

## Television, Nationalism AND Indian Cricket in the Era of Global Media

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### ***Cricket calls the nation...***

"The virtue of all-in Wrestling is that it is the spectacle of excess". This is a comment made by Roland Barthes in one of his famous articles.<sup>[1]</sup> But is it right to say that cricket is also a kind of spectacle of excess? Following Ashis Nandy's line of argument I prefer to answer 'no', since cricket is a game less dependent on content and more on form.<sup>[2]</sup> The form of the game hardly provides continuity, generating new spectacles in each ball delivered to the batsman. In addition to this, however, the time needed to reach a clear result in a cricket match of the classical mode leaves the possibility of generating pure spectacles out of it.

Cricket, as argued by Nandy, is a game that depends more on chance and style and less on *purushakar* and rationality.<sup>[3]</sup> In this context, a comment made by the late Mushtaque Ali, who represented the Indian team in the 1930s, 40s and early 50s, could be recalled. He said: "...one cannot be a successful cricketer unless he accepts the game as a religion."<sup>[4]</sup> The game, exported by the colonial rulers, was loved and adopted by the native Indians for its capability of producing excess that exerts chance over rationality. The essence of the game favours the non-rational natives than the rational rulers.

Despite the victory of Mohunbagan Club in the soccer shield final in 1911 over an English team, and despite the Hindu reformers' emphasis on football, cricket gradually gained a national status in the decades of 1930's and 40's. The nationalist logic behind this popularity of cricket might have been: 'when we dominate the white man in cricket, we dominate him at his chosen game.' This may be applied to understand the nationalist joy in the success of Ranjit Singhji and Iftikar Ali Khan Pataudi. Cricket, at this plane, represents the 'unbound seriality'<sup>[5]</sup> of hopes, ambitions, fears and anxieties

of the people caught within the system of an emerging nation-state. In the first three decades after independence, cricket was a signifier of the nation's prestige, the latter depending less on the result of the matches and more on the display of style, recall Salim Durani's stormy spectacle or Pankaj Roy's courageous resistance against fast bowling, or the magical spells bowled by the Indian spinners, often condemned by the Western people in orientalist terms as 'Asian black magic'.

But a new kind of nationalism fuelled by cricket, which is not like the earlier one, emerged in the mid-1980s. Nandy thinks it surfaced in the Reliance World Cup cricket in 1987, organized jointly by India and Pakistan. And this second wave of nationalism presumes a sharp distinction between the Self and the Other. Nandy notes how the police big-wigs of Calcutta, who were anxious anticipating the deterioration of law and order situation as a result of a possible Indo-Pak encounter in the finals to be held at the Eden Gardens, had been relieved from tension after the completion of the semifinal matches, as both India and Pakistan were eliminated. But the nationalist euphoria based on the will to demolish the 'other' surfaced as Indians massively celebrated the defeat of Pakistan in the hands of Australia.<sup>[6]</sup>

Victory and defeat, in this way became more important than the game. The late Vijay Hazare, Indian captain who played in the 1940s and 50s, wrote in his biography: "... cricket has now become an issue of national prestige. In my opinion too much importance is attached to the result of a match. A win is a sign of supremacy while defeat is regarded as disaster. In this respect at least, cricket has changed. In my time we were still sorry to lose but did not attach undue importance either to a victory or to a reverse ... Our attitude was that as long as we did our best either individually or collectively, a defeat was no disgrace."<sup>[7]</sup>

In fact, victory or defeat was a rare occasion in test cricket as most of the test matches ended in a draw. So, shaping national cricket in the binary of win/lose is not inherent to the game but is a type of representational binary proposed by television and fuelled by nationalism. A conjectural relationship

may also be imagined between television and neo-nationalism in India, mobilized around the sport since 1982. That year marked the watershed in the history of Indian television broadcasting when the Asian Games (held in Delhi) and national television in came together in a permanent bonding.<sup>[8]</sup> As the national television network spread out in different corners of India in the mid-1980s, the live telecast of cricket became more and more popular. This popularity was boosted by statements by the sports-loving Prime Minister Rajeev Gandhi in favour of investing sports with national prestige. And as live telecast of cricket on television became popular a new kind of spectatorship developed. The spectatorship before a television set becomes different from the spectatorship in the sports arena. Televised cricket has an economy of representation that creates an experience different from viewing the game sitting inside the arena. Let us remember that the spectator-position invoked by the radio relay of the cricket matches is not close to the televisual spectatorship. Radio commentary constructs a spectator-position that is more open in terms of an excess of imagining the visual by listening to the description and ambient sound of the arena. The age of radio commentary in India, incidentally, marked the age of old nationalism while the age of entertainment television coincides with the age of neo-nationalism. The televisual style of representation which narrows down the `excess' of the game, largely contributes to this linkage.

