

GOVT. OF INDIA RNI NO.: UPBIL/2015/62096

UGC Approved Care Listed Journal

ISSN
2229-3620

SIG



SHODH SANCHAR

Bulletin

An International
Multidisciplinary
Quarterly Bilingual
Peer Reviewed
Refereed
Research Journal

Vol. 11

Issue 41

January to March 2021

Editor in Chief

Dr. Vinay Kumar Sharma

D. Litt. - Gold Medalist



sanchar
Educational & Research Foundation

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'CRIQUET' TO CRICKET: A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY ON THE GAME FROM HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Cricket the most popular game playing across the world in the present day was originally a pastime sport in the villages of England. It was mostly the outcome of a socio-economic culture that emerged in England during the 18th c. This newly emerged social structure mainly helped in the sportization of cricket.

Keywords: Club Ball, Cricket, Kent, Sussex, Landed Gentry, Aristocracy, Amateurs.

Introduction

Ball games are always analogous to pandemics, visible all over the world from time immemorial. Club ball is considered as the generic precursor of all the ball games. Among the modern ball games, cricket is considered as the off spring of club ball while others can claim only a distant relationship. Cricket which is widely acclaimed as the 'Manly and Noble game' ever played sprouted in England and it became their National game in the 18th century. The stature of the game began to grow globally in the 19th and 20th centuries. Thought Emerged purely as a village game, the socio-economic situation of England during the 18th century provided an environment to the growth and development of cricket. Not with standing thecrises and criticisms faced during the embryonic stage, cricket emerged as the noble stand most popularly played sport. This paper is an attempt to explicate the origin, growth and expansion of Cricket and the sportization of the game. It is believed that all histories are presentist

history, so it is necessary to understand how a game which was played in the villages of England enraptured the sentiments of billions of people all over the world.

Derivation of the word 'Cricket'

There are several versions regarding the etymology of the word 'Cricket'. Its earliest known name was 'creckett'.(Rev.George Swinnock. A M,1672) while a few claim that it was derived from the old French word 'criquet', meaning 'goal, post or stick' or from the Middle Dutch 'kricke', meaning 'stick or staff'.(Daven Hiskey,2010)According to other sources, the derivation emerged from the Anglo-Saxon word 'cricc' meaning a 'shepherd's rod'. (Catherine Chambers, 2009, p.8) The shepherds used the staff as the bat while the ball was made of wool or hide and it was thrown at the gates of sheep pens,which served the role of primitive wickets.(Liam Mc Cann, 2007, p.7) Another version is that, the bat and ball game 'creag'played by the royal family evolved as 'creag-a-wicket' which was shortened

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as cricket. (Liam McCann, 2007, p.7) In 1598, Giovanni Florio in the English version of his Italian Dictionary defined 'squillare' as to make a noise like a cricket orto play cricket a wicket and be merry. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1911) A few years later, Randle Cotgrave's French and English Dictionary translated 'crosse' as inter alia "the crooked staff where with boys play at cricket". (H. S. Altham & A.W. Swanton, 1926, p.20) Dr. Heiner Gillmeister, the European language expert and a specialist in medieval sports, claims that the word cricket was derived from the Middle Dutch phrase for hockey 'met de kirk ket sen' which means with the 'stick chase'. (Roy Case, 2018)

Genesis of the Sport - Cricket

No sport has a more enthralling history than that of cricket. Its long and chequered history has a rich and colourful background. The game from its inception was considered as 'children's game' being played primarily in Sussex, Surrey and Kent. The origin of cricket dates back to the Saxon or Norman times as a game played by children living in Weald, an area of dense woodlands and clearings in south-east England. "..... in the very early days of the game, the Wealden boy living in a world of trees, would find a natural mark for attack and defence in every tree-stump just as Hobbs tells us that the first wicket he himself defended was a lamp post in a Cambridge street". (H S Altham & A W Swanton, 1926, p.27) The dictionary of Cotgrave (French & English Dictionary) published in the 17th c defined cricket as a boys' game. William Dugdale testifies that Oliver Cromwell who was the Protector of England played cricket and football in his childhood and attained fame as a player. Geoff also refers that a game called 'Creag', considered as the forerunner of Cricket, was recorded in the court accounts of 1300. The Royal Wardrobe accounts for 1299-1300 reveals that Prince Edward (Edward II), infamous for his laziness and pleasure seeking attitude, was paid 6 Pounds to

play 'creag' at Westminster and Newenden (Derek Birley, 2013).

