

The Making of Sported Society: Popularization of Modern Sports in Kerala

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Abstract

The paper conveys the historical background of the making of contemporary global sports in Kerala with the means and measures of economic Globalization. The paper also traces out the important turning points and incidents of the lineage towards the making process of identity of global sports in Kerala and the ‘glocalization’ of sports in the State.

Introduction

G. V. Raja and the Popularization of Modern Sports

G V Raja, born on 13th October 1908 was an army man by profession and he is the founding president of all major sports organizations in Kerala. He was a routine visitor of Olympic Games. For the sake of the development of sports, he started labor core in the Colleges of Kerala; he was the first director of Physical education in the University of Travancore; he also took initiative to construct a modern stadium at Trivandrum, instead of the parade ground of Travancore State Force in 1940ⁱ. Later on, the Central Stadium of Trivandrum was also constructed under the initiative of G V Raja, and he introduced the Victory stand system in it. For National Aquatic championship, he took initiative to construct an international level aquatic pool at Vellayambalam. Actually the aquatic games were not a familiar one for the natives and after the organization of national aquatic Championship in 1962 it became popular.

He organized a mountaineering camp at Kalloopara near Neyyar and organized mountaineering classes with the help of Tensing Himalayan mountaineering Institute, with Galanmik and Nagthempe as the coachesⁱⁱ. He formed Kerala Sports Council in 1954 to coordinate total sports activities in the State and in 1958 he founded a flying Club at Trivandrumⁱⁱⁱ. The establishment of boxing association of Kerala was also under the initiative of G V Raja; he established two boxing rings at Sasthamangalam and University Stadium. Golf and the cricket were the other two games popularized by the Raja and organized Santhosh Trophy in 1955 and 1956 under his leadership^{iv}.

The establishment of Trivandrum Tennis Club was possible through the exhibition match between the world class veteran tennis players Tildon, Ramillion, Cosha and Barck. The ad hoc committee of the exhibition match became the executive committee of Trivandrum Tennis Club. The decision of G.V Raja to centralize all regional tennis clubs with the TTC was a fine decision for the tennis in Kerala and finally the Travancore Lawn Tennis Association was formed with G.V Raja himself the permanent president. Rajkumari Amruth Kaur Sports Coaching Project was the turning point in the history of tennis in Travancore.

Through that project G.V introduced Rambeer Singh, the famous Indian coach. The tournaments like Sri Chithira Thirunal Tennis Tournament, K.G Menon Memmorial Tournament, Venkitajalam Trophy Tournament for under 20 and T.K Neelakandayyar Memmorial Tournament were the contributions of G.V.

The formation of Labor Core (LC) was another revolutionary activity from G.V for the development of modern concept of sports. In the first training session of LC more than 350 students participated and G.V was the commandant. The concept of one day for drill and sports in a week was the contribution of LC project. The problem with Sir C.P was the reason for the resignation of G.V from LC.

The role of G V Raja for the popularization and the development of modern sports and games were noticeable. The English education and the experience from Madras University molded his life in an emotional relation with all the western and modern sports items. The bureaucratization and professionalization process were made under his leadership; he is the founding father of most of the sports organizations of Kerala. The main problem of his approach is the elite establishments and he represented upper strata of the society. By the nature of Mimicking, theoretically explained by the Homi K Babha^v, the society wholeheartedly adopted it as its own sports that aroused the cultural crisis.

5.1 Sports Associations/ Organizations Constituted by G V Raja^{vi}

Association	Place of Establishment	Year of Establishment
Trivandrum Tennis Club	Trivandrum	1938
Table Tennis Association	Trivandrum	1940
Lawn Tennis Association	Trivandrum	1941
Aquatic Association	Trivandrum	1953
All India Sports Council	Trivandrum	1954
Kerala Rifle Association	Trivandrum	1958
Kerala Cricket Association	Trivandrum	1958
Kerala Yogic Culture Association	Trivandrum	1958
Kerala Mountaineering association	Trivandrum	1961
Golf Club association of Kerala	Trivandrum	
Travancore Sports Council	Trivandrum	1954

Role of Government in the making of Modern Sport

From the British period onwards government took much initiative for the development of western games. After the formation of the state the native government also followed the same pattern. So many funding were given to the western games and so many offers were given in the organizational level of the tournaments. In the name of the fitness of the native people, government followed a policy of entertaining western games. The total sum of all those strategy was the mass disappearance of indigenous games.

