' network prompted Packer to launch one of the most transformative events in cricket history.

Packer attracted key players from the Caribbean, England, and Australia by offering them lucrative sums of money to play in a three-way international competition each summer. This way he gained his goal: exclusive television coverage of the conventional game. The legacy of the Packer series was the one-day international (ODI) format, which replaced the traditional five-day Test matches. The look of cricket changed as well, with coloured clothing and sponsors' logos replacing white flannel, use of floodlights for games that ran into the night, and the rise of international superstars, whose popularity grew with the glamour associated with the new series.

Packer's innovation was exemplary of the interdependence between sport and the media. The result-oriented game came to attract unprecedented levels of spectatorship, hence opening the doors for sponsorship in cricket. The Channel 9 network was to later become the model for Rupert Murdoch's tactic of using sports as a 'battering ram'. While it lasted for only three years, between 1977 and 1979, WSC effectively challenged national sporting organizations' hegemony over the game. It was able to get players, referees, and the media on board to popularize the game. The spectacle that WSC produced was carried forward by other media such as newspapers and radio, which were also owned by Packer. This strategy would not have been possible without the removal of the high degrees of state control over the television and radio waves. The liberalization of media markets worldwide had a major impact on the way that cricket was run and consumed, as well as contributing most to the shifting centre of world cricket.

State attitudes towards broadcast liberalization had a direct impact on the reach of cricket broadcasts within different national contexts, hence directly affecting the market sizes in different countries. Cricket played a major role in revolutionizing Indian broadcasting, changing its legal and economic dimensions. The Indian Telegraphs Act of 1885 gave the state monopoly over the maintenance of, operation of, and right to grant licenses for 'any apparatus for the purpose of affording means of telegraphic communication'.⁷⁷ This monopoly was challenged in court in a dispute over cricket broadcasting. The first case was in May 1993 when the Cricketing Association of Bengal (CAB) sold the telecast rights for the five-nation Hero Cup to Trans World International (TWI), an arm of the US-based International Management Group (IMG). The state television company, Doordarshan, which had failed to match the bid, refused to allow the broadcaster to uplink from Indian soil,

76 Miller et al., *Globalization and sport*, p. 62.

77 The Indian Telegraph Act, Act XIII of 1885. Amended in 1957, section 7 of Act 47, redefining the term 'telegraph'.

claiming exclusive rights to do so and calling the CAB 'anti-national'. Customs officials in Mumbai confiscated TWI's broadcast equipment,⁷⁸ leading the CAB to appeal to the Supreme Court of India. In an important ruling on 15 November 1993, the court overruled the government and allowed TWI to generate its own broadcast. This, however, was limited to the Hero Cup. Doordarshan and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) locked horns again in 1994, when Doordarshan blocked the broadcast of international cricket matches on ESPN (Entertainment and Sports Programming Network), which had won five-year exclusive broadcast rights as part of a US\$30 million contract. Not all government departments were against the deal, however: for example, the government-owned VSNL company was forced to return the advance given to it by ESPN. An official was quoted as saying: 'We do not need to put money for infrastructure because we already possess all the facilities, but the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting would not let us do anything, even if it involves earning thousands of dollars in the country in foreign exchange.'⁷⁹

Following another appeal by the BCCI, the court ruled in February 1995 that the airwaves could not be a state monopoly as they constitute public property.⁸⁰ It deemed that the Indian Telegraph Act of 1885 was 'intended for an altogether different purpose' and ordered the government to take immediate steps to establish an autonomous public authority to control and regulate the use of the airwaves.⁸¹ The court made it clear that the airwaves were meant to be used to advance the fundamental right of free speech, something difficult to achieve under a monopoly.⁸² This had a great impact on the state of television and radio broadcasting in India, leading to the proliferation of regional channels driving the media boom today.

The active involvement of the Indian state ensured the continued presence of Indian cricket on free-to-air TV, enabling the continued penetration of cricket into Indian markets. Similarly, Australia enacted an Anti-Siphoning Act in 1992, which ensured that all cricket events would be simultaneously broadcast on free-to-air state television.⁸³ In fact, Packer's cricket revolution was also heavily subsidized by the state, which offered incentives for companies to provide local programming content in the 1960s and '70s. Both India and Australia were, in effect, beneficiaries of huge government subsidies, often at the expense of private broadcasters who were not able to limit cricket to paid television. The provision of cricket on free-to-air TV made it possible for them to expand the game into the deepest reaches of the markets. This is, however, not the case with England and the West Indies.