Another documented evidence of cricket was the 'Guilford record' of the 16th c. This record was a dispute that came before the court over a piece of land in Guildford in 1598. In the court John Derrick aged 59, had given his testimony stating that he and his school companions used to play cricket in the disputed land during their childhood. (Exploring Surrey's past, 2020) This indicates that cricket was played in the Guildford area between 1540s and 1550s. In the book 'Life and death of Thomas Wilson', reference was made to Cricket. "Maidstone was formerly a very profane town; in so much that I have seen morrice dancing, cudgel playing, stool balls, crickets and many other sports openly and publicly on the Lord's Day". (Rev. George Swinnock A M, 1831 Second Edition, p. 58) The primitive form of cricket probably derived from the popular pastime bowls with a new rule allowing a defender to try and protect the jack by hitting the bowl away. (Liam Mc Cann, 2007, p.7)

Transformation and Crises

From 16th century itself, cricket was popularly regarded as the boys' game and later it enticed the attention of the elite and was established as an organised adult game. An evidence of adult playing cricket was a picture given in a manuscript in the Bodleian library at Oxford depicting one monk bowling a ball to another who is about to strike it with a 'cric' where other monks are in the field. (Geoff Tibballs, 2006) The first recorded reference to cricket being played as an adult sport was in 1611 at Sussex. (Glenn Macias, 2019, p.134)

References show that Edward III, the king of England, had forbidden a game similar to cricket in 1369, 'pila baculorea' or 'club ball' as it was known along with certain other games, during the Anglo-French war to avoid sporting distraction among the youth. (RMSPORTS24, 2019) With the arrival of Puritanism in England in the late 16th c

and early 17th c, assaults on cricket players became a common feature and were frequently victimized. In 1611, two men in Sussex were prosecuted for playing cricket on Sunday instead of going to the Church. (Glenn Macias, 2019, p. 134) Eight players of Sussex were fined for playing the game in 1637 and seven men of Kent were ordered to pay two shillings each for playing cricket. (Gavin Mortimer, 2013, p. 4) This was mainly because Puritanism was tough on recreation and their main aim was to make the people more pious. (Alistair Dougall, 2012) By the end of English civil war, Cromwell clamped down all sports played on the Sabbath Day. By a decree in 1656, Cromwell banned the sport of Krickett and ordered to burn all sticks and balls. (Liam Mc Cann, 2007, p.8) In this situation, many Royalists deserted London and returned to their native places in Kent and Sussex. There they began to play cricket for the first time to break their monotonous life and later took the game to the capital after Restoration.

A turning point in the history of cricket in England was the Restoration of Monarchy with Charles II as the King. He reinstated all sorts of sports and games including cricket. A Gambling Act was passed in 1664 to limit the amount to be betted on the matches. (Liam McCann, 2007, p.9) In 1696 Freedom of Press was granted and newspapers could for the first time publish detailed account of cricket matches. (Roy Case, 2018) In a year or two it became common in London society to schedule matches and to form clubs. According to cricket historian Altham, "thus was inaugurated the regime of feudal patronage which was to control the destinies of the game for the next centuries or more. (Gavin Mortimer, 2013, p.5) Meaning of cricket changed during this period with the publication of Dr Johnson's Dictionary of English Language.

Socio- Economic Background of the Development of Cricket

The transformed adult game was adopted by the aristocracy after witnessing the tenants and

servants of their estates playing. The aristocracy had both the time and money to stage matches. (Williams, 1991) The nature of the English society can be traced from the organisation of cricket. The affluent class played for pleasure and were called 'amateurs' and 'gentlemen' whereas the poor who played were termed as 'professionals'. Cricket laws were framed by amateurs and they always tended to be the batsmen whereas professionals remained as bowlers. This was the context of attributing prioritised benefits for the batsmen in cricket laws. The social superiority of the gentlemen had equally impacted on the captaincy of the sport - batsman always possessed the priority to become the captain. The resolution of gambling and the avoidance of crowd disorder were the reasons for the involvement of the amateurs in establishing laws. Another reason was to clarify their outcomes of bets which were symptoms of status rivalry. (Dominic Malcolm, 2013, p. 21)

Several theories exist regarding the socio-economic background for the development of cricket in England. Some argue that Britain became the first sporting nation merely because of industrialisation. But Dunning and Sheard refuted this by arguing that it was the emergence of a society where the middle classes were able to maintain a degree of independence from the state which gave them much more freedom than their European counterpart in their leisure choices. There was a mutual accommodation of this powerful middle class and the landed aristocracy of the age which became the principal structural force behind the patronage to sports. (Williams, 1991) Jürgen Habermas argues that there exist two important features for the newly developed social structure. One, as the emergence of a Bourgeois public sphere from 17th c onwards in which individuals are free to mingle as social equals and the other as the role of associativity. (Stefan Szymanski, 2008, p.2) This newly emerged social structure was the main supportive factor for the development of sports in England based on the above theories.

