



Sports: Nationalism and Commerce

- Do you like to play games?
- What games do you play?
- Which game do you like the most?
- Think of some sports in which only girls or only boys participate.
- Are some games played only in the villages?
- Are some games played only by very rich people?

Why do you play?

Put a (✓) if you agree with the reason given. Put (×) if you disagree. If you find other reasons, add them to the list.

Playing games is easy	
It is fun to play games	
Parents, teachers and friends appreciate it	
Games are challenging	
Games keep the body healthy	
Lot of scope to imitate their favourites like Sachin, Sania etc.	
Games are easier than studies	
Appear on the television	
No written tests and examinations in games	
Win medals in international games	
To bring glory to the country	
Win name, money and fame	

Collect the views of all the students in the class and find out which reason is considered most important.

We play games for a variety of reasons. But what games we play and watch is also deeply influenced by what is going on in the society. Take the example of cricket. It was a game played by villagers of England in open fields of their village just like our villagers play *kabaddi*. However, today it is played all over India, in villages and

towns. Especially, the youth have developed a craze and devotion for the game. People spare their valuable time to watch the match on television. There are some people who offer prayers for the victory of their favourite team. Cricket has gained such popularity that the other games like hockey, football and traditional games like

kabbadi, *khokho* lack the support, encouragement and enthusiasm from the people. What could be the reason for this? Why do you think has a game, which played in the villages of England has assumed such popularity in our country? Let us find out more about this.

Cricket was invented in England. By the end of the 19th century, it had become a game of ‘gentlemen’, that is the rich men lots of land the game required and to play on. The game was expected to represent all that the English valued – fair play, discipline, gentlemanly attitude. It was introduced in schools as a part of a wider programme of physical training through which boys were to be moulded into ideal citizens. Girls were not supposed to play the games meant for boys.

Unlike other team games of England like football or hockey, which became popular all over the world, cricket took root only in countries that the British ruled. In these colonies, cricket was established as a popular sport either by white settlers (as in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Australia, New Zealand, the West Indies and Kenya) or by local elites who wanted to copy the habits of their colonial masters, as in India.

- Locate the cricket playing nations in your atlas.
- Did you notice that there is no single country called West Indies? Identify one of these islands that has the best athletes in running _____

Cricket in India

Cricket fans know that watching a match involves taking sides. In a Ranji Trophy match, when Delhi plays against Mumbai, the loyalty of spectators depends on which city they come from or support. When India plays against Australia, the spectators watching the match on television in Hyderabad or Chennai feel involved as Indians – they are moved by nationalist loyalties. But through the early history of Indian first class cricket, teams were not organised on geographical principles. It was not until 1932 that a national team was given the right to represent India in a Test match. So how were teams organised and in the absence of regional or national teams, how did cricket fans choose sides? We turn to history for answers, to discover how cricket in India developed and to get a sense of the loyalties that united and divided Indians in the days of the Raj.

The origins of Indian cricket, that is, cricket played by Indians are to be found in Bombay and the first Indian community to start playing the game was the small community of Parsis. Brought into close contact with the British because of their interest in trade and the first Indian community to westernise, the Parsis founded the first Indian cricket club, the Oriental Cricket Club in Bombay in 1848. Parsi clubs were funded and sponsored by Parsi businessmen like the Tatas and the Wadias. The white cricket elite in India offered no help to the enthusiastic Parsis. In fact, there was a quarrel between the Bombay Gymkhana, a whites-only club, and

Parsi cricketers over the use of a public park.

When it became clear that the colonial authorities were prejudiced in favour of Englishmen, the Parsis built their own gymkhana to play cricket in. The rivalry between the Parsis and the racist Bombay Gymkhana had a happy ending for these pioneers of Indian cricket. A Parsi team beat the Bombay Gymkhana at cricket in 1889, just four years after the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885.

The establishment of the Parsi Gymkhana became a **precedent** for other Indians who in turn established clubs based on the idea of religious community. By the

1890s, Hindus and Muslims were busy gathering funds and support for a Hindu Gymkhana and an Islam Gymkhana. This history of gymkhana cricket led to first class cricket being organised on communal and racial lines. The teams that played colonial India's greatest and most famous first class cricket tournament did not represent regions, as teams in today's Ranji Trophy currently do, but represented religious communities. The tournament was called the Pentangular, because it was played by five teams: the Europeans, the Parsis, the Hindus, the Muslims and Others. By the late 1930s and early 1940s, journalists, cricketers and political leaders

Mahatma Gandhi and colonial sports

Mahatma Gandhi believed that a sport was essential for a balance between the body and the mind. However, he often emphasised that games like cricket and hockey were imported into India by the British and were replacing traditional games. They showed a colonial mindset and were a less effective education than the simple exercise of those who worked on the land.

'I should, however, be exceedingly surprised and even painfully surprised, if I were told your boys were devoid of all game. If you have national games, I would urge upon you that yours is an institution that should lead in reviving old games. I know that we have in India many indigenous games just as interesting and exciting as they are inexpensive, because the cost is practically next to nothing.'