The rise of television in Britain has, in fact, worked contrary to the interest of English and Welsh cricket. First, football and motor racing have come to be more important on television than cricket, owing to their superior marketing. Second, the English and Welsh cricket authorities have actively worked towards taking the game off free-to-air TV, hence reducing

78 Nalin Mehta, 'Batting for the flag: cricket, television and globalization in India', *Sport in Society*, 12, 4–5, 2009, p. 590.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 591.

80 Supreme Court Case 161 before justices P. B. Sawant, S. Mohan, and B. P. Jeevan Reddy, Civil Appeals Nos. 1429–30 of 1995, quoted in *ibid.*

81 *Ibid.*

82 *Ibid.*

83 Section 115 of the Broadcast Service Act (BCA) 1992.

its availability to most British households. Cricket was taken off the A-list of events – those that are supposed to be available on free-to-air TV – in 1998. This was presumably an attempt by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to make more money from broadcasting rights. Nevertheless, the result was a major decline in the audience figures and hence the market size of the sport. It also reinforced class divides between those who could afford subscription television and those who could not. At the same time, viewing figures rose for sports that were considered less elitist and were available on free-to-air TV, such as football and motor racing. It is significant that the model of cricket generating the most revenue today – the Twenty20 – was thought up by English cricket leagues to re-create interest in the game, but was subsequently successfully commercialized by Indian entrepreneurs who had access to a highly receptive cricket audience at home.

The emergence of global television networks and broadcasting tapped into another major market, the diaspora. Economic migration is one of the salient features of the late twentieth century, with large numbers of skilled and highly skilled migrant workers, mostly from the Asian countries, making their way to more lucrative employment in major commercial and financial centres. The impact of this process on cricket was first felt in the 1980s when a Middle Eastern billionaire, Shaikh Abdul Rehman Bukhatir, started promoting the game in the UAE, a place with no local cricketing team or fan base. It was the enormous Indian and Pakistani diaspora communities in the Persian Gulf that, with heavy nationalist overtones, became consumers of cricket.⁸⁴ Bukhatir invested heavily in cricket, offering huge sums for teams to play in Sharjah. The frequency of matches grew in the late 1980s and the 1990s, and this was an important step towards turning cricket into a television spectacle. The presence of celebrities in the form of famous Bollywood stars, as well as South Asian mafia dons, glamourized Sharjah cricket, while the frequency of the competitions made it a regular source of profitable content for television. Based on the success of his Sharjah competition, Bukhatir also launched TEN Sports in 2002.⁸⁵ This is currently the leading broadcast channel in South Asia, enjoying a more than 50% share of sports viewership in the region.

Large groups of the South Asian diaspora in Western countries also affected the way that cricket was consumed there. In 1990, the continued support of the West Indian, Indian, and Pakistani diaspora for their cricket sides led the British Conservative minister Norman Tebbit to contemplate devising a cricket test to check the loyalties of immigrants. Tebbit was reported to have said that a 'large proportion of Britain's Asian population fail to pass the cricket test. Which side do they cheer for? It's an interesting test. Are you still harking back to where you came from or where you are?'⁸⁶ In questioning the loyalties of the immigrants, Tebbit inadvertently also pointed towards another factor of British immigration: the failure of the state to integrate migrants properly into national culture and institutions. Immigrants' continued support for the teams of the nations of their origin is a reflection of their exclusion from national culture. Michael Roberts, in a sociological examination of migrant culture in

84 Amit Gupta, 'The globalization of cricket: the rise of the non-West', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 21, 2, 2004, p. 265.

85 *Ibid.*

86 Darcus Howe, 'Tebbit's loyalty test is dead', *New Statesman*, 3 July 2006, <http://www.newstatesman.com/node/153619> (consulted 13 April 2013).

Britain, speculates that ‘expressing sentimental respect for the homeland and one’s totemic practices was (and is) a means of proclaiming selfhood and creating a respect of the self’.⁸⁷ Reports on the failure of cricket leagues in Britain to attract local talent blame the exclusionist attitudes of these clubs, and their tendency to support a certain class base.

The presence of the international diaspora that supports South Asian national sides also leads to higher viewing figures worldwide for matches involving Indian and Pakistani teams. This means better revenues for the cricket boards of these countries, as well as increasing their bargaining power when it comes to negotiating international broadcasting contracts. Thus, as the location of the tournaments, choices of venues, and playing times become geared to fit the international diaspora, these cricket boards continue to exercise influence on the way cricket is run.