### ***Nation calls cricket ...***

The history of the development of cricket telecast has been a journey towards an `economy of representation'. The history of television, as indicated by Umberto Eco, has undergone two distinct phases - Paleo-TV and Neo-TV.<sup>[9]</sup> In the age of Paleo-TV that marked the pre-1970 era, telecast live cricket followed a `primitive mode of representation'. The single camera visuals, with an editing pattern marked with compulsory jump cuts was like early cinema. The mode of representation in Paleo-TV provoked spectatorship that was, to some extent, similar to the spectatorship in the arena, as it provided a single viewing position imitating a viewer seated in

the gallery. Paleo-TV thus emphasized the actuality of the game-event. The scenario first changed in late 1970s when Kerry Packer, after being barred by the authorities to telecast the test matches played by the national team, organized a World Series Cricket spectacle in Australia and broadcast it through the Channel Nine owned by him.<sup>[10]</sup> Packer's private channel was the first to show cricket on television with the use of multiple cameras equipped with powerful zoom lenses that could get close-ups and reaction shots of the cricketers in action. Packer, in an interview, made the interesting comment that he planned to set camera in both ends and in different positions in the cricket field as he did not want to see "cricketer's bums".<sup>[11]</sup> This reveals the fact that the Australian media tycoon was much more interested in representation than the game itself. The reception of Packer's package had another interesting aspect. The star-studded show failed to draw people to the arena but became popular on television. On the other hand, people were gathered in the arena to see the performance of their weak and broken national team led by veteran Bobby Simpson. Packer's real success came when he got the right to telecast the performance of the national team through Channel Nine. Thus nationalist euphoria and the discreet charm of televisual representation merged into a single stream.<sup>[12]</sup>

The Indian audience experienced Packer's magic in 1983 as Channel Nine got the sole right to telecast the matches of Benson and Hedges (Mini) World Cup held in Australia all over the world. The star-studded Indian team won that tournament and Channel Nine showed the spectacle of the celebration by the team after they won the final match.<sup>[13]</sup> The Indian audience who experienced that event on television can remember the last lap of the spectacle which showed the players of the victorious national team going around the arena on a luxury car given to a member of the Indian team by a big corporate company. The representation of that event with minute dramatic details asserted the 'everywhereness' of the subjective camera in a cricket field. This event had a symbolic value as the omnipotent camera, nationalist spirit and corporate involvement -- all three determinants of

present day cricket broadcast came to a point of convergence for the first time in the history of sports.

Packer's mode of representation influenced televisual cricket all over the globe. And within four/five years Indian national television adopted this new mode of broadcasting cricket. As far as broadcasting sports are concerned, the experience of Neo-TV in India became synonymous with the Packer mode. However, as a result of the advent of Neo-TV equipped with high-tech devices and an omnipotent look, the spectatorship before television markedly differs from the spectatorship in the arena. A crowd on gallery, for instance, creates a real public sphere which forms a real community; a spectator before television though lacks a communal reality yet feels him/herself part of a community - a community which is virtual, not real. A television spectator viewing a live telecast of a cricket match in this way imagines a community<sup>[14]</sup> based on a pseudo-mass watching cricket in different unidentified corners of the country, unknown to each other but thought to be bound together by the same national allegiance.

It may sound too obvious but one should mention that the audience in the arena is much more plural in nature than a spectator viewing television. Indian crowd in the stadium, for example, prefer to see their national player scoring a century, but may not be unhappy when they find a foreign player e.g., Salim Malik or Steve Waugh scoring points. Let us remember the last match played by Asif Iqbal at Eden Gardens, Kolkata, in early 1980s. He received a five minutes' standing ovation from the crowd as a farewell tribute. This is because a direct interaction exists between the cricketers in the field and the crowd present. As on many occasions, e.g., while fielding on the fence, they interact with the crowd, chat with them, pass comment or respond to the jokes made by the people, even give autographs to them. It is evident that there are some foreign cricketers who are popular to the crowd in the gallery not much for their cricket skills but for their relationship with the mass. Some unpleasant incidents did happen, but generally these are due to some gesture or short-temperedness from the player. Inzamamul

Haque, for example, dislikes the crowd as they often pass comments on his bulk. But these incidents rarely involve nationalist sentiments.

