

Deep Cover: Cricket and Indian Identity

Ramanan Raghavendran

MLA Capstone

May 2015

Table of Contents

Preface	3
Background	6
Introduction	6
A Cricket Primer	8
1978: Cricket.....	11
Memory	11
Moving.....	12
Colony.....	13
Assimilation.....	15
Spinning.....	16
Cricket in India.....	19
Status.....	19
Elevation.....	22
India.....	23
1978: Identity	27
South Indian	27
India.....	27
Father.....	29
Madrasi.....	30
India and Pakistan	32
Indians.....	32
Pakistan.....	33
War Minus Shooting	37
War With Shooting.....	39
1978: Enemies	41
Home Alone	41
Modernity.....	42
Emergency	44
Versus	45
Sport and Nationalism	48
Nations.....	48
Sport	50
India.....	52
Cricket.....	53
1978: Imagination.....	55
Radio.....	55
Differences.....	56
Imagination	57
Memory	59
Bibliography	61

Preface

In the spring of 2011, I was overcome by the feeling that as the years went by and I entered more fully into middle age, I was getting, for lack of a better word, dumber. I looked at math notebooks from high school and could not believe I once solved the problems I saw there. I reflected on two decades of writing emails and business memos and wondered if I even had the ability to *write*, to either express myself creatively or to organize an intelligent exposition of an intellectual notion.

This wasn't quite the desire to write a great novel; it was a yearning for the kind of intellectual endeavor that now lay in my distant past, and a longing for a deeper dive into the life of the intellect than one can get from reading for pleasure (no matter how wide and how voracious and how catholic such reading might be, it does not place any obligation on the reader to analyze or synthesize).

That's all it was. There was no larger agenda or driving question that I wanted to answer. I found my way to Penn's part-time MA program in the liberal arts (called an "MLA"). I selected courses based on logistics; I lived and worked in New York, so I could only take courses that fit with my work and home schedules. Given these limitations, I got lucky; I found courses I liked, faculty members who were warm and congenial, and highly motivated classmates who kept me on my toes.

There were many surprises. I was hugely impressed with the Penn faculty. This is not "surprising", but their dedication to teaching was still different from what I remember from my undergraduate days. I was inspired by the doctoral students and my fellow MLA classmates. I was disappointed, in contrast, by undergraduate students in my classes who I felt were there mostly to check some box or the other -- but then was I any different at their age?

The tone for my MLA coursework and the papers I wrote for my courses, and ultimately for my Capstone, was set by a writing course I took with Meredith Broussard in the fall of 2011. The title of the course was Research for Writers, and it was my re-introduction to a university's pedagogical environment. All my classmates wrote creative fiction; perhaps because of an underlying insecurity about creative writing, I wrote a creative nonfiction piece on the discovery of Hinduism by the British. I thought it would be easier; it wasn't.

The investigation of Hinduism in the colonial period was revelatory on many levels. Certainly I discovered that I could write, at least to the basic standard required; and I also figured out the tools I needed to write and do research that work best for me (Scrivener, Papers 2 and Dropbox, as all my classmates in all my courses know). What is far more important is that much of the academic research was new to me and was eye-opening. It was stunning and humbling to find that I, of Indian origin and widely read, was unaware of the degree to which fundamental aspects of modern Indian identity were largely constructed in the colonial period -- or that this construction is so "obvious" and well-known in academia as to be unworthy of much further academic research.

This revelation, or set of revelations, has guided all of my coursework (and indeed has changed my view of hitherto fundamental verities). In other courses I explored caste, the military, and to a minor degree cricket, all with an increasingly skeptical lens on Indian identity itself.

When the time came for my Capstone (the MLA version of a master's thesis), I initially wrote a proposal that focused tightly on identity as a concept. I wandered in a fog for two years, because identity is so abstract and identity theory is an especially foggy area of academia. It became clear to me that I needed to pick a component of Indian identity and go deep. That was

my state when I enrolled in the Capstone proposal seminar in the fall of 2014; and during the course of the semester, I fleshed out a proposal that involves cricket.

I grew up with the sport and have spent an incredible amount of time following it; but now I sought to understand what made cricket, this bizarre sport, the quintessential Indian pastime. Why was it adopted by Indians? How do they define themselves in the performance of the sport (as players or as viewers)? How do elites appropriate the sport for power and influence?

I hope my Capstone can answer at least one, if not more, of these questions. But even if not, this for me has been about the journey, not the destination.

Ramanan Raghavendran, May 2015

P.S. As for math notebooks from my adolescence: I took the GRE before I enrolled in the MLA program even though it's not a requirement. That helped verify that I am a lot dumber than I was, but taking it was a wonderful exercise; and I intend taking it again every five years keep the mental pencil moderately sharpened!

Background

Introduction

"[Sport] is a domain with enormous ramifications for economy, culture and society: it is a gigantic industry; it is invested in heavily by the state; it is watched by almost everyone, and fills miles of column inches in the press; it is something that all children and most adults are encouraged to do, for its physical and social benefits. Yet it is often treated as a rather trivial topic, and thought to be far less important in understanding the relationship between economy, society and culture than many minority arts and leisure activities."

Alan Warde, "Cultural Capital and the Place of Sport"¹

Cricket is an English sport whose popularity rose contemporaneously with the spread of British mercantile and military power around the globe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From about the middle of the nineteenth century, native and immigrant populations began playing the sport in all major British colonies.

Since Indian independence from colonial rule in 1947, cricket has become the dominant sport in India, rather than subsiding against more accessible sports such as soccer or indigenous sports such as *kabaddi*. While the interest of immigrant populations in, for example, Australia and South Africa is understandable given the shared ethnic and cultural heritage with the metropole, the extraordinary rise of this sport amongst native populations in what is now known as India is harder to explain.

¹ Warde, "Cultural Capital and the Place of Sport," 107.

Broad histories of Indian cricket -- notably Guha² and Bose³ -- provide a chronological view of the evolution of the sport. There have been sporadic studies of specific episodes or trends in the sport as played in India, notable more for their sparseness relative to, say, the voluminous academic literature on Salman Rushdie (see, for example, Sen⁴ and Mehta⁵). There has been little investigation of the idea that cricket may serve as a crucial metaphor for, and bearer of, Indian identity.

No doubt this is partially because the analysis of sport is an academic backwater in general, as Warde points out. It may also reflect the fact that the study of India for the last several decades has been dominated by the subaltern studies movement, whose practitioners have had little interest in sport even though it is a dominant cultural meme (perhaps the dominant cultural meme in as fragmented a polity in India).

In my Capstone, I combine personal memoir, historical research, and a theoretical intervention to show how cricket is a critical driver of Indian identity formation. It cuts across religious, linguistic and caste divides, it is accessible as a broadcast sport across the logistical and geographic diversity of India, and it presents "Indians" with a legitimate vehicle within which to exercise nationalistic sentiments -- within which to "perform" Indian identity.

The fundamental question that I seek to answer here is: how did cricket contribute to national identity formation during the first three decades after independence in 1947? The answer is as much about Pakistan as it is about India.

² Guha, *A Corner of a Foreign Field: the Indian History of a British Sport*.

³ Bose, *A History of Indian Cricket*.

⁴ Sen, *Migrant Races: Empire, Identity and K.S. Ranjitsinhji (Studies in Imperialism)*.

⁵ Mehta, "The Great Indian Willow Trick: Cricket, Nationalism and India's TV News Revolution, 1998–2005."

A Cricket Primer

"Cricket as explained to a foreign visitor:

There are two sides one out in the field and one in. Each player that's in the side that's in goes out and when he's out he comes in and the next player goes in until he's out. When they are all out the side that's out comes in and the side that's been in goes out and tries to get those coming in out. Sometimes you get players still in and not out. When both side have been in and out including the not outs, that's the end of the game."

Dominic Malcolm, "Globalizing Cricket"⁶

One knowledgeable observer has written that "in terms of its rules, rituals and vocabulary, cricket is the most complex game in the world."⁷ But the principles are straightforward. Cricket is played on large grass fields between two teams of eleven members each. At the center of the field is a rectangular strip, normally of compacted mud, known as a pitch. Each end of the pitch has a set of three vertical wooden stumps known as wickets, which are topped by two small horizontal pieces of wood called bails. All eleven players from the batting team come out to bat, one after the other, before one inning is over; the teams then switch places. The batter has to defend these bails from being dislodged by the bowler; he has just one at-bat in each full innings. There are several ways in which a batsman can get out other than having the bails dislodged, the main one being a ball hit to one of the eleven fielders without bouncing on the ground. Runs are scored by the batsman running back and forth between the wickets. If the ball is hit out of the field without bouncing, six runs are scored; if the ball rolls over the boundary line after bouncing, four runs are scored. Behind this simple description is an

⁶ Malcolm, *Globalizing Cricket* L3611.

⁷ Guha, "Cricket and Politics in Colonial India," 158.

entire universe of complexity, subtlety and specific jargon (from "googly", which is a kind of curveball, to "silly mid off", which is a fielding position close to the batsman).

The principles above apply to all forms of cricket. There are now three variations of the game played at the international level. The first, which is the oldest form of the game, is Test cricket. Over the 140 year period that Tests have been played, the basic format has stayed the same: each team has two innings each, thereby batting twice and bowling twice. The game has a fixed time period of five days, with about six hours of play on each day. Given the fixed time, it is quite possible for a game to end in a no-result. Dozens of Tests are played each year between the ten Test-playing nations, and India itself plays between 10 and 15 each year (with limited success as will be described later).

As the pace of life in the 20th century accelerated, the game's administrators felt that a shorter version was needed, and in the late 1960s the concept of a one-day international (ODI) was introduced. ODIs allow for one innings for each team to bat (and for the other to bowl), and have a fixed number of overs (a set of six pitches bowled at a stretch by a player against the opposing team's batsmen). In international cricket, ODIs usually have 50 overs per innings. An ODI is usually finished in 8 or 9 hours, i.e. in one day.