The identification of the diaspora with their national sporting teams, as well as the increased spectatorship of contests where there is an element of conflict involved, shows how the growth of cricket and its shifting power centre was inherently connected with new formulations of identity and nationhood in the twentieth century. South Asian cricket grew stronger financially worldwide with the identification of the diaspora with their national teams. At the same time, the media’s playing up of the conflict between India and Pakistan, and the regular portrayal of these cricket matches as tests of nationhood and manhood increased the spectatorship of the sport, also benefiting the rise of the non-West in cricket.

The International Cricket Council: imperial council to Asian bloc

The rising influence of the former colonies radically transformed cricket’s organizing body, the International Cricket Council (ICC). From the beginning, the ICC was laden with colonial condescension. It began as the Imperial Cricket Council in 1909 with Australia, England, and South Africa as members. Its presidency automatically went to the President of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), a private members’ club situated in the famous Lord’s Cricket Ground in London. Within the organization Australia and England enjoyed the status of ‘founding members’, without whose consent any decision of the ICC would not be able to go through, a status that they enjoyed as late as 1993.

The controlling power of global sporting organizations has been highlighted in a recent study by John Foster and Nigel Pope, which recognizes a contradiction in their structure.⁸⁸ Most of these organizations, including the ICC, began as non-profit groups devoted to a certain sport. However, with the increasing commercialization of sport, they found it difficult to reconcile their original non-profit status with their ability to generate large amounts of revenue.⁸⁹ This contradiction is all too apparent in the ICC. The reluctance of the Council to take part in the organization of cricket tours, for example, meant that certain

87 Michael Roberts, ‘Cricketing fervour and Islamic fervour: marginalization of the diaspora’, in Boria Majumdar and J. A. Mangan, eds., *Sport in South Asian society: past and present*, London: Routledge, 2005, p. 316.

88 See John Foster and Nigel Pope, *The political economy of global sporting organisations*, London: Routledge, 2007.

89 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

nations would not have an opportunity to play cricket for prolonged periods, as opposed to nations such as Australia and England who would play more regularly. This had a direct impact on the profitability of the game. When the World Cup was instituted in 1975, the competitions were held in England for the first three editions of the tournament.

The rise of the non-West in the ICC was substantially guided by anti-colonial sentiment. N. K. P. Salve, an Indian cricket administrator, recounts how he was denied extra tickets to the finals of the 1983 Prudential World Cup held at the MCC in London and organized by the ICC, which itself was housed at the MCC. This led him to foment a revolt of the non-Western nations to bring the cricket World Cup to India in 1987.⁹⁰ The number of non-Western nations in the ICC increased following the admission of associate members, who do not compete in the highest 'Test-match' league, such as Fiji and Ceylon in 1964. The associate members grew to about eight by 1987, when Salve, together with the West Indian and Pakistani cricket boards, shifted the World Cup to the subcontinent. The cooperation between the Indian and Pakistani boards, at a time when the two countries were involved in a military stand-off, is also indicative of the desire to get cricket out of English hands.

Another coup was staged with the help of the associate members when the subcontinent once again staged the World Cup in 1996, leading to sections of the British press making allegations that the associate members had been bribed.⁹¹ The same year the ICC decided to have a rolling post of chairman, with each country having a three-year tenure. Jagmohan Dalmiya, an Indian industrialist and politician who was also the head of the BCCI, was the first to be elected under the new scheme. His chairmanship was associated with major transformations within the cricketing world. He imposed a schedule where each country was supposed to tour the others at regular intervals. He also increased his political influence by increasing the number of associate member countries. Dalmiya insisted that money be spent on cricket in countries where it was not widely played. This meant that he got significant backing from the newly inducted countries, which were in a way beholden to him.⁹²

The rise of the Asian bloc within the ICC is the result of two simultaneous processes: the recognition by Asian entrepreneurs of the great financial potential of cricket, and these countries taking the lead in making the game more commercialized by inviting corporate investment and increasing markets by inducting new members. At the same time there is a heavy anti-colonial line in commercializing cricket. This is evident in the following statement by Dalmiya regarding the changes in the ICC:

At that time we [India and Pakistan] almost never received our due share ... They [the ICC] were a corrupt kind of setup ... basically it was England and Australia. India and Pakistan were just two members. South Africa was in exile at the time. It was more a colony or more a small kind of club and we felt it was time to change all that.⁹³

90 See N. K. P. Salve, *The Story of the Reliance Cup*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1987.

91 Mike Marqusee, 'Who's afraid of the Asian bloc?', *Mikemarqusee.com*, <http://www.mikemarqusee.com/?p=218> (consulted 4 June 2012).