Speech at Mahindra College, 24 November 1927, The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi.

'A sound body means one which bends itself to the spirit and is always a ready instrument at its service. Such bodies are not made, in my opinion, on the football field. They are made on cornfield and farms. I would urge you to think this over and you will find innumerable illustrations to prove my statements. Our colonial-born Indians are carried away with this football and cricket mania. These games may have their place under certain circumstances... Why do we not take the simple fact into consideration that the vast majority of mankind who are vigorous in body and mind are simple agriculturists and that they are strangers to these games...?'

Letter to Lazarus, 17 April 1915, The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol.14.

had begun to criticise the racial and communal foundations of the Pentangular tournament.

- What has been the relationship between the cricket and the idea of developing western culture?

Modern cricket is dominated by Tests and one-day internationals, played between national teams. The players who become

famous, who live in the memories of cricket fans, are those who have played for their country. India entered the world of Test cricket in 1932, a decade and a half before it became an independent nation. This was possible because test cricket, from its origins in 1877, was organised as a contest between different parts of the British empire and not sovereign nations.

Playing cricket also became a way of claiming equality with the colonial rulers and challenging them.

Transformation of Cricket

The 1970s was the decade in which cricket was transformed: it was a time when a traditional game evolved to fit a changing world. If 1970 was notable for the exclusion of South Africa from international cricket, 1971 was a landmark year because the first one-day international was played between England and Australia in Melbourne. The enormous popularity of this shortened version of the game led to the first World Cup being successfully staged in 1975. Then in 1977, even as cricket celebrated 100 years of test matches, the game was changed forever, not by a player or cricket administrator, but by a businessman. Kerry Packer, an Australian television tycoon who saw the moneymaking potential of cricket as a televised sport, signed up fifty-one of the world's leading cricketers against the wishes of the national cricket boards and for about two years staged unofficial Tests and One-Day internationals under the name of World Series Cricket. Packer's 'cir-



There are different sports equipments to play games as you can see here. You may notice that they are of very different quality than the one's available in your local market. Do you think such equipments will be affordable for children to play for fun as against professional adults playing game for making money?

cus', as it was then described, folded up after two years. But the innovations he introduced during this time to make cricket more attractive to television audiences endured and changed the nature of the game.

Coloured dress, protective helmets, field restrictions, cricket under lights became a standard part of the post-Packer game. Crucially, Packer drove home the lesson that cricket was a marketable game, which could generate huge revenues. Cricket boards became rich by selling television rights to television companies. Television channels made money by selling television spots to companies who were happy to pay large sums of money to advertise their products to cricket's captive television audience. Continuous television coverage turned cricketers into celebrities who, besides being paid better by their cricket boards, now made even larger sums of money by making commercials for a wide range of products, from tyres to colas. Television coverage changed cricket. It expanded the spectators for the game by bringing cricket into small towns and villages. It also broadened cricket's social base. Children who had previously never had the chance to watch international cricket because they lived outside the big cities, could now watch and learn by imitating their heroes. The technology of satellite television and the world wide reach of multinational television companies created a global market for cricket.

- List the changes that occurred with end of the dominance of Test cricket.

Commerce, Media and Cricket Today

Matches in Sydney could now be watched live in Surat. This simple fact shifted the balance of power in cricket: a process that had begun by the break-up of the British Empire was taken to its logical conclusion by globalisation. Since India had the largest viewership for the game amongst the cricket-playing nations and the largest market in the cricketing world, the game's centre of gravity shifted to South Asia. This shift was symbolised by the shifting of the ICC headquarters from London to tax-free Dubai.

A more important sign that the centre of gravity in cricket had shifted away from the old, Anglo-Australian axis is that innovations in cricket technique in recent years have mainly come from the practice of subcontinental teams in countries like India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Pakistan has pioneered two great advances in bowling: the '*doosra*' and the 'reverse swing'. Both the skills were developed in response to subcontinental conditions: the *doosra* to counter aggressive batsmen with heavy modern bats who were threatening to make finger-spin obsolete and 'reverse swing' to move the ball in on dusty, unresponsive wickets under clear skies. Initially, both innovations were greeted with great suspicion by countries like Britain and Australia which saw them as an underhanded, illegal bending of the laws of cricket. In time, it came to be accepted that the laws of cricket could not continue to be framed for British or Australian

conditions of play, and they became part of the technique of all bowlers, everywhere in the world.

One hundred and fifty years ago, the first Indian cricketers, the Parsis, had to struggle to find an open space to play in. Today, the global marketplace has made Indian players the best-paid, most famous and for whom the world is a stage. The history that brought about this transformation was made up of many smaller changes: the replacement of the gentlemanly amateur by the paid professional, the triumph of the one-day game and twenty-twenty as it over-

shadowed Test cricket in terms of popularity, and the remarkable changes in global commerce and technology. The business of history is to make sense of change over time. In this chapter, we have followed the spread of a colonial sport through its history, and tried to understand how it adapted to a post-colonial world.

