

# History and Sport: The Story of Cricket

## **The Story Of Cricket**

Cricket was invented in England and became intimately linked to the culture of 19th century-Victorian society. The game was expected to represent all that England valued; fair play, discipline and gentlemanliness. With the British, cricket spread to the colonies. It was supposed to uphold the values of Englishness also. The colonial masters assumed that only they could play the game as it ought to be played in its spirit.

The game of cricket thus got linked up closely with the politics of colonialism and nationalism. Within the colonies of the British, the game had a complex history. It was connected to the politics of caste and religion, community and nation. The emergence of cricket as a national game was the result of many decades of historical development.

Cricket grew out of the many stick-and-ball games played in England 500 years ago, under a variety of different rules. The word 'bat' is an old English word that simply means stick or club.

By the 17th century, cricket had evolved enough to be recognisable as a distinct game. Till the middle of the 18th century, bats were roughly the same shape as hockey sticks, curving outwards at the bottom. There was a simple reason for this, the ball was bowled underarm, along the ground so the curve at the end of the bat gave the batsman the best chance of making contact.

## **The Historical Development Of Cricket As A Game In England**

The social and economic history of England in the 18th and 19th centuries shaped the game and gave it a unique nature. For instance, a Test match of cricket can go on for five days and still end in a draw. No other modern team sport takes even half as much time to complete.

The length of the pitch is specified i.e. 22 yards but, the size and shape of the ground is not specified. Grounds can be oval, like Adelaide, or nearly circular, like Chepauk in Chennai. A six at the Melbourne Cricket Ground needs to clear much more ground than a Feroz Shah Kotla in Delhi. Both these strange aspects consist a historical reason.

## **Laws of Cricket**

The first written Laws of Cricket were drawn up in 1774. These laws stated that 'the principals shall choose the gentlemen from amongst present two umpires who shall, absolutely decide all disputes. The stumps must be 22 inches high and bail across them 6 inches. The ball must be between 5 to 6 ounces and the two sets of stumps should be 22 yards apart'. There was no limits on the shape or size of the bat.

Changes in Cricket Laws by Marylebone Cricket Club.

The world's first cricket club was formed in Hambledon in 1760s and the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) was founded in 1787. In 1788, MCC published the first revision of the laws and became the guardian of cricket's regulations.

The MCC revision of the laws brought in a series of changes in the game that occurred in the second half of the 18th century. During the 1760s and 1770s, it became common to pitch the ball through the air, rather than roll it along the ground. It opened new possibilities for pace, spin and swing for the bowlers.

The weight of the ball was limited between 5-10 ounces and the width of the bat to 4 inches. In 1774, the first leg-before law was published and three days had become the length of a major match.

### **Changes in Cricket During 19th Century**

Many important changes occurred during the 19th century. They were

- The rule about wide balls was applied
- The exact circumference of the ball was specified
- Protective equipment like pads and gloves became available
- Boundaries were introduced. Previously all shots had to be run
- Over-arm bowling became illegal.

### **Cricket as a Reflection of Past and Present**

The game of cricket matured during the early phase of the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century. This history has made cricket a game with characteristics of both past and present. Cricket's connection with a rural past can be seen in the length of a Test match and the uncertainty about the size of a cricket ground. Even after boundaries were written into the laws of cricket, their distance from the wicket was not specified. Originally, cricket matches did not have time limit.

Modern factory work meant that people were paid by the hour or the day or the week. That's why games like football and hockey were strictly time-limited so that time should be limited to fit the routines of industrial city life.

### **Technological Changes in Cricket Equipments**

The cricket has changed with changing time and it also remained true to its origins in rural England. Cricket's most important tools like bat, ball, stumps, bails all are made of natural, pre-industrial materials. The material of bat changed slightly over time. But cricket has refused to make its tools with man-made materials, like, plastic, fibre glass, metal, etc.

In the matter of protective equipment, cricket has been influenced by technological change. The invention of vulcanised rubber led to introduction of pads in 1848 and protective gloves soon afterward. Also, helmets made of metal and synthetic lightweight materials were introduced.

### **Cricket and Victorian England**

The organisation of cricket in England reflected the nature of English society. The rich, who could afford to play it for pleasure, were called amateurs and the poor, who played it for a living, were called professionals. The wages of professionals were paid by patronage or subscription or gate money.