92 Quoted in N. Mehta, Jon Gemmel, and Dominic Malcolm, "'Bombay Sport Exchange": cricket, globalization and the future', *Sport in Society*, 12, 4–5, 2009, p. 700.

93 *Ibid.*

The Indian Premier League: reaping commercial benefits

The rise of the Indian Premier League (IPL) is perhaps the most prominent example of the shift in the global sporting economy from the Western to the emerging nations. When it was launched in 2008, the IPL earned around UA\$1 billion in broadcasting revenues. The finals of the event captured around 9.5% of the Indian television market, the third largest in the world, with soaps and reality shows chalking up 5%.⁹⁴ Consisting of ‘franchises’ based in eight Indian cities and owned by Bollywood superstars and corporate moguls, the IPL attracts talent from all the major cricket-playing nations, with some players forsaking spots in their national sides to participate in it.⁹⁵ The format for the IPL games is an innovative, faster and shorter version of cricket. As opposed to the five-day matches that are the preference of the puritans, the IPL matches last three hours, ideal for prime-time television.

The IPL grew out of the changing broadcast laws in India and the entry of private satellite networks into the entertainment marketplace in the late 1980s. It has been noted that until 1987 it was rare for broadcast licences for sports to be auctioned to private channels. In India this period also coincided with the opening up of the national economy to the international market and the rise of the Indian consumer – the middle class. International brands seeking to enter a new market collaborated extensively with what was by now the most popular entertainment format.

One of the biggest contributing factors in this shift in cricket was that Indian entrepreneurs were willing to adopt innovations in the game to make it more in tune with international television markets. As mentioned above, the shortened Twenty20 format used in the IPL was pioneered in England to regenerate interest in county cricket. However, owing to opposition from cricket puritans, who deemed it ‘hit and giggle’ cricket, it never really found favour with the ECB.⁹⁶ This again goes to show how much the cultural value attached to the game still resonates in its global political economy, albeit now to the benefit of the ex-colonies.

The IPL has had a great impact on the organization of cricket. The games in the first edition of the tournament ran at the end of the Indian season. This overlapped with the English season, leading to the ECB banning a number of players from playing in the IPL. The English players protested, as they were missing out on the lucrative cash rewards that come from participating in the richest cricket tournament in the world. Subsequently, cricketers from all parts of the globe have been pressuring their respective boards to consider an ‘IPL window’ in which they would be free from engagements with their national teams in order to take part in the IPL. The impact of the IPL could be judged by this transformation alone. In the past, players from across the globe would take time off from their careers in order to play in the English county season, which, apart from offering substantial rewards, was also considered to be valuable for young talent to gain ‘exposure’ and test their mettle in the hallowed cricket grounds of the metropole. With the rising financial power of the colonies, based on the factors listed in the previous section, this trend has almost come to an end. English counties are too cash-strapped to hire foreign talent. Cricket labour migration is now reversed, with the increasing entrepreneurship associated with the sport in the colonies.

94 ‘Cricket, lovely cricket’, p. 11.

95 *Ibid.*

96 *Ibid.*

This is a relatively recent phenomenon, with long-term impacts, which raises a lot of questions that historians and scholars are currently grappling with. Nevertheless, a few observations can be mentioned on the significance of the IPL in cricketing history. First, the IPL and the Twenty20 format have altered the international structure in which cricket is played, and matches and leagues are no longer organized along national lines; hitherto international cricket comprised national teams of former colonies (the so-called Test-playing nations) governed by an erstwhile imperial sporting organization. Second, in the opinion of some scholars, the rise of the IPL heralds an era where cricket has completely globalized: that is, it has become more integrated into economic globalization and is now governed by global corporations, corporate sponsorships, migration, and information technology,⁹⁷ as opposed to being a Commonwealth game. Third, this was the first instance where a regional version of the game found commercial success.⁹⁸ Other variations such as county cricket in England also historically attracted foreign players but remained non-profitable events carried out by the national cricketing bodies. In the process of redevelopment, entrepreneurship in finding new revenue and sponsorship models, and particularly the efforts of its founder, Lalit Modi, was a major factor in the success of the IPL. Lastly, the successful commercialization of cricket by the IPL was based on a pre-existing market for such an event in India. In the context of the discussion in the previous pages, the IPL represents the culmination of the path that the diffusion and commercialization of cricket took in the twentieth century. Without getting into the specifics of the commodification of cricket, it is worth noting that, with the opening up of the global broadcasting economy, and the tying in of corporate sponsorship interests with the sport of cricket in India, an existing consumer base for cricket, composed of Asians across the world, was made financially profitable.