A foreign player after scoring a century customarily lifts his bat and waves it to the gallery; the crowd applauds in return. But for a viewer watching television, the image (close up or medium close up) of lifting and waving the bat by a foreign player is a 'distant signifier' which rarely affect his/her emotions. The gesture, s/he supposes, is made not to him/her but directed and responded to his/her 'imagined other'. The gesture that I call 'distant signifier', is also a 'mythic' signifier. In myth the meaning of the signifier is distorted by the concept, as Roland Barthes explains.<sup>[15]</sup> Here the meaning of the sign of waving and lifting the bat by a foreign player is distorted by a concept of nationalism, transcendental and based on othering. Barthes suggests that the mythic signifier has two aspects: one, full, which is the meaning, and two, empty, which is the form.<sup>[16]</sup> What the concept distorts is of course what is full, the meaning \_ at this level, history and contexts are reduced to mere gestures. The empty aspect of a signifier, on the other hand, which is form, is actually a form of the game, here cricket. The distortion doesn't occur at this level. So, in mythical signifiers, form is empty but present (the game itself), but meaning is absent but full. A flesh and blood cricketer, thus, is constructed as an 'other' to a television spectator.

### ***Dreaming nation, viewing cricket...***

The relationship between televisual cricket in the era of global media and the spectator-subject posited by it invokes a psychic dimension which is ambiguous in nature. A heavy investment of nationalism in televisual cricket must indicate a kind of displacement of emotion and feeling which is clearly manifested in the mass media. The nexus among cricket, nationalism and television can be defined and modeled in a framework of 'mediawork', a coinage inspired by Sigmund Freud's 'dreamwork', where, we know, a 'latent content' is represented in the form of a dream as 'manifest content'. I borrow this Freudian interpretation to explain the ideological and formal

functioning of media from Hamid Naficy's article 'Mediawork's Representation of the Other'. Naficy writes: "Mediawork, as an agency of hegemony, acts similarly to 'dreamwork': it manifests in its representations the latent or 'deep structures' of beliefs and ideologies. But in the interests of maintaining consensus (and a sense of free choice) it conceals its own operations, and reformats or disguises those deep structures and values. Thus the deep structures, the dominant ideologies, remain latent, beneath consciousness, are taken for granted and considered normal."<sup>[17]</sup>

In this framework, cricket broadcast in the entertainment television in India must fit into the role of a kind of *manifest content* which actually is a projection of the *latent content* constituted by a special kind of nationalism that emerged in the mid-1980s. And this nationalism, based on the distinction of self/other, desires the other to perish, and the desire is manifested in the disguise of a game, to be more specific, in the victory/defeat of the national team in cricket. Television in India in the global era, in this process, plays the role of a dream factory, which produces the *manifest content*, refining, channeling and displacing its desired messages in the pretext of live telecast of cricket.

Live telecast of cricket matches of the national side, as compared to the *manifest content*, invokes a certain kind of 'economy of representation' that actually leads to a structure of narrative. "Sport on television demonstrates particularly clearly an aspect of narrative on television ... sports promises a live narrative," comments John Ellis.<sup>[18]</sup> But it must be taken into account that televisual narrativization of sports, somehow has a different effect altogether. One basic aspect of cinematic and literary narrative is iconicity, which television lacks ontologically. On the contrary, the effort to narrativize a televisual nonfiction programme contributes to its 'flow'.<sup>[19]</sup> The experiences of television in the UK and the US lead to the conclusion that the 'flow' of television dislodges the stability of images and in this process destroys the aura of iconicity largely. But the Indian experience with television is slightly different. Television in India resolves the binary of

flow/iconicity through a synthesis. Televisuality here works within a `flow of iconicity', the process which destabilizes the so-called stasis of iconicity and restabilizes it by repeating it constantly. `Iconicity' here is not embedded in a single text but dispersed within the form. And this dispersion is caused by the over-production of iconic images, and often by evoking the `mode retro'<sup>[20]</sup>.

So, television in India, despite its immense `flow', won't destroy iconicity, rather it establishes a new kind of iconicity, which I refer to as a unique phenomenon of `flow of iconicity'. The logic that backs up the proposition is simple: television in India cannot conceive the signs of nationalism if it loses iconicity completely. Because, in a third-world nation like India nationalism and iconicity are tied together in an umbilical bond. The nationalism that has been generated as a reaction to colonialism needs an image of iconic value that can shore up identity. It may be ambitious but not unjustified to say that a postcolonial nation appropriates an apparatus of postmodern de-  
iconisation in its own terms without being carried away by the mere dynamics of `flow'.

In order to restore iconicity, if one part of the television in India converts itself into a `nostalgia industry', another part, which consists of phenomena like broadcasting live cricket, works through the overproduction of iconic images, even though the essential flow remains undisturbed.

### ***Consuming cricket, consuming nationalism***

Thus basic features of television in India in the era of global media can be summarized as i.] mode retro and ii.] telecast of live and recorded sports. Sports in Indian television in the pre-open-sky broadcast era were a kind of live spectacle shown occasionally in a very selective manner. But the advent of global television, which introduces a number of twenty four hour sports channels, locates sport events in a continuous `flow' of televisuality. The images of live or recorded sport events generated by always available sports



channels are so naturally identified with and seamlessly sutured within the `flow of iconicity' constituted with films-on-television, soap opera, advertisement and song/dance spectacles that televisual sport shows a `pseudo-play mode' subjugating the `record mode'<sup>[21]</sup> beneath the flow constituted by the apparatus. Thus global television transforms the sanctity of `live' sports telecast to a pleasure of representation. The documentary effect of `liveness' and fictionality of the play mode are so homogeneously mixed up that the line of demarcation often vanishes.

I would like to refer to the recent betting scam in the cricket circuit that became an event in print and electronic media but rarely affected the viewership of cricket in entertainment television. We have a very clear statistics in support of this statement. According to the survey report of Television Audience Measurement (TAM), the viewership of satellite television in India increased fantastically in last three/four years. The viewership of sport programmes in 1999 was 22 million in India. In 2003 it reached an estimated 45 million.<sup>[22]</sup> This statistics provides a cue that in televisual cricket, representation and televisuality are much more important than the credibility of the game itself.

Margaret Morse in her article `Sports on Television: Replay and Display' comments: "Sport is, however, not only a stadium event and an institution, but also a television genre, and, in the convergence of sport and television, it is clearly television which is the dominant partner."<sup>[23]</sup> Morse's seminal article explained some of the important discourses related to televisual sports. But the limitation of her essay lies in the fact that she studied the US Television and consequently reached conclusions which are specific to the US experience of sports broadcast. One proposition made by her is: "advertisements do not endanger the `live' framework of sport by offering a realistic contrast...."<sup>[24]</sup> This remark needs a rethinking as far as the experience of consumer television, particularly in India, is concerned.

The massive boom of advertisement industry inspired by and made for the show of national cricket on television in India and the insertion of those advertisement capsules in the body of a live sports programme largely destabilizes the demarcation between the live world of game and advertisement texts. The fictionality of advertisements, which includes the same characters who are there on the field, casts shadows on the non-fictionality of the representation of the game, thus inflicting the play mode into a 'live' show. The 'perfect' blending of advertisement texts with the game creates continuity. But a representation is not self-sufficient to convey the message that it wants to. It must generate consent to, at least partially, by the spectator. Only the consumer subjectivity of the spectator could legitimize the blending of an advertisement text with a live show.

Ava Rose and James Friedman, in their article 'Television Sport as Masculine Cult of Distraction', note: "today's family of consumers has access to diversion in their own home. Perhaps the strongest - certainly the most consistent - lure to the screen is televised sport. Nowhere there is a more spectacular celebration of the surface sphere, a more explicit correspondence between enterprise and entertainment, or a more pervasive reiteration of dominant values."<sup>[25]</sup> They further suggest that televisual sport as 'a cult of distraction' in the US should be viewed not as a 'national cultural phenomena', but as 'textual and historical peculiarities'.<sup>[26]</sup>

But the problem regarding televised sport in India ought to be addressed within the context of nationalism and consumer subjectivity offered by some other social determinants. The television in India in the era of global media can hardly be formulated upon unless nationalism supplies a proper matrix in the development of the broadcast of cricket, which again offers enough space for the germination of the phenomenon of the 'overdetermined' spectator subject. Unlike televised sports in the US, the reception of cricket broadcast on television in India lies largely outside the text, though textual experience and representation matters considerably. In the US and UK even the telecast of local and club matches are immensely popular. But in India the massive

euphoria and craze related to the performance of the national team beneath which the popularity of local or international sports is lost, clearly indicates that the major element of distraction is nationalism, something that is performed outside the text. As a result of that, in India, cricket broadcast in entertainment television creates a kind of trans-textual experience where textual meaning is overcharged and distracted by apparently disconnected discourses which encircle the text.

As television in India transformed itself into entertainment television, and later on into a global medium, a new citizen subject emerged that I would like to term the 'consumer citizen subject'. This new citizen subject is different from the old one posited by the national media (All India Radio and Doordarshan). Doordarshan posited a citizen subject which was directly inspired by the so-called welfare state. The national television in that era used to convey the emblems of welfare state which, borrowing Eric Hobsbawm's term, can be described as signs of 'symbolic nationalism'<sup>[27]</sup>, signs which helped the production of the 'authentic effect' of the citizen subject. The advent of global media, on the contrary, defines the citizen subject within the contours of 'consumer nationalism'. I would like to interpret the phrase 'consumer nationalism' as a form that develops and works outside the domain of 'symbolic nationalism'.

'Consumer nationalism' is a product of so-called globalization in India. But the ideology of globalization accepted by a government ought to appear abstract to the people until and unless it is mediated and symbolized by the mass media. And it is taken for granted that satellite television in India performed this role as it was the first among the media that adopted a global idiom. In this sense satellite television in India itself stands as 'symbolic globalization'. I would like to recall Marshal McLuhan's famous comment, "medium is the message",<sup>[28]</sup> to substantiate the argument. Global television itself is a signifier, if we think in Mcluhan's terms, that indicates a specific relationship between the symbol and its meaning. The content of mass

media, McLuhan argues, is less important than their structures, since the content lies at the level of structure.<sup>[29]</sup>

The proliferation of global television by its specific nature and structure posits a subjectivity which is different from the single-citizen subjectivity; it can be identified in an analogy with the `dual-citizen' subjectivity. The constant experience of viewing CNN, BBC, Hallmark, Star TV programmes along with Indian channels multiplies the citizen self - one subjectivity relates to the national and another relates to the extra-national. Entertainment television in the global era posits a `dual citizen subjectivity'<sup>[30]</sup> on a virtual plane. The virtual `dual citizen' subjectivity symptomatically surfaces through cricket broadcast. When television, with its global reach, shows the spectacles of non-resident Indians watching cricket matches sitting in the gallery in Dubai or Canada or the US, a viewer in India before the small screen identifies, at least partially, with them.

And finally, I would like to discuss the Apple Singh phenomenon in order to address the issue of `dual citizen' subjectivity more specifically. Remember the world cup cricket held in England in 1999. Apple Singh, who was present at Lords and Hedgingly, appeared before the television camera regularly. The image of Apple Singh actually represented the folk of north-Indian origin, unsophisticated, dressed queerly in turban, misfit *kurta* and massive *nagra* shoes. He was not scared, though fully aware of the big city like London or the Sahibs around him, he ardently desired the victory of the national team. This image clearly represented a large number of very ordinary people having north-Indian origin, who settled in cities like London, Melbourne or Montreal, sell their labour as tram conductor or taxi driver or run small business like motels and inns. The structure of global television and its potential to posit a virtual `dual citizen' subjectivity surface through these images.

***Cricket: playing the women...***

The question of gender in reception of sports in television is a bit ambiguous. Contemporary theories of film and television spectatorship have in many ways reiterated the gender distinction, aligning female reception with distraction while assuming the male gaze to be voyeuristic, linear and contemplative. This is true for the spectatorship of film and soap opera on TV. But the gender question regarding the reception of sports in television is much more complicated as there is no such thing that can be called 'implicitly feminine'. The spectatorship of male viewer is not posited by voyeurism though a process of othering of the female spectator does exist.

To explain my point let me concentrate on the spectatorial position when a male spectator in television is watching a female spectator viewing the game from the gallery. A female spectator in the arena apparently is a part of the crowd but the representation in television often distinguishes between the male spectator and a female spectator even if both are parts of an undissociated crowd. It is evident that the female spectator in the cricket field is not a new presence. Women used to come regularly to watch cricket matches since the advent of county and test cricket in Britain.<sup>[31]</sup> But the way neo-TV, equipped with long focal lens, zoom lenses, close-ups and multiple camera set ups, represents her, should draw our special attention. For instance, we remember Henry Blowfield, an English commentator, a familiar name in late 1980's and early '90's, who was famous for observing the details of the ornaments, sunglasses and gestures of female spectators in the gallery. The same representational style is followed when a camera finds out and looks at a Bollywood actress watching the game sitting in the arena. Television camera and editing in the process create a gender distinction where male spectators are treated as natural and female spectators as their special counterpart. That means, women are assimilated within a heterogeneous mass watching cricket in the arena as citizen subjects enjoying equal rights with the male. But the televisual representation in some moments, though not always consciously, shows the symptoms of positioning the women spectator as the 'other'. There are moments when

the representation of live sports in television cannot repress its hidden agenda of othering the female spectator in the field. Let us recall the anxious moments of waiting as the third umpire takes time before he declares a batsman run out or not. Often the editors of television prefer to show the sign of relief from anxiety, as third umpire's decision comes through blinking light signals, by showing a woman's face or gesture as a part of transition from the action of the field to the reaction of the gallery.

There are ideally at least six monitors before the editor sitting in mobile control room which show six different images. And they posit six different points of interest covering the event. There are a number of possible shots available to follow the blinking signal of the third umpire's decision. All these images thus set up the paradigm out of which the editor makes a proper selection of shots. The choice too is not the editor's own but comes from a 'langue' proposed by an ideology of televisual representation. Again, the anxious scanning of the event with the help of hi-definition television technology offers the spectator a goal-oriented look, displacing the emotional register into the body of a woman. Morse(1983), however, suggests that a male spectator, while watching a male game, fetishizes male body and thus enjoys a homoerotic pleasure. This is not like viewing of a television serial by a woman where the flow of narrative actually is a displaced form of the flow of 'household' work. On the contrary a male viewer watching sport in television, she argues, is a hermeneutic or socio-scientific experience that is a reflection of extra-familial world dominated by masculinity.<sup>[32]</sup>

But Rose and Friedman (1994) largely disagree with Morse. According to them, though a part of Morse's argument is correct, viewing of a male game by a male spectator on television can also be located in an analogy of 'household flow'- the house-work done by the male partner of a family in leisure hours, e.g., working on a car, mowing the garden, putting nails on the wall climbing on a chair or on a ladder etc.<sup>[33]</sup> So, a degree of distraction creates an aura of maleness within the household. And as men perform the house-work entitled for them in their leisure hours women of the family just

observe them, help them occasionally, and finally appreciate them. The presence of female spectators in the arena of men's cricket and the role of television camera, however, justify the appreciation of masculinity by the women. And it sounds logical to consider televisual sport, ideally consumed by a male spectator sparing his leisure time, as a cult of distraction, without assuming it as a purely hermeneutic process. Because the impact of a game broadcast on television comes more through identification with the narrative of the game and the related personalities than scientific inquiry of the actions in the field. This kind of identification produces distraction that exists parallel to the 'attention span'.

However, it is evident that commentary on sports plays a role and creates a metadiscourse of sorts. Rose and Friedman (1994) infer that the commentary on a sport event is addressed simultaneously to the 'attentive spectator' and the 'distracted fan'. They suggest that the commentators mediate between the 'flow of sport programming' and the 'distractions of the viewing situation'.<sup>[34]</sup> It is noted from recent trends that the panel of commentators deputed by ESPN/ Star Sports and other sport channels to relay a cricket match is constituted with two different kinds of experts. One group addresses the attentive spectators generally by analyzing the game proper, interpreting the situations, etc. The retired cricketers of classical personality like Sunil Gavaskar, Michel Holding and Tony Greg belong to this group. Another group of commentators address the distracted fans particularly. Recent developments reveal that two major issues of distraction involved in televised cricket on the Indian subcontinent are nationalism and the pleasure derived from the passive presence of the women in the arena.

The emergence of N. S. Siddhu and Mandira Bedi as cricket commentators is symptomatic in this context. The dashing, aggressive and sectarian spell delivered by Siddhu as opposed to Gavaskar's or Holding's 'sober, judicious and neutral' commentary, creates a distraction which is nationalistic in nature. The inclusion of Mandira Bedi in the expert's panel renders the second kind of distraction, often coupled with the first kind. Mandira Bedi sits

in the expert's box with reputed cricketers like K. Srikkant, Mohinder Amarnath and Kapil Dev. She, with her male counterpart journalist Charu Sharma, hosts the programme. It is quite obvious that the composition of the expert's panel on SETMAX is configured to satisfy both the 'attentive spectators' and the 'distracted fans'. Mandira's presence assures a cult of distraction that has recently become a part of the televisuality of sport in India. The structure of the programme assumed by the role of the participants provokes an analogy of a familial formation. Mandira and Charu are supposed to be a couple who invite the guests, offer tea or coffee and hold discussion rendering the feeling of a family drawing room. There are two kinds of priority. First, there is the priority of the guest to hold the conversation and give opinion. Second is Mandira Bedi's priority of being the mistress of the house to host and present herself at an afternoon tea party. The knowledge hierarchy remains as expected. The guests who are selected and invited top the structure. Charu Sharma, assumed to be the master of the house mediates between the home and the world. Mandira, the mistress, is a bit extrovert but naïve; yet she becomes one of the prime attractions. Here, beneath the explicitly surfaced difference of knowledge and fetish-object operates the implicit binary of attention/distraction.

The recent phenomenon of televised cricket and other games that foreground the subjective factor over objective action can be explained through an analogy with postindustrial work. To cite Rose and Friedman (1994):

While classical masculine spectatorship corresponds to the goal-oriented and linear production of industry, and reflects the industrial worker's attention to a single task, men's work in our consumer society depends on different skills and a different mode of attention. In fact, postindustrial labour may - like housework - actually require distraction.<sup>[35]</sup>

Televsual sport, being a masculine cult of distraction, thus stands not as an antithesis to the soap opera supposed to be a 'feminine form' but, engages



itself in a dialectical relationship with the so-called feminine form of the series narrative. The images portrayed by sports television in India in the era of global media themselves become an ambiguous commodity which can be acquired through reification or a series of exchanges between cricket and advertised images, the linked product and the consumer, live documentation and narrativization, attention and distraction.

And finally, as Ashis Nandy comments, "cricket is an Indian game accidentally discovered by the English".<sup>[36]</sup> It could be reworked and recycled so that cricket is an epic game which is today reduced to and fitted within a binary of victory/defeat. This is because new forms of nationalism, a major inertia of distraction, that rides on the televisuality of the global media, only acknowledges the victory, effacing the pathos of the glorious loser.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, London, Paladin Grafton, 1973, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ashis Nandy, *The Tao of Cricket*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press Television, Nationalism AND Indian Cricket in the Era of Global Media the continuity between traditions and modernity ... and between the 'seductive' West and the 'easy', 'material', 'moral' East", explains Nandy, "... is established not through *purushakar* but through the management of random events. As in cricket, you establish your 'success' not through specific successes but through the way you accept and negotiate a random set of challenges." *ibid.* p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Said Mustaque Ali died on 18th June, 2005 at the age of 91. The next day the renowned Bengali novelist and sports journalist Moti Nandy wrote an obituary in *Anandabazar Patrika*, (Kolkata, June 19, 2005, p. 15, where he recounted the late cricketer's comment made in 1978 in an interview.

<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson uses the phrase 'unbound seriality' in *The Spectre of Comparisons*, London, Verso, 1998, to explain a liberal and universal feature of nationalism that stands as an antithesis to a sectarian nationalism based on the ethnicity and othering. Partha Chatterjee, in 'Anderson's Utopia', (*Diacritics*, vol. 29, no. 4, 1999, pp. 128-129), writes: "the most significant addition that Anderson has made to his analysis in *Imagined Communities* is his attempt to distinguish between nationalism and the politics of ethnicity. He does this by identifying two kinds of seriality that are produced by the modern imaginings of community. One is the unbound seriality of the everyday universals of modern social thought: nations, citizens, revolutionaries, bureaucrats, workers, intellectuals, and so on. The other is the bound seriality of governmentality: the finite totals of enumerable classes of population produced by the modern census and the modern electoral systems. Unbound serialities are typically imagined and narrated by means of the classic instruments of print-capitalism, namely, the newspaper and the novel. They afford the opportunity for individuals to imagine themselves as members of larger than face-to-face solidarities, of choosing to act on behalf of

those solidarities, of transcending by an act of political imagination the limits imposed by traditional practices. Unbound serialities are potentially liberating.”

[6](#) Ashis Nandy, *The Tao of Cricket*, pp. 112-113.

[7](#) Vijay Hazare, *A Long Innings*, , Calcutta, Rupa & Co., 1981, p. 247.

[8](#) Ananda Mitra, *Television and Popular Culture in India*, New Delhi, Sage, 1993, pp. 35-40.

[9](#) [http://www.themodernword.com/eco/eco\\_works\\_nonfiction.html](http://www.themodernword.com/eco/eco_works_nonfiction.html)

[10](#) <http://www.worldiQ.com> Encyclopedia, 20th October, 4:30 p.m.

[11](#) *ibid.*

[12](#) *ibid.*

[13](#) In the final match India beat Pakistan at Sydney. And Ravi Shastri of Indian team won the Man of the Series award, an Audi 100 car.

[14](#) The idea of “imagined communities” is formulated by Benedict Anderson. According to him the modern nation, particularly in the third world, is not constituted by kinship, religion or dynasty. “In an anthropological spirit,” Anderson proposes, the definition of the nation “it is an imagined political community \_ and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion.” (*Imagined Communities*, London, Verso, 1991, pp. 5-6)

[15](#) Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, London, Paladin Grafton, 1973, pp. 132-133.

[16](#) *Ibid* p. 135.

[17](#) Hamid Naficy ‘ Mediaworks Representation of Other: The case of Iran’, in Jim Pines and Paul Willeman (eds), *Questions of Third Cinema*, London, B.F.I., 1994, pp. 227\_230.

[18](#) John Ellis, *Visible Fiction: Cinema Television Video*, London, Routledge, 1988, p.112.

[19](#) Raymond Williams, ‘ Programming as Sequence or Flow’, in Paul Morris and Sue Thornham (ed), *Media Studies A Reader*, Edinburgh University Press, 1998, pp. 238\_239.

[20](#) for “mode retro” see Fredric Jameson’s ‘Postmodernism & Consumer Society’, in Hal Foster (ed), *Postmodern Culture*, pp. 116 \_117, London, Pluto Press, 1998.

[21](#) See Abhijit Roy, ‘The *Bhadralok* and the New Popular’ (unpublished paper presented at the international seminar on ‘City and the Cinema’, Sarai - CSDS, February, 2000, Delhi). He writes “It seems that these two aspects of the ‘new popular’ engage two different modes of address which are not mutually exclusive. We would identify the ‘entertainment-popular’ best represented by MTV...as engaging primarily a ‘play-mode’ because things \_ songs, dance, film, fiction \_ are ‘played’ here with the dominant resultant impression being “it’s being *played* for me/us”. As opposed to this we think of the ‘information-popular’ (BBC, Star News etc.) as engaging a ‘record mode’ generating impressions of things *recorded* for me/us”. These two domains deploy two different kinds of proclamations; the record-mode ‘produces’ documents of life caught unawares and the play-mode emphasizes ‘performance’”.

[22](#) Debasish Dasgupta, 'Cricket & Mass Media', *Journal of the Dept. of Mass Communication*, The University of Burdwan, p. 76.

[23](#) Margaret Morse, 'Sports on Television: Replay and Display', in Toby Miller (ed.), *Television, Critical Concepts in Media & Cultural Studies*, vol II, pp.392\_393, London, N.Y, Routledge, 2003.

[24](#) Ibid.

[25](#) Ava Rose and James Friedman, 'Television Sport as Masculine Cult of Distraction', *Screen*, vol.35, No. 1, 1994, p. 22.

[26](#) Ibid p.22.

[27](#) The term "symbolic nationalism" is used here in the sense in which Ashish Rajadhyakshya, inspired by Eric Hobsbawn's idea, used it in his 'Rethinking State after Bollywood', *Journal of the Moving Image*, No. 3, Jadavpur University, 2004.

[28](#) Marshal McLuhan, 'Medium is the Message', in Paul Morris and Sue Thornham (eds), *Media Studies, A Reader*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1998, pp. 38-42.

[29](#) Ibid p. 40.

[30](#) The last BJP government in the center promised 'dual citizenship', specially for the NRIs, and both the PM and the Deputy PM declared that they were in favour of it. By virtue of it the NRIs could enjoy the citizenship of India even if they already have the citizenship a foreign country.

[31](#) <http://www.britannica.com>.

[32](#) Margaret Morse, op cit pp. 382-383.

[33](#) Ava Rose and James Friedman, op cit, p. 22.

[34](#) Ibid, p. 26.

[35](#) Ibid, p. 26.

[36](#) Ashis Nandy, *The Tao of Cricket*, p. 122. Nandy adds: "It is also the argument of the book that ... the vision of certain victory over the white man ... may turn out to be a prescription for a civilizational defeat if pushed to its logical conclusion. But then I am also aware that seeing a victory as a camouflaged defeat, for reasons which have to do with the means employed to win, requires a cultural self-confidence which is available only at the peripheries of Indian society."