### **Gentlemen and the Players**

The game was seasonal and it did not offer employment for the whole year. Thus, professionals worked as miners or in other forms of working class employment. The social superiority of amateurs was built into the customs of cricket. Amateurs were called Gentlemen, while professionals were called Players. They even entered the playground from different entrances.

Amateurs tended to be batsman, leaving the energetic, hardworking aspect of the game, like fast bowling to the professionals. That is why the laws of the game always gave the benefit to the batsman. Cricket is a batsman's game because its rules were made to favour 'Gentlemen'. The social superiority of the amateur was also the reason that the captain of a cricket team was traditionally a batsman. Captain of teams, whether club teams or national sides were always amateurs. It was not till the 1930s that the English team was led by a professional, the Yorkshire batsman, Len Hutton.

### **Introduction of Cricket to Boys School**

It is often said that the 'Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton'. It means that Britain's military success was based on the values taught to school boys in its public schools. Eton was the most famous of these school. The English boarding school was the institution that trained English boys for careers in the three great institution of imperial England (i.e. the Military, Civil service and the Church).

By the beginning of 19th century, educationist like Thomas Arnold (founder of the modern public school system) saw team sport like, cricket and rugby as not just outdoor game, but as a way of teaching English boys the discipline, the importance of hierarchy, the skills, the codes of conduct and the leadership qualities that helped them to build the British empire properly.

Cricket helped the English Elite by glorifying the amateur ideal, where cricket was played not for victory or profit but for its own sake in the spirit of game.

English ruling class believed that they won the wars due to- the superior characters of its young men, built in boarding schools, playing gentlemanly games like cricket that tipped the balance.

### **Sports for Girls**

Till the end of the 19th century, sports and vigorous exercise for girls were not a part of their education in Britain. Croquet which was a slow-pace, elegant game considered suitable for women, especially of the upper class. By the 1890s, schools

began acquiring playgrounds and allowing girls to play some, of the games which were earlier considered as male games.

### **The Spread Of Cricket**

Some English team games like hockey and football became international games but cricket remained a colonial game. It was only played in the countries that were once had been part of British empire. In the colonies, cricket was established as a popular sport either by white settlers or by local upper classes who wanted to copy their colonial masters. In colonies, playing cricket became a sign of superior social and racial status.

The Afro-Caribbean population of the countries in the West Indies was discouraged from participating in organized club cricket. This remained dominated by white plantation owners and their servants.

The first non-white club in the West Indies was established towards the end of the 19th century and its members were the light-skinned Mulattos. The blacks played informal cricket on beaches, in back alleys and parks.

Cricket became hugely popular in the Caribbean. Success at cricket became a measure of racial equality and political progress. When the West Indies won its First Test Series against England in 1950, it was celebrated as a national achievement.

### **Ironies of the Victory**

#### **The following points state ironies of this victory**

It was a way of demonstrating that West Indians were the equals of white Englishmen.

The winning West Indies team was captained by a white player. The first time a black player, Frank Worrell led the West Indies Test team in 1960.

The West Indies cricket team represented not one nation but several dominions that later became independent countries.

### **Cricket, Race, and Religion**

In colonial India, cricket was organised on the principle of race and religion. The first record of cricket being played in India is 1721. It was played as a recreational sport by English sailors in Cambay.

The first Indian club, the Calcutta Cricket Club was established in 1792. Through the 18th century, cricket in India was only played by British military men and civil servants in all white clubs and gymkhanas.

The first Indian community to start playing the game was the small community of Zoroastrians, the Parsis in Bombay.

The Parsis came into close contact with the British because of their interest in trade

and this was the first Indian community to westernize. They founded the first Indian cricket club, the Oriental cricket club in Bombay in 1848.

### **History of Gymkhana Cricket**

Parsi clubs were funded and sponsored by Parsi businessmen like the Tatas and the Wadias. There was a quarrel between the Bombay Gymkhana (a whites-only club) and Parsi cricketers over the use of a public park. So the Parsis built their own gymkhana to play 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. Indian National Congress was an organisation which had early leaders, like the great Parsi statesman and intellectual Dadabhai Naoroji.

The establishment of the Parsi Gymkhana became 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. The 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 tournaments represents religious communities.