The appropriation of cricket by the aristocracy around the start of the 18thc shaped a new era in the development of games. Their growing involvement initiated a fundamental shift in cricket's social and cultural dynamics which altered general perception of the game. The increasing aristocratic interest in cricket formed a healthy structure of recreation. The patronage of popular sports and entertainments played important roles in reinforcing the relationship that underlies the 18th c social structure of Britain. Members of aristocracy often staged lavish events which aimed to attract a wide audience in order to court popularity and emphasise the importance of a common English culture that crossed class division. (Antony & Hill, 2011, p. 28) Amateurs advertised their matches because cricketing success enhanced their social status. (Dominic Malcolm, 2013, p. 21)

Development of the Game

The first recorded eleven-a-side match was played at Sussex in 1697 for the high stake of 50 guineas. In 1709, Kent and Surrey played the first inter-county match in which the teams used county names for the first time. (ICC, 2020, p. 1) The 18th c acted as a spring board for the growth and development of modern cricket because most of the earlier vicissitudes in cricket happened between 1760s and 1770s. The Surrey gentlemen proved to be the prime movers in the introduction of new laws of cricket. (Duncan Stone, 2008, p. 506) The first cricket laws were framed in 1744 instructing the length and width of the pitches, bowling crease, wicket and also regarding the weight of the ball. (Knowledge Universe Online, 2020)

The oldest cricket bat dated back to 1729 resembled a hockey stick. The bowler bowled underarm and aimed to get the ball through the wicket which was just two stumps and a crosspiece. (Ian Mortimer, 2017) During the period, the ball was not pitched and the change over to the pitched delivery came about in 1760s. Underarm delivery continued but they pitched the

ball towards the wicket through the air. This method of bowling led to the invention of straight bat which in turn led to round arm and overarm style of bowling. (Roy Case, 2018) Though there was earlier reference to change of bowling action it was John Willes of Kent who tried out the possibilities of round arm bowling in several matches for which he incurred a lot of criticisms. Later in 1835, round arm bowling was legalised (Geoff Tibballs, 2006).

Permanent addition of two important laws in cricket i.e. maximum width of the cricket bat and the introduction of the third / middle stump in the wicket was made in the year 1771 and 1775 respectively. Following the wide bat controversy, the bat width was restricted to 4¼ inches and the realisation that balls could pass through two stumps led to the innovation of the third stump. (Abhishek Mukherjee, 2020) In 1774, laws for LBW were framed. In 1788, MCC revised the Laws of Cricket and became the custodian thereafter.

Formation of the Clubs

The earliest cricket club in England was the Dartford club formed in 1727. Later Hambledon grew into prominence when they played a series of three matches against Dartford. Hambledon was often regarded as Squire Lands Club after Squire Thomas Land who was the principal organiser of the cricket team in the village prior to the formation of the club. In spite of the rural location Hambledon developed as a private club by incorporating the membership of nobles and landed gentry for whom the main attraction was the potential of the game presented for gambling. (Roy Case, 2018) It was with Hambledon cricket that the game assumed today's adept and precise character.

The Marylebone Cricket Club universally branded as MCC was formed in 1787 and played at White Conduit Fields. Later they moved to the Lord's Cricket Ground in St. Marylebone borough.

In 1788, they introduced the first revised code of laws. In 1814, they moved to St. John's Wood ground and Lord's became the headquarters of world cricket. (Marcus: Britannica)

Path to Globalisation

By 19th c, the English cricket efficaciously dispersed to almost all countries which had her colonial ties. Cricket began spreading to other countries when British soldiers and settlers brought it with them to the various colonies of the empire. (Jason & Orlando, 2005, p. 83) Cricket was considered as the umbilical cord of the Empire linking the mother country with her children. The game was deliberately "exported" to the British colonies as part of their colonial policy. The sport was considered the main channel for transmitting the suitable British moral code from the messengers of empire to the local populations. (Jason & Orlando, 2005)

The first global match was played in New York in 1844 between Canada and the United States. England played their first transnational match against Australia in 1877 resulting in the sports' oldest contention. The stage was set when England lost to Australia in 1882. A mock obituary was written for English cricket and two Melbourne ladies burnt a bail and the ash was presented to the English cricket captain in an urn. Thus began the much celebrated 'Ashes series', the game's longest running saga as the two sides play off every two years for the astonishing urn. The International Cricket Council which is the world governing body of cricket was founded at the Imperial Cricket Conference in 1909 with representatives from Australia, England and South Africa. (Lissori, 2012) Thus with the formation of ICC cricket became a popular and universal game.

Conclusion

A sport is a reflection of the contemporary society which reveals their way of life and social responsibilities. The paper attempts to trace the outcome of the trajectories of the sport cricket

from its bygone ages to the contemporary period. Cricket as a team sport is taught in England to inculcate values of discipline, hierarchy, skills, code of honours and leadership qualities among the boys. The rural character of cricket is explicit even today from the features of the ground, materials used for making the main equipment for playing, the prolonged duration of play, the dominant character of the batsman and the framing of the first laws. The present universal acceptance of the game is due to the fact that it was materialized in such a clear and comprehensible form which could easily be communicated before equally organised games.

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