The official Support of Making Sport

The making of modern sport was not only a social building but also a fundamental step taken by the bureaucratic authorities. The ways of cultural penetration were made by the European authorities through different measures. First among them was the formulation of the strategy by the bureaucratic authority to establish cultural hegemony, either forcefully or morally. In the case of sports the primary governmental policy was funding for infrastructure and training at organizational level. By the terms 'physical fitness' and the 'health of the society' the colonial and postcolonial governments accepted the same policy of encouraging the sport.

The making of sports grounds were the major policy of developing sports. The making of grounds was in three types: grounds for the educational institutions, grounds for the force and grounds for the social organizations (regional clubs). The first modern European ground with grass lawn was established at Thalasseri in the early 19th century and with the establishment of town cricket club in 1880 the proper maintenance of ground was possible. In the governmental sector, Lord Wellesley gave much support for the establishment of the ground. By the second decade of 20th century, Thalasseri became the capital of cricket in South India. This is the way of establishing popularity in a systematic pattern by the modern sports.

Calicut Golf course

A broad golf course is still an extravagance in contemporary Kozhikode. Yet during an era when solaces were few, the city bragged a fairway. Archival reports from frontier times demonstrate that the Collector of Malabar gave his assent for a course here. Then again, cutting edge reminders of this play territory which would have been a center for amusement for the colonizers are difficult to find in the city. An obvious indication of the once-existent fairway is the Golf Link Road going through Chevarambalam and Chevayur and which joins the fundamental street at Chevayur intersection. Aside from this pointer of sorts, not a lot lets us know about the area of the course. Records from 1929 demonstrate that it was in Mayanad Desom, neighboring Kovoov. Enquires made among inhabitants and senior medicinal specialists point to the court around the Calicut Medical College, especially the school grounds, as the spot where the British played golf.^{vii}

The provision for giving play grounds on rental was also available officially in colonial and postcolonial period. The main aim of that program was encouraging the official format of the western sports.^{viii} Actually the topography of Kerala is insufficient to give a plain surface with grass lawn so that the less possibility for a ground was the reason for the rental of the ground; but now a days the reason for the same rental is the unavailability of land and high density, but the strategy of the European sport changed in to spectatorship through mass media.

An urgent file was sent to the Divan of Travancore, Sir. C.P Ramaswami Iyer to include horse racing (European style) in the police sports meet in 1938.^{ix} The type of the file was characterized highly confidential.^x This file indicates the role of force in the maintaining of British system within the force and within the society. The confidential character of the file indicates the constraint need of the force to include this elite game in their sports meet. Force was one of the major distributors of the sports items to the common people and the European hierarchy was always kept in the force and sports.

The members of the police force got the money to meet expenses for participation in police games even before the formation of Kerala state.^{xi} The order of Travancore-Cochin ministry

ensures the travel allowance and daily allowance for the police constables who were participating in the police games.^{xii} The participatory item in the police games was European sport items; by these kind of allowances the governmental machineries encouraged western sports. The native games were not a considering factor for the authority.

The education department had taken authoritative decisions to the development of western sports. For the encouragement of football, cricket, volleyball, basketball, hockey, shuttle badminton and tennis, the government sanctioned funds to meet the expenses of the participants.^{xiii} The policies of the colonial government in such activities were in the name of better health. Without any queries about the fundamental characteristics of the society and culture, they implemented the western sports habits.

The support of native rulers was also an unavoidable feature in the growth of modern sports in Kerala. For the development of the sport item Maharaja of Travancore gave Rs. 100/- to the BPO sports and social club in Trivandrum.^{xiv} The elite class was highly interested in the western sports, they have sufficient ambiance to play the game but the role of indigenous games was that of the lower classes.

Authority was highly interested in the western sports and games. Much before the introduction of sports journals in Kerala, the high bureaucratic officials and ministers subscribed sports magazines like 'sports and pastime'.^{xv} The subscription of this magazine was free for the officials by government order; the magazine was completely built with European elements and the only matters discussed were the European tournaments.^{xvi} The governmental machineries highly neglected the indigenous games in every sense and no records were found to develop the means and measures of these games.