- After thinking about cricket for sometime, Vinayak listed a few words that are only in English language – ‘boundary’, ‘over’, ‘wicket’. Can you explain to him why there are no Telugu words for it?

Interview with G H Vihari, under 19 World Cup Indian Cricket Team Member from erstwhile Andhra Pradesh

Q. Share your feelings that you experienced when our team beat Australia in the World Cup Final.

A. [with a smile]... a scintillating performance by us. It was thrilling you know..., defeating kangaroos in their home ground is a daunting task. The win is a feather in our cap.

Q. Why do you think the game of cricket is gaining importance in India?

A. In our country there is a lot of craze and lot of opportunities. You see children playing in the *gallies* (streets) in India. It is a game of feasibility... People love to watch their players performing best. In India after the victory in World Cup 1983 more or less there is consistency in the performance level... Now we won 2011 World Cup and now under 19 World Cup... many outstanding performances like these will follow... consequently there would be importance...

Q. Don't you think this game of cricket is surpassing the other games like *kabbadi*, *khokho*, *hockey* etc.?

A. Yeah to some extent. But it is necessary to give encouragement to other games also. I feel sorry over the lack of funds in hockey... Sponsors should come forward. People and the govt. should look into this.

Q. How do you think sports promote nationalism?

A. Yeah I think sports and nationalism are intertwined. Sports and games flourish when there is encouragement, support from the people who watch them. Encouraging

the players is a trend in sports arena now. The underlying principle is... unity and industry

Sports promote unity which is a salient feature in nation building... Representing a nation is a nationalistic feeling.

Q. Why is there much commercial support for cricket than other games?

A. Television, media, sponsors are the factors for this. Other games need to be given publicity and encouragement.

Q. Do you see this game as a career or entertainment only?

A. mmmm... upto my middle school I enjoyed it, now I see it as a profession. I would like to win laurels to my country through this...

Q. Is cricket overshadowing other games?

A. Many people believe that too much significance is being given to cricket in our country. Companies sponsor the game and Sports channels broadcast the matches live. But this is not happening in case of other games. Consequently traditional games like *kabbadi*, *khokho*, chess are losing their prominence. To excel in certain game a player must have perseverance, dedication and hard work. Miracles never work. Sheer determination alone pays the reward.

Other popular games and their status

Hockey is another popular game in India. Indian team had won many competitions even during the colonial rule. Till 1980's, India was able to dominate the international Hockey games. However, there has been a decline in the last decades. Unlike Cricket, games like Hockey do not get equal amount of media attention or commercial support. *Kabbadi* is another traditional popular game in India. However, it was only about 10 years ago that it began to be played on the international level. India has been successful in it. In many other games, like Archery, Badminton, Boxing, Weightlifting, Chess, Tennis etc. too, Indian players have won many medals in international competitions.

However, we have not been very successful in athletics, or other inter-

nationally popular games like Football, Volleyball, Basketball etc. Nor do we find many of our popular children's games, as in the following pictures, being played by adults! Have you played any of them? Can you describe the rules about it? Why do you think adults don't play such games?



Sports develop us mentally and physically. The government initiates various programmes for encouraging the children by recognizing their talent and interests at the school level. The government organises coaching classes to

develop sports. For this, under the Ministry of Human Resources Development, the Department of Sports and Games trains the children to show their performance on the international platform. The skilled children are chosen and provided special training through sports councils. The government conducts Mandal, Division, District, State, Zonal and National level competitions. The winners are awarded with prizes and special coaches are appointed for their empowerment. These competitions are not organized for commercial purposes. They develop the cult towards sports and games as well as international understanding, cultural development and universal brotherhood. Sports promote national integration in India, a multi cultural country.



Keywords

1. Colonial Sport
2. Global Commerce
3. Nationalism
4. Sponsors

Improve your learning

1. Correct the false statements:
 - Colonial rulers promoted Cricket to be played between nations that were under their power.
 - People adopted the game of cricket to become westernised.
 - Indian villagers played cricket.
 - Cricket was introduced in schools to teach good manners.
2. Write a short note on Gandhiji's views on other sports and cricket.
3. Give brief explanations for the following.
 - The Parsis were the first Indian community to set up a cricket club in India.
 - The significance of the shift of the ICC headquarters from London to Dubai.
4. Find out the history of any one local sport. Ask your parents or grandparents about how this game was played in their childhood. Find out whether it is played in the same way now. Try and think of the historical forces that might account for the changes.
5. How have advances in technology, especially television technology, influenced the development of contemporary cricket?
6. Prepare a pamphlet on the consequences of commercialisation of cricket.
7. Point out any five cricket playing countries on the world map.



Debate: Does a Nation's prestige increase by sports? Conduct a debate.

Project: Collect information about any game. Write the history of the game in the form of a report.