### **Quadrangular and Pentangular Tournaments**

The first-class cricket tournament was called the Quadrangular as it was played by four teams, the Europeans, the Parsis, the Hindus and the Muslims. Later, the Quadrangular became the Pentangular when a fifth team, viz the Rest was added. The Rest was comprised of all the communities left over. For example, Vijay Hazare, a Christian, played for the Rest. By the late 1930s and early 1940s, journalists, cricketers and political leaders had begun to criticise the racial and communal foundations of the pentangular tournament.

The distinguished editor of the Bombay Chronicle, S A Brelvi, radio commentator, A F S Talyarkhan and India's most respected political leader like Mahatma Gandhi, were against the Pentangular as a communally divisive competition. It was played at the time when nationalists were trying to unite India.

A rival first-class tournament on regional lines, the National Cricket. Championship (later named the Ranji Trophy), was established but was not able to replace Pentangular tournament. It was present until independence but colonial tournament died with their rule.

### **Caste and Cricket**

Palwankar Baloo was born in Poona in 1875. He was the greatest Indian slow bowler of his time. He played for the Hindus in the Quadrangular tournament. Despite being

their greatest player he was never made captain of the Hindus because he was born as a Dalit.

His younger brother, Vithal was a batsman. He became captain of the Hindus in 1923 and led the team to a famous victory against the Europeans.

'The Hindus' brilliant victory was due more to the judicious and bold step of the Hindu Gymkhana in appointing Mr Vithal as a captain of the Hindu team. The moral that can be safely drawn from the Hindus' magnificent victory is that removal of Untouchability would lead to swaraj, which is the prophecy of Mahatma Gandhi.

### **The Modern Transformation Of The Game**

Tests and One-day Internationals (ODIs), played between national teams dominate modern cricket. The players who become famous, who live on in the memories of cricket's public, are those who have played for their country. The players are remembered by Indian fans from the era of the Pentangular and the Quadrangular tournaments.

CK Nayudu is popularly remembered as an outstanding Indian batsman. He became India's first Test Captain and played for India in its first test match against England in 1932.

### **The entry of Indians to Test Cricket**

India entered the world of Test cricket in 1932. This was possible because Test cricket from its origins in 1877 was organised as a contest between different parts of the British empire, not sovereign nations.

The first Test was played between England and Australia when Australia was still a white settler colony, not even a self-governing dominion. Similarly, the small countries of the Caribbean that together make up the West Indies team were British colonies after the Second World War.

### **Mahatma Gandhi and Colonial Sport**

Mahatma Gandhi believed that sport was essential for creating a balance between the body and the mind. He often emphasised that games like cricket and hockey were imported into India by the colonial masters and were replacing our traditional games.

Games like cricket, hockey, football, and tennis were expensive games, so these were meant for the privileged only. Gandhiji suggested that these games showed a colonial mindset and were a less effective education than the simple exercise of those who worked on the land.

### **Decolonization and Sport**

Decolonization is the process through which different parts of European empires became independent nations. It began with the independence of India in 1947 and

continued for the next half of century. This process led to the decline of British influence in trade, commerce, military affairs, international politics and sports matter.

Even after the disappearance of the British colonies, the regulation of international cricket remained the business of the Imperial Cricket Conference (ICC). In 1965, the ICC renamed the International Cricket Conference. But it was dominated by its foundation members, England and Australia which had the veto power. After 1989, the privileged position of England and Australia was taken away.

The colonial flavour of world cricket during 1950s and 1960s can be seen from the fact that England, Australia and New Zealand continued to play Test cricket with South Africa, a racist state where a policy of racial segregation is practiced. Test-playing nations like India, Pakistan and the West Indies boycotted South Africa. English cricket authorities canceled a tour by South Africa only in 1970 after the increasing political pressure to boycott the racist state.

### **Commerce, Media And Cricket Today**

The 1970s was the decade, in which cricket was transformed. It was notable for the exclusion of 'Racist' South Africa from international cricket. Year 1971 was a landmark year because the first One-Day International was played between England and Australia in Melbourne. In 1975, the first World Cup was staged successfully. In 1977, cricket was changed forever by a businessman.

### **World Series Cricket**

Kerry Packer, an Australian television tycoon saw the money-making potential of cricket as a televised sport. He signed up fifty-one of the world's leading cricketers against the wishes of the National Cricket Board and for about two years staged unofficial Tests and one-day internationals under the name of World Series Cricket. It was described as Packer's circus.

Kerry Packer made cricket more attractive to television audiences which changed the nature of the game. Coloured dress, protective helmets, field restrictions, cricket under lights, became a standard part of the post-Packer game. Packer gave the lesson that cricket was a marketable game, which could generate huge revenue. Cricket boards became rich by selling television rights to television companies.

### **Television and Expansion of Cricket**

Television channels made money by selling sports to television companies. The continuous television coverage made cricketers celebrities. The cricketers made larger sums of money by making commercials for wide range of products, from types to Colas, on television.

Television coverage changed cricket. It expanded the audience for the game by beaming cricket into small towns and villages. The technology of satellite television

and the worldwide reach of multi-national television companies created a global market for cricket.

Since India had the largest viewership and market for the game, the game's center of gravity shifted to South Asia. This shift was symbolized by the shifting of the International Cricket Council (ICC) headquarters from London to tax-free Dubai. The center of gravity in cricket has shifted away from the old Anglo-Australian axis to subcontinental teams like India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

### **Conclusion**

One hundred and fifty years ago, the Parsis, the first Indian cricketers struggled for an open space to play cricket. Today, Indian players are the best-paid, most famous cricketers in the game. The factors behind this transformation are the replacement of the gentlemanly amateur by the paid professional, the triumph of the one-day game in place of Test cricket and the remarkable changes in global commerce and technology. In this way a colonial sport became the most popular game in our country.

Cricket was invented in England and it was assumed that the game ought to be played in its true spirit. Hence, it was linked up closely with politics of colonialism and nationalism, caste, religion and community.

Cricket had evolved as a different game by 17th century. Ball was bowled underarm and till middle of the 18th century bats were of same shape as hockey sticks.

Cricket was shaped by the social and economic history of England in the 18th and 19th century.

Length of the pitch is specified as 22 yards; but shape and size of the ground is not fixed.

The laws of cricket were codified in 1774. Stumps 22 inches high, bail 6 inches, ball 5 to 6 ounces but shape or size of bat not specified.

Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) was founded in 1787. In 1788 it published the first revision of the laws and became the guardian of cricket's regulations.

Cricket as a game is connected with both past and present. The past is reflected in the length of cricket match, size of cricket grounds, no time limit etc.

The organization of cricket in England reflected the nature of English society. The rich played for pleasure and were called amateurs and the poor played for living were called professionals.



Amateurs were called gentlemen while professionals were called players. Amateurs were batsman hence rules of cricket were in favor of Batsman.

Educationist like Thomas Arnold saw sports like cricket, rugby as not just outdoor game but as source of discipline, skills, code of conduct and leadership quality.

Girls were only allowed to play slow pace and elegant game until 1890, after which they played games earlier considered as male games.

The cricket remained a colonial game, as playing cricket became a superior social and racial status. The Afro-Caribbean population discouraged from participating in organised club cricket.

Cricket became so popular in Caribbean that success in cricket became a measure of racial equality and political progress.

Cricket was organised on the principle of race and religion. The Calcutta Cricket Club was first Indian club established in 1792. The Oriental Cricket Club, established by Parsis in 1848, was the first Indian Cricket Club.

The Parsis team beat the Bombay Gymkhana in 1889.

The first class cricket tournament was called Quadrangular (Europeans, Parsis, Muslims and Hindus), later it became Pentangular when a fifth team Rest was added.

The division of cricket tournament was condemned by respected leaders including Mahatma Gandhi, for being communally divisive.

Modern cricket is dominated by test and One Day Internationals.

India played first test match against England in 1932.

The impact of decolonisation process was also reflected in cricket as after 1989 privileged position of England and Australia was scrapped.

South Africa was excluded from international cricket because of prevailing racialism.

First International One Day match was played between England and Australia in 1971 at Melbourne.

Kerry Packer realised the money making .potential of cricket, as a televised sport and made it more. popular and attractive with coloured dress, protective helmets, crickets under light, etc!

The technology of satellite television created a global market for cricket.

Since India had the longest viewership, the game center of gravity shifted to South Asia.

International Cricket Council (ICC) headquarters shifted from London to Dubai.

Colonial sport cricket became the most popular game in our country.