The establishment of sports school,^{xvii} Kerala School Sports Meet and introduction of reservation for the outstanding sportsmen in the educational institutions^{xviii} and in the government jobs were the turning points in the history of sports and games in Kerala. The encouragement from the part of government in every sense like making appropriate condition to build up sports persons made a large number of heroes in the European sports, especially in the athletics of Kerala.^{xix} All such supports are given only to the sports originated from the west, so that the government itself establishes the idea of nobility to the professional sports. These orders are also an example for the making of professionals in western sports.

Formation of Kerala State Sports Council

Kerala State Sports Council was the first sports council in India. The concept of a consolidated sports association was evolved from Col. Goda Varma Raja. In 1954 December with the special announcement by the government, the sports association was formed. G. V Raja was the first president of Tirukochi Sports Council; the secretary was P. I Alexander and E. P Epan was the founder Treasurer. The primary working pattern of the KSSC was the formation of consolidated organization for each item. The beginning of the Travancore Cochin football association was from this perspective, subsequently separate associations for cricket, swimming and tennis was formed.

After the formation of Kerala state in 1956 it was re named KSSC. G. V Raja was the president until his death in 1971 and N. Parameswara Menon became the full time secretary. In 1971, another re-organization was made in the KSSC with provision for nominated members. As per the revised structure, the nominees were the DGP, Director of General Education, Director of College Education, two MLAs, Corporation Mayor, a Municipal

Chairman, a Panchayath President, one nominated representative from the laborers and two experts in sports. With this format each district was also to form sports organizations.

Globalization and the Sports

“Globalization is the general term for the interdependence of the world society”^{xx}. The relationship between the capitalist economic world and the sports was started in 19th century and with the support of the press it became a richest economy in the global level. The television broadcasting of sporting events made it completely the part of the global economy, which increased the GDP of sports and the countries measured in the sports as a matter of GDP.^{xxi} Contemporary sports are bounded with the global system of interdependency; maybe it is a force full relation. Since the development of modern sports in 19th century Europe it has become gradually international. According to Joseph Maguire the development of global sports was highly complex and it was described in five stages. The first one was from 1550s to 1750s; during this period many folk sports emerged as national identity in Europe. The second stage was from 1750s to 1870s; in this period voluntary associations of sports were established, for example, sports clubs. The phase three refers to the period between 1870s and 1920s; in this period English sports became the identity of European sports. Fourth stage was from 1920 to 1960; in that period English sports became an international entity; and the final stage was form 1960 to 1990; in this period the capitalist sports over headed all over the world.^{xxii} After that, the globalization process influences the sports un- presciently.^{xxiii}

Global sporting events are the most watching television programs in the world^{xxiv} and the players emerged the international public figures. The general concept that developed in the milieu of global sports is the Diaspora of the people, development of technology, changing pattern of finance and the ideologies. Joseph Maguire used the term ‘sports labor migration’^{xxv} in this perspective. The ‘space’ was highly problematic in this situation. The host of a particular sport activity is to maintain this concept of space in the sports. Cultural activity, economic relations, social conditions and all other tangible and intangible elements exclusively determine the space.

In the perspective of globalization of sports numbers of theories are implacable, modernization theory, theory of imperialism, theory of cultural imperialism etc. The homogenization process was the cumulative idea of globalization, the center and core of that homogenization was European sports and the periphery was third world countries. The large scale profit was controlled by the core and this was against the economic determinism that encourages the situation of negative interdependency. The notion of gender is also highly debatable in the context of globalization.

The cultural intervention of sports reflects every activity of the society of Kerala. Spectatorship of sports is theoretically a part of popular culture. Cinema is the most popular media among Keralites. The general people discuss much about cinema and it carried a big role in the formation of postcolonial public sphere

Contemporaneously, sports and games exercise unprecedented effect upon all walks of life. The Rugby world cup victory was instrumental in determining the power play of New Zealand that turned Helen Clark’s down in favor of John Key in the last general elections. No less in significance was the rolling down of the heads of Suresh Kalmadi, Sasi Tharoor, Lalitmodi recently in India, consequent on the alleged controversies against them.

End Notes

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