

REPRESENTATION OF SPORTSPERSONS IN LITERATURE AND CINEMA

Ph.D. THESIS

by

MUKESH CHOUDHARY



**DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, ROORKEE
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AUGUST, 2021**

REPRESENTATION OF SPORTSPERSONS IN LITERATURE AND CINEMA

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by

MUKESH CHOUDHARY



DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING
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STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the work presented in the thesis entitled “**REPRESENTATION OF SPORTSPERSONS IN LITERATURE AND CINEMA**” is my own work carried out during a period from July, 2017 to June, 2021 under the supervision of Dr. Sanjit Kumar Mishra, Professor, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee.

The matter presented in the thesis has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this or any other Institute.

Dated: 16-08-2021

(**MUKESH CHOUDHARY**)

Research Scholar

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

This is to certify that the above mentioned work is carried out under my supervision.

Dated: 16-08-2021

(**SANJIT KUMAR MISHRA**)

Supervisor

PREFACE

The present thesis entitled *Representation of Sportspersons in Literature and Cinema* attempts to explore the cultural dimensions of Sports and their professionals as a product of a given civilization during its onward march over the ages. The thesis argues in favour of analyzing the cultural factors being responsible for the growth and control of games and sports as integral components of human civilization. Slightly deviating from the predominant academic norms and discourse around the study of Sports as a subject of research, this research takes a different view on the area of Sports studies. Thus, by way of exploring some of the hitherto untrodden territories or the ones not much touched upon so far, a detailed analysis of cultural products like Literature and Cinema finds due consideration in this study which seeks to establish the cultural roots as far more important than their mere presentation as a ‘scientific’ product. No doubt, sports are predominantly a subject of ‘Physical Education’ but their cultural ramifications cannot be overlooked under a surveilling gaze and lenses of Science. Divided into five chapters namely, *Introduction*; *Approaching Human Situation the ‘Purush Way’*: *Dhyan Chand’s GOAL and Milkha Singh’s THE RACE OF MY LIFE*; *Approaching Human Situation the ‘Prakriti Way’*: *Mary Kom’s UNBREAKABLE and Sania Mirza’s ACE AGAINST ODDS*; *Sports and Bollywood*; and finally, *Conclusion*—the thesis explores some of the key cultural issues including race, ethnicity and gender in terms of their impact on the shaping of sports as also on the psychology of the sportspersons in their role as humans with all their qualities of head and heart. Since the thesis relates itself more to the realm of art and culture instead of claiming any kinship with pure ‘reason’ or what we say Science, it draws its strength in exploring the more subtle, the unconscious and abstract precincts of not just the human existence in terms of eternal values cherished by each of the individual sportsmen chosen for this study while their inner selves

finding an artful representation in their autobiographies. More importantly, the present study claims to explore the ‘unconscious’ (to use a Freudian term) labyrinths of Sports as a cultural activity through an academic analysis of the four autobiographies representing the mind and the vision of these individuals in particular and the sportspersons in general. Similarly, since the cinema has grown up as a popular medium of communication, the study has appropriately included as many as four films depicting different sports and their practitioners with a view to analyzing their acceptance and relevance in terms of their potential for mass appeal. The purpose of this selection is to inquire into the issues related to production as well as reception of sports as a cultural artefact with its potential for influencing the masses.

The *Introduction* deals with relevance of such a study as this one and attempts to discover the inseparable link between sports and literature as two entirely different sides of the coin only to be jointed within the wider matrix of culture. Apart from introducing some of the concepts relevant to the study, the chapter sets the stage for a further discussion around the theme of race, ethnicity, gender and marginalization as reflected in the writings of as many as four sportspersons included in the study: Major Dhyan Chand, Milkha Singh, Mary Kom and Sania Mirza, apart from certain films that echo these issues. The issues related to native/alternative and foreign/alien in terms of sports, the impact of successive invasions eventually leading to the dehumanizing process of colonization, and an overall adverse effect of all these on the local traditional sports—these issues have been discussed in chapter rather exhaustively so as to provide a context to the foregoing analysis of autobiographies and films in the successive sections of the thesis.

With a view to understanding and exploring the ‘unconscious’ and the ‘unknowable’ of sports, the second chapter entitled *Approaching Human Situation the ‘Purush Way’: Dhyan Chand’s*

GOAL and Milkha Singh's *THE RACE OF MY LIFE* presents a philosophical inquiry into the situation of sportspersons as human beings as strong or even as weak as any other ordinary mortals in as much as they reflect that upon their growth as sportspersons. Through a literary investigation of Dhyan Chand's *Goal* and Milkha Singh's *The Race of My Life*, an attempt has been carried out to showcase their dedication to Hockey and Athletics (respectively) as also their lovable qualities as excellent human beings who turned out to be role models for successive generations of sportsmen both on and off the grounds.

The third chapter, *Approaching Human Situation the 'Prakriti Way': Mary Kom's UNBREAKABLE and Sania Mirza's ACE AGAINST ODDS*, as the title rightly suggests, is a critical evaluation of women sportspersons and their inevitable role in shaping the games that each of them has been playing while still taking pride in "being women" of great human substance. It is important to note that though these two women—Mary Kom and Sania Mirza—belong to two separate geographical locales as also two different faiths yet their dedication to sports remains predominant, overshadowing any other identities whatsoever. The fourth chapter, *Sports and Bollywood*, deals with the representation of sports and sportspersons in the films made in Bollywood (Mumbai) and investigates how certain games and sports have been privileged while others have been marginalized. The chapter also discusses some of the popular films like *Lagaan*, *Chak de! India*, *Paan Singh Tomar*, and *Dangal* among others to bring out the para-technical cultural issues as driving forces behind their shaping as also their mass appeal. The movies chosen for discussion in the chapter present a cultural analysis of the body that plays and also the heart that feels. Finally, the findings of thesis and other important discussions have been carried out in the concluding chapter, *Conclusion*. Apart from a discussion around the universal human values and their relevance in the life of sportspersons and the role of art in

shaping their communication particularly in terms of their autobiographies that have been chosen for this study, the chapter contains some concluding remarks on issues like nationalism, race, ethnicity, ethics, gender and other cultural contours as inseparable components in any wholesome understanding of sports. In this context, it can be argued that each of the four sportspersons whose autobiographies have been included in the study, also represent the four dominant religious groups—Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity and Islam—thus offering a wider spectrum of India's socio-cultural dynamics and its attitude towards sports which seeks to grow in a multiplicity of its cultural backgrounds that the individual sportspersons belong to. Especial attention has been paid to establishing the significance of this particular study which fruitfully borders upon the rugged domain of sports on the one hand while the soft and abstract realm of creative writings with their imaginative impulse on the other.

Working on the assumption that various indigenous systems including those related to education and administration prevalent in the country were systematically destroyed by the invaders and colonizers, the thesis concludes that a similar destruction of native sports had been strategically carried out by those regimes in numerous ways both covert and overt both—a fact which has been grossly overlooked by the common people in general and the scholars of a particular leaning in particular who chose to disregard the values of local traditions and cultural practices at the altar of a colonial modernity. This interdisciplinary study establishes its relevance in that it fills up the much perceived gap in the scholarship on Sports and Literature thus paving a way for other researches in this area which will be useful for researchers, policy planners and sports professionals—all alike. In terms of adopting a suitable methodology for this study, the researcher has chosen to employ both inductive and deductive reasoning besides doing a neo-

historical analysis of sports as a cultural artefact besides using the insights propounded by Structuralism.



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(Mukesh Choudhary)
Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee

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Chapter 1

Introduction

While on the one hand ‘Sport’ (or, ‘Sports’) occupies an important space in human world, its study as a serious intellectual discipline within the wider matrix of culture has continued to remain largely unexplored or at best, underdeveloped. It is precisely in this context that the present study modestly offers itself as an academic exercise involving critical analysis of sports in its cultural dimension. It is only recently, as Peter Bailey (1978) argues, that “sport has been viewed in its own light, as a significant element of social experience, whose history is of particular importance in the broader exercise of reconstructing the kind of lives led by ordinary people in the past” (Bailey 284). In the context of Europe, Hobsbawm (1983) also observes that “sport has only recently been perceived as one of the most important social practices of Europe of the late 19th and early 20th centuries” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 298). Keeping in view the modern concept of ‘historiography’, it can be argued that matters of trivial standing have been conflated and recorded at unnecessary lengths by their recorders and commentators and their conferences and literature, the historians are yet to appreciate the relevance of sports in the lives of the influential and the insignificant of past communities. This apparent incongruity is still more evident in the context of former colonies like India and Africa. However, as Indian sports journalist Boria Majumdar finds the utility of a rigorous study of sport history as an essential component, “not only for an understanding of the evolution of the sporting heritage of a nation, but for a deeper appreciation of seemingly unrelated political processes such as nationalism, colonial culture and so on. Within the constraints of an already under researched field, a neglect of sources in the vernacular further contributes to a skewed understanding of particular events, ones that have played crucial roles in India's colonial context. Vernacular sources, more often

than not, present a fundamentally different understanding of history in relation to English language source”(Majumdar 3069).

The present study *Representation of Sportspersons in Literature and Cinema* attempts to explore the cultural dimensions of Sports and their professionals as a product of a given civilization during its onward march over the ages. The thesis argues as to what role the cultural factors can play in growth and control of games and sports as integral components of human civilization. Slightly deviating from the predominant academic norms and discourse around the study of Sports as a subject of research, this research takes a different view on the area of Sports studies. Thus, by way of exploring some of the hitherto untrodden territories or the ones not much touched upon so far, a detailed analysis of cultural products like Literature and Cinema finds due consideration in this study which seeks to establish the cultural roots as far more important than their mere presentation as a ‘scientific’ product. No doubt, sports are predominantly a subject of ‘Physical Education’ but their cultural ramifications cannot be overlooked under a surveilling gaze and lenses of Science. Divided into five chapters namely, *Introduction; Approaching Human Situation the ‘Purush Way’: Dhyan Chand’s GOAL and Milkha Singh’s THE RACE OF MY LIFE; Approaching Human Situation the ‘Prakriti Way’: Mary Kom’s UNBREAKABLE and Sania Mirza’s ACE AGAINST ODDS; Sports and Bollywood;* and finally, *Conclusion*—the thesis explores some of the key cultural issues including race, ethnicity and gender in terms of their impact on the shaping of sports as also on the psychology of the sportspersons in their role as humans with all their qualities of head and heart. Since the thesis relates itself more to the realm of art and culture instead of claiming any kinship with pure ‘reason’ or what we say Science, it draws its strength in exploring the more subtle, the unconscious and abstract precincts of not just the human existence in terms of eternal values

cherished by each of the individual sportsmen chosen for this study while their inner selves finding an artful representation in their autobiographies. More importantly, the present study claims to explore the ‘unconscious’ (to use a Freudian term) labyrinths of Sports as a cultural activity through an academic analysis of the four autobiographies representing the mind and the vision of these individuals in particular and the sportspersons in general. Similarly, since the cinema has grown up as a popular medium of communication, the study has appropriately included as many as four films depicting different sports and their practitioners with a view to analyzing their acceptance and relevance in terms of their potential for mass appeal. The purpose of this selection is to inquire into the issues related to production as well as reception of sports as a cultural artefact with its potential for influencing the masses. The thesis reveals how the Indians had a rich range of sports and associated cultural practices like Yoga, meditation in the daily routines which, however, were adversely impacted by the successive invasions by the Mughals and colonial powers including the Europeans, with the traditional sports being pushed back to the margins as the native sports being scoffed at as “games of the savage”.

The thesis primarily underscores the relevance of such a study as this one in discovering the inseparable link between sports and literature as the two entirely different sides of the coin only to be jointed within the wider matrix of culture. Apart from introducing some of the concepts relevant to the study, the chapter sets the stage for a further discussion around the theme of race, ethnicity, gender and marginalization as reflected in the writings of as many as four sportspersons included in the study: Major Dhyan Chand, Milkha Singh, Mary Kom and Sania Mirza, apart from certain films that echo these issues. The issues related to native/alternative and foreign/alien in terms of sports, the impact of successive invasions eventually leading to the dehumanizing process of colonization, and an overall adverse effect of all these on the local

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para-technical cultural issues as driving forces behind their shaping as also their mass appeal. The movies chosen for discussion in the chapter present a cultural analysis of the body that plays and also the heart that feels. Finally, the findings of thesis and other important discussions have been carried out in the concluding chapter, *Conclusion*. Apart from a discussion around the universal human values and their relevance in the life of sportspersons and the role of art in shaping their communication particularly in terms of their autobiographies that have been chosen for this study, the chapter contains some concluding remarks on issues like nationalism, race, ethnicity, ethics, gender and other cultural contours as inseparable components in any wholesome understanding of sports. In this context, it can be argued that each of the four sportspersons whose autobiographies have been included in the study, also represent the four dominant religious groups—Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity and Islam—thus offering a wider spectrum of India's socio-cultural dynamics and its attitude towards sports which seeks to grow in a multiplicity of its cultural backgrounds that the individual sportspersons belong to. Especial attention has been paid to establishing the significance of this particular study which fruitfully borders upon the rugged domain of sports on the one hand while the soft and abstract realm of creative writings with their imaginative impulse on the other.

Working on the premise that various indigenous systems including those related to education and administration prevalent in the country were systematically destroyed by the invaders and colonizers, the thesis successfully concludes that a similar destruction of native sports has been grossly overlooked in modern times too, in numerous ways both covert as well as overt. This interdisciplinary study establishes its relevance in that it fills up the much perceived gap in the scholarship on Sports and Literature thus paving a way for other researches in the area which will be fruitful to academic researchers as well as to the professionals—creative writers and

sportspersons, all alike. In terms of adopting a suitable methodology for this study, the researcher has chosen to employ both inductive and deductive reasoning besides doing a neo-historical analysis of sports as a cultural artefact besides using the insights propounded by Structuralism.