Conclusion

The transformation of the game of cricket in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is deeply rooted in the social and economic transformations of the former British colonies, as well as in changing relations between the East and West. The unifying element in the successful diffusion and subsequent commercialization of cricket was the ability of the game to serve as a signifier of identity. Theoretically, this has implications that suggest that globalizing processes can coexist with nationalizing ones, sometimes even abetting them. Cricket was successfully appropriated and commercialized in places where it became a platform on which the colonized could assert themselves against the colonizers; where it became a marker of identity.

It was this idea of nationhood, or the representation of the nation-state on the sports field, that South Asian entrepreneurs were successfully able to capitalize upon. The willingness of the South Asian elites to share the sport with non-elites, together with the platform that cricket provided for projecting ethnicity on the field, had already ensured that the game penetrated the urban centres very well. In the postcolonial context, continuing support from merchant bankers, and more importantly the state, together with a desire to assert nationhood on the cricket field led to heavy state subsidies that enabled cricket to have a wide viewership in South Asia. It was

97 Robert Holton, 'Globalization and cricket', in Rumford and Wagg, *Cricket and globalization*, p. 19.

98 See Rob Steen, 'Acronym wars: the economics and Indianisation of contemporary cricket', in Rumford and Wagg, *Cricket and globalization*, pp. 84–102.

this continuing penetration of cricket into the Indian market that made the shift from West to East viable. In turn it was aided by the non-West's desire to break old imperial bonds and reassert themselves.

Miller et al. point out that sport fully expresses the current global dilemma between global commerce and parochial ethnicity.⁹⁹ In the case of cricket, the reification of the nation on the cricket field, making 'nationhood' a consumable experience, was central to its successful commercialization by South Asian cricketing bodies and entrepreneurs. At the same time in Britain, the baggage of cricket being a 'gentleman's game', with a completely different set of values associated with it, not only led to alienation among spectators but also made the cricket governing bodies wary of commercializing the game.

There are two further points of note in the shift in global cricket. First, while it is clear that the attempts by the English to infuse cricket with the colonialist image were challenged by the ability of the indigenous peoples to subvert this identification and develop the game according to their own interests, it is difficult to put a finger on how exactly this came about: that is to say, what it was about cricket that attracted the diverse ethnicities of South Asia. Perhaps the best explanation is provided by Appadurai, who says that the answer lies in the fact that cricket gave different groups the opportunity to experiment with the 'means of modernity'.¹⁰⁰ This, he clarifies elsewhere, does not mean the 'bottomless hunger in the Asian world for things western'.¹⁰¹ Instead, it is the appropriation by indigenous people of various social, cultural, economic, and organizational traits that afford them the prospect of a better association with 'modernity'. In this understanding, cricket fulfilled certain aspirations towards a more global and Western outlook among the Indian masses, and allowed them to locate themselves in a sphere where they would get recognition.

The broader implications of this process are, as Maguire points out, 'diminishing contrasts between cultures but also the increasing variety of cultures that ... has fostered forms of cosmopolitan consciousness'.¹⁰² Increasing trade, migration, and changes in technology have led to an increasing awareness of other cultures. Additionally, the standardization in the control of cultural forms such as music and sport in the late capitalist moment with the rise of transnational media has also contributed to a relative homogenization of culture. The similarity of global culture, however, does not mean the diminishing of parochial identities. As we have seen in the case of cricket, an essentially Western cultural form is used to assert ethnic and national identities. This, once again, indicates that globalization processes do not necessarily mean that the relevance of local identities and practices disappears. In the face of homogenization and standardization, as well as transnational control, of cultural forms, local identities reassert themselves within this framework by adding symbolism to such forms.

Lastly, cricket serves as an early example of a game that has been successfully 'decolonized' and appropriated by the non-Western nations to the extent that they now control its power structures. This pattern may be replicated in other sports as transnational

99 Miller et al., *Globalization and sport*, p. 14. Benjamin Barber is mentioned as the provenance of the term 'between global commerce and parochial ethnicity'.

100 Appadurai, *Modernity*, p. 113.

101 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

102 Maguire, *Global sport*, pp. 211–12.

cultural flows have made sports more accessible in non-Western countries. This is not, of course, a self-evident process, and requires a high degree of entrepreneurship from local sports bodies to realize the potential. However, global processes have ensured that in the sports business developed countries no longer call all the shots. With a little more organization, better playing facilities, and an increase in standards, Chinese basketball, Mexican baseball, or Southeast Asian football could become bigger than their Western counterparts.

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