

## SPORTS CLUBS: ITS STRUCTURE AND ROLE UNDER GLOBALIZATION - AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY IN NORTH 24 PARGANAS, WEST BENGAL

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### Introduction

Sport is a part of civilized culture. It has conceptual theme, symbolic meaning, rituals, institutions, a striving for perfection, a system of rules, means for enforcing the rules and competition through organizations. These elements underscore the seriousness and justification with which Social-cultural anthropologists view sport as a ubiquitous activity and microcosm of society and culture. As sports become more institutionalized, an increasing number of competitions and professional roles under different organizations are developed. So, finally sports become more institutionalized as rules are codified, primary participants are specially trained, organizations form to manage and administer activities like competitions and public communication develop through tremendous influence of mass media especially in urban city contexts.

It is only recently that scholars and insightful practitioners in anthropology have been critically looking at sports through its organizational milieu. Sport

is a direct representation of the organized sociocultural system of a given society. The organizing bodies or clubs may be viewed as microcosm of social organizations to organize sports regularly and reflections of society's organizational behaviour or culture in general.

### Methodology

The study, being a qualitative one is basically an anthropological ethnography. It has been conducted through Participant Observation along with Intensive Interviews and Case Studies for collecting primary data. Data from secondary sources like books, journals, sports magazines, internets, etc. have also been utilized in the study.

### Observations & Discussions

The urban areas of the districts of north 24 Parganas, West Bengal, are the abodes as well as patrons of modern institutionalized competitive sports as organized by numerous clubs like professional organizations and associations. Through rules,

organizational structures, practicing, training, academies multi-gyms, spectacular competitions, sponsors, the urban sports in the district are well linked with national and international networks and are changing rapidly under globalization. Recently many corporate honchos of worldwide repute looking at the clubs with greater interest to make their business strong with sports marketing. Political leaders are also using the club platforms to spread their political prowess.

The sport-club system is the primary vehicle of training and competition from youth sports to elite sports. Another organizational aspect of children and youth sports in the district is that it tends to be increasingly exclusionary as children of different age groups (like, Nursery, Sub-junior, Junior, levels etc.) become senior or youths. For the junior and senior levels, there appears to be almost unlimited opportunities to learn sports and to compete in a variety of sports events. In some clubs, girls of the same age group levels and women, however, those opportunities become substantially fewer. It is also a mentionable fact that the local sports as organized and regulated through the clubs, is also under the parental organizations or associations of regional and town as well as district and national levels. Some clubs of excellent repute maintain their role by organizing regular competitions financed by sponsoring agencies, keeping records, and providing officials to ensure appropriate play. The range of sports involvement at this level is as broad as sport itself in the district – soccer, cricket and volley leagues and knockout tournaments,

academies or sports coaching centers, age group specific leagues and knockout tournaments etc. Some major regional differences in organized recreational sports, participation are also observed during investigation. The winning of any sports events, players, trainers, sports celebrities, etc. are mostly appreciated and honored and also treated with spectacular ceremonies by the club officials, members, supporters, and the local people. Recently, an increasing amount of organized recreational sports is found in the private fitness-club gyms. As part of their services to their members and athletes as well as players, club organize individual and team competitions in a number of indoor and outdoor sports, most typically soccer, cricket, volleyball, badminton, table tennis, carom, athletics, swimming, etc.

During investigation, it has also been found that there are many ways to be involved in sports events of the clubs besides playing or coaching. The variegated roles are created that require professional expertise to be applied to the interests of the sports and also maintaining the clubs' status quo of the performances in the area. Thus, sports vocations are developing gradually in the club-sports at the local level, typically in communities, often operates primarily with part-time and volunteer jobs. This situation strengthens the networks of relations around local sports-clubs with the sports world of the city of Kolkata which is presently the abodes of global sports in West Bengal.

Therefore, the subject of organizational structure and change has become

increasingly important for the studied district in the recent times. Technological advancement, increased national and international competition, changes to geopolitical boundaries, the creation and extension of various transitional trading blocks, and the introduction of market mechanisms to public sector organizations have all conspired to increase the speed and magnitude of change across sports organizations in the district under study.

Most of the sports clubs are open to the members, regardless of age, sex, social class, caste and religion or ability. They usually try to integrate recreation, physical culture, fraternity and quality of performance as a form of community interaction, making them available as pastime professions to all primary and secondary participants and the people of the localities. The major

and popular sports like Soccer, Cricket, Volleyball, are the important events to analyze sports clubs through organizational ethnography.

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