Literature plays a pivotal role in promoting a sport, just like any cultural practice. Movies, books, novels depicting different sports and glorifying sportspersons make the art popular among the masses and therefore play an important role in social acceptance. While Cultural imperialism had marginalized Indian sports and sports personalities since the seventeenth century; in recent times, a lot of popular media works have started focusing on Indian sports and the associated personalities. Bollywood for instance have brought out movies on Major Dhyan Chand, Milkha Singh, Mary Kom and Sania Mirza and echoed their journey and achievements and successes and failures. This thesis will be visiting the movies and works associated with these Indian sports legends among others and establishing how creative employment of Indian sports and stories around Indian sports personalities can help rejuvenate the interest in the sports for Indian audiences.

The thesis attempts to discuss the sports, sportspersons and the 'unexpressed' part of their self in terms their autobiographical writings as well as the movies made around their lives, apart from touching upon some of the significant aspects of the games that they have been associated with. It is precisely in this context that an analysis of the theoretical framework operating upon the work becomes relevant to comment upon. Thus, the thesis builds its arguments upon theorists like Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida and others whose findings have provided a veritable insight towards a fuller understanding of the issues presented in the study. Some of the critical concepts mostly related to colonization, neo-colonization, imperialism, neo-imperialism, cultural imperialism, marginalization, hegemony,

ideology, and discrimination find themselves inextricably and fruitfully linked to the findings of the thesis. Hence, it would be in the fitness of the things that an executive brief be presented here so that the reader could connect the rest part of the thesis with the terms mentioned herein.

Sports like other prehistoric arts have traveled through times immemorial, with their forms constantly evolving during successive stages of progress—from a savage hunting and boar fighting to the more civilized forms of swords fighting to wrestling to modern day sports—the cultural landscape of sports has kept on modifying itself over time. With the dawn of what we would prefer to call civilization, sports have become an integral part of human being's cultural existence across the world, both East and West. While on the one hand sports have been part of Greek and Roman civilizations in the forms like long-distance race, mule-cart race, fencing, javelin throw and boxing, the people in India and other eastern countries were also not deprived of the pleasures practical usages of sports which formed part of their life in the basic formats of wrestling, archery, fencing, weight-lifting, horse-race, chess (ashtapada or chaturanga), dice, snakes & ladders and the yoga, to name only a few, thus evidently buttressing the claim that the arena of sports pervaded every age and clime, in one form or the other, not just to entertain their kids and grown-ups all alike, but also in the form of a cultural tool to educate them with. Eventually, it can also be argued that sports have been traditionally associated with the values of universality and eternity apart from their ability to entertain and educate the human beings irrespective of the boundaries of place and time. In the pages that follow, an attempt has been made to present a fuller understanding of sports as a cultural product as well as a cultural 'text', the reading of which can best be done only in the light of comparison and contrasts, an analysis which has been carried out later in this chapter.

Mythologist-scholar Devdutt Pattanaik (2019) finds a parallel in the sports traditions of ancient Greece and those of India and draws a fruitful comparison between the western form of sports and India's Yoga. A number of sports and games came to India including other parts of the world in imitation to what we know as the Olympic Games, which were originally organized as a ritual when one of their great heroes died (Pattanaik). The uncanny similarity between the sports traditions of the two continents could be attributed to a cultural borrowing in terms of various sports and games played in both the places albeit with certain changes and differences of format and scheme. Thus, athletics played a very important role in both these cultures. Pattanaik observes that, "Gods, like Apollo and Artemis, and heroes, like Atlanta, are celebrated for their racing abilities and the typical Greek body type, which is highly muscular. These stories are about achievement and offered a test to the physical and mental prowess of the participating sportspersons. The victor was crowned with a laurel wreath, because there was an association of the surge of adrenaline, exhilaration and triumph with the ambrosia of the gods. It was the moment when one connected with the divine. Hence, the Greek heroes were constantly focused on aggressive achievement". He further observes, "Now, add to this a scientific or business element and you will find people focusing on the measuring and monitoring the achievement of a target. One is pushed by one's coach and cheerleaders to do better and better. There is both reward and benefit and one sees this in athletic traditions; but now it has percolated into Yoga traditions, where one is continuously being cheered to achieve a particular posture, a particular number or to tone your body to a particular goal. It becomes all about the objective. This is very different from the traditional model where yoga was primarily a tool to make one self-aware." Similarly, speaking of Yoga, a popular ancient practice and the difference in its perception by the West and India, Pattanaik writes, "One of the key differences that one finds between the yoga

that is popular in the West and that which is taught by traditionally trained Indian gurus of India is the idea of achievement. In the West, yoga is marketed as an achievement: the achievement of a particular body posture and a body type, which demands constant measurement and monitoring. But the traditional yoga guru is not interested in achievement. He is more interested in awareness, in using the body, the breath and the mind as tools to make one's self aware of not just the body, breath and mind, but things within and without. Achievement versus awareness is the fundamental difference between western and Indian thought" (Pattanaik). In the context of the sports traditions across the various cultures, the foregoing discussion posits sport as an organized, competitive and a skillful physical activity within the moral canvass of devotion and fair play—the human virtues essentially demanded of sportspersons. Since it is difficult to visualize a period when the young ones did not instinctively participate in races or wrestling, it can be construed that they might have always included sports in their physical or even recreational activities. However, to quote Pattanaik, "one can only speculate about the emergence of sports as autotelic physical contests for adults. Hunters are depicted in prehistoric art, but it cannot be known whether the hunters pursued their prey in a mood of grim necessity or with the joyful abandon of sportsmen. It is certain, however, from the rich literary and iconographic evidence of all ancient civilizations that hunting soon became an end in itself at least for royalty and nobility" (Pattanaik).

The *Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary* defines sports as "any activity done for pleasure and that needs physical effort or skill, usually done in a special area and according to fix rule, is called 'sport'. Being understood from this perspective, sporting activity, in one form or other, started with the beginning of life on earth". Understandably, humans have ever remained fascinated by physical adventures and activities which promised to offer enjoyment and

recreation. The primordial bronze sculptures of ancient Greek civilization to the monuments of Egypt—one can have reasons to believe that sports have existed as integral parts of human cultures. These early, primitive depictions indicate that sports activities like wrestling, swimming and gymnastics formed important part of human existence with men and women expected to have acquired the skills like hunting the animals, climbing rocks and trees, running, swimming and similar other skills being crucial to their survival and existence.

To quote Devdutt Pattanaik (2019) “Fast runners, fearless hunters, belligerent marksmen and good warriors have always emerged as heroes and led the society for ages” (Pattanaik). Pattanaik further observes that mythological heroes like, “Achilles of Rome, Hercules of Sparta and Arjuna from Indian epic Mahabharata, are some of the excellent examples of physically skilled men who became legends. The ruins of Coliseum in Rome, Roman Amphitheatre in Germany and Togyu arena in Okinawa in Japan bear witness to the fact that enjoying sporting activities was a popular leisure activity in different parts of the world for ages. Stories of gladiators amusing and entertaining the public speak volumes about the popularity of sports in ancient societies” (Pattanaik).

A cursory preview of the writings on history of sports unravels that different games and sports took shape at different points of time, with only a few of them evolving into durably working formats, while others dwindled out into marginalized positions. Scholars like Andreas De Block and Siegfried Dewitte have tried to give a Darwinian approach of ‘survival of fittest’ in rise and fall of any sport. “Almost every sport is in itself an intricate system composed of the interaction of biological and cultural elements. But despite this interlacing of nature and culture, a Darwinian theory of sports is possible” (S. and B. A. De Dewitte 2). The sport which had the capacity to attract the maximum number of players as well as its spectators was considered to be

more popular and successful than others. Only those sports which have endured through the withering of time have existed while others got thrown into oblivion. Arguably, according to the theory of Evolution, the most successful sport happens to be one which has “evolved towards an optimal balance between accuracy, informativeness, and transparency, referred to as the sport’s signaling value” (8). Dewitte further observes, “Sports like Cricket, Football, Hockey and Rugby have transformed themselves with time and are popular around the globe. Different sports evolved in different parts of the world to cater to the necessity of the region. In central Asia, for example, horseback riding is a necessity. Having a good skill of the game, **Buzkashi**, an odd version of polo played in that region, could make a man a fierce warrior and an excellent hunter. Mastering a perfect marksmanship could make you a law enforcement agent in western countries. Polo was played in Persia (Iran) in 6th century B.C, but, later on, became a well-established game in China” (12).

Consecutively there has been an increased interest to enhance global appeal for sports and movies, books and other literary devices have turned into the mediums necessary for this transition. Indian societies in ancient and medieval times rated these skills as a sign of *sabhayata* in the personality. People were rated macho and chivalrous who mastered these skills. Giving an account of the culture and sporting habits of medieval society, O’ Hanlon (2007) writes: “Archery and wrestling formed part of the education of sons of ashraf urban elites, and well-known literary figures were often also skilled archers and swordsmen. These gendered bodily and literary accomplishments were in turn vital parts of the repertoire of a gentleman of culture, for whom appropriate bodily deportment and the cultivation of bodily health were important signs of gentility” (O’Hanlon 490).

The Culture of Sports and Games in Ancient India

With a rich legacy of civilization, the depiction of sports in Indian cultures goes back to the Harappan period. According to Kaur & Chander (2015), “Physical culture in ancient India was fed by a powerful fuel, the religious rites. In early India, games and sports were very much concerned about the development of the physique and for the art of offence and defense”. Sports like polo, martial art of judo, chess was originated in India and it was transmitted to foreign countries. Knowledge was given to their pupil by using oral method of teaching. India has a rich inheritance in terms of sports as revealed through the excavation of the ruined sites of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa as also depicted in the country’s Vedic literature including the epics like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Later Chanakya’s *Arthashastra*, Kalidas’ *Kumarasambhavam*, Panini’s *Aṣṭadhyayi* and Dandin’s treatises like *Dasakumaracarita* and *Avantisundari* as well as a whole lot of Buddhist and Jaina writings. Other archaeological sources like coins, inscriptions and monuments also support this view.

The Indus Valley Civilization: The excavations in Indus valley Civilization, also known as Harappan Civilization which grew up around the valley of Indus river, buttress the prevailing notion that during its heydays (2500 - 1700 B.C), its citizens had been capable of using different types of weapons and armaments in war and hunting: bow and arrow, dagger, axe, and mace. Weapons like javelin and discus were very commonly used in games as well. The Harappan society enjoyed a settled and sedentary life, playing music, singing and dancing were common. A statuette found from the Mohenjo-Daro depicting a danseuse, reveals the dancing as an important sports activity. Other important sports included swimming, marbles, balls and dice. Besides, a type of board game resembling the modern chess was also prevalent. Chess was originally called Ashtapada (sixty-four squares).

Vedic Period: During the era of the Rig-Veda including the ages when great Indian epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, were composed (though during entirely different respective periods), men and women were expected to be well - adept in chariot - racing, archery, martial games, swimming, wrestling and hunting (Kaur and Chander 76). According to the same scholars as already referred to, women in the Vedic times “received a fair share of masculine attention in physical and military training. The Rig-Veda tells us that many women joined the army in those days. A form of chariot race was one of the games most popular during the Vedic period. People were fond of swinging. Ball games were in vogue in those days by both men and women. Apart from this, a number of courtyard games like "Hide and seek" and "Run and catch" were also played by the girls. Playing with dice became a popular activity. The dices were apparently made of Vibhidaka nuts. From the Rig-Veda, it appears that the Vedic Aryans knew the art of boxing” (76). History also reveals that there were sports festivals during Vedic times, these sports festivals were called samana, archery, horse riding and chariots were conducted for the sake of prizes. In the later Vedic and post -Vedic age, yoga had been an integral part of the ancient civilization (76).

In the Epic Age: “Aryans also gave India two historic epics called *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, in which chariot-racing, archery, horsemanship, military tactics, wrestling, weight-lifting, swimming and hunting are mentioned” (76).

Buddhist Period: With the advent of Buddhism, Indian sports reached the peak of excellence (Kaur and Chander). Arguably, “Gautama Buddha himself is said to have been an ace at archery, chariot - racing, equitation and hammer - throwing. Buddha himself reveals in the terrain of yoga. Swimming, sword - fighting (fencing, as we know it today), running, wrestling and ball games were immensely popular among the students of Nalanda and Taxila. The idea that man

enters into harmony with the five elements, through the science of breathing, is to be found in the most ancient records of Indian history. A Buddhist monk from India introduced Kalari into China and Japan in the 5th century. He taught this art in a temple. This temple is today known as the Shaolin temple”(77) In Jainism, there is Tri-Ratna and Angas who gives us many stories related to sports. People were playing some games like; Archery, Dice, Chess, Swimming, Horse riding, Fencing & some ball games also. Women were interested in singing, dancing & some another games.

Mauryan Period: The Mauryan Empire established by Chandragupta Maurya later flourished by “Asoka the great” ruled throughout large part of India. Kautilya composed the Arthsastra. According to this text, the king Chandragupta had biggest military that was near about 6 lacs. They were given physical training for their fitness. In his Arthśastra Kautilya mentions about the swimming, archery, horse-riding, fencing, chariot-racing, javelin and wrestling. Children played toys made of wood and clay.

Post Mauryan Era: Mahabhashya, tells us about Yog-sutras written by “Patanjali”. This text mentions about Yog-Sutras. The term Sutra means a thread. The Yog-Sutra has four padas, they are “Samadhi Pada, (On being absorbed in spirit), Sadhana Pada (On being immersed in spirit), Vibhuti Pada (On supernatural abilities and gifts) and Kaivalya Pada (On absolute freedom). The Bhagawad Gita itself is considered as a great Yogasastra” (78). Yoga is as old as human being’s history. In India yoga has been practiced by people for more than 4000 years ago. Ancient Indian history was rich with the knowledge of sports and physical activities (78).

Games such as Chess, Snakes and Ladders, Playing Cards, Polo, Judo and Karate martial arts originated in India and it was from here that these games were transmitted to other countries, where they were developed further. The games of Chess, Ludo (including ladders and snake) and

Playing Cards owe their origins in India to several games now known worldwide. The famous epic Mahabharata tells of an event in which a game between two groups of warring cousins called Chaturang was played. (“Sports and Games”).

