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THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS ON THE STATUS OF HOCKEY IN INDIA*Shilu Singh**Assistant Professor. Physical Education
M.S.K.G. College, Karnal, Haryana, India***Abstract**

This Paper represents the lack of interest in Indian hockey in present era. Author has discussed all the foremost reasons behind the lack of interest in spite being national name. In the proposed paper causes and effects to downfall of Indian Hockey is cited. Author has illustrated the comparison of cricket and hockey. Author also mentioned the needs of the Indian Hockey to regain its reputation and position in the hearts of Indian population.

Introduction

There was a time when holey in India was quite a popular game. The people used to gather round their radios and transistors when our there was a hockey commentary of the Olympics matches or Asiad in the seventies and eighties. But this craze was limited to only the international matches and especially when India and Pakistan were pitted against each other.

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Then the game of hockey lost its charm when the other European and Asian countries pulled us down. We could not face even the Australian team. Then came the Cricket world cup in 1983 and Kapil Dev became a very famous all rounder. The Indian cricket became quite popular then onwards. Moreover, the cricket matches were played quite frequently. First it was the test matches, then came the one day internationals and finally the twenty – 20s. A novelty was introduced from time to time. Hockey, however remained the same old 70 minutes game. Cricket commentary became more entertaining first on radios and then on TVs. The cricket game got a lot financial support from the advertisers and kept on getting popular day by day.

Well, if asked some Indians about what they thought was the National Sport of India his answer would most probably be Cricket. Even though most people will agree but, the truth is the National Sport of India actually is Field Hockey. The thing is actually the hockey team deserves little better treatment and higher praise than cricket. But, do we treat both games equally in India and do we have any special attachment for our national game? Even though Hockey is the national sport of India, and its glorious days, but how Cricket has become the so called national sport of India. Also, we Indians get angry at the slightest insult to our national flag, national anthem; why not care for the national sport then? ("Chak de India-Hockey vs. Cricket."). Our intention towards writing this article is not to say that Indians don't know about their country. Instead my purpose is to refer to the part of population who actually don't know or care about our nation. We are pretty sure most of the people who read this article are not included in this part of the population.

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Hockey has been played in India way before Cricket was; Hockey became India's national game in 1928 and was played for the first time in the Olympics that year. The Indians won the gold medal without conceding a single defeat in all the matches they played. From then on until 1980 India virtually dominated the sport winning 8 gold, one silver and two bronze medals in the Olympics. Once it trounced USA by margin of 24-1 goals. Such was its glory. 1980's scripted the decline of Indian hockey, and heralded the rise of Indian cricket as popular sport. In 1983 India won the Cricket World Cup and instantly its charm reverberated throughout the country. It was in this decade that Indians were introduced to Televisions as a large-scale that helped the cause. It is not surprising that hockey's loss was cricket's gain.

Obscureness of Hockey by audience because of Cricket:

Growing popularity of the Cricket in India is the main cause for other sports to lose their charm. Sports like hockey, tennis, and football are losing popularity among the audience. Even the government is neglecting other sports including hockey as cricket fetches more revenue than all other sports combined.

Hockey, the national game of India, is now slowly being neglected. Because of fewer sponsors, people are not finding interest in Hockey. However, Hockey, as many of us are unknown about its facts, has a golden history in India.

Golden Era of Hockey

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Hockey in India was introduced by British. It was when the British army regiments played the game; the Indian regiments also picked up the game and then followed the tradition of playing the game of hockey. Then gradually this game was adopted by the masses.

Hockey in India saw its first ever in house hockey club in Calcutta, which was formed in the year 1885-86, then followed the formation of hockey clubs in Bombay and Punjab. Slowly and gradually, this game gained its importance amongst the masses and more and more people started playing it.

In between 1928 and 1956, India won six consecutive gold medals in the Olympics, and won all 24 matches played. There were some legendary players in the history of Hockey in India that includes Dhyan Chand, K.D. Singh, Dhanraj Pillay and Dilip Tirkey.

Present Condition of Hockey

In the present scenario, cricket is more important. There are many forms of cricket and each form is more beneficial for the country's GDP. The Income Tax, excise, and other similar departments are happy, and so are the players.

Sponsors are showing interest only in cricket, because they have the guarantee of returns. This makes other sports fund less. Media also popularizing only cricket, as if other games do not exist at all.

Being our national sport, hockey should get special importance. It should not be neglected. There are people who are interested in hockey, but are not getting required support, coaching, and motivation. Government should encourage all sports equally to make India all-rounder.

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If government takes special interest, then definitely sponsors will also come. However, when approached it said that it does not have enough funds to conduct an international level tournament of Hockey in India. However, it does have several millions to offer to the cricket team after each match.

Reasons for neglecting Indian hockey by Indian Audience are listed below:

- (1) Shrinkage of available space for grounds due to constructions without proper lay out for play grounds.
- (2) Lack of play grounds in colleges and schools.
- (3) Lack of playgrounds in our villages.
- (4) More concentration of students on studies which are overloaded with syllabus and subject now.
- (5) Not much financial support from the business which is fully devoted to cricket and other money earning games like tennis.
- (6) Lack of training and coaching facilities of international standard.
- (7) The involvement of politicians in selection of the teams.
- (8) Our continuous failure in international matches.
- (9) Politics in running our hockey federations and associations.

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(10) Lack of proper diet for the players.

Hockey is India's national game, and it fetched 8 medals so far in Olympic games but now most of the people in India do not even know who is the current Indian Hockey team captain. The main reason is of course every one knew that, the rise of Indian cricket team.

The attention Cricket gets was not given to our national game. People in India says that media is not concerned about Hockey and they never highlight our national game in their news, media people says Indian citizens do not have any concern or interest in their national game.

Hockey board also do not take any care to improve the game. How many cities in India have proper Hockey stadium with all required infrastructure. Players are playing in grounds and not on grass turf, they do not get sponsorship like cricketer get, they could not earn from endorsements like cricketer does. When 3 Indian Cricketers were arrested for spot-fixing entire media said they have cheated millions of people and we hang our heads in shame, but the real shame is our national game is getting destroyed slowly but steadily. Media exclusively keep half an hour daily for cricket, why it can't be hockey? Why events like PHL are not properly publicized? The attitude of Government towards this sport is also no satisfactory.

Future of Indian Hockey:

We proudly call hockey as our national game. Is it still making us proud? Once we were the unparalleled emperor of the game. We had players like Dhyan Chand. In Olympics we bagged the gold medal consecutively from 1928 to 1956. We defeated USA in Los Angeles Olympics with a record margin of 24-1.

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But where has the glory gone? We are continuously failing to perform? People have lost interest. Where is the fault? We have to start winning again. We must have to revive the interest of the people.

How many of us know the names of our hockey players? Many of us even don't know that "World Cup Hockey" is being played in India". It's also the duty of the media to give adequate coverage to the hockey players. Glamour, name and fame must be associated with the game of hockey.

We have budding talents in every corner of the country. The sport authority of Indian should groom the talents. The infrastructure of hockey should also be developed across the country. We need more hockey stadiums in our nation. Many districts in our country don't have a single hockey stadium. It's our national game and everyone should have the opportunity and infrastructure to try their hands in this game. We have the talents. But they need to be groomed to take on the world again. Yes, we have the potential to show our prominence again in the game. The future of Indian hockey is bright if we prepare ourselves to see it bright.

Conclusion:

People are not as interested in hockey as they are cricket, hockey does not get the exposure that cricket does in India. Cricket is the main sport in India, so why would hockey have as many sponsors as cricket. Money is the ONLY thing that sponsors care about, and if hockey isn't generating as much revenue as cricket is, then cricket will carry on having more sponsors than hockey. This is one the major reason that hockey players are not getting the proper resources and as a result they are not performing well at international level. This leads Indian hockey to a bad ranking team and makes it less popular in the Indian crowd in spite of National Game.

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3. From 2002-2007 there have been up to four Muslims in the Indian cricket squad which is more than at any other time since 1932.
4. Daily Times, "Editorial: Shame on Inzi and his men," 19 March 2007, http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2007\03\19\story_19-3-2007_pg3_1.
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