In the mid-1990s, the game's administrators -- now partially acting in response to the demands of television companies and audiences as television revenues began driving the economics of the sport -- introduced an even more abbreviated form of the game, called 20/20. As the name suggests, this third variation of the international game is essentially the ODI format shrunk down to twenty overs per innings per side. The game is over in three hours, and is more suitable for a modern-day television audience and also for an evening outing for a family. 20/20 cricket has exploded in popularity in large part due to the creation of the Indian Premier League

(IPL), a franchise-based league in India that also involves leading non-Indian players. The IPL has been a crucial recent factor in the further dominance of world cricket by India (or rather by the Indian cricket board), as it generates huge broadcast revenues but is entirely localized within India.

A brief note on the administrative structure of the game: the game is administered by the International Cricket Council (ICC), which has 105 members but only ten Full Members, who call all of the shots and jealously protect their interests. These are England, Australia, South Africa, West Indies, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and Bangladesh, in order of admission to full membership.

1978: Cricket

Memory

Salman Rushdie has written that "putting down roots in memory is the natural condition of exile."⁸ I root around in the sites of my memory, looking for a landing place in which to anchor my self. The past is a foreign country -- in my case a foreign country in what is now a foreign country, so doubly exiled from my present.

I write here of cricket and identity, but while cricket history can be researched and footnoted, my identity consists of episodic images excavated by peeling the layers of a mental palimpsest. This may have to do with all the moving around I did as a child in India, the offspring of a peripatetic air force officer. When you know you will inevitably leave for the next destination, leaving behind friends and familiar landmarks, perhaps your mind trains itself to erase quickly.

I was the youngest child, separated by eleven and eight years from two much older sisters. I was thus a solitary child, without the comfort of a close sibling who could serve as an anchor. All the more reason to erase and rewrite.

The milieus of my childhood in India are long gone. That is not just because of the arrow of time, which transfixes all human beings and all places. It is also the cacophonous expansion of the population, the sheer weight of the rising number of *people*, that has erased physical and mental landscapes.

⁸ Rushdie, *Grimus*, 107.

Foucault, embedded in a Europe that even then was entering stasis, speaks of "unmoving histories"⁹; in India it feels that history is constantly erased by innumerable footprints. The thread that has stayed constant throughout my life, as my identity has morphed and evolved, is cricket. I played it -- sort of -- and watched it as a child; and even now, when I no longer know quite whom to cheer for, I find myself absorbed in following the sport around the world.

Moving

I first played "cricket" as a ten year old, in 1978. We had just moved to New Delhi. My father had received a promotion but it didn't feel like one. In Ambala, whence we came, he was the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the local Indian Air Force base, and that grandiose title is an exact representation of what life was like on the cantonment ("Ambala Cantt") for the son of one of the military potentates.

Ambala was a small town a few hundred miles north of Delhi, not far from the India-Pakistan border -- just a few minutes for a supersonic fighter jet. I remember a huge house, with many rooms and a large verandah on each side of the house, surrounded by sprawling gardens. An army of household staff to take care of the property.

At one time we had a dog, who died of an unknown disease. At another time we had two rabbits who alas didn't live long either. I clearly wasn't meant to do well with pets -- much later on in a different city I acquired a turtle that appeared to have been afflicted with leprosy -- for one morning one of its legs had fallen off.

There were snakes around our house in Ambala -- one night, I recall my father killing one with a large stick, with me huddled behind my mother's *sari*.

⁹ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 3.

I remember being treated especially well by the teachers in my government school -- until my father's transfer to Delhi was announced. He left a few months before the rest of the family, to assume his new job and find us housing in the capital. Overnight there was a shift in my teachers' attitudes. The day before I was the prized pupil being commended for my command of my subjects. The day after, at least one teacher made pointed remarks about my no longer being the child of the AOC-in-C.

This could not have been just because of the change of status. No doubt I had behaved, as the nine year old son of a local *caudillo*, in ways that radiated a sense of privilege and arrogance; I have no doubt now that I deserved the comeuppance. At the time, I remember just swallowing my hurt and outrage; it was evident to me that I was now a second-class citizen in that school. The children of the new AOC-in-C, likely in a higher class, were the feted ones.

Colony

I was not overwhelmed by the move to New Delhi, a much larger city. Besides the sense of adventure -- and the fact that it was our fourth move in five years so I was getting quite used to the idea of jumping around India -- military families moved in a closed ecosystem that provided an umbrella and a sense of warmth.

At this time, more than three and a half decades ago, New Delhi retained much of its colonial charm. Lutyens had the chance to build a Haussmann-like city in the middle of the Gangetic plain, and the wide tree-lined roads created a sense of space that was very different from the chaos of Old Delhi.

Many years later, as a high school student, I found my way to Old Delhi's legendary *Nai Sadak* ("New Road" although there was nothing new about it). All the "real" academic booksellers were there; it had a mythical status amongst academically inclined high school

students. This was my first real exposure to Old Delhi, and it felt like I had stepped into a different world. Crowded, narrow lanes, sellers of sweetmeats and snacks on every street corner, drivers who viewed traffic lights as a source of optional guidance -- it was the antithesis of clean, orderly New Delhi. And therefore, almost by definition, far more interesting and exciting.

Although I was not overwhelmed by the move, there was a distinct sense of becoming anonymous. I was not the son of the chief; I was just one more military brat. This was in a different way from what happened in that stub period in Ambala, after my father left, when I felt a palpable sense of being downgraded.

The feeling of anonymity was magnified by the neighborhood we moved to, the Sardar Patel Colony. Urban neighborhoods in much of India are called "colonies". I am not sure what the etymology is. The dual meaning relative to empire is likely just a coincidence. It simply meant an agglomeration of residential dwellings that formed a neighborhood, in the same way that the British placed a "colony" in the city of Calcutta in the eighteenth century.

Sardar Patel Colony was primarily for military personnel and their families, and was named after Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, an important figure in the Indian independence struggle and the only alternative to Jawaharlal Nehru for supreme leadership at the moment of freedom in 1947. Patel came up the hard way in the western province of Gujarat. Nehru went to Harrow and Cambridge in the early 20th century, and with his Westernized manners flirted suavely with Edwina Mountbatten when Earl Mountbatten served as the last viceroy of colonial India. He was always going to be the chosen one.

We lived on the fifth floor of one of many concrete "blocks" or towers in the colony. I went downstairs one afternoon, after returning home on the school bus, and found a gaggle of boys playing with a cricket bat and a tennis ball. Did I politely ask to join? Is that how small

boys behave? It is possible but I do not remember clearly. What is more likely is that I shouted loudly, demanded participation, and was grudgingly admitted to the circle. Thus I was introduced to cricket downstairs in our colony; and then, a week or so later, in my new school.

I spoke English and Hindi fluently, no different from my neighborhood friends or my classmates at school. But my name, which provided a double-barreled reiteration of my South Indian origins, and my glasses, which made me physically different from most other kids in the colony or in my class at school, set me apart. I don't think my personality was one that rejoiced in this difference -- I sought to belong. Cricket began to do that for me, as I tried settling into life in the new city.

I wasn't completely sure what the sport was about. As a child of ten, at a conscious level this was an activity, not something larger or more meaningful. So playing cricket, whether downstairs from our apartment or at school, was just a ball game that I played.

Of course looking back it is clear that cricket was far more than just a game. It was a way for me to assimilate, to find common ground with my fellow Indian classmates and playmates who were mostly from Punjab or Uttar Pradesh, two North Indian states. It was a way to create an identity that covered over all these fragments and differences with a quilt that all of us could share, whether from Meerut or Madras.

Assimilation

My memory of the seven years that I spent in New Delhi is intimately associated with the monsoons, for the school year began in July, right in the middle of the rainy season. When I think of school in Delhi, I first think of lashing rains, *pouring* down as I made my way to the school bus under an umbrella. The bus took me and a gaggle of noisy kids, all from Sardar Patel Colony, to the Air Force Bal Bharati School on Lodhi Road.

The bus pulled in through the school gates, past the Soviet-built MiG-21 fighter jet placed in front to remind all of the Air Force affiliation of the school, and parked in front of the secondary school building to unload us. School started at eight in the morning, Monday through Saturday, and lasted till two in the afternoon. There were two or three breaks during the school day, each lasting fifteen to thirty minutes, and the moment the bell rang for a break we all sprinted to the playground.

Within a minute the playground, which was between the two school buildings (one for grades one through five, the other for grades six through twelve), was filled with hundreds of children of varying ages jockeying for space to play their games.

Spinning

Youths in all cultures are either nerds or jocks, and early on it was quite clear that I was a nerd, although that word was not common in India at the time. My glasses set me apart from almost everyone in my class; and I was quick with words and quick with math as a boy. I was a card-carrying nerd almost from my very first day in sixth grade.

At breaks between classes or at the end of the school day, while we all played outside on the playground, the real jocks got to play with real equipment, whether that was cricket or basketball or badminton. It's not clear to me now why it is that simple sporting equipment was so hard to come by, in an otherwise well-appointed school. But the nerds didn't seem to have real cricket bats or a hard cricket ball or an inflated basketball. What we had was a tennis ball and our hands.

So we played a version of the game of cricket involving throwing the ball underarm at a batsman who used his hands to hit the ball. There were many obscure rules designed to protect and to enhance participation. Among other things, you could only bowl slowly, and the ball had

to bounce before reaching the batsman. This gave the batsman a shot at hitting the ball with his hands. Always "his" -- the girls never played.

It meant that the bowler had to rely on deception, either of the flight of the ball or the spin imparted to it. This gave him a fighting chance of getting past the batsman's defenses and hitting one of the three bricks that served as wickets. At that point the batsman was "out" and the next batsman would take his place).

Despite being a nerd all my life, I was blessed with my father's genes for athleticism, and I did not lack for hand-eye coordination nor for stamina. So when we had long class breaks I could go on and on, as a batsman or as a bowler.

There was no great science or art to being a batsman in this form of the game. So as a batsman, the key was to keep your eye on the ball, make contact with the palm of your hand, and attempt to guide the ball to a vacant area and score "runs". You had to hit the ball, of course; you couldn't just catch it and throw it!

If there was skill here, it was in the art of bowling. Bowling slowly meant that raw speed and power in hurling the ball were irrelevant. So it came down to how you pitched the ball -- the arc or loop it took before it hit the ground and was then attacked by the batsman -- and the spin imparted.

I spent years at school perfecting my spin technique in this bastardized form of the game. Over the years I have seen many professional crickets and their spinning techniques, but I developed my own system involving projecting the ball out of my right hand using a flip of the thumb. The ball would come out with a fizzing spin, land on the ground, and swerve sharply from left to right. Depending on the loop and speed of the ball, this could deceive the batsman --

and occasionally the spin would occur so abruptly that it might even beat a batsman with less than stellar reflexes.

I remember clearly that playing this form of "cricket" was important to me. I treasured my high scores sometimes more than I did my grades.

I added street cred by developing an encyclopedic knowledge of the statistical minutia of the international game. Cricket, like baseball, has history and nuances that make it a statistician's delight. A twin separated at birth from me, living in Minneapolis, might speak knowingly of Ted Williams' iconic status as the last batter to beat .400; I spoke knowingly of Don Bradman's lifetime batting average down to the second decimal point (99.94, if you must know; a truly freakish 50 per cent higher than the next batsman in the entire history of Test cricket).

I derived much of my self-esteem and confidence, and the (limited) respect of my peers, from my prowess in this playground version of cricket, and my nerdy mastery of the game's statistical trivia.

The reason for that lies deep within the notion of India and Indian identity. Cricket was a far more important contributor to that idea than is commonly understood.

Cricket in India

Status

"The indigenization of a sport like cricket has many dimensions: it has something to do with the way the sport is managed, patronized, and publicized; it has something to do with the class background of Indian players and thus with their capability to mimic Victorian elite values; it has something to do with the dialectic between team spirit and national sentiment, which is inherent in the sport and is implicitly corrosive of the bonds of empire; it has something to do with the way in which a reservoir of talent is created and nurtured outside the urban elites, so that the sport can become internally self-sustaining; it has something to do with the ways in which media and language help to unyoke cricket from its Englishness; and it has something to do with the construction of a postcolonial male spectatorship that can charge cricket with the power of bodily competition and virile nationalism."

Arjun Appadurai, "Modernity at Large"¹⁰

India began playing Test cricket, the highest form of the game in the traditional view, in 1932. At that time Test cricket, played over several days, was the only international form game. Not always to a conclusion; one of the perennially baffling elements of the sport for an uninformed onlooker is the fact that two teams can play for five days and have a match end in a draw. I will speak more of this in the context of India-Pakistan cricket matches.

The genesis of India's elevation to Test status -- at the time, only five countries had this high distinction -- began with the formation of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)

¹⁰ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 89.

in 1928 by a British businessman, R.E. Grant-Govan and his Indian secretary A.S. D'Mello. During a trip to London to proselytize with the Imperial Cricket Council (ICC) which governed the sport at the time, these two gentlemen were able to convince the President of the ICC, Lord Harris (a curmudgeonly Old Etonian and cricket grandee), that India was deserving of Test status¹¹.

There was history behind this, of a peculiar interracial variety. Incredibly, the late-nineteenth century Indian prince Ranjitsinhji ("Ranji") had actually played Test cricket for England in the 1890s, very successfully; as had his nephew, Duleepsinhji, in the late 1920s¹². Their success for the metropolitan team was certainly a factor in India receiving Test status.

Before Ranji, there was half a century of cricket history in India, in which the Parsi community played an important role. The Parsis were prominent collaborators with the British, in pursuit of mercantile success, and cricket was viewed as an avenue to assimilation and even parity with the foreign overlords. The prominent Parsi player and cricket historian, J.M. Framjee Patel, believed that cricket was "destined very appreciably to solve that really intricate problem - the social relations existing all over the world between the white and the black man".¹³ He was articulating a deep aspiration on the part of the colonials, to belong and assimilate, to in fact **be** British -- "if we beat them at cricket, they will think better of us."¹⁴

The cause of the BCCI visitors from India in 1928 was also greatly helped by a remarkable coincidence of timing -- which is that India, competing as a separate nation despite being a colony, had won an Olympic gold medal in Amsterdam in 1928 in the sport of field

¹¹ Guha, *A Corner of a Foreign Field: the Indian History of a British Sport*, 190-191.

¹² Mukherjee, *Nationalism, Education, and Migrant Identities: the England-Returned*, 71.

¹³ Cashman, *Patrons, Players, and the Crowd* L336.

¹⁴ Kidambi, "Sport and the Imperial Bond: the 1911 'All-India' Cricket Tour of Great Britain," 270.

hockey. The English view of India was that of a hot and enervating land with an effete populace that was unable to participate in many sports -- and this ideology was pervasive in England. Indians were a "'soft bodied little people' who could nonetheless compete with Englishmen in civil service examinations."¹⁵

The Indian victory in a popular sport requiring some level of athletic skill was therefore a signifier of a baseline level of athletic prowess¹⁶.

Sadly, India fell off the list of field hockey dominators in the decades after independence. And it is a cause for quadrennial handwringing that India's performance in Olympic sports is beyond abysmal. Cricket, a sport played by just ten countries at the Test level, is now the national religion. But in 1929, it was field hockey that was instrumental in creating an Indian identity in the realm of sport, and that catalyzed the admission of India into the Test cricket firmament.

What is interesting in retrospect is the degree to which India's cricketing ambitions were pushed and promoted by entrepreneurial figures -- Grant-Govan, D'Mello, Harris being just some of the names -- and not as part of a larger plan to strengthen colonial ties at a time when Gandhi's independence movement was beginning to reach a new crescendo. Arjun Appadurai writes that "although there was never a conscious policy in regard to the support of cricket by the colonial regime in India, cricket evolved into an unofficial instrument of state cultural policy."¹⁷ Is it possible that Harris spoke to the Colonial Office and obtained "permission", or at least a nod in an oak-paneled London gentlemen's club? It is possible, but there is no record of it. What the

¹⁵ Rosselli, "The Self-Image of Effeteness: Physical Education and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Bengal," 122.

¹⁶ Guha, *A Corner of a Foreign Field: the Indian History of a British Sport*, 190.

¹⁷ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 92.

historical record suggests is that this small group of men, working on their own and for personal motives, together contrived to bring India into the Test fold.

This story of entrepreneurship -- which likely also includes a mercantile element -- is not unique to India. Australia was the counterparty to England in the initiation of the Test cricket format. From the very beginning cricket tours between those two countries were entrepreneurial business ventures in which payments to professional cricketers, ticket sales at venues, the cost of transportation by ship and train, were all part of a financial calculus. Cricket always had a running strain of an implicit higher morality -- "I say, that's not cricket" -- but the sport at all levels has had a deep and abiding commercial flavor visible to anyone who chooses to look.

Elevation

Thus almost a century after groups of Parsi men began playing the sport in Mumbai to help cement their status as privileged insiders, in 1932, India played its first Test match. The game was played at Lord's, the "home" of Test cricket in England -- somewhat like Yankee Stadium and Fenway Park combined, in terms of historical resonance and symbolic value for the sport.

There were several individual performances of note, including fast bowling from Mohammad Nissar and good batting by CK Nayudu and L. Amar Singh. As those names might suggest, the team had been chosen carefully by the BCCI for religious diversity -- the touring party of seventeen (of whom only eleven play in a match) had 7 Hindus, 4 Muslims, 4 Parsis, and 2 Sikhs¹⁸. Heaven forbid that the tour's organizers be accused of religious bias in a polity where religion was and is a powder keg ready to go off at any moment.

¹⁸ Guha, *A Corner of a Foreign Field: the Indian History of a British Sport*, 194.

India was beaten by the wide margin of 158 runs-- yet not so wide as to preclude future Test matches. In the 15 years following this first Test, India played England at home and away seven times, never winning and usually getting clobbered. But there were always occasional individual performances of startling brilliance and this set in place a trend in Indian cricket -- fans couldn't rejoice in the team's success for there wasn't any, but could center their adoration on individuals who stood apart.

This adoration coupled with mediocre team performance led to an obsession with individual statistics. The average Indian schoolboy with even a marginal interest in cricket can speak with accuracy about the number of runs scored by the leading Indian cricketers.

In my boyhood, Sunil Gavaskar was the font of many a young Indian's fascination with Test cricket in the '70s and '80s. There wasn't much else to celebrate. The fact that Gavaskar scored 774 runs in his debut cricket series against the West Indies in 1971 was common knowledge. When he overtook the legendary West Indian Garry Sobers' career runs total of 8,032 runs to become the highest run scorer of all time, it was enough to make up for a general lack of team performance on the global stage.

India

At independence in 1947, Indian cricket retained the name of "India" to denote its national team -- and most of the infrastructure. Pakistan had to start mostly from scratch as it did in numerous other civil and societal respects.

The domestic league was played for the Ranji trophy, named after Ranjitsinhji. The vast majority of the Ranji league teams -- organized by province -- were in post-independence India, as were the best playing fields, a sense of historical ability at the game, municipal leagues that

were feeders to the Ranji teams that in turn produced the Indian national team players, coaches and so on.

Indian cricket is now organized by province, a continuation of the pre-independence Ranji league. There are four geographic zones, each of which contributed a certain number of members to the BCCI -- creating thus a provincially delineated set of power blocs, competing for the spoils of cricket's economy and pushing their own players for consideration in the national side.

In the quarter century after independence in 1947, India played an inordinate amount of Test cricket -- 112 matches against every Test playing country, home and away -- with a staggering record of mediocrity. 53 matches drawn, 17 matches won, and 42 matches lost (see stats.espncricinfo.com). In other words, India won a pitiful 15% of all its Test matches during this period.

When, in 1971, India won its first Test cricket series against England -- in other words a majority of the completed matches on a tour, usually between three and five in number -- joy was unconfined despite the fact that this was a painstaking victory achieved almost four decades after receiving Test status. The returning team was showered with economic rewards and civic felicitations.

Test Playing Nation	Test Debut	First Test Match Victory Over England	First Test Series Victory Over England
England	1877		
Australia	1877	1877	1877
South Africa	1889	1905	1906
West Indies	1928	1929	1950
New Zealand	1929	1977	1984
<u>India</u>	<u>1932</u>	<u>1952</u>	<u>1971</u>
<u>Pakistan</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1984</u>
Sri Lanka	1982	1993	1993
Zimbabwe	1992		
Bangladesh	2000		

Note: Table from Malcolm¹⁹

There is a mirror relationship between India's field hockey team's popularity and performance, and that of the Indian cricket team. India's last field hockey gold medal in an un-boycotted Olympics was in 1960 -- and starting a decade later, first in the West Indies and then in England as mentioned above, the Indian cricket team finally began winning Test cricket matches and series.

¹⁹ Malcolm, *Globalizing Cricket* L1449.

It is not easy to pick out a systemic reason for the improvement in India's cricket fortunes, and so we have to rely on examining what changed. Credit has sometimes been assigned to the appointment of the Nawab of Pataudi as Indian cricket captain in the early 1960s and his more aggressive attitude to the game ²⁰ -- a more nationalistic approach that involved emphasizing a united Indian identity rather than a fragmented provincial one.

Whence this unified identity? Is not India a timeless land, infused with rituals and cultural practices that have been around for millennia? As it happens, no. For India is an artificial and recent creation. At independence, the country had almost thirty different provinces, each often reflecting a radically different language, culture, social practices, religious makeup, and history. And that number has increased over time, as distinct linguistic or cultural units have sought autonomous provincial status ²¹.

These provinces are separated not just by geography but by languages that in many cases are as different from each other as English is from Chinese. Tamil, in the South of India, belongs to an entirely different language family than Hindi which is widely spoken in the North. Before the British came to India, the only common link was Sanskrit, the Latin of the Indian subcontinent, dead in all respects except as a sacral *lingua franca*.

The claim, then, is that the Nawab of Pataudi in the 1960s was the first Indian captain to truly push an Indian identity in the team, breaking down regional cliques in the locker room. Why the Nawab? Possibly because like most English-speaking colonial elites he belonged to no place and so could only belong to India. A Muslim; the scion of royalty; Oxford-educated; English as his first language -- where could he root himself, other than in the idea of India?

²⁰ Bose, *A Maidan View: the Magic of Indian Cricket*, 264.

²¹ Brass, *The Politics of India Since Independence*, 157-168.

1978: Identity

South Indian

Before Ambala, where my father was a Grand Personage, we had lived in Bangalore where he was the second in command of the local air force station. In these places, I was not conscious of any cultural difference from my peers other than being a child of relative privilege. But in Delhi my father was one of many officers of his rank (albeit a rising star and one marked for future promise -- an odd thing to be, as I think back, for a forty eight year old man, but such is the rhythm of a military career).

In this more egalitarian environment, a new set of differences, which apparently formed crucial elements of my identity as perceived by all around me, was revealed to me. For it was in Delhi that I realized that I wasn't just an Indian -- I was a *South* Indian, and specifically I was a Tamilian. These categories were new to me. It was only many years later that I understood that these labels, these pigeonholes, were not defined since time immemorial -- these were recently defined and were artifacts of the colonial experience.

India

The British planted their first flags in Kolkata in the East (the capital of Bengal, formerly known as Calcutta), Mumbai in the West (the capital of what is now the Indian state of Maharashtra), and Madras in the South (the capital of what is now the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, or the land of the Tamils). They slowly made their way into the interior, defending their mercantile interests with imported English soldiers and a much larger native collaborating force, conquering land outright or placing local kings under their "protection".

In this way, over a hundred year period from the Battle of Plassey in 1756 to the Indian Mutiny in 1857, the British welded together something called India that had never existed before. In other words: India is an entirely constructed and fabricated entity, and that too of relatively recent provenance.

There was no prior state in the Indian subcontinent that contained within itself these diverse cultures. No empire governed, simultaneously, the Pathans in the far north, the Mizos in the east, the Gujaratis in the west, and the Tamils in the south. The Mughals came close to doing that across the same geographic expanse, near the end of Aurangzeb's reign in the late seventeenth century. That was for a brief period, though, and they did not create the unifying super- and substructures that the British did.

There is a great line in an essay by one of the doyens of Indian historiography: "the history of British rule in India is to some extent to be seen in the unanticipated consequence of its actions" ²². The blind watchmaker embedded in British interests slowly, tick-tock, tick-tock, crafted this rickety polity, this India, that contained all these peoples.

If all they had done was to put a wrapper around the Indian subcontinent and call it "India", that would be one thing. The British went well beyond that, and catalyzed an unprecedented intermixing of cultures. This took three forms.

First, the common economic frameworks that now spanned the subcontinent presented historically mercantile communities, such as the Parsis and the Marwaris, with the opportunity to operate over a much broader geographic area.

Second, the British built railways, starting in the mid nineteenth century. The importance of this cannot be overstated. The railways played, and continue to play, a vital role in the

²² Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays*, 157.

intermixing of peoples and cultures across India. Air travel is still not something for the masses, well into the twenty first century.

Third, and most relevant for my story, the British sought to create India-wide administrative and military services, and over a long period -- accelerating in the first half of the twentieth century prior to their departure in 1947 -- began to look beyond the so-called martial races of North India for the officer corps. These recruits, now from the east, west and south, were brought into a military organization that was naturally concentrated in the north. That is where the land borders with Russia, Iran and China were.

Father

My father was the son of a schoolteacher in the deep South of India. When he was born, most of the South was contained within the Madras Presidency, a political unit of the Empire directly governed by the British. My grandparents were Tamilian Brahmins who lived in what is now the state of Kerala, adjacent to the state of Tamil Nadu. His ancestors likely migrated there in search of economic opportunity sometime in the eighteenth century.

My father did well in school, and probably spoke better English than most as my grandfather taught in English schools and viewed English as an important component of upward mobility under the British (which it was, and which it is in modern India).

At the age of twelve, he won a scholarship -- the only such handed out by the British in the Madras Presidency in the year 1942 -- to the Royal Indian Military College. The RIMC was in Dehradun, in the far north at the foot of the Himalayas. My father was part of an early cohort of Tamils, almost all Brahmins because of their better education at the time, who moved out of their homeland to serve in other parts of "India". The roles they found were mostly in government and military service.

It is only now that I begin to comprehend the internal fortitude required for my father to go north, alone on a long train ride, at the age of twelve in an era when most communication was by posted letters, and then build a military career despite being from a most un-martial race by British (and later Indian) standards.

Madras

I do not remember being especially conscious of being South Indian or Tamilian before we got to Delhi. Certainly I knew that my "mother tongue" was Tamil, because I'd hear my parents speak it occasionally to each other or to visiting relatives. But we spoke English at home as a family, and I learned and spoke Hindi in school.

In Delhi, however, I was almost immediately conscious of being South Indian, and so a figure of mixed respect and ridicule. I was now a "Madras", or one from Madras, the capital of Tamil Nadu. Madrasis, and Tamilian Brahmins in particular, bore a reputation of being smart, vegetarian, unathletic, and effete. Certainly in contradistinction to virile carnivorous North Indians.

I doubt anything was ever said out of malice or hatred. But Indian society is as fragmented, parochial and insular as any other; and children everywhere are knowingly and unknowingly cruel. Put a group of Indian children together, and you won't find a whole lot of inherent intellectual curiosity about each other's origins. Rather the millennia-old cultural and linguistic differences are immediately in the forefront, and minorities, as they must in order to survive and thrive, learn how to fit in.

It is no different for the Punjabi child at school in Madras (or Chennai, as it is now known).

There was a balancing factor. Which is that I also was the son of a fighter pilot who had served in the two wars, in 1965 and 1971, with Pakistan. That was about as martial as one can get, and some of this rubbed off on me. Or rather, I used this fact to rebut and defend.

India and Pakistan

Indians

The cricket victories in 1971 in the West Indies and England were not under the Nawab of Pataudi's leadership -- the captain was Ajit Wadekar, a stalwart of the Bombay regional side in the Ranji league. Bombay dominated the Ranji trophy in the decades after independence in a manner not unlike that of the New York Yankees. Over a twenty two year period starting in 1955, the Bombay team won the Ranji trophy a ridiculous 20 times.

Wadekar was deposed as captain in 1974 after leading a tour of England in which India was absolutely obliterated -- in one of the Test matches, the team was bowled for an all-time low of 42 runs (the unfortunate scorecard can be found here: <http://www.espncricinfo.com/ci/engine/current/match/63126.html>).

The aftermath of that tour, in India, presented the first major sign of the societal forces being unleashed by the growing expectations of Indian cricket fans -- for a loss was no longer the default case. As fans began to project a personal identity and absorb an Indian identity, the implications of a loss -- especially a bad loss to the former metropole -- were a direct wound to the perception of self.

In the cauldron that was the evolving India, the material consequences of this loss to the perceived symbolic leader, the team captain, were severe. It is hard to imagine this in a Western context, but Wadekar's house was actually burned down. The equivalent in the United States would be for Derek Jeter's apartment in Manhattan to be torched by irate fans after a 4-0 loss in the World Series.

This was not fun and games any more, in short.

The years that followed, leading up to the Pakistan series in 1978, were unsettled ones for Indian cricket. The dominant figure on the team was the previously mentioned Sunil Gavaskar, a Bombay stalwart. Gavaskar was the first truly great batsman produced by India, and was a remorseless accumulator of runs. In a sporting culture in which individual performances remained the mainstay of fan interest, Gavaskar's capturing of various global records in the game were moments of joy and pride. For adults and for little boys.

But the team stayed mediocre; losses of 3-2 in a five Test series to the West Indies (at home) and Australia (away) suggested a team that might have been close, but not close enough. The humiliation of the 1974 England victory did not recur, at least not during this period.

This was the state of Indian cricket when Bishen Singh Bedi, the first Sikh captain of the Indian team, led the first Indian tour of Pakistan in seventeen years in the winter of 1978.

Pakistan

If India is an artificial and created polity, then how do we describe Pakistan, which does not even have the benefit of a colonial-era existence? The country sprang into being in 1947 as a consequence of the agitation by the Muslim League, counterpoint to the Congress, which sought a separate nation-state for the Muslims of British India. Partition was one of the great tragedies of the twentieth century, largely ignored in the West -- it is believed that up to one million may have died, and over fifteen million displaced.

Benedict Anderson, whose notion of an "imagined community" I will explore later, notes that colonial nationalism was mapped to the colonial administrative unit, no matter how artificial or new that unit was²³. We see this on a map of the modern Middle East -- and it is also entirely

²³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New Edition)*.

true for "India", a political entity that did not exist at any time in history prior to the British. Cartography was vital in creating perceived boundaries that delimited territories from one another, setting the stage for future post-colonial nationhood. European colonizers brought, and created, maps that began to shape the imaginations of native populations who had not envisioned their own realities in this manner before.

Beyond just the creation of political maps of the present, colonizers went on to create "historical maps" to demonstrate the antiquity of the territorial boundaries of the regions they had conquered. These were in due course appropriated by bilingual collaborators/adversaries to pursue their own political ends -- in India, in Indonesia, in the Middle East, and elsewhere.

Cartography lies at the heart of national identity, and the Partition of 1947 fragmented the boundaries imposed by the British. It is the piece known as India that has the deepest claim to the "ownership" of millennia of history -- history that is largely imagined as it relates to the idea of an "Indian" nation state that has persisted since antiquity. While colonial territories were the result of imperialism, often no more than a few decades old, Eric Hobsbawm argues that this artificial unity might sometimes "produce a people that saw itself as a 'nation'." Hobsbawm:1992wz L1541} This is what happened and continues to happen with India. Religion and "values" are being retrospectively imposed to justify the existence of the Indian nation-state.

Pakistan, now broken up again after the departure of Bangladesh in 1971, has been left to rely on Islam to paper over cultural and linguistic differences in order to create a new imagined community. There was not even an incipient Pakistani identity at independence -- in fact, as late as 1946 it was not clear that partition would occur. And at the moment of partition India got the lion's share of the cricketing infrastructure. The cities of Lahore and Karachi in West Pakistan

were municipal centers for the sport, however. Three of the players in the first team from India to visit England in 1886 were from Karachi (all Parsis).

There was an immediate need to establish the requisite body to discipline and control the sport, and a crucial figure in this was Alvin Cornelius, a Christian in a Muslim nation but one of great influence in the sport (and beyond -- he was a respected judge for decades, rising to become Chief Justice of the Pakistan Supreme Court). Cornelius was the "true shaper, the man with the plan"²⁴ behind the creation in 1948 of the Board of Control for Cricket of Pakistan (BCCP).

The BCCP had no money but the new nation had plenty of *jazba*, a "combination of hope, spirit and passion."²⁵ This passion, this sense for the dramatic, is a core element of Pakistani cricket since inception (and perhaps of Pakistan itself). Incidents from just the last ten years of Pakistani Test cricket include: a captain of the Test team being banned for spot-fixing, a form of illegal gambling; a leading player being banned for biting the cricket ball (in an effort to make it swing unnaturally, so to speak); the leading fast bowler being revealed by the team doctor as having "genital warts"; and four different chairmen of the PCB (the modern name for the BCCP) taking office inside a twelve month period.

The *sturm und drang* of Pakistani cricket is incomprehensible to any outsider -- and behind it lies *jazba*, from the beginning.

The founders of the BCCP -- again, all "entrepreneurs" as it appears to not at the time have been a top-down, government-driven initiative -- set about assembling a national team. In some ways the BCCP sought first to build a national team out of known cricketers from the pre-partition period, and then impose a league structure beneath them. This fact reverberates through

²⁴ Samiuddin, *The Unquiet Ones: a History of Pakistan Cricket* L925.

²⁵ *ibid.* L380.

the decades -- for even now, the league level of Pakistani cricket, which should be the breeding ground for Pakistani cricketers, is disorganized and chaotic.

Justice Cornelius had an abiding belief in the virtues of fast bowlers, and the BCCP set the tone for all Pakistani cricket right from the start by focusing on fast bowlers. This is a critical element of the distinction between Indian and Pakistani cricket teams as perceived by fans of the two teams, and it infiltrates deeply into ideas of identity.

The image of the Indian team, until recently, was the image of Ranjitsinhji -- a languid Oriental figure with a cricket bat in hand, delicately glancing or guiding the cricket ball -- who brought to cricket "a peculiarly Indian style"²⁶. The image of the Pakistan team: a well built young man, running in almost from the boundary line, intimidating the batsman with the threat of injury from a hard cricket ball, sending the projectile at speeds in excess of ninety miles an hour.

This is the enduring image of Pakistan in cricket, and for Pakistanis as they consider their cricket team -- they want virility, aggression, muscularity, boldness. None of these namby pamby spin bowlers or effete batsmen for the average Pakistani cricket fan -- they want bowlers who can break bones and batsman who can hit the ball out of the park.

The current captain of the Pakistani team, Misbah-ul-Haq, is a batsman who is an accumulator in the Indian mode -- online cricket forums are full of never ending opprobrium showered upon him by irate Pakistani fans, even when the poor man leads his team to a victory. Recent topic titles in the leading online cricket forum, PakPassion (www.pakpassion.net), include "Dearth of Big Hitters in Pakistan", "There's No Freshness of Ideas and Direction", and "When Will The Torture End?" Those are the polite ones.

²⁶ Bateman, "The Politics of the Aesthetic: Cricket, Literature and Empire," 731.

War Minus Shooting

Test cricket status for Pakistan was far from assured after independence. For one, India was opposed -- for no good reason other than general grumpiness, as far as can be determined -- and now had a vote as a member of the ICC. For another, there was widespread skepticism about the quality of Pakistan cricket given the holes in the infrastructure. All of this changed when Pakistan defeated a visiting team from England in 1951, in part thanks to some remarkable fast bowling by Fazal Mahmood and Khan Mohammad.

The Pakistani Prime Minister, Khawaja Nizamuddin, was present at the match, and "seizing Fazal and Kardar by the arms, he led the crowd in cries of 'Pakistan *Zindabad!*' ('Long Live Pakistan!')." ²⁷ A few months later Pakistan was made a member of the ICC, conferred with official Test status, and invited by India to tour the country for its first Test match and series. Thus began the history of India-Pakistan cricket -- truly "war minus the shooting."²⁸

Cricket teams require captains, for those fast bowlers need leadership. Here Cornelius left his most enduring stamp on Pakistani cricket. For it was he who wrote to Abdul Hafeez Kardar inviting him to captain a Pakistani team against the visiting side from England in 1951. AH Kardar was the dominant figure in Pakistani cricket for the next three decades.

Kardar is an extraordinary figure. He reinvented himself in his youth, changing his name from Abdul Hafeez to A.H. Kardar -- this was part of his self-elevation to elite status, a process which also involved attending Oxford. An Oxbridge education, in those early days after independence, accorded immediate elite status to an Indian or Pakistani -- the Nawab of Pataudi

²⁷ Osborne, *Wounded Tiger*, 39.

²⁸ Orwell, *Facing Unpleasant Facts*, 195.

didn't need it, but even his status was enhanced by the fact that he attended Oxford and captained the university cricket team. So it was with Kardar.

He played Test cricket for India before partition, one of a handful of similar figures who stayed with Pakistan after independence and thus played Test cricket for both countries. Of him it has been said that "few men were so convinced of the rightness of Pakistan and fewer used sport as much to convince everyone else."²⁹ It has also been said that his cricket team represented "a traumatised nation neurotic about its status and desperate for recognition"³⁰ -- replace "nation" with "individual" and we have a window into the importance of cricket to Pakistani identity.

Kardar led the Pakistan team for the next decade. While that first Test series against India was lost 2-1, Pakistan won a Test match. In 1954, the visiting Pakistan team fought England to a draw in the Test series in England -- a result not achieved by India for another seventeen years. Other successes followed against Australia and the West Indies.

Appadurai tells us that "cricket matches between India and Pakistan are thinly disguised national wars."³¹ It was not mere sport -- it was a battle of competing identities, supposedly secular India against an Islamic nation, the virility of meat-eating Muslims against limp vegetarian Hindus, *jazba* against timidity. There is no question that "elements of communal tension... have always simmered when the two teams faced each other."³²

Paradoxically this created an enormous bias on the part of players on both sides to avoid losing at all costs. The two countries played ten more Test matches, in two series, in 1955 and in

²⁹ Samiuddin, *The Unquiet Ones: a History of Pakistan Cricket* L1452.

³⁰ Osborne, *Wounded Tiger*, 31.

³¹ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 107.

³² Brightman, *Cricket's Contribution to India's National Solidification* L1230.

1961. Every one of those Test matches resulted in a draw. It is said that cricket is "one of the more sophisticated war surrogates"³³; playing to a draw allowed both sides to claim victory.

Fifty full days of playing cricket from morning till evening -- nary a result. The 1962 edition of Wisden's Cricketers' Almanack, the bible of the sport, published without interruption since 1864, has the following to say about this cricket series: "an extremely dour affair" (<http://www.espnricinfo.com/wisdenalmanack/content/story/155247.html>).

Wisden got it right about the cricket, yet national honor was preserved by both sides. Perhaps more Test series might have been scheduled between the two countries, and perhaps these might have been more interesting for spectators. War with the shooting got in the way.

War With Shooting

In 1965, under the leadership of military dictator Ayub Khan but with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto playing Richelieu behind the scenes as foreign minister, Pakistan declared war on India. The reason was ostensibly the state of Kashmir, the main site of conflict between the two countries since independence. Hindu king, Muslim-majority population; each side has a viable story and the Solomonic solution during a brief war in 1948 was a partition of the state. But the tensions have never subsided.

The 1965 war was fought to a quick stalemate, but with India holding the edge when ceasefire was declared. Pakistani narratives are naturally different, but in India there was a sense that the country could hold its own in a military conflict against a martial regime and culture.

Then, in 1971, catastrophe struck Pakistan. The eastern wing of Pakistan, separated by thousands of miles, by language, by culture, by history, seceded with the help of India. This is

³³ Birley, *Social History of English Cricket* L91.

not the place to rehash the entire history of that event, but we can say here that the Pakistani army and air force were decimated on both sides, in both West and East Pakistan.

East Pakistan became an independent nation as Bangladesh (and joined the Test playing community three decades later). West Pakistan became just Pakistan, with a deep sense of loss and shame. Bhutto replaced Ayub Khan's successor, Yahya Khan, as the supremo of Pakistani politics.

From this societal turbulence emerged several of the greatest figures in Pakistani cricket. Many of them started playing for Pakistan in the early and mid '70s -- Imran Khan, the great fast bowler and occasional batsman who became the second iconic figure for Pakistani cricket after Kardar; Zaheer Abbas, one of the great Pakistani batsman; and Javed Miandad, perhaps the greatest Pakistani batsman of them all.

Leading up to the rematch with India in 1978 several of these Pakistani players were entering the high noon of their careers. Even now, in the mind's eye, as I think back to their images on television and in print, I see flamboyant, virile, hairy-chested Pakistanis; and unprepossessing clean shaven Indians. It is remarkable that this should be the case given the results of the 1971 war, just seven years earlier.

Could it be that the sense of shame and loss created a generation of sportsmen who sought to use the sport to revitalize the amputated Pakistani identity? My theory is that it is the latter -- for in the Indian subcontinent, cricket is not merely sport -- it is the nation, it is identity.

1978: Enemies

Home Alone

When I got home from school and tossed my school bag -- weighted down with all my textbooks and notebooks -- I mostly found myself alone. My eldest sister, eleven years older, was first in boarding school and then in college away from home for the entirety of my childhood. My middle sister was eight years older than me and we had little in common.

My mother, a homemaker, and my father, busy with his career, were warm and loving, but this was not a white picket fence environment in which dad played catch with his boy in the backyard and mom drove us around to classes. The idea of "extracurricular" activities is a relatively new one in the Indian environment, and so I was mostly left to plot my own path. The one major exception to this occurred when I failed a subject -- Hindi! -- in ninth grade, but we'll get to that later.

I read everything I could get my hands on. I had access early on to the British Council library in Connaught Place at the center of New Delhi, probably the best library in India at the time. We also had trunks full of old books, mainly by English authors -- although I did spend one adolescent summer trying to wade through, unsuccessfully, Jean-Paul Sartre's *Saint Genet*.

I would read for most of the afternoon, and then go downstairs to play cricket for a bit with my fellow neighborhood urchins. The "cricket" we played at home was very similar to that which we played in school, with the exception that the batsman had a cricket bat and didn't use his hand to hit the ball. Which meant the ball could go a long way! I'd come back to do some homework and then sit down to dinner.

Dinner was always a family affair, as my father would be home. Ours was a vegetarian household, and my mother viewed the kitchen as an important part of her domain of control. During the week, the fare was mostly North Indian food, with vegetable curried dishes accompanied by *chapatis*. On the weekend, as a treat, we'd eat South Indian fare, including *dosais* which remain my favorite dish in the world. *Dosais* are a breaded crepe, usually eaten with coconut chutney and *mulahaa podi* (literally "chilly powder" but often called gunpowder -- appropriately -- in North Indian or Western settings).

Modernity

In moving to Delhi, we lost the feeling of being in a completely cocooned military setting. This was not a cantonment; while Sardar Patel Colony mostly had military families, the urban landscape was no different from any civilian neighborhood in Delhi. We didn't hear fighter jets overhead all day, nor did my father's underlings come home with him, as they sometimes did in Ambala.

The daily evidence that our family had anything military about it came in the form of my father's uniform. During the summer, half-sleeved khaki; during the cold northern winters, a full-sleeved navy blue buttoned-up jacket. Trousers with a knife-edge crease at all times. Shoes and belt polished so you could see your face in them.

I was always proud of my father, but at that time proud of him only in that he was a senior officer in a position of leadership, that he was a martial figure, and that he looked real good in the uniform. It was only much later, as an exiled adult, that I began to comprehend what he'd had to overcome to get to the position he did.

Our family had no wealth to speak of, but there is no question that we lived in relative privilege. We had a nice government-issue apartment (and a nice government-issue house before

and after that), and at no time did I feel a want or a need. There was food on the dining table, books to read, a school to go to, and now "cricket" to play. What more could a young boy want?

This environment changed a couple of months after we moved into our apartment, when we acquired our first television.

In this time, before the world shrank with commonplace intercontinental travel, telecommunications links, and the Internet, consumer goods of all kinds were unavailable in India. When they were available, it was twenty or thirty years after the West and even then in bastardized form. So our first television was a black and white one in the fall of 1978.

Doordarshan, at the time the national (and only) broadcaster, made consistently weird programming choices. These choices have affected my life as no doubt they have those of millions of unsuspecting Indian children. I have an abiding interest in ballet. Why? Because Doordarshan chose to broadcast, several times early in the '80s, *Swan Lake* performed by the Kirov. I fell in love with the music and I associate it with the dance form -- thirty years later, that's how I think of Tchaikovsky. Why did Doordarshan broadcast Russian ballet performances to a billion Indians? This will forever remain a mystery.

The programming was appalling in most respects, but we didn't know any better so it was always amazing and always a novelty. One regular daily program, for example, was *Krishi Darshan*, a mind-numbingly dull thirty minute variety show involving Indian farmers and their insights into agricultural innovation. I was ten years old, living in an urban environment, so damned if I really cared about fertilizer -- but it was on at 7:30 pm every day and I watched it.

Things took a sensational turn for the better when Doordarshan -- the name means "seeing faraway things" in Hindi -- began broadcasting the tour of Pakistan by the Indian cricket team.

Emergency

India and Pakistan had not played cricket in seventeen years. Since the last encounter on a cricket ground between the two countries, the five Test match series in 1961, two wars had been fought. Cricket in the Indian subcontinent is an instrument of politics in many ways, and the resumption of cricket matches between the two reflects a radical change in the political landscape in each country.

In Pakistan, in July 1977, the army chief General Zia-ul-Haq ousted -- and later executed -- the populist Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Bhutto was prime minister during the 1971 war and it is inconceivable that cricketing ties would have been resumed during his reign. As has often been the case with Pakistan since independence, it is under military dictatorships that the relationship with India has been the warmest.

In India, in April 1977, the Congress Party was booted out in a general election, ceding its thirty year long dominance of Indian political life. Two years earlier, in response to increasing social agitation against her federal government's policies, the Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi -- daughter of Nehru, no relation to the Mahatma -- had declared a countrywide emergency. This was not quite martial law, but civil liberties were suspended and scores of opposition politicians were incarcerated.

While Gandhi rightfully gets castigated for this highly undemocratic act, she gets little or no credit for what she did two years later. She lifted the emergency decrees and called the general election -- she did not have to, as she had full control over the political and military landscape. The elections were obviously free and fair, as witnessed by the fact that the Congress Party lost. The new government was formed by the Janata Party, a hastily assembled coalition of

opposition politicians. The first non-Congress Prime Minister of independent India was one Morarji Desai.

I was nine years old and in Ambala at the time. In the depths of my (spotty) memory, I seem to recall excitement and a certain hubbub in my parents' social circle. I remember the word "emergency". I remember little else. But I remember Morarji Desai very fondly, for two reasons.

The first is that his birthday was on February 29th, 1896, a source of much joy to a nine year old mind interested in intellectual curiosities -- he could only celebrate his birthday every four years! The second is that his incarceration during the emergency period, in his seventies, led to a rather unusual lifestyle choice, namely the drinking of his own urine. There are very few things in the world that could be of more fascination to a nine year old boy.

There was a new regime and a new sheriff in town. Between Desai, his foreign minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (later to become the first Hindu nationalist prime minister of India), and General Zia, everything was up for reconsideration -- including cricket.

Versus

Despite growing up on air force bases, despite a father who was a fighter pilot and served in two wars with Pakistan, I cannot remember thinking very much about Pakistan -- and therefore about India's relationship with it. It is only as I began watching the grainy images of a cricket match between the two countries that an awareness grew within me, an awareness that it was India versus Pakistan. That there was a rivalry, that there was enmity, that I was Indian and they were Pakistani.

My father had many Muslim classmates at the RIMC. The year he graduated from school and joined the Indian Air Force was 1947 -- in the very month of independence, August -- and most of these classmates gave their allegiance to the newly formed Pakistani nation. Decades

later he met some of them at RIMC reunions, and it was as though they were all still friends and classmates. But they had fought against each other in two brutal wars.

We did not speak of this during my childhood or later; only when he wrote his memoirs at the age of eighty did I understand the context.

Clearly militaries exist for the purpose of an adversarial conflict. But my ten year old mind hadn't understood that in any substantive way. Fighter jets were big shiny toys, and my dad got to fly in them, but the idea of Pakistan as the adversary did not enter my mind until I saw a cricket match on television.

I also had almost no idea about the differences between Hindus and Muslims, staggering though that may sound today. The Indian military deliberately effaces religious distinctions, because India has such sizable populations of religious minorities. There are, for example, over 100 million Muslims in India.

Military forces (and their families) need to subscribe to the idea of India if they are to fight effectively as a grouped force. At the time of the India-Pakistan series in 1978, the Chief of the Indian Air Force was a Muslim; he was succeeded by a Sikh; who was followed by a Hindu; and to complete the sequence, the next one was Christian.

Ours was also not a particularly religious family; we'd go to a temple periodically, but our home was not infused with the iconography and ritual of religion.

My class at the Air Force Bal Bharati School had one Muslim in it, a boy named Ahmed. But at this time, a few months into the new school, I had made no connection between that and the differences in religious background between me and him. He just had a different sounding name -- and since I was the reigning class champion of different sounding names, there was actually an affinity rather than a difference.

All this began to change as I sat in front of the television and watched nineteen year old Kapil Dev open his legendary career for the Indian cricket team by bowling the first ball of the first Test Match between India and Pakistan on October 16, 1978.

Sport and Nationalism

Nations

"Cricket has been a game where power has been enforced and contested, and where political battles are fought afresh, often even while the international spirit of friendliness and sporting behavior is being proclaimed. Geographical and cultural differences and the struggle for different configurations of power have all affected the game."

Wendy Varney, "Howzat! Cricket from empire to globalization"³⁴

Millions of words have been written on the subject of nations and nationalism, and yet the concept of a nation remains fuzzy and hard to pin down. In his masterpiece, *Imagined Communities*, written more than three decades ago but never superseded, Benedict Anderson provides the most popular current definition: "an imagined political community -- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."³⁵

Much of Anderson's work focuses on colonial empires and the proto-nations therein. Post-colonial elites -- starting with their colonial-era agitations for sovereignty -- imagined their hitherto nonexistent countries into existence in almost all cases, building on the new boundaries created by the colonial power. Anderson refers to Sukarno who spoke of 350 years of colonial domination of Indonesia as though "Indonesia" was an ancient nation -- but it was and is

³⁴ Varney, "Howzat! Cricket From Empire to Globalization," 560.

³⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New Edition)*, 5.

transparently a recent invention, assembled by the Dutch.³⁶ The British and their native collaborators-turned-agitators constructed the same binary for the Indian subcontinent.

In Anderson's analysis of the British Empire, in the context of "official nationalism", a long range policy of Anglicization was followed throughout the colonial territories, following the famous "Minute on Education" by Macaulay for India.³⁷ He argues that it created a cadre of colonial subjects who were constitutionally barred from progressing beyond their home colony, but whose Anglicization made them strangers in their own land.

In a highly evocative phrase that resonates as I think about the great Indian nationalists -- Gandhi, Nehru, and Bose are excellent examples as they were educated not just in English, but in fact were educated in England and very likely thought in English -- Anderson points out that "the key early spokesmen for colonial nationalism were lonely, bilingual intelligentsias unattached to sturdy local bourgeoisies."³⁸ These men -- they were almost all men -- imagined India into being.

Gellner tells us that "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it *invents* nations where they do not exist."³⁹ What is Indian nationalism, if it isn't the invention of the Indian nation where one did not exist? At the stroke of midnight on August 14, 1947, the founding fathers of India had invented their nation. They had made India, now they had to make Indians, as Massimo d'Azeglio said about Italy at the moment of unification.⁴⁰

India's founders knew well that the mosaic of wildly different languages and cultures in India needed to be unified under more than a hatred of the colonial power. That required, among

³⁶ *ibid.*, 38.

³⁷ Cutts, "The Background of Macaulay's Minute."

³⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New Edition)*, 142.

³⁹ Gellner in *ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁰ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality (Canto)* L509.

other things, sport. For it required the masses to be "invited into history... in a language they understood" -- and there is no language more universal than that of sport.⁴¹

Sport

A crucial aspect of Anglicization under the British was sport. This included many games invented or popularized in England in the nineteenth century -- field hockey and soccer being two good examples. But it is cricket that has become over a period of a potent symbol of nationalism and the Indian state (and the Pakistani state).

Michael Billig puts it well: "sport is never merely sport."⁴² Sport reinforces and repeats the flag-waving stereotypes of the nation. The advent of modernity brought with it the rise of organized sport, and almost immediately sport and sporting events became symbols of the nation. When Pierre de Coubertin created the modern Olympics in 1896, the competing teams were organized by nation and so it has stayed.

Hitler's orchestration of the 1936 Berlin Olympics as a pageant for the resurgent German nation after the miseries of the post-Versailles Weimar Republic (so memorably captured by Leni Riefenstahl in the propaganda masterpiece *Triumph des Willens*); the extraordinary myth making around the United States' win over the Soviet Union in ice hockey at Lake Placid; the magnificent ceremony at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, held in the backdrop of Chinese human rights abuses -- these are just three of countless examples of how sport has reinforced the image of the nation.

For Indians and Pakistanis, as denizens of nation states of recent provenance, national identity is totally reliant on symbols. These symbols are presented and massaged by elites for

⁴¹ Nairn in Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New Edition)*, 82.

⁴² Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 119.

their own purposes -- mercantile or disciplinary or otherwise -- and have become pervasive to the point where their artificiality, their "createdness" is invisible.

This pervasiveness is a result of unprecedented distribution and visibility thanks to, first, the radio and television industry, and now the Internet whose powers can be accessed through cheap smartphones. "Most states now have dedicated sporting channels on television, will have a separate sports press, will make heroes of its sporting champions, and will celebrate any national victory"⁴³ -- and in India and Pakistan, where other sports are a distant second, victories in cricket are front and center at all times. In the subcontinent, cricket is "hegemonic."⁴⁴

It could be argued that given India has not been particularly successful at cricket, with the exception of the occasional spike (sporadic Test victories over England, capturing a recent one day international World Cup), perhaps this is all about entertainment and not about identity. That is "manifestly silly" -- countries like India have clearly "inscribed their own identities into sports."⁴⁵

There is no question that part of what is at work here is the invisible hand of capitalism. In a land so riven by differences, the need to capture a national market for maximizing profits has led broadcasters and advertisers to "turn to cricket as the lowest common denominator."⁴⁶ Everyone in Indian media knows this; one editor says that "as far as Indian identity is concerned, cricket overtakes even Bollywood... every time you watch cricket you are subconsciously and

⁴³ Cronin and Mayall, "Sport and Ethnicity: Some Introductory Remarks," 5.

⁴⁴ Kaufman and Patterson, "Cross-National Cultural Diffusion: the Global Spread of Cricket," 87.

⁴⁵ Morgan, "Sports and the Making of National Identities: a Moral View," 16.

⁴⁶ Mehta, "Batting for the Flag: Cricket, Television and Globalization in India," 580.

consciously reminded of the Indian identity."⁴⁷ In India, cricket has been utilized to make nationhood a "consumable" experience.⁴⁸

Indian cricket fans naturally do not perceive the manipulation. They do not think of the strangeness of it all, of the quirks of colonial and post-colonial history that have led to a country of 1.3 billion people shutting down for a major cricket match. For sport is the "one area of the social arena in which otherwise differing people might meet."⁴⁹ It is the field in which fans perform their Indian identity; it is integral to the sense of manufactured self.

India

Many factors went into the creation of the Indian nation. But as I repeatedly make the case, sport and specifically cricket have been crucial. Appadurai makes this clear eloquently: "Although it is true that census classifications, the control of religious endowments, and the issue of separate electorates were the major official arenas in which issues of communal identity were reified as part of a colonial sociology of India, the role of cricket in this process must not be underestimated."⁵⁰ In India, cricket is a sport of mass appeal, contrary to its image as a "sport for aficionados."⁵¹

Over the decades millions of words have also been written about the postcolonial experience, and much academic research has gone into understanding how the colonial past affects the postcolonial present. For several decades this sphere has been dominated by the

⁴⁷ Mehta, "The Great Indian Willow Trick: Cricket, Nationalism and India's TV News Revolution, 1998–2005," 1196.

⁴⁸ Mustafa, "Cricket and Globalization: Global Processes and the Imperial Game," 340.

⁴⁹ Stoddart, "Sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire," 673.

⁵⁰ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 96.

⁵¹ Rumford, "More Than a Game: Globalization and the Post-Westernization of World Cricket," 207.

"subaltern school" exemplified by Gayatri Spivak. Her phrase "Can the subaltern speak" has been appropriately described as the remark "that launched a thousand conference papers."⁵²

But almost none of the research on postcolonial nationhood has been about sport. One exasperated anthologist writes that "discussion of postcolonial India may concentrate on novels such Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (whose title is a direct reference to the granting of Indian independence), even though... cricket has had a far greater purchase on the popular imagination of Indian society than Rushdie or any other writer."⁵³

Perhaps one hundred thousand Indians can speak knowledgeably about Rushdie -- and eight hundred million Indians follow the sport of cricket with manic intensity! There are few better examples of the total disconnect between the reality of "lived experience" and the nature of the ivory tower. My argument here and in my personal recollections is that as an Indian becomes an Indian in the present day, he or she is not thinking deep postcolonial thoughts about subalterns -- more often than not he is thinking about cricket and about his Indian cricket team.

Cricket

Cricket, in the spectrum of sporting activity, is an exceedingly weird creature. Test cricket is played over five days and can still end in a no-result. It is followed by over a billion people -- but just ten countries play it at the highest level. The sport itself is complicated and nuanced to a degree that almost no other sport is. The very lexicon of the sport requires years of immersion to fully comprehend.

This complexity is part of what engenders a fiercely loyal fan base and community: "cricket is subject to a largely unconscious but nonetheless systematic obfuscation and, through

⁵² Wagg, *Cricket and National Identity in the Postcolonial Age*, 2.

⁵³ *ibid.*, 3.

that obfuscation, an exclusionary boundary is constructed."⁵⁴ The creation of such an imagined community is the reason why this alien sport is a national symbol in India and Pakistan, for the sense of community cuts across all the customary divisions of religion, province, caste and language, when played by the national team.

Sharda Ugra, one of India's most thoughtful sports journalists, writes that "only two things brought India together – war and cricket. Only two institutions could therefore keep the flag flying: the army and the cricket team."⁵⁵ What she means, at an individual level, is that the military and cricket "make" the Indian identity, more than any other sociocultural practice from religion to language.

My father chose the military as a young man at the moment of destiny in August 1947. When my time came, I chose cricket. Perhaps it was chosen for me.

⁵⁴ Malcolm, *Globalizing Cricket* L3764.

⁵⁵ Ugra in Wagg, *Cricket and National Identity in the Postcolonial Age*, 74.

1978: Imagination

Radio

One blurry night, almost two decades after the time of which I write here, I remember saying to a friend in the back seat of a New York City cab: "if we don't write of this time and this place, who will?" I feel that way about much of my childhood in India.

Now New York City has a never ending series of chroniclers -- not of every time and every locale, and now that the city has been turned into a luxury mall these chroniclers may cease to renew their ranks, but for now there are enough to present a future historian with ample material. But the lived experiences of my childhood don't seem to have made it to memoirs, and certainly not into sociology journals.

One example of that is the experience of listening to cricket on the radio. For decades, even after the advent of television, it was live cricket commentary on the radio that brought the sport to a wide audience in India. Appadurai knew this when he wrote that "multilingual radio commentary is probably the single major instrument in the socialization of the Indian mass audience in the subtleties of the sport."⁵⁶ This was a minor aside in a longer essay; and that is all one can find in the academic literature on a cultural experience that swallowed the waking hours of hundreds of millions of human beings for decades.

My classmates and I obviously couldn't watch the India-Pakistan cricket series in school. So we did what countless schoolchildren -- and officegoers -- did across the land, which was to smuggle tiny transistor radios into the school. During class breaks, in the corridors and on the

⁵⁶ Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 100.

playground, we'd press the radio against our ears -- there were no headphone jacks -- and eagerly follow the combat.

The game would last from 10 am to 5 pm each day, and I got home from school around three in the afternoon. I'd catch the end of the day's play on the television, but I experienced most of the cricket during the series on my radio.

In acknowledgement of India's multilingual polity and policy, commentators would alternate in English and Hindi. There are formal Hindi terms for many English words, painstakingly constructed neologisms generated to keep up with modernity. A railway station is, in formal Hindi, a *laupadh gamini sthaanak*. Most people just say "railway station"! Similar neologisms were generated for cricket terms, with equally amusing contortions. What stays in my mind is the expression for "four runs" -- an important term, as it indicates the batsman hit the ball out of the park. "*Chaar* run!" was what we heard on the radio when the Hindi commentator was on, just a simple translation of the word for "four" followed by "runs".

They didn't use that expression very much when India was batting in the 1978 series.

Differences

For it did not end well for India. The first Test ended in a draw after five days. There were strong individual performances on both sides, with Zaheer Abbas scoring 176 runs -- a harbinger of what he was to do to the Indian team for the rest of the series.

In the next two Test matches, Abbas and his colleagues thumped India. He and Javed Miandad scored many, many runs; and Imran Khan and Sarfraz Nawaz bowled at pace with great accuracy. The Indians couldn't handle the bowling, and their own bowling was anemic. Across the three Test matches India did not bowl out the Pakistan team even once.

After the first Test match, I was in good spirits. My excitement waned quickly as India were obliterated in the next two Tests. So I hung my fan's hat on individual performances as Indians had done since the beginning of India's Test history; centuries (scores of over 100 runs) by Gavaskar, and short but exciting innings by Kapil Dev (who was primarily a bowler, but could also bat). There was little to remember about the Indian bowling.

But the 1978 series hooked me completely on the sport. There is a direct line from then to now, where I snatch moments during the day to follow obscure games ("Bangladesh versus Zimbabwe") on the Cricinfo web site.

My identity has fragmented since that time, and I am now just as interested in the doings of the English or Australian teams as I am about India. But in 1978 what the series did was to introduce me to the imagined community formed by Indian cricket fans. In my peer group, at home or at school, an interest in and passion for following the sport and the Indian cricket team were entry points, a mode of belonging. I was a nerdy little boy, but this was a place where nerdiness gave me credibility.

I was now a cricket fan, able to converse knowledgeably and with passion about the batsmen and bowlers who represented India. I had a new fragment of identity, of Indian identity.

Imagination

As a ten year old boy, with no comprehension of the history and context, the intrinsic understanding that I was Indian came first when I saw a cricket match between my country and another -- the first time I saw the other in the flesh and understood that there were different identities in the world, made real and whole outside a textbook or a comic book.

I was Indian; **they** were Pakistani. I was not-Pakistani. I'd never met a Pakistani, nor would I in the course of a normal Indian life (although I did, up close, many years later at college

in the United States). But the Pakistanis were known to me now because of cricket, and I was not them -- I was Indian, and as I think back it feels that was the moment that the entire mythology of the manufacture of modern India seeped into my bones.

From here on, for decades until I brought a more skeptical eye to the fables of Indian nationalism, Nehru represented a heroic figure, in part because he battled with the saturnine Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. Nehru was just a character in my school history book before the cricket series; but now he was the defender of the faith. My faith, which was being Indian.

"Being" Indian was one aspect of how the cricket series shaped the formation of my identity. Another was the realization that **I** was Hindu, and **they** were Muslim. On the cricket field, it was the Hindus fighting the Muslims, as was the case in the two wars in which my father fought. The names were different and the rituals, religious or otherwise, were different.

The complexity and fragility of Indian identity revealed itself in other ways. I am not sure I thought about caste at this time -- it was only with time that Brahmin intellectualism became another unexpected attribute that came with my name and heritage. But in 1978, my growing understanding of the fact that I was South Indian did create an affinity for the South Indians in the team.

In the Third Test, played between November 14 and 19, Gundappa Viswanath, Syed Kirmani and Bhagwath Chandrasekhar were all from the South. I looked out for them and rejoiced in their success (and mourned their failures). But there was a further wrinkle in identity: all three happened to be from the same state, Karnataka; not from my state of Tamil Nadu, the land of the Tamils. **I** was Tamilian; **they** were Kannadiga. Not the same. I rooted for more Tamilians to join the team, and a few did many years later.

This, then, was my imagined community, made out of many elements. Common to all the elements was this strange sport, parasitically wound around the tree of subcontinental history.

Memory

A couple of years after the India-Pakistan series, after I'd figured out that the Wisden annual almanac was the definitive cricket book to own, I made my way to E.D. Galgotia & Sons, the legendary booksellers in Connaught Place ("CP") at the center of New Delhi. It's still around though all of CP has changed out of recognition (<http://blogs.hindustantimes.com/the-delhi-walla/?p=675>). The store carried that year's almanac. My parents gave in to my relentless entreaties and bought it, for several hundred rupees as I recall. The exchange rate at the time was fixed at eight rupees to the US dollar, and we were not wealthy -- this was an expensive purchase.

I am unsentimental about artifacts and I look to discard rather than preserve the debris of one's passage through life. Erase and rewrite. But I still have the 1980 Wisden, carrying it around the world with me for thirty five years.

It's a massive tome with over a thousand pages and tiny print. My copy has the famous yellow cover wrapped in plastic for protection. Once in a long while, I'll open it and flip through the pages.

That year's Wisden covered the 1978 India-Pakistan encounter, as the series ended too late to be described in the 1979 almanac. The almanac is published in April of each year, and the cut off for new information, in that pre-Internet era, was near the end of the previous year.

The writer describing the 1978 series speaks of my boyhood hero thus: "Head and shoulders above everyone else was Gavaskar, with scores of 89, 8 not out, 5, 97, 111, and 137." When I read those words, once every few years, I think of a hot afternoon at school, listening to

the radio in between classes. Images are oddly sequenced in memory and so I then see my father in his winter uniform, and my mother doling out food onto our plates at dinnertime under bright yellow military-issue light bulbs.

I remember getting on the school bus in my light blue school uniform. I remember the driving rain, feeble umbrellas, getting drenched during the first few weeks of the school year. I think of friends whose names I can no longer remember, the arcs of whose lives have been different from mine.

If I am feeling especially introspective (and maudlin) I think of memory and exile and identity; I think of who I was as a boy and who I am now in middle age, what has stayed constant and what has changed.

The almanac and some old math notebooks are the only physical objects from my youth in India that I still possess.

Bibliography

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (New Edition)*. New Edition. Verso, 2006.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large*, U of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Bateman, Anthony. "The Politics of the Aesthetic: Cricket, Literature and Empire." *International Journal of Regional and Local History* 1, no. 1 (January 2005): 63–82.
- Billig, Michael. *Banal Nationalism*. 1st ed., Sage Publications Ltd, 1995.
- Birley, Derek. *Social History of English Cricket*, Aurum Press Ltd, 2003.
- Bose, Mihir. *A History of Indian Cricket*, Andre Deutsch Ltd, 2002.
- Bose, Mihir. *A Maidan View: the Magic of Indian Cricket*, Penguin Books, 2006.
- Brass, Paul R. *The Politics of India Since Independence*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Brightman, Jason H. *Cricket's Contribution to India's National Solidification*, 2012.
- Cashman, Richard I. *Patrons, Players, and the Crowd*, 1980.
- Cohn, Bernard S. *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Cronin, M, and D Mayall. "Sport and Ethnicity: Some Introductory Remarks." *Immigrants & Minorities*, 1998.
- Cutts, EH. "The Background of Macaulay's Minute." *The American Historical Review* 58, no. 4 (July 1953): 824–53.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Vintage, 2012.
- Guha, Ramachandra. *A Corner of a Foreign Field: the Indian History of a British Sport*, Macmillan UK, 2003.

- Guha, Ramachandra. "Cricket and Politics in Colonial India." *Past & Present* 161 (November 1998): 155–90.
- Hobsbawm, E J. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality (Canto)*. 2nd ed., Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Kaufman, J, and O Patterson. "Cross-National Cultural Diffusion: the Global Spread of Cricket." *American Sociological Review* 70, no. 1 (February 1, 2005): 82–110.
- Kidambi, Prashant. "Sport and the Imperial Bond: the 1911 'All-India' Cricket Tour of Great Britain." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 8, no. 3 (January 1, 2013): 261–85.
- Malcolm, Dominic. *Globalizing Cricket*, A&C Black, 2012.
- Mehta, N. "Batting for the Flag: Cricket, Television and Globalization in India." *Sport in Society*, 2009.
- Mehta, N. "The Great Indian Willow Trick: Cricket, Nationalism and India's TV News Revolution, 1998–2005." *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 2007.
- Morgan, W J. "Sports and the Making of National Identities: a Moral View." *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, 1997.
- Mukherjee, S. *Nationalism, Education, and Migrant Identities: the England-Returned*, Taylor & Francis, 2009.
- Mustafa, Fahad. "Cricket and Globalization: Global Processes and the Imperial Game." *Journal of Global History* 8, no. 2 (June 6, 2013): 318–41.
- Osborne, Peter. *Wounded Tiger*, Simon and Schuster, 2014.
- Orwell, George. *Facing Unpleasant Facts*. Edited by George Packer, Mariner Books, 2009.
- Rosselli, J. "The Self-Image of Effeteness: Physical Education and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Bengal." *Past & Present*, 1980.

- Rumford, Chris. "More Than a Game: Globalization and the Post-Westernization of World Cricket." *Global Networks* 7, no. 2 (April 2007): 202–14.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Grimus*, Vintage Canada, 2010.
- Samiuddin, Osman. *The Unquiet Ones: a History of Pakistan Cricket*, HarperCollins Publishers India, 2014.
- Sen, Satadru. *Migrant Races: Empire, Identity and K.S. Ranjitsinhji (Studies in Imperialism)*, Manchester University Press, 2005.
- Stoddart, B. "Sport, Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30, no. 4 (October 1988): 649–73.
- Varney, Wendy. "Howzat! Cricket From Empire to Globalization." *Peace Review* 11, no. 4 (December 1999): 557–63.
- Wagg, Stephen. *Cricket and National Identity in the Postcolonial Age*. Edited by Stephen Wagg, Taylor & Francis, 2007.
- Warde, Alan. "Cultural Capital and the Place of Sport." *Cultural Trends* 15, no. 2 (June 2006): 107–22.