Wrestling: Sharma and Choubey (2016) observe that in the “Vedic texts that dating back to 1700 B.C, in the Rig-Veda (Avari 2007), and also in the epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, there are references to wrestling. A fusion of two distinct forms is wrestling in India. In the *Mahabharata* that was written between 500-300 BC, the indigenous Indian form, Mallayuddha, is mentioned, and later references to wrestlers exercising on wooden poles occur in the *Manasollasa* (1135 AD), which is a comprehensive instruction manual written by the Western Chalukya King Somesvara III on the scholarship and military training of young Chalukyan princes. Mallakhamb traces its history historically in the 12th century from Malla-Yuddha, or the indigenous wrestling form. In the 16th century, the Persian Mughals introduced a more northern wrestling power to the Indian subcontinent. Combined with the indigenous form, this practice developed the pehlwani wrestling style that is common today in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh” (Sharma, R. and Choubey 24).

Further Kamble (2020) observes that the sport of wrestling was included in the Olympics in 708 BC, being counted among the most prestigious and oldest competitions in the Olympic Games while the sport in India was mostly used in ancient times as a wonderful way to keep physically fit. It was often used without any guns as a perfect means of military exercise. Wrestling is also known as 'dangal' in India and it is the basic type of a tournament for wrestling. In the fourth chapter of this thesis entitled SPORTS AND BOLLYWOOD, the sport of wrestling finds a detailed treatment as a cultural product with its depiction in the Hindi movie “Dangal” (2016).

Mythological references to Wrestling: Most famously, “wrestling in India is known as Malla-Yuddha. Even before the Aryan invasion, some forms of MallaYuddha were practiced in India. Mahabharata, the famous Indian epic, has made a major mention of the Indian wrestling game. Bhima was considered to be a great wrestler of that period, one of the leading characters in Mahabharata, and some of the other great wrestlers included Jarasandha, Duryodhan, Karna, etc. Wrestling in India is also mentioned in the other Indian epic, Ramayana, and Hanuman is identified as one of the greatest wrestlers of that time. The Malla Purana of the thirteenth century is a reference to a group of Gujarati Brahmin wrestlers known as Jyesthimallas” (Kamble 89).

Shekhar and Kumar (2019) view wrestling as one of the most seasoned games played in rural India, drawing inspiration from the Indian epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Wrestling was also referred to as "MallaYuddha" in ancient India. The characters like Jarasandha, Bhima, Karna and Duryodhan were strong wrestlers referenced in the *Mahabharata*. Hanuman was a wrestler who appears as a revered deity in the epic of *Ramayana*. Some Gujarati Brahmin wrestlers known as 'Jyesthimallas' also find mention in the 'Malla Purana.' Evidently, ancient India's rulers and sovereigns put their wrestlers on highest pedestals. By doing physical exercises all the time, the wrestlers managed to preserve their well-being and quality (Shekhar and Kumar 1967).

Pattanaik (2016) also discusses Krishna as a wrestler. He writes, “Krishna is a great wrestler. The Bhagavata Purana tells us how Krishna wrestles demons who take the form of bulls (Arista) and horses (Keshi) and serpents (Kaliya) and pythons (Agha). And, most importantly, how he went to Mathura to participate in a wrestling contest where he overpowered the state wrestling champions, Chanura and Mustika, and even the dictator, Kamsa. Later in life, he yokes seven wild bulls to win the hand of Satya, daughter of Nagnajit, king of Kosala, in marriage. The image

we get before us is that of a virile Indian youth from an agricultural community participating in a bullock-cart race or bull-leaping, such as in the now controversial Jallikattu festivals of Tamil Nadu, cheered by all villagers, who feel secure that they have a strongman to protect them from marauders and oppressive kings” (Pattanaik).

Vajra Mushti: Vajra Mushti also referred to as 'precious stone clench hand' or 'thunder-clench hand' is a method of antiquated Indian combative tactics used by wrestlers known by the name Jyesthimalla. The ammunition register in this game is called 'Indra-mukti,' which indicates Lord Indra's clenching hand. Pehlwani: Pehlwani is also known as 'Kusti' and is a wrestling technique from South Asia. It's a combination of the kind of wrestling in the neighborhood, known as 'Malla-Yuddha' and 'Varzesh-e bastani', a kind of Persian wrestling. Four kinds such as 'Bhimaseni', 'Hanumanthi', 'Jambuvanthi' and 'Jarasandhi' were isolated in the old time wrestling in India, based on method and strategy. Bhimaseni Wrestling: Bhimaseni is for wrestlers of immense form and consistency. This kind of wrestling needs additional consistency and eventual use of it. Wrestling with Hanumanthi: This kind of wrestling is an increasingly advanced kind of wrestling. The wrestler, by his skilled predominance, will win the match. Jambuvani Wrestling: in which bolts and holds are used by wrestlers to deal with the adversary wrestler. Jarasandhi Wrestling: The form of Jarasandhi wrestling is fundamentally considered to sever the adversary's appendages and joints; it is India's most dangerous type of wrestling. Depending on the methods for determining the victor, wrestling in India can again be split into two other groups. They are: Orthia: The wrestler needs to drop the opposing wrestler on the ground many times in a row to win the match in this way. Kato Pale: This style of wrestling asks the wrestler to accept defeat by pointing his finger to lift his right hand (Shekhar, Chander and Kumar 1968). Later, wrestling was advanced throughout British India, with wrestlers being inducted into their military forces in

different capacities, most usually as fighters with a special ability to wield a heavy “gada”. In this way, wrestling continued to flourish as a popular game in India with earning a coveted position among the top 10 wrestling nations. Until the 1960s, this condition remained unaltered. The World Wrestling Championship was organized in New Delhi by India during 1967. In India, there are various kinds of wrestling, such as techniques, winning, local and some more. Today, wrestling processes have been merged with other hand-to-hand combat structures. Wrestling in India can be divided into two main groups in this cutting edge era, such as 'Malla Krida' and 'Malla-Yuddha'. The game style is Malla Krida, while MallaYuddha is the battle form of wrestling. Since Vedic occasions, free-form wrestling has become more typical than distinct systems. In India, free-form wrestling is known as 'Pushti' or 'Kushti'. Malakhra: Malakhra is an unmistakable kind of wrestling that South Asia has secured. In various regions of India and even in Pakistan, this kind of wrestling is carried out. The wrestlers tie a material around the adversary's midriff and each one of them tries to toss it down to the ground (1967).

Mallakhamb: Burt (2010) observes that in its ancient avatar in India, Mallakhamb appeared in the form of wrestling suitably blended with certain yogic postures of the same type. Mallakhamb traces its history historically in the 12th century from Malla-Yuddha. The Mughal Empire ruled much of the Indian sub-continent between the mid-16th century and the early 17th century. By 1725, successive internal revolts had undermined the Mughal Empire. Under the guidance of Chatrapati Shivaji, who fought against the Mughals, the Maratha Empire started to take shape. Not until the beginning of the 18th century did the next reference to Mallakhamb appear. This lack of any historical record for a period of more than six centuries concerning Mallakhamb is exceptional. The scholar Joseph Alter commented on the "lack of historical accounts of wrestling and the sport's generally opaque and thin description" (Alter).

The British Government took over India's direct administration in 1858. Several aspects of Indian physical society were influenced. Phillip Zarrilli, the British Kalaripayattu practitioner and scholar, has outlined the influence of colonial control on traditional Indian martial art forms (Zarrilli). Kalaripayattu, a martial art from South India, was prohibited entirely. Just a handful of Gurukuls or masters who were training secretly in remote locations in the south-western state of Kerala kept it alive. There is no historical record suggesting that the British prohibited the practice of Mallakhamb, possibly because it was not seen as a martial art because there was no fighting or weapons involved and so it was not considered a physical hazard, but Mallakhamb, along with many indigenous Indian physical practices, appears to have suffered and fallen out of favor during this time. Other factors for the dwindling popularity of games like wrestling and fencing may be due to the British and their soldiers' heavy use of weapons. English sports such as cricket, tennis and gymnastics were introduced to India and flourished during the time of the British Raj (1858-1947). The first western-style gymnasiums were also opened in India at the end of the 1920s. In the early 1920s, the re-emergence of Indian wrestling culture took place, spurred on by nationalists reacting against the British. In order to reclaim a clear national identity in the run up to independence, Indian physical culturalists turned to their own wrestling tradition (Rosselli).

The exploits of the Indian wrestler Gama, who traveled to London in 1920 and defeated British wrestling champions and later became the undisputed world wrestling champion, were well publicized and made him a national hero (Alter). This laid the foundation for the third revival of Mallakhamb and its development after Indian independence in 1947. Mallakhamb was a form in its own right by this time, a consequence, I would argue, of the contraction of modern Indian wrestling training. Contemporary Indian wrestlers have a fairly restricted palette of training

exercises notably pushups or Dands and deep-knee bends or Bethaks. This contraction in the training routine created a difference between the contemporary form of wrestling and its early training devices, such as the pole and the rope of Mallakhamb. In the nationalist time before Indian independence, when Mallakhamb re-emerged, wrestling was performed separately.

The Impact of Colonial Gymnastics on the Native Mallakhamb: It can be argued that gymnastics must have had its impact on the native Indian practices of Mallakhamb as can be noticed in the changing format of the game: the Mallakhamb practitioners transposed the movements, such as hand balances, mounts, dismounts and body levers, which they had seen directly to their own experience of gymnastics. This explains the reality that these moves are still referred to by their original English names in Mallakhamb training. In contemporary Mallakhamb, modern hatha yoga is also a core physical feature. Influences from other physical activities, including gymnastics, had begun to influence the development of yoga practice by the time the Sritattvanidhi, a Hatha yoga text from the early 1800s, was written, which contributed to an increase in the number of yoga postures. The poet, the Maharaja of Mysore, Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, details instructions for 122 yoga poses in the Sritattvanidhi, including handstands, backbends, foot-behind-the-head poses, lotus variations, and rope exercises (Sjoman).

In Mallakhamb practice, many of these postures feature prominently. Mallakhamb, like hatha yoga, appears to have shown the ability to respect and reinterpret its own practices through exposure to external influences. The sport of Mallakhamb appears highly likely to continue to develop despite the lack of sufficient support and only recent recognition from the Indian government. That of a modern performing art is the other emerging face of Mallakhamb. The Indian dancer Daksha Sheth, an unusual artist who provided a background within the

traditionally conservative Indian dance discourse for traditional Indian martial arts, pioneered this. Members of the Sheth Company were trained in the Mallakhamb rope and pole styles, the Chau and Kalaripayattu Indian martial arts, as well as classical kathak dance. Mallakhamb was featured by Sarpagatiand Bhukham in Sheth's works. The point of view that an alien alternate universe is occupied by conventional Indian culture and remains unchanging and frozen in time is a pit. Mallakhamb has always had an innate ability to adjust and modify in response to evolving environments. As it was discovered, Mallakhamb, in its contemporary form, is itself an embodiment of the collision of numerous cultural forces. As it is, in its nature, a hybrid physical type after having learned it, practiced in it, and also researched it. Perhaps this is what has made it resilient, adaptable and able to thrive not just as a sport and a means of fitness stress, but also as a performing art of circus, dance and theater in its modern and exciting manifestation (Burt 34-35).

Gymnastics: Sharma and Singh (2019) observe that “Sports and games are part of every culture and have important place in every society worldwide. Gymnastics has vital role in the development of mankind. Egyptian aristocracy was entertained by acrobats about seven thousand years ago. The Chinese were engaged in gymnastic exercises as early as 2000 B.C. The term “Gymnastics” derived from Greek word “Gymnos” which means naked art. In ancient Greece male athletes performed exercise without clothing in school of gymnastics which was called as Palestra. Activities included wrestling, running, jumping, throwing, weight lifting, boxing and swimming all classified as gymnastics. Johann Bernhard Basedow had opened the first school to give a gymnastic program to all people. Christian Carl Andre recognized as the founder of modern gymnastics. He was first to introduce free hand exercise to the pupil in indoor hall. Johann Christoph Frederick Guts Muths (1759-1839) was considered as the real founder of

modern physical education and the grandfather of German gymnastics. Gymnastics came to India through British regiments. The Indian military establishment always had a close relationship to the British army since the East India Company. Gymnastics training in the Indian armies began soon after the establishment of the gymnastics staff in Britain. This training was transferred to India through several means, the exchange of ideas between officer serving in British and Indian regiments. The transfer of gymnastics staff –trained regimental instructors in India with their units. In ancient India gymnastic was unknown, people of ancient India practice yoga asana, acrobatic movements for health, physical & mental fitness and recreation. The practice of asana to keep physically, mentally fit and for the meditation. In ancient India, Vedic civilization was one of the richest civilizations of the ancient world. It is interesting to remark that in a Vajasaneyi Samhita mentions the word Vamsha– Nartin, which means acrobat or pole dancer, is cited in the Yajurveda. Acrobatics was probably the earliest form of Gymnastics in the Indian history. In the Epic age, people of that period have high standard of physique. They gave privilege to the development of their body strength. D. C. Majumdar, (1950) observes that in 17th century Shree Samarth Ramdas Swami was considered as the pioneer of organised Gymnastic Institution in Maharashtra. He was considered to be the incarnation of strength and skill, he travelled for and wide in the whole of India and inspired the people to build a temple of Hunuman with a gymnasium attached to it. Modern gymnastics apparatus which start getting popularity in 18th and 19th century in Europe was comparatively unknown to the Indians. In India, apparatus gymnastics was introduced by the British regiments. The Indian military establishment had close relationship to the British army since the establishment of East India Company with a formal gymnastic training being imparted by the British officers to accomplish two primary goals: firstly, to make the Indian soldier more capable and physically fit; secondly,

to make the Sepoy a 'better' human--the one who could match the British conception of character, morale, and martial aptitude" (Sharma and Singh 718-720). While discussing the concept of 'colonization' in the upcoming passages we shall have a detailed analysis around these often demeaning experiences faced by Indians.

Archery: Gulia and Dhauta (2019) observe that, "the excavations at Harappa and Mohanjodaro revealed the use of bow and arrow as a classical Indian weapon during the warfare, right from the Vedic period, until the advent of Islam and even it has a mention in some Rig-Veda hymns. Detailed accounts of training methodologies in early India concern archery, considered to be an essential martial skill in early India"(Gulia and Dhauta 1253). One of the most ancient sports is considered to be archery in India. The game of Archery was mentioned quite extensively in the two most common Indian epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana. All the principal characters of these two epics have been described as Archery's great warrior's legendary figures like Doran are depicted as masters in the art of archery. Rama, Laxmana, Bharata, Shatrughan, Arjuna, Eklavya, and Karna the great warrior are also associated with archery. Dhanurvediya or Archery is an indigenous game of Meghalaya. Gulia and Dhauta perceptively observe, "Archery games were immensely popular all over India. Specially among the students in the renowned universities of Nalanda and Taxila in ancient India. Now it is one of the most prominent games in all continents of the world" (1254).

Swimming: Kumar (2016) observes that in "Krishna Leela" from the Vedic Times, people in India were familiar with this art during the epic era. We also see that Gopika (Ladies) swimming in water, Krishna killed the Kalia Sarpa by dancing in water on his head. Duryodhana hid in a lake performing Kumbhaka in "Mahabharata" with the fear of Bheema's blast. In "Mohanjodaro," we see that before the Mughal era, there were well built swimming pools for

public baths. There is a reference to Kalidas Swimming in the Gupta Period. In Vasanta Ritu, he described swimming as an incomparable recreation. He defined swimming in such a way that swimming was known to him. Swimming pools were the hallmark of pleasure during the Muslim era. Babar was a terrific swimmer. It is stated in his autobiography "Babarnama" that he swam all the major rivers from Central Asia to Banaras. By jumping into the Ganga and swimming the River with the aid of the Skin Bag, Humayun saved himself from his enemies in the Baxar Battle. Swimming was an important military ability during the Maratha era. British officers who took charge of the Indian government used swimming as a leisure sport. There was an opportunity for local people who came into touch with British people to learn to swim on modern lines. Since the swimming facilities were the pioneering centers of modern swimming in India in large cities such as Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, etc. (Kumar).

Equestrian: India's equestrian sports have a rich history. In the inscription, carving and coins excavated at Mohenjadaro and Harappa, evidence of horse games and equestrian activities was found. A type of chariot racing was one of the most common games during the Vedic era (2500 BC-600 BC) and this continued into the period of Ramayana when hunting became a royal sport ("BRIEF HISTORY OF EQUESTRIAN").

Hockey: Describing hockey as one of the oldest sports, Majumdar (2008) observes that, "hockey predates the ancient Olympic Games by a little more than 1,200 years. However, the modern game of field hockey evolved in the British Isles in the middle of the nineteenth century. The British helped spread hockey globally, promoting it in parts of the empire as part of the civilizing process, and subsequently its popularity became especially visible in the Indian subcontinent by the early twentieth century". He further writes, "In colonial India, especially in the early decades of the twentieth century, hockey was as popular as cricket and football, the

country's other passions. Even school and college magazines of the period are replete with descriptions of hockey matches, and they specifically draw attention to India's spectacular performance in the Olympics" (Majumdar 1592). According to Majumdar, "Men's hockey first appeared at the 1908 Olympic Games in London. It reappeared in Antwerp in 1920, returning to stay from the 1928 Amsterdam games onwards. Women's hockey waited much longer, finally debuting in 1980. Between 1928 and 1956, India won six straight Olympic gold medals and 24 consecutive matches, a record likely to stand for the foreseeable future. Indians have won two more gold medals since, in 1964 and 1980. In fact, it was at India's insistence that hockey was reinstated at Amsterdam after being dropped from the programme of the eighth Olympiad in Paris in 1924" (Majumdar 1594).

Further Haque (2011) observes Hockey is the national game of India. However, like the national animal, the national game is also in danger. There are several factors responsible for the decline of Hockey in the country. Lack of proper planning and motivation, politicization of the bodies relating to promotion of the game, shrinking space for the children to play and several other factors can be mentioned here. But the most important factor for this sorry situation is often ignored. In fact, it is profit-oriented 'the market' that is determining the fate of society and nations today. Hockey as a sport is not market-friendly in present circumstances. It does not serve the interests of corporate houses and therefore, the sport is disappearing from schools and colleges, and also from the television. On the other hand, the market friendly game of Cricket is becoming popular day by day.

Hockey has also failed in getting the attention of the politically-governing class of the country. The plight of the hockey players who brought laurels to the country is often reported in the media but the political masters hardly care for them. Even the groups and persons who never

miss an opportunity to show their nationalism and patriotism do not bother either about the declining national game or about the appalling conditions of the hockey players who have given their lives and blood to the game and won medals and shields for the country. This is because the national game is not going to fetch money and fame for them. On the other hand, the cricketers and the film actors can provide them both. Thus we find cricketers and film actors contesting elections and defeating seasoned politicians. If they do not contest, they are hired by political parties as crowd pullers and star campaigners. The great and legendary hockey players are always conspicuous by their absence on all such occasions (Haque)

Punam (2015) describes the games and sports were very much concerned with the growth of the physique and the art of offense and defense in early India. Games were often considered a kind of leisure that played a vital role in the growth of the personality of a man. The famous epic Mahabharata recounts an occurrence in which two groups of warring cousins played a game called Chaturanga. The period when the epic Mahabharata was written dates from about 800 BC to 1000 BC in different forms. The game persisted in some form or another until it developed into chess. In his 1913 dissertation, *A History of Chess*, H.J.R. Murry concluded that chess is a descendant of an Indian game played in the 7th century AD. The Encyclopedia Britannica notes that we find that the best authorities agree that chess existed in India before anywhere else was recorded to have been played. In ancient India, the game of cards was also invented. Abul Fazal was a court scholar of Emperor Akbar of the Mughal Empire. In his book *Ain-e-Akbari*, which is a reflection of the life of that period, card game records are of Indian origin. Kalaripayattu, the name of the Martial Arts, was originally from Kerala. Kalaripayattu is made up of a variety of complex movements that train the mind and body (Punam 346-347).

Since the study focuses on the socio-cultural dimensions of sportspersons just as the individual sports they have been associated with, it is relevant to present a brief discussion around some of the concepts including: Colonisation, Neo-Colonization, Imperialism, Cultural Imperialism, Marginalization, Discrimination, Hegemony and Ideology among others. While as many as two chapters of this thesis, the second and the third, deal with autobiographies representing four significant sportspersons—Dhyan Chand (*Goal*, 1952), Milkha Singh (*The Race of My Life*, 2013), Mary Kom (*Unbreakable*, 2013) and Sania Mirza (*Ace Against Odds*, 2016)—the fourth chapter includes movies depicting four different sports—Cricket (*Lagaan*, 2001), Hockey (*Chak De India*, 2007), Athletics (*Pan Singh Tomar*, 2012) and Wrestling (*Dangal*, 2016). Further, it is also notable that these four sportspersons embodying the four dominant denominations in terms of faith (religion) apart from representing the two gendered categories—male and female. Since a sportsperson cannot afford to ignore the bearing of the faith or the gender or even the influences of the socio-cultural milieu he or she belongs to, it is important to analyze these extraneous factors responsible for shaping their sports. The concepts shared below have an ideological relationship with the four sportspersons-authors and the protagonists of the four movies chosen in this study which will be further referred to while analyzing them here onwards in the respective chapters. It is with this intention that the aforementioned concepts and terms find a scholarly albeit a brief discussion in the following sub-section.

Colonization: After the Industrial revolution that began in Europe during eighteenth century, ‘colonization’ happened to take place its natural corollary more in the form of its ideological ally to aid it, rather than standing in opposition to the movement. Though the process and effects of colonization were not new, its modern form can be associated with the rise of European powers to the positions of superiority in relation to the non-white nations of the world. Given the

limitations of space, suffice to say that it had a dehumanizing and demeaning effect on these newly colonized countries and their citizens. While the present thesis limits itself to the consequences of colonization on sports and sportspersons of the colonized nations, it has been argued that several traditional sports belonging to these nations were replaced by non-traditional, modern European games and sports thus significantly reducing them to marginalized positions only to an unimaginable loss of traditions in terms of sports. The process often involved the settlers dispossessing indigenous inhabitants, or instituting legal and other structures which systematically disadvantage them. Though in its basic format, colonization can be demarcated as establishment of foreign control over the 'target territories' or even the humans for the purpose of cultivation, often through establishing colonies and possibly by settling them, it had affected the sports in a similar manner.

Neocolonialism: The term refers to the marginalization and subjugation of Asian, African, and to some extent, the Latin American countries by European powers through indirect means. According to the Wikipedia, "The term is now an unambiguously negative one that is widely used to refer to a form of global power in which transnational corporations and global and multilateral institutions combine to perpetuate colonial forms of exploitation of developing countries. Neocolonialism has been broadly understood as a further development of capitalism that enables capitalist powers (both nations and corporations) to dominate subject nations through the operations of international capitalism rather than by means of direct rule" ("Neocolonialism"). As such, *neocolonialism* refers to the Eurocentric policies that were seen as schemes to maintain control of these so-called Third World nations of the world.

Imperialism refers to a type of transnational world-order in which one group of countries or class controls the 'others' through application of subtler means of control in the post-colonized

era. In the chapters that follow, an attempt has been made to show how it has had its negative effects on Indian sports and sportspersons including those in other parts of world with a similar experience of imperialism.

Cultural imperialism refers to cultural subjugation or even what Gramsci calls- ‘hegemony’, of the more developed industrialized countries, thus determining the control and direction of both economic and social progress while also defining the cultural values and setting socio-economic standards across the world in relation to the West. It has been observed that the whole world has been subjected to a situation of ‘cultural common market area’ in which, to quote Matti Sarmela (1975), “the same kind of technical product development, the same kind of knowledge, fashion, music and literature, the same kind of metropolitan mass culture is manufactured, bought and sold. Western ideologies, political beliefs, western science, western laws and social institutions, western moral concepts, sexual symbols and ideals of beauty, western working methods and leisure activities, western foods, western pop idols and the western concept of human existence have become objectives, examples and norms everywhere in the world. But there are too many dispossessed people who have amassed a few western material possessions but no longer have any birthplace, home or final resting-place” (Sarmela 1).

Marginalization or Social exclusion, as the Adler University’s *Institute on Public Safety and Social Justice* defines it, “is the process in which individuals are blocked from (or denied full access to) various rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to members of a different group, and which are fundamental to social integration and observance of human rights within that particular group” (*Social Exclusion - Wikipedia*). The present study analyses the autobiographies of sportspersons like Mary Kom and films like *Lagaan* and *Chak-de India* in the light of this particular concept i.e. social exclusion or marginalization.

Discrimination: Since the present study deals with autobiographies of sportspersons like Dhyan Chand, Milkha Singh and Mary Kom—who have experienced discrimination of one type or the other at different stages of their career, it is important to discuss what we mean by the term ‘discrimination’ though very briefly. The charter of Amnesty International defines ‘discrimination’ as “an act of making unjustified distinctions between human beings based on the groups, classes, or other categories to which they are perceived to belong” and which “occurs when a person is unable to enjoy his or her human rights or other legal rights on an equal basis with others because of an unjustified distinction made in policy, law or treatment” (“Discrimination”).

Hegemony: In its most common usage, ‘hegemony’ can be referred to the perceived or real control of one class or group over another, which is usually legitimized through the norms or ideas planted by the dominant ones. It can also be defined as “the political, economic, or military predominance or control of one state over others” (Schenoni).

However, in the precise context of this study, ‘hegemony’ has been taken to mean as “shorthand to describe the relatively dominant position of a particular set of ideas and their associated tendency to become commonsensical and intuitive, thereby inhibiting the dissemination or even the articulation of alternative ideas” while the related ‘hegemon’ has been used to identify the “actor, group, class, or state that exercises hegemonic power or that is responsible for the dissemination of hegemonic ideas”(Rosamond).

Ideology: “Ideology can be referred to a set of beliefs ascribed to a person or a group, particularly as held for reasons that are not purely epistemic in which practical elements are as prominent as theoretical ones” (Honderich 392). Though the word originated as a serious theoretical discourse, very soon it took on “connotations of impracticality” with Napoleon

choosing to use it in a sarcastic mode. However, in modern times, the word mostly refers to a systematic body of concepts, particularly the ones of a specific society, group or political organisation. As Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines, The term has been in use in English since the end of the 18th century with the French author Destutt de Tracy designating it as the *science of ideas*” (“Ideology”).

For a careful analysis of the autobiographies and films taken up in this project, it is in the fitness of the things that the socio-cultural perspectives shaping the mind and art of a sportsperson be also analyzed and properly contextualized accordingly. The foregoing discussion should prove helpful in decoding the cultural context and the undercurrent of personal feelings and emotions which cannot be ignored in an academic project on sportspersons and their representation in literature and cinema. It is hoped the upcoming chapters would be read in this light.

Chapter 2

Approaching Human Situation the ‘Purush Way’: Dhyan Chand’s *Goal* and Milkha Singh’s *The Race of My Life*

Before a discussion on the autobiographies of these two well-known sportsmen—Dhyan Chand and Milkha Singh—is taken up, it is important to understand the wider philosophical context in which their contribution to sports can be properly located. The epistemological concept of *Purush*, has its origin in **Saankhya darshan** as the ‘*Supreme Cosmic Being* who represents the one, indivisible, infinite, independent cosmic reality’ as opposed to, or complemented with, *Prakriti* which faintly refers to ‘illusion’ or ‘creation’ or ‘nature’. The web source Wikipedia associates **Saankhya darsahan** with the ontological investigations made by the ancient Indian philosopher, Kapil (also known as Kapilachaarya). Accordingly, **Saankhya** is also one of the six types of Indian philosophies that had become popular during ancient India, and which can be considered to stand in binary or contrast with another equally powerful philosophy that remained dominant for many centuries, the **Advaita Vedanta**. The literal meaning of ‘*Saankhya* or *Samkhya*’ is ‘number, which logically takes it to the realm of two (or the idea of multiplicity)—the *Purush* and the *Prakriti*, the two separate yet inseparable entities the human world consists of. Gaurav Mandal observes, “*Purusha* is the quintessential male, the controlling, regulating, supreme Lord. *Purusha* represents pure consciousness, the one, indivisible, indestructible, and ultimate reality (*tattva*). *Prakriti* represents the mental states and materiality (*chit-shakti*), which arise from the 23 realities (*tattvas*) which are an integral part of her. They are the universal prototypes or building blocks, each subject to three basic modes namely *sattva* (pure), *rajas* (mixed) and *tamas* (impure). Their permutations and combinations result in the diversity of

beings and objects” (Mandal). Arguably, in their archetypal formats, *Purush* and *Prakriti* are hard to distinguish thus giving the “impression that the ultimate reality is one only, and Brahman is all, without distinction, names and forms” (Mandal). However, they grow apart as they descend into the lower planes of existence, creating the illusion that they are separate and independent. Hence, in the mortal world no one knows surely whether they are one or two, and whether they are entirely independent or mutually dependent. From our own constitution and from the scriptures we know that they are incomplete without one another, and neither life nor creation is possible unless they both participate in the same field. “The *Purusha* and *Prakriti* are present in everything from the highest, sunlit heaven to the lowest, sunless hell. In us, *Purusha* personifies the soul or the self, while *Prakriti* represents the mind and body. Together they manifest in the mortal world as *Jiva*, the living being or the embodied soul. The soul is pure and effulgent. The body in its natural state is impure and dense, bound to birth and death. They impart to the beings the dualities of light and darkness, good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, and purity and impurity” (Mandal).

Dhyan Chand and Milkha Singh happen to be the two most iconic personalities affiliated to Hockey and Athletics respectively, while the sports that they represent also happen to be no less significant in terms of their potential for a timeless and universal appeal. Their autobiographies apart, the various shades of their personality have found manifestation in the films made around them. However, it is through their autobiographies one can have a better assessment of their personalities as celebrated sportspersons and the real inner selves that they actually were. In the light of these two autobiographies—Dhyan Chand’s *Goal* and Milkha Singh’s *The Race of My Life*—an analysis of the socio-psychological perspectives of their individual selves along with a cultural investigation of the milieu has been presented in the chapter. Dhyan Chand’s *Goal* was

published in 1952 while Milkha Singh's *The Race of My Life* appeared in 2013—separated by a time lag of over six decades, the two books fittingly depict the different socio-cultural milieu and individual perceptions of the two sportsmen. However, since both these men were born in the same period when India was yet to be Independent and was still under the colonial rule, it can be argued that their sportsmanship was not unaffected by the mutilating influence of colonization. Understandably, both had also witnessed the horrible Partition of their motherland in 1947, the manifestation of which can be profitably traced and analysed in their respective autobiographies chosen for this study.

The genre of autobiography is treated as a public apology offered by another for his acts of omission and commission over a long period of time which he failed to extend for one reason or the other at the appropriate moment. To confront self is not an easy proposition and the quality of an autobiography heavily depends on the writer's ability to distinguish his inner and outer selves in a dispassionate manner, so that they can engage themselves in a meaningful dialogue while recapitulating many an unsavory and embarrassing situation that prick his consciences and seek explanation. The personal and professional commitments of the another as also his exposure to the larger world also substantially contribute to the nicety of his recollections leading their aura where the reader is compelled to empathies with the experience. This paper intends to examine Dhyan Chand's autobiography, *Goal* which reflects the qualities of his head and heart, both as a human being and also as a sportsman par excellence.

Unlike the usually flat titles given to autobiographies like, *An Autobiography* (Jawaharlal Nehru) *My Story* (Kamla Das) and *My Cricketing Years* (Ajit Wadekar), Dhyan Chand chooses a well-focused title **Goal**, which has several connotations. Conceded that this 'Centre Forward' of

Indian Hockey team pursued his game to score goal after goal against the opposite team to eventually win the match. But the title 'Goal' also has another no less significant implication.

One could also decode 'Goal' as one which has a larger perspective. Through his human attributes, the writer unconsciously identifies the values and perceptions which might go a long way in making life reasonably worth living. Such appropriate reading gives justification when of the focused back page comments three highlights his humility---- but also of his 'simplicity and humility as a person'. And so humble; a thorough gentleman--- but I will remember him as a great source of motivation and a legend with amazing humility. A careful reading of *Goal* betrays that his modesty is shorn of all pretensions which quite after plague memories and reminiscences.

Excessively conscious of his humble background Dhyhan Chand is apologetic while referring to his family life in the very opening chapter itself:

“I realize that I am not a very important man, not good enough to write an autobiography, but I feel tempted to let my friends know a little bit of my private life as well” (Chand 14).

Instead of devoting a substantive part of autobiography to ancestry and focusing upbringing as writers invariably do, he sums up such detail in less than a couple of pages at the outset. Coming from family where the father and the elder brother were serving in the Army Dhyhan Chand's career was decided by his fathers and he joined as a Sepoy in the First Brahmans Regiment in Delhi in 1922 at the age of sixteen. His dislike for public (13).

In his "Foreword" to Dhyhan Chand's autobiography *GOAL* (1952, republished 2018), Rajyavardhan Rathore, the former Sports Minister of India, admits: "As an army man, an athlete and a union minister, I got three platforms to serve the country uniquely. I take a lot of pride in

every opportunity I have to contribute for the nation. *Still, it is difficult to imagine the emotions of a man who worked and played for British India even as his heart beat for his own country.*”

[Italics mine] Since the author of these words is himself an Olympian, former soldier and a politician—all blended into one, one has reasons to trust what he says for a man who was a sportsman and soldier at the same time while having a heart beating for the nation with the same pace as a common man’s heart does. Enmeshed between the two opposing worlds—the one commanded by the colonizers while the other surviving merely to serve their colonial masters. Weaving a way through could have been made possible only by a man like Dhyan Chand, something which he humbly accepts in his GOAL: “You are doubtless aware than I am first a common man and then a soldier. It has been my training from my very childhood to avoid the limelight and publicity. I have chosen a profession where we have been taught to be a soldier and nothing beyond that” (13).

Invariably every perceptive discussion on sports or sportspersons is bound to include a fair share of words like excel, surpass, exceed, transcend, outdo, outstrip, and many more that suggest the concept of going beyond a limit or standard of performance in a given field, while to prove to be excellent suggests exceeding one’s expectation. However, it is very difficult to contain all these virtues without remaining unaffected by the vices these are likely to generate in the subject (i.e. the sportsperson concerned). A careful analysis of the GOAL gives reasonable glimpse into the mind of Dhyan Chand who continued to exhibit an exemplary sense of humility even while blending all the aforementioned qualities of sportsmanship in his character.

Born to Sharada Singh (mother) and Sameshwar Singh (father) on 29th August 1905 in Prayagraj, Dhyan Chand was entitled ‘Chand’ by his first coach Pankaj Gupta who had the honour of predicting that he would one day shine like the real ‘chand/chaand’ –the moon, a prediction

which actually far exceeded the expectations of his dear ones. (*Pankaj Gupta - Wikipedia*). Even as a teenager, Dhyan Chand also followed the footsteps of his father who was an Army man by joining the army only at the age of sixteen. Being a promising sportsman, he ensured his entry in the Army Hockey tournament. Very soon, he was chosen for the Indian Army team for participating in New Zealand during the year 1926. This selection was a turning point for him while his team won 18 matches out of 21. He was greatly appreciated for his brilliant performance that eventually led to his promotion to the rank of Lance Naik and further to the coveted position of Major in the Indian Army. The very field of Hockey was reintroduced to him in 1928 during Amsterdam Olympics and the Indian Hockey Federation wanted to send its best team for the event. Dhyan Chand was the dazzling star, twinkling too much to be avoided for this event that with his great performance in the inaugural nationals secured a place in the team. The Indian team went to Amsterdam and won over the Dutch, German and Belgium teams in the pre-Olympics matches by big gap. He scored as many as three goals in India's debut Olympic match against Austria, winning 6-0. The final match held on 26th May 1928 in which the Indian team faced the home team of Netherlands. It became too challenging even to imagine to win while some of the India's top players got sick. Anyhow, the team still managed to beat Netherlands with 3-0 and thus won his first Olympic gold medal. With this victory of Indian Hockey team, Dhyan Chand emerged as the hero of 1928 Olympics by scoring 14 goals in five matches. After that for the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, he was automatically selected for the Indian Hockey team while the rest of the team players were selected after their performances in the Inter-Provincial Tournament to earn their places. This time his brother Roop Singh was also one of the players of this. Roop Singh, his younger brother used to say about him that Dhyan Chand was a Hockey ka Devata. Finally India regained the Gold medal at the Los Angeles Olympics, beating USA 24-

01 in the final as world record. Here, he had scored 133 goals out of India's 338. He was appointed Captain of Indian Hockey for the western Asiafic Games on march 2, 1934. Being appointed captain for the 1936 Berlin Olympics, he scored 59 goals out of India's 175 on the world tour and led India to a great victory over Germany in the final. Then, he being appointed captain for the tour of East Africa scored 61 goals in 22 matches during Dec 1947 to early 1948 at his age of 43. On the great surprising success of Dhyan Chand, even German media could not help admiring and quoting: "The Olympic complex how has a magic show too. Visit the Hockey stadium to watch the Indian magician Dhyan Chand in Action" (Sham).

As we are dealing with the autobiography of Dhyan Chand who was devoted to the cause of hockey, it will be relevant to discuss some of the important developments that led to the growth and popularity of this sport eventually making our national sport. Boria Majumdar (2008) in his essay titled "The Golden Years of Indian Hockey: 'We Climb the Victory Stand'" writes, "One of the world's oldest sports, hockey predates the ancient Olympic Games by a little more than 1,200 years. However, the modern game of field hockey (for those distinguishing it from ice hockey) evolved in the British Isles in the middle of the nineteenth century. The British helped spread hockey globally, promoting it in parts of the empire as part of the civilizing process, and subsequently its popularity became especially visible in the Indian subcontinent by the early twentieth century. In colonial India, especially in the early decades of the twentieth century, hockey was as popular as cricket and football, the country's other passions. Even school and college magazines of the period are replete with descriptions of hockey matches, and they specifically draw attention to India's spectacular performance in the Olympics" (Majumdar 1592). In India, the organized format of hockey was started first in Kolkata (then Calcutta) as early as 1885 when the first hockey clubs were formed. Only within a decade the great

tournaments that were to become the breeding grounds of the national team had been established. The Beighton Cup in Kolkata and the Aga Khan Tournament in Mumbai (then Bombay) were both set up in the year 1895. Having established itself in the east and west parts of India, hockey moved northward to Punjab, via the army cantonments to the Punjab University Sports Tournament in 1903, the same year that Lahore started its famous Hot Weather Tournament for hockey. These tournaments were to be the lifeline of Indian hockey all through its golden age. Writing of the Beighton Cup in 1952, Dhyan Chand writes in his autobiography:

“In 1933, the Jhansi Heroes decided to participate in the Beighton Cup hockey tournament. My life’s ambition was to win the Beighton Cup, as I had always regarded this competition as the blue riband of Indian hockey.... In my opinion it is perhaps the best organised hockey event in the country. Calcutta is indeed lucky that it has at least three or four first class hockey grounds on the maidan, and this is a great advantage to run a tournament on schedule. Instituted in 1895, this tournament has had a non-stop run. World Wars I and II did not affect the tournament. Threats of Japanese bombs and actual bombings in Kolkata while the hockey season was on also did not prevent the tournament from being held. That being said, it is sad to think that the tournament had to yield to the communal frenzy, which gripped the nation in 1946–47” (Chand 130-131).

Like the Bombay Pentagonal in cricket, these tournaments helped in popularizing the game beyond the confines of army cantonments and the first attempts at forming a national association were visible in Calcutta in 1907–8. The political chaos that engulfed Bengal after its partition in 1905, however, put paid to these efforts. The move was revived in the 1920s when C.E. Newham, president of the Punjab Hockey Federation, started a campaign to create a central

organization to govern Indian hockey. This second attempt at establishing a nodal organization also ended in failure and it was not until November 1925 that a governing body for hockey was established. De Mello further observes, “In 1924, at the request of the now defunct Western India Hockey Association, Lieutenant Colonel Luard, who was then President of the Gwalior Sports Association, addressed all hockey associations, clubs and individuals interested in the game and invited them to a meeting in Gwalior. This meeting, which took place on November 7th, 1925, resulted in the official formation of the Indian Hockey Federation” (Mello 82). Majumdar writes, “At the inaugural meeting of the Federation, Gwalior, Bengal, Punjab, Sind, Rajputana, Western India, Punjab University and the Army Sports Control Board were represented. For the first two years Gwalior was treated as the headquarters, which was subsequently moved to Delhi in 1927” (Majumdar 1593).

The formation of the Indian Hockey Federation (more popular with its acronym, IHF) in 1925 was a milestone occasion as it exposed Indian players to the real international arena for the first time. Less than a year ahead of its formation, the IHF organized India’s first international trip to New Zealand in 1926 where the Indian team made its presence felt with its magic proving to be a commercial success at the same time. Basu Basudhita (2015) observes that the New Zealand Hockey Federation was able to garner a huge profit of £300 sterling even after having paid the Indians a hefty £500. “The Indians ended the tour with 18 victories in 21 matches, with just one defeat. They scored a total of 192 goals, conceding 24, at an average of 9.31 goals per match. Astonishingly, the Indians registered double-digit scores in as many as nine games” (Basu).

It was on this tour that Dhyhan Chand established himself as the premier star of Indian hockey. For him, who was simply a sepoy in the army and a man not born into privilege, unlike some of

his counterparts, the opportunity to represent India was an unexpected windfall. The memorable ecstasy finds a beautiful expression in his autobiography:

“It was a great day for me when my Commanding Officer called me and said: ‘Boy, you are to go to New Zealand.’ I was dumbfounded. I did not know what to reply. All I did was to click my heels snappily and give as smart a salute as I could possibly do and then leave. Once out of sight of the officer, I ran like a hare to reach my barracks and communicated the good news to my fellow soldiers. What a reception they gave me! I lost no time in getting prepared for the trip. I was not a rich man, my earnings only a few rupees a month as a sepoy. My parents were not rich either. All my thoughts of outfitting and equipping myself in the proper manner for an overseas tour of this nature had to be given up for want of sufficient financial resources. I clothed myself as little as possible, and my main personal outfit was my military kit. . . . As soldiers, particularly those belonging to the other ranks, it was a great experience for us. Prior to this tour we could never conceive of being feted and entertained at private houses and at public functions in such a glorious and enjoyable manner. We were made heroes, and on my part, if I may put it quite modestly, I proved myself a great success and left behind a great impression” (Chand 18-20).

Riding on this success and encouraged by the colonial British government’s support, the IHF applied for and subsequently obtained global affiliation in 1927. This was crucial to India’s participation at the Amsterdam Olympic Games in 1928 when India began its unhampered sway over the world of hockey for the upcoming two decades.

Major General Rudra, one of Dhyan Chand's officers in the Punjab Regiment described his genius in the 'Foreword' to the first published edition of the player's autobiography, *Goal* (1952) in the following words: "I consider it a very great honor to be asked to write a foreword for this book. I have known Dhyan Chand since 1924, and was present at the match in which he earned the name 'The wizard'." Impressed by the bewitching charm of the magician of hockey, he further writes: "It was the final of the Punjab Indian infantry tournament in Jhelum. His side was losing the match by two goals, and with only four minutes to go, his commanding officer called out to him, 'Come on Dhyan! We are two goals down, do something about it.' He then proceeded to do something about it, scored three goals in four minutes and led his side to victory." He gives more accolades to the brilliant wizard of hockey: "Dhyan Chand has been, and is, the world's greatest hockey player" (Chand 5-6). Dhyan Chand through the Preface of his Autobiography has shared his ambition of being a soldier since his childhood, followed by his interest in sports, "I have chosen as my most favorite sports game, which unlike other sports has no statisticians or historians in this country...I do not think man's intelligence could have conceived of a more fascinating game than hockey. Perhaps I am writing because I have not played other games. But tell me which game is as fast as hockey" (13).

With the kind of objectivity, equanimity or neutrality of approach that one comes across in his autobiography is remarkable. It is very unusual to find writers betraying a dispassionate attitude in their writings—as an autobiography, Dhyan Chand's *Goal* has very few parallels when it comes to generating an effect of positivity on the reader. Though not without creating an aesthetic appeal, even the minutest of details of his sporting career have been revealed in a way which many others might feel shy of. He has begun it with the details of his birth in one of the modest families with the members pulling on within their limited finances, almost in penury:

“As I said before, I joined the Army as a *Sepoy* in 1922. When I received my first pay of a few rupees, you cannot imagine what a thrill it was to me. I could then never dream that from a *Sepoy* without much academic qualification, I would be raised to the rank of a Captain in the Indian Army... I was not a rich man, my earnings as a *sepo*y being only a few rupees a month. My parents were not rich either. All my thoughts of outfitting and equipping myself in the proper manner for an overseas tour of this nature had to be given up for want of sufficient resources. I clothed myself as little as possible, and my main personal outfit was my military kit. Nowadays, if a young man is invited for a trip, either the association sponsoring him outfits him properly or some other means are found to do it. In my time, rather so far I was concerned, the story was entirely different. Nevertheless, I was quite happy. All the members of the team, quite a few of them were other ranks like me, thought that it was a military expedition and not a hockey tour, and we must, even on a hockey tour, move about and feel and think like a soldier. We enjoyed every bit of the tour. We never looked for luxuries and comforts, the best of hotels and the best of everything” (19).

It is further remarkable to note that despite being a hockey wizard he shares the details about his military career then the details of his sports career while accepting the truth that he had learnt all the basics related to hockey only after joining his service of army. He writes:

“I do not remember whether I had played any hockey worth mentioning before I joined the Army. I do remember occasionally indulging in hockey in Jhansi with my friend’s comrades and playmates, not in any methodical manner but just for the fun of it” (13).

He himself feels amazed about his hockey career as he had never decided till the period of his joining in army. The crucial tutelage offered by his immediate officer in-charge as well as his first hockey Guru Subedar-Major Bale Tiwari, happened to be the turning point in the career of Dhyan Chand who never fails to acknowledge this good deed. A grateful Dhyan Chand writes in his autobiography:

“When I joined the first Brahmin Regiment we had a Subedar Major by the name of Bale Tiwari who was a keen hockey enthusiast and a very fine player took a fancy to me. My regiment was well known in hockey circles and that was the only outdoor game to which the regiment devoted most of its sporting attention. Subedar Major Tiwari initiated me into this game and gave me my first lessons. He was my guru. We had no fixed times at the cantonment to play hockey. We indulged in it at all hours of the day. From the very start I took a keen interest in the game. Little did I realize then the part hockey would play in my life. I showed promise in the various practice games and my elders thought that in course of time I would be a first-class hockey player. I did not mix with the players of my regiment very much. I kept myself aloof most of the time. That has been my temperament all my life. I was thrilled when my subedar major told me one day that I had been selected to play for our regimental team in the annual military tournament in Delhi. That was the first big match I played... My position as the centre-forward in the regiment team was permanently assured after this tournament. I was told by my subedar major that I had done very well and from then onwards I was to be the regimental team’s centre- forward” (16).

He took a fancy to 'dribbling' (a particular movement in hockey) from the very start of his hockey career much to the annoyance of his guru, Tiwari, who would never support this tendency in the player. He recalls in his book how he imbibed the lesson that hockey was actually a game of team spirit and that a player must pass the ball at the right juncture. These early lessons stood him in good stead:

"I took a fancy to dribbling from the very start of my hockey career. *Subedar-Major* Bale Tiwari, my guru, frowned on this tendency, and would never allow me to dribble too long or hang on to the ball. He drove home the lesson that hockey was a team game and I must pass the ball at the correct time. I had no right to keep the ball to myself, he said. Another thing I was taught was marksmanship at the goal, not so much with powerful hits as with placements and push-strokes. These early lessons stood me in good stead, and if present-day inside-forwards who occasionally played with me thought that I was rude when I shouted for a pass, they should not have misunderstood it. My brother Roop Singh got any amount of scolding and rebukes from me when he indulged in pattern-weaving and playing to the gallery" (16-17).

It could be observed that sports organizations are not without the usual ills that have potential to mar the spirit of sportsmanship thus being accountable for spoiling the career of individuals, while its awareness is no less demoralizing and dispiriting to the young men and women who aspire to start a career in sports. It is beyond argument that the evil of nepotism and favoritism has become pronounced feature of sports competitions in modern times. Films and literature are replete with such accounts of sportspersons being affected at the altar of these evils. However, it is interesting to know that he had no such tale to tell depicting the possibilities of these ills that

are so common today. As a man of immense positivity and possibilities, he recalls in his autobiography:

“In the military code of life, it was not possible for Other Ranks to approach officers and discuss even sporting matters. At the same time, being very shy by temperament, I could not directly or indirectly inform anybody how glad I would be if I were picked for the New Zealand tour. I had been taught throughout that one must not seek favours in any walk of life. I was confident that if my form was good and if I could show signs of promise, my superiors would do me justice. In our military sporting arena, I could hardly see any nepotism, favoritism or corruption in any sphere. Therefore, with the greatest of zeal and enthusiasm, I played in regimental hockey and also took part in the native army hockey tournament which was the blue riband of Indian military hockey” (18).

There were days when the Indian Army had a well-grounded tradition of nurturing sportspersons irrespective of the rank of its men. Thus from the junior ranks of a Sepoy, Dhyani Chand was elevated, though only, to the rank of a junior commissioned officer without any hassles and obstacles—something which is rare to find these days. He feels amply satisfied with what he received during his stint with the Army which never felt hesitant in rewarding him with a series of promotions duly recognizing his brilliant performances, and not without reason that he remains indebted to his mentor organization: “It was a great day for me when my commanding officer called me and said: ‘Boy, you are to go to New Zealand.’ I was dumbfounded and did not know what to reply. All I did was to click my heels snappily, give as smart a salute as I possibly could and beat a hasty retreat. Once out of sight of the officer I ran like a hare to reach my

barracks and communicated the goal news to my fellow soldiers. And what a reception they gave me!” (18-19)

Overall his team played 21 matches in New Zealand tour of which won 18, draw 2 and lost 1. After this success he came in the public eye. The press and people started talking about him even his higher officers and colleagues told him occasionally that he had a big hockey career ahead of him. Such praise and encouragement were great aid to his courage and reward. His success in New Zealand brought to him a tremendous inspiration as he has shared through his autobiography:

“The success in New Zealand gave me tremendous inspiration and in my heart of hearts I felt that the forecasts about me might prove successful and there should be no slackness on my part. Therefore, at odd moments in the barracks even all by myself with just the hockey stick and ball I kept myself very fit” (25).

The February 16, 1928 brought an unforgettable moment in his sporting career when Dhyan Chand's team created history for its province by winning the national hockey title, the first winners of this event. The initial success had a series of such successful events as though in its womb, only to be cheered by people for whom hockey was their new-found enchantment. Dhyan Chand shares these moments in his book:

“We received a great ovation on the field immediately after the final was over, and were literally mobbed. Streams of callers kept as busy till the late hours of the evening congratulating us on our triumph. I was struck and amazed at the way the people of Kolkata gave us compliments and felicitations after our triumph, Rajputana, who were sporting losers, were the first to congratulate us and we appreciated it very much. It was our day” (46).

In a brilliant show of his talent, he played as many as eleven wonderful matches in England, the turf of his colonizers. His team played against a combined services team at the military headquarters at Alder shot but lost the match by two goals to one. It was really disappointing to his team. But after winning the Olympic championship in 1932 at Los Angeles he and his team members made a whirlwind tour of the European continent. A similar experience befell to them just after four years in 1936 when they recorded their victory by winning the Olympic title in Berlin Olympic. Though he was motivated by his audience all the time with full enthusiasm but he on some point of disregarding act of the English Hockey Association, he must have loosed his temper as he has also shared through his autobiography:

“I envy the 1948 Indian Olympic team to who fell that honor. How I wish I had at least been present to witness the historic occasion. But like most of you I was fasted to be thousands of miles away at home listening to the radio and reading press reports” (62).

It is most remarkable about Dhyan Chand that despite his scoring with six goals in India's Victory over Germany in the Olympic final. It was not for nothing that he titled his book *Goal* which depicts his unmixed spirit of excellence with the real quality of sportsmanship that motivated him to give his best even without worrying about success or failure. While describing the feats of this great player, it would be very pertinent to quote what Shri Krishna says in *Srimadbhagwadgita* (popularly known as the *Gita*):

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन । मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भुर्मा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

Karmanye Vadhikaraste, Ma phaleshu kada chana, Ma Karma Phala Hetur Bhurmathey Sangostva Akarmani

Aside from an occasional game with his team in Jhansi, he had not played any hockey worth mentioning before he joined the army at the age of 16 in 1922. It was Subedar Major Bale Tiwari who noticed his dribbling skills at the army. As soon as the Subedar Tiwari noted the hidden talent of Dhyan Chand, he became his mentor and helped him to improve his game through certain practice. Between 1922 and 1926 he thus played the army hockey tournaments and the regimental game. He was eventually selected for an Indian Army tour of New Zealand. After every match India played including he as team member, a number of players used to go enclosed to him and also used to observe and touch Dhyan Chand and his hockey stick to find the wonder of the tricks that used to keep the ball from leaving the stick as he dribbled his way all over the field. Once in Netherland, hockey authorities were in doubt if there was magnet inside his stick. In 1936 Berlin Olympics he was not supposed to play in the finals due to an injury but at half time when India led by only 1-0 Dhyan Chand out of sudden removed his shoe and entered the field bare foot. Not only had this he also taken India to a stunning victory scoring 6 more goals. Amazed by his performance, Adolf Hitler couldn't bear the humiliation and left before the game ended. It is also rumored that Hitler later offered to elevate 'Lance Naik' Dhyan Chand to the rank of a colonel if he (Chand) migrated to Germany that he refused.

Once during his 1947 tour he put through a wondrous ball to K D Singh Babu then turned his back and walked away. When Babu later asked to him the reason of his such behavior, Dhyan Chand replied to K D Babu: "If you could not get a goal from that you did not deserve to be on my team" (Biradar).

Administration and praise went to Dhyan Chand in great heap. Though, he had been self-motivated to do the best to his country in the field, audience never lived behind to encourage him. Perhaps, the encouragement of the audience was clung to his date that he never left behind

with his talent. Keshav Dutt, Olympic gold medalist once admired Dhyan Chand in the following manner:

“His real talent lay above his shoulders. He was easily the hockey brain of the century. He could see a field the way a chess player sees the board. He knew where his teammates were and more importantly where his opponents were without looking. It was almost psychic. He treated everybody as pieces on a board meant for his use. He'd know from his own movement how the defence was forming and where the gaps were. In other words, he was the only one imponderable while everybody else (opposition included) fell in predictable patterns around him” (Biradar).

He was the centre of proud glory surprise and amaze in the field of sports with his victories in abnormal conditions. In 1949, after a very huge successful journey as a Hockey player that lasted 30 years, Dhyan Chand got his retirement from the game of Hockey. Even though he was a part of many unforgettable matches, he considered a particular hockey match to be his best:

“If anybody asked me which was the best match I had played, I will unhesitatingly say that it was the 1933 Beighton Cup final between Jhansi Heroes and the redoubtable Calcutta Custom” (Chand 130).

He reveals the 1933 Beighton cup final as his most unforgettable match which he had lost. He has always regarded this match as the blue riband of Indian hockey. It was really very shocking that he did not score any goal in that match. He only contributed the crucial pass for the lone goal scored by his team Jhansi Heroes. Really very honestly he had shared the most romantic incident behind calling it his most memorable match:

“I had an embarrassing incident at Prague. A young and good- looking hockey enthusiast a Czechoslovakian girl insisted after the match on kissing me. ‘Oh, you are an angel,’ she declared she almost succeeded in her intention, but I resisted repeating all the time that I was a married man. It was all in good fun” (126).

The quote above indicates the player’s sensitivity to the likes and dislikes of his audience, as well as his emotionally surcharged feelings suffused with nationalism and patriotic ideals. Everywhere a player or his team goes to play a match, he/ she represents the whole of the nation that they belong to. Every responsible citizen of nation for which the player plays, hopes and prays for the successful performance of the player. In return the player also tries to give his best being motivated by such audience. The role of these tender, celestial feelings, which represent the cultural side of sports, cannot be ignored.

Dhyan Chand after his retirement in Jhansi used to play all the other games of his choice, not just hockey which has shaped his professional career as a soldier in Indian Army, but also cricket, carom, billiards and many more during the leisurely hours for the sake of his personal pleasure as also for the enjoyment of his fellow villagers. His autobiography also reveals that he was not averse to a sport as elite as Billiards, which incidentally was his favorite indoor game that he used to play till late night. That is how he continued to keep himself busy in sports even after retirement from the army with the rank of Major when he was just 51 years old. The unending spirit of excellence kept alive in him even during his old age while keeping himself playfully engaged as a hockey coach for a while in Jhansi.

A close reading of his memoir Goal reveals that he was a very simple-hearted soul with a very down-to-earth approach to life. Despite having a brilliant sports career along with his army job he had to face poor economic conditions during the last stage of his life. There is big

contradiction to learn that his nation as his audience and the governing body of his nation didn't worry for the wonder personality when he was suffering from liver cancer as if being forgotten, Dhyan Chand was sent to a general ward at AIIMS in New Delhi where he finally left for his heavenly abode on 3rd December 1979 in very pathetic conditions. In the 'epilogue' to the *Goal*, his son Ashok Kumar recalls those last days in the life of his legendary father:

“In 1979, ten days before my father's death. I was in Delhi and had been informed that his health had deteriorated and he had been admitted to hospital. I rushed to Jhansi. He was very ill, had stopped eating and had grown very weak. The doctors advised to take him to Delhi for proper treatment. I somehow managed to catch a train, where the icon of Indian hockey travelled third class compartment. Getting a wheel chair at Nizamuddin station and then taking him home was a herculean task for me and my family. I had been staying at Airlines Colony in Vasant Vihar, close to the Airport. The next day I took him to the AIIMS. I had to stand in queue to get him admitted. My father was put in the general ward and stayed there for four or five days before the press got a whiff of it. Jasdev Singh, the commentator, got into action and journalist Jagannadha Rao wrote about it. The news was splashed in newspapers around the country. The headlines caught the attention of the authorities, who then arranged to shift my father to a special ward. All this happened only after the national press intervened. I could not miss my flying duties, but my family was around to look after my father. I was informed only after I returned from a flight that his health had deteriorated alarmingly. Early next morning I got the news from the hospital that he was no more” (259).

It has been a pathetic experience on the part of sportspersons in India when they end up lying helpless at the mercy of an insensitive fellow countrymen, the selfsame people for whom they brought medals and made them proud with their victories. Invariably every sportsperson has had to face unimaginable callousness of authorities especially during the twilight years of their life, a bitter truth that has been plaguing the country for long. Newspaper reports can be cited to reveal how Chetan Chauhan, the former cricketer died recently in a helpless situation even as the doctors at the PGI hospital of Lucknow continued to harass and humiliate him instead of showing the modicum of sensitivity expected of them. (National Herald, 23 August 2020, Lucknow). The former sportsman, despite being a Minister in the UP Govt. who was subjected to an unspeakable harassment as well as humiliation the hands of his physicians who continued to ask all those personal questions related to his life. Instances of sportsmen receiving similar treatment are not few. Understandably, these sportsmen must have sacrificed their personal comfort and often putting their financial prospects at risk at the altar of their ambition to bring medals for their nation. It is also logical to conclude that they were so much engrossedly devoted to their cause that their superannuated life failed to bring them the much needed financial security, thus leaving them to fend for themselves. It can also be argued that the ungrateful people simply forget the contribution of these sportsmen who must have given everything they possessed—time, money, comfort and much more—during their sporting years when they were young and physically fit. The autobiography of Dhyan Chand reveals similar problems which he was pitted against towards the end of his life. An emotional Ashok Kumar describes how his father, Dhyan Chand, had to experience callousness of the selfsame people who used to cheer him up when he brought laurels in hockey:

“I had to take my father’s body to Jhansi. I ran around to book a hearse and convinced the driver to take us to Jhansi. I returned home to find a huge crowd. People suddenly remembered Dhyan Chand after he had passed away. None had come to us when the news of his illness had been published in the newspapers. I was then told that the government had made arrangements to fly my father’s body to Jhansi. When my father was being treated, I had approached many ministers and government officials for help, but had returned empty-handed. In death, my father found more supporters. The whole of Jhansi turned up for the cremation. A band had arrived from his regiment and the cremation was held at the ground where he would play. There was a demand to take his body to the crematorium, but there were protests against this. My father was cremated at the ground and later a statue was installed there. There was a statue at the top of a hill there, too, and it has become a tourist spot” (260).

According to the information available on the web source Wikipedia, “Because of his father's numerous army transfers, the family had to move to different cities and as such he had to terminate his education after only six years of schooling. The family finally settled in Jhansi, while Dhyan Chand leaving for Gwalior in 1932 for his graduation from Victoria College. Young Dhyan Chand had no serious inclination towards sports though he loved wrestling. He stated that he did not remember whether he played any hockey worth mentioning before he joined the Army, though he said that he occasionally indulged in casual games in Jhansi with his friends” (“Dhyan Chand”).

As Dhyan Chand reminisces how the American press described his shows adding a figure of speech “typhoon-like”:

"The All-India field hockey team which G. D. Sondhi brought to Los Angeles to defend their 1928 Olympic title was like a typhoon out of the east. They trampled under their feet and all but shoved out of the Olympic stadium the eleven players representing the United States" (10).

It is not for nothing that he has endeared men and women of all ages earning the status of a magician with stick --- *Hockey ka Jaadugar* which translates to "Magician of the game of Hockey".

It is sportsman's spirit that best defines Dhyan Chand who always accepted the odds and struggles of life in his stride. In this respect, it would be pertinent to narrate what happened in December 1934 when the Indian Hockey Federation (IHF) sent a team to New Zealand in the new year with Dhyan Chand and his brother Roop Singh as participating players. According to the web source Wikipedia, though eventually "Dhyan Chand was appointed captain of the team in the same series, he never felt any grudges when upon returning to India he had to get back to the menial jobs in the barracks. Similarly, a year later, in December 1935, the IHF decided to stage the Inter-Provincial tournament to select the Olympic team when again his controlling officers denied permission to leave his platoon, though once again he was selected without formalities. After this unfavorable start, the players went on a successful tour of the continent, finally departing for Marseilles on 27 June. They arrived on 10 July, and after an uncomfortable journey in third-class compartments, reached Berlin on 13 July" ("Dhyan Chand").

Every member of the team was feeling the strain of the defeat to the Germans in the practice match, and no one was in his usual self. The players were nervous as to what the result of the match would be, which was heightened by the feeling that the burden of the country's honour was on their shoulders. The game was played at a fast pace and was packed with thrilling

incidents. The Germans undercut and lifted the ball, but the Indian team countered with brilliant half-volleying and amazing long shots. Dhyan Chand discarded his spiked shoes and stockings and played with bare legs and rubber soles and became speedier in the second half. To Dhyan Chand, every single detail on-the-ground used to appear as important and real as the one off-the-field:

“When Germany was four goals down, a ball hit Allen's pad and rebounded. The Germans took full advantage of this and made a rush, netting the ball before we could stop it. That was the only goal Germany would score in the match against our eight, and incidentally the only goal scored against India in the entire Olympic tournament. India's goal-getters were Roop Singh, Tapsell and Jaffar with one each, Dara two and myself three” (171).

As a matter of sheer shock rather than a mere surprise, it can be argued that the talent of sportspersons has been invariably used for entertainment of the rank and file including the civilian elites, and to buttress this claim one can very well cite the example of hockey players like Dhyan Chand who continued to hold his ‘emergency commission’ in the Army even after the Independence but was never granted a regular commission (*"Part I-Section 4: Ministry of Defence (Army Branch)". The Gazette of India.30March 1957. p. 80*) (“Dhyan Chand”) —a typical bias of the elite minded top brass and “officers” of the Indian Army that continues to retain its colonial legacy even after eight decades of the country’s Independence. When having put in thirty-four long years of his life to the Army as also to hockey, he finally superannuated from the in 1956 only as a lieutenant—acting captain, at the most. It won’t be wide off the mark to quote one more example from the recent past when another Olympic Silver Medalist Vijay Kumar Sharma whose much worthy demand for being granted regular commission was

summarily rejected by the government authorities without citing any reasons. In a similar fashion, this ace shooter too was granted simply the rank of an honorary captain, a non-commissioned rank.

“The Government of India honoured him the same year by conferring him the Padma Bhushan, India's third highest civilian honour. After retirement, he taught at coaching camps at Mount Abu, Rajasthan. Later, Dhyan Chand accepted the position of Chief Hockey Coach at the National Institute of Sports, Patiala, a post he held for several years before finally deciding to lead a retired life in his birthplace, Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. No doubt, the great magician of hockey remains a legendary figure in Indian history and world hockey whose skills have been glorified through various fictional narratives and anecdotes of the country with most of these revolving around Dhyan Chand's astonishing control over dribbling the ball. It is with a great sense of honour that the country celebrates his birthday, 29 August, as National Sports Day in India. The President of India gives away sport-related awards including the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna, Arjuna Award and Dronacharya Award on this day to mark Dhyan Chand's seminal contributions to the field of sports. The 20th National Award 2012, the “*Gem of India*”, awarded by the Union Minister of India, was given posthumously to Dhyan Chand, received by his son, Ashok Dhyan Chand (a hockey Olympian in his own right) on behalf of his late father. India's highest award for lifetime achievement in sports is the *Dhyan Chand Award* which is awarded annually to sportspersons who not only contribute through their performance but also contribute to the sport after their retirement. The National Stadium, Delhi was renamed Dhyan Chand National Stadium in 2002 in his honour. Government of India has issued a commemorative postage stamp and a First Day Cover in honour of Dhyan Chand: he remains the only Indian hockey player to have a postal ticket after him. Life plays ironies sometimes even while the man

ceases to live. He was betrayed and duped not just in life but also much after his death—he was among the nominees considered for India's highest civilian award *Bharat Ratna* for the year 2014 with a good number of people supporting and expecting the same. However, the award was finally given to Sachin Tendulkar and C. N. R. Rao, leaving Dhyan Chand's admirers and family members puzzled and no less disappointed" ("Dhyan Chand").

But personally, Dhyan Chand was a man beyond the mundane. "It is not my country's duty to push me ahead. It is my duty to push my country ahead"—that is how the legendary player took the life in his stride. A close reading of Dhyan Chand's *Goal* can be helpful in identifying certain important characteristics and humane sides of his personality that have mostly gone unnoticed or overlooked during the casual readings of this book. The researcher has meticulously prepared an extraction of his book which might serve as a handy guide to the legend of Dhyan Chand:

- **Sense of Duty:** "It has been my training from my have chosen a profession where we have been taught to be a soldier and nothing beyond that" (Chand 13).
- **Sense of discrimination:** "Being a youngster full of ambition, naturally I felt quite modestly though that possibly I might earn a place in the Indian army team. I was nervous, first because I was a youngster and secondly because I was another rank" (18).
- **"The quality of Army an Institution:** I had been trained thorough that one most not seek favours in whatever walk of life. In our military sporting arena, I could hardly see any nepotism, favoritism or corruption in any sphere. All I did was to click my heels snappily and give as smart a salute as I could possibly do and then leave" (18).
- **Pangs of poor background:** "I was not a rich man, my earnings being only a few rupees a month as a sepoy. My parents were not rich either. All my thoughts of outfitting and equipping

myself in the proper manner for an overseas tour of this nature had to be given up for want of sufficient financial resources. I clothed myself as little as possible and my main personal outfit was my military kit” (19).

- **Gentle sense of humor:** “Nevertheless, I was quite happy. All the members of the team, quite a few of them were other ranks like me, thought that it was a military hockey tour, move about and feel and think like a soldier. We scored one hundred and ninety two goals and had only twenty four goals scored against us. On my part if I may put it quite modestly, I proved myself a great success and left behind a great impression” (19).
- **Simplicity and contentment:** “I always felt that a man is essentially a man and it was unbecoming of him to show off and make others feel that there was snobbery in him. I was just a sepoy when I accompanied the Indian Army hockey team to New Zealand in 1926. Immediately after my return, I was made a lance naik” (24).
- **Sense of gratitude:** “Our manager, Dr. A.C. Chatterjee, went mad with excitement. He was very happy and all smiles. He came to me and patted me affectionately. We did our job. Here I must pay my tribute to the care and love bestowed by Dr. Chatterjee on us during our stay for the tournament. He was particularly kind to me and he realized from the very start that being a youngster and a complete stranger to civilian company, he owed a special responsibility to me. I am grateful to him for all his kindnesses” (46).
- **Exemplary humility:** “I felt that the team might have been slightly improved. Be that as it may, I must at the same time say that as the general standard of form of players was very close, it was a very hard job for the selectors to make their choice. The difference between one player and another was so small and narrow” (47).

- **Plea for transparency in sports administration:** “I am referring to this because in my view it was a grand thing for the president of the IHF to explain his action to the players and representatives. Have you heard of a similar approach in modern times, what with an administration hidebound by rules and regulations and officials riding high horse, bordering on fascism? The fact remains that their present attitude is not in keeping with my conception of sport” (53).
- **Reflection on Social Situation:** “Let me narrate here an interesting experience that befell us, and reminded us, rather rudely, that England was not India, the land of maharajas, nawabs, burra and chota sahibs, bearers and malis. In India, whenever we got to the field for any match, our beares and malis carried our kits and gears. In Aldershot, we failed to shed the burra sahib attitude and all of us were shouting for the mali to take our kit to the field. We shouted in vain and then to our surprise found the opposing players march on to the field each carrying his own kit. We then realized that England was not the land of *Koi hai*. Here every player, be he a prince or a pauper, must tote his own gear. Manager Rosser gently and affectionately rebuked us and told us that we must carry our kits ourselves. Thereafter, we made no error on this score” (60).

“I have suspicion these fellows must have augmented their pockets by trading away the autographs. People in Madras were more than kind to us” (92).
- **Literary quote:** “The poet’s desire, ‘Oh, to be in England, now that April is there!’ was inexplicable so far as the Indian hockey players were concerned” (62).
- **Colonial reference:** On enquiry, I found that during the Amsterdam Olympics some members of the team had claimed that they “were Englishmen resident in India” (88).

- **Art of writing autobiography:** “I have perhaps strayed a little, but I felt that a little bit of colour here and there may save readers the tedium of listening to nothing but game after game of hockey and hockey alone” (89).
- **Sense of personal loss:** “Somewhere between Lahore and Amritsar there is a large lake. Whilst trying to retrieve a duck, he got entangled in the underwater weeds and found a watery grave. My unit was in the Punjab for some time and during movements I have had many occasions to pass through the road running near that lake and every time I could not but help remembering how a young and budding life was cut short early” (87).
- **Sense of human weakness:** “It was plain where the sympathies of each lay and even though we got the better of our opponents, we never doubted their ability to fight back. The final whistle was a welcome relief for us” (91).
- **Typical distancing from limelight and publicity:** “He had been schooled in the rigid Indian custom of not making oneself prominent in the company of family elders and wherever I made my appearance I noticed him slinking away” (95).
- **Indian brotherhood:** “The Indian residents of Singapore mustered strong to bid us welcome and see us back on board again. They feted us royally and showed us round the city. The president of the Indian Association, Mr. Menon, excelled himself as a host. This was the first time I realized the meaning of the term “Greater India”. From the hockey field we rushed back to our steamer, which promptly weighed anchor at sunset and set her course for Hong Kong” (96).
- **Love for India to be reciprocated:** “Sadhu to play for us against Malaya. Sadhu felt very much honoured and gratified, and this gesture on our part went a long way to please our countrymen in that part of the world. My only prayer is that whenever Indian sports teams go

abroad, those in charge of such tours would show similar courtesy to Indians residing abroad. It is needless to add how much goodwill such a gesture creates and how happy our country” (109).

- **Spartan simplicity of Japanese P.M.:** “The train reached Tokyo at about 9 P.M. and as we were nearing the station, a quiet Japanese gentleman got into the train and occupied a seat in the compartment where Pankaj Gupta sat, Pankaj Gupta wanted to pick up a conversation with this gentleman and so he asked the train conductor who he was. Imagine Gupta’s surprise when he was told that he was none other than Japan’s prime minister”. We have heard of the Spartan simplicity of the Japanese, from the emperor downwards. But it was revealing that even the prime minister travelled so quietly and unaccompanied” (115).

Some quotable opinions on Dhyan Chand: The dust-jacket of the *Goal* (the new edition published by the Hindu Group, 2018) contains some important observations and opinion about Dhyan Chand. It would be a fitting tribute to this magician of hockey if we quote them here asunder:

“Dhyan Chand remains the epitome of not just perfection, but excellence under the toughest of conditions. He put India and Indian sports on the global map even before we became an independence nation, such was his brilliance. He brought respect for Indian hockey across the world and was the first real, global sporting icon from India. His book *Goal*, even after all these years, remains the gold standard of not just technical knowledge on hockey, but also of his simplicity and humility as a person”.

-Narinder Batra, president, Federation international de Hockey

“Major Dhyan Chand has a special place in our hearts. He commanded tremendous respect. We not have seen him play, but we benefited from his guidance. He was acknowledged as a wizard, the most artistic player in the world. Without doubt, the greatest hockey player the game has known”.

-M. P. Ganesh, former India hockey captain

“Dhyan Chand was ahead of the times. The way he read the game was exceptional. And so humble; a thorough gentleman. His name always evokes awe and respect, just like Don Bradman, Pele, Muhammad Ali”.

- Zafar Iqbal, former India hockey captain

“The world knows Dhyan Chand as a master on the hockey turf, but I will remember him as a great source of motivation and a legend with amazing humility. He was a visionary as a coach and selector, and players of my generation were fortunate to receive tactical inputs from him”.

-Harbinder Singh, 1964 Olympics hockey gold medalist

Milkha Singh: *The Race of My Life*

While being proud of our Indian players, Indian mind and soul cannot be untouched to recall the wonderful proud performance of the great Milkha Singh nicknamed as ‘The Flying Sikh’ in Track and Field as a sprinter. Milkha Singh’s approach to human situation is not entirely different from his senior sports mate Dhyan Chand, though their activities widely differ in that the former’s accolades are individual while those of the latter are considered to be a team work demanding mutual understanding and cooperation on the field. Be as it is, the titles of their autobiographies betray a well-focused thrust on their instinctive choices – ‘goal’ in Dhyan Chand’s case and ‘race’ in Milkha Singh’s priorities. It is not for nothing that the dust jacket of *The Race of My Life* reads, ‘Milkha Singh has led a life dominated by running, running, running ... And what followed was the stuff the legends are made of’.

The autobiography opens with an Urdu couplet: “*Mita de apni hasti ko agar koi marataba chahe, ki dana khak may mil kar gul-e-gulzar hota hai* (Destroy your entire existence if you want to reach the zenith, ‘Cos a seed has to become one with the dust to sprout and blossom into a flower)” which may be treated as the very spirit of his person which goaded him to define his destiny until he became one of the topmost towering figures in Indian Sports. Recalling his early school days and his aversion to studies he refers to a humorous situation when he read out the same English lesson before his semi-literate father who felt satisfied with his progress in ignorance: “But what he never realized was that I read out the same passage every evening, which I had memorized. Since he didn’t know the language, he assumed that I was doing well in English at school, and felt extremely pleased” (Singh 6).

Reminiscing his practice days, he underlines the motto of his life which seems to be what the English poet Matthew Arnold calls ‘one aim, one business and one desire’:

“Between 1956 and 1957, my primary mission in life was to excel in running. The track, to me, was like an open book, in which I could read the meaning and purpose of life” (47).

According to the information available on the web source Wikipedia and also as mentioned by himself in his autobiography *The Race of My Life*, “Milkha Singh was born on 20 November 1932 in a Rajput family of Rathore clan of Govindpura, a village in Muzaffargarh (now in Pakistan). He was one of fifteen siblings, eight of whom died before the Partition of India. He was orphaned during the Partition, when his parents, a brother and two sisters were killed in the violence that ensued. He witnessed these killings—a cruel fact that continued to influence his sports and his life even to this day. Incidentally, these selfsame experiences have inspired his biopic, *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, a feature film that became a popular hit among the masses in the country. Escaping the troubles in Punjab, where killings of Hindus and Sikhs were continuing, by moving to Delhi, India, in 1947, he lived for a short time with the family of his married sister and was briefly imprisoned at Tihar jail for travelling on a train without a ticket. His sister, Ishvar, sold some jewellery to obtain his release. He spent some time at a refugee camp in Purana Qila and at a resettlement colony in Shahdara, both in Delhi” (“Milkha Singh”).

“These traumatic events left Milkha Singh extremely disenchanted with his life who at one point even contemplated to becoming a dacoit but was instead persuaded by his brother, Malkhan, to try for the Indian Army, and eventually became successful in his fourth attempt, in 1952, and later, while stationed at the Electrical Mechanical Engineering Centre in Secunderabad, the ace athlete in the making was introduced to his sport: the athletics” (Singh 23).

He had run the 10 km distance to and from school as a child and was selected by the army for special training in athletics after finishing sixth in a compulsory cross-country run for new

recruits. He has acknowledged in his autobiography how the army introduced him to sport, saying, "I came from a remote village, I didn't know what running was, or the Olympics" (26).

In one of his major achievements, he represented the country in the **200 m and 400 m** races of the 1956 Melbourne Olympics while in 1958, he set records for similar formats in the National Games of India winning gold medals in the same events at the Asian Games. His winning spree continued unabated: he won a gold medal in the 400m (440 yards at this time) competition at the 1958 British Empire and Commonwealth Games with a time of 46.6 seconds. This particular accomplishment made him the first gold medalist at the Commonwealth Games from independent India. Interestingly, he was the only Indian male to have won an individual athletics gold medal at those Games till Vikas Gowda won the gold in 2014.

He recalls in his autobiography how he was persuaded by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to set aside his memories of the Partition era to race successfully in 1960 against Abdul Khaliq in Pakistan, where a post-race comment by the then General Ayub Khan led to him acquiring the nickname of "Flying Sikh", Milkha Singh writes:

"It was General Ayub Khan who coined the title 'Flying Sikh', when he had congratulated me, saying, '*Tum daude nahi, udhey ho*—you do not run, but fly!' As I passed in front of the women's section, the ladies lifted their burqas from their faces so that they could have a closer look at me—an incident that was widely reported in the Pakistani press. And so, with this victory, I became the Flying Sikh, a title that soon became synonymous with my name all over the world" (83).

Some sources say that he set a world record of 45.8 seconds in France, shortly before the Rome Olympics in the same year Milkha Singh describes:

“When the race began, I ran with a vengeance, straining every muscle and won, establishing a new record of 45.8 seconds—point one second less than the previous Olympic record of 45.9. My achievement made headline news in the international press the next day. When I returned to my hotel room, I watched the reruns of the race that were being telecast on television. It was a new experience to watch myself run as well as observe the audience’s reaction to my win. I was deeply gratified by the accolades I had received” (93).

At those Olympics, he was involved in a close-run final race in the 400 m competition, where he was placed fourth. He had beaten all the leading contenders other than Otis Davis, and a medal had been anticipated because of his good form. However, he made an error when leading the race at 250m, slowing down in the belief that his pace could not be sustained and looking round at his fellow competitors. He believes that these errors caused him to lose his medal opportunity and they are his "worst memory". Davis, Carl Kaufmann and Malcolm Spence all passed him, and a photo-finish resulted. Davis and Kaufman were both timed at a world-record breaking 44.9 seconds, while Spence and he went under the pre-Games Olympic record of 45.9 seconds, set in 1952 by George Rhoden and Herb McKenley, with times of 45.5 and 45.6 seconds, respectively Milkha Singh writes in the autobiography:

“This was a huge blow to me because the German was the only runner in my line of vision. With nothing but negative thoughts running through my mind, I took my standing position. When the starter shouted, ‘On your marks!’ I got down on my knees and offered a silent prayer to the ground beneath me, ‘Oh, Mother Earth, you have bestowed many favours on me. I pray that you will do the same today.’ I bowed my head and took a deep breath. The starter shouted ‘Set!’ and when he fired his gun we flew off at lightning speed. I started off by being ahead

of the others, and at the 250-metre mark, I was running so perilously fast that I decided to slow down in case I collapsed—a fatal decision I regret even to this day. As I completed 300 metres, the three competitors right behind me came abreast and began to move ahead, and even though I increased my speed, trying desperately to catch up with Spence, who I had beaten at Cardiff, or the two before him, I could not wipe out the deficit of those six or seven yards. And thus, as fate would have it, my error of judgment at that crucial point in the race, had dragged me to the fourth position and destroyed all my chances of winning that elusive Olympic gold. Yet, it was a very close race, where the top positions were decided through a photo finish, which meant that the announcements were delayed. The suspense was excruciating. When the results were declared, all four of us—Davis, Kaufmann, Spence and I—had shattered the previous Olympic record of 45.9 seconds. Davis had come first with 44.9 seconds; Kaufmann was second with the same time of 44.9 seconds and Spence third with 45.5 seconds. Even though I had come fourth, my timing of 45.6 seconds was still a new record. I felt completely bereft and humiliated by what had happened. I had scaled the heights of success and now the decline had set in. I knew no one can remain on the top forever. I had dominated the global sports scene for several years and it was time to go. I felt that I could not return to India in this dejected frame of mind, and so participated in competitions in London, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. And then it was time to get back home” (96).

The Age noted in 2006 that "Milkha Singh is the only Indian to have broken an Olympic track record. Unfortunately, he was the fourth man to do so in the same race" but the official Olympic

report notes that Davis had already equaled the Rhoden/ McKenley Olympic record in the quarter-finals and surpassed it with a time of 45.5 seconds in the semi-finals.

I was part of the Indian contingent for the Jakarta Asian Games in August 1962, where I won two gold medals, one for the 400-metre race and the other as part of the 4x400-metre relay team. And then it was on to the Olympics in Tokyo in 1964, after which I hung up my boots. My sports career finally set in 1964. A new chapter now awaited me. Soon after retiring, I announced that I would give an award of two lakh rupees to any athlete who breaks my record of 45.6 seconds in the Olympics. So far, this has not happened, but I have stipulated that even, when I'm no more, my son Jeev will honour the award (Singh 105-106).

His time in the 1960 Olympics 400 m final, which was run on a cinder track, set a national record that stood until 1998 when Paramjit Singh exceeded it on a synthetic track and with fully automatic timing that recorded 45.70 seconds. Although Milkha Singh's Olympic result of 45.6 seconds had been hand-timed, an electronic system at those Games had determined his record to be 45.73. On account of his dazzling performances, the flying Sikh was promoted from the rank of sepoy to junior commissioned officer in recognition of his successes in the 1958 Asian Games. Eventually, Milkha Singh rose to become the Director of Sports in Punjab and continued to hold the position till 1998. After receiving the much-coveted Padma Shri (1959), in 2001, he turned down an offer of the Arjuna Award for life time contribution, arguing that it was intended to recognise young sports people and not those such as him. A little dissatisfied, he believed that the Award could have gone to more deserving ones, and which was currently being inappropriately given to people who had little notable involvement as active sports people at all:

"I have been clubbed with sportspersons who are nowhere near the level that I had achieved. Addressing a crowded press conference at the Chandigarh Golf

Club here, Milkha Singh said he had sent a letter to Union Sports Minister Uma Bharti conveying his decision. The letter was sent to Delhi yesterday. The Arjuna and other sports awards are scheduled to be awarded later this month by the President of India, Mr K.R. Narayanan. Milkha Singh disclosed that he had taken the decision after a 15-minute telephonic conversation with Ms Bharti and taking into account the sentiments expressed by people and well-wishers in India and abroad, who suggested that he should not accept the award. Milkha Singh, who also released a copy of the letter, said the Arjuna Awards, instituted in 1961, were being given to those who did not deserve them. 'I am against this award itself and the way it is awarded'. He said he was of the view that the national sports awards like the Arjuna should be decided by specialists who had a deep understanding of the subject. He claimed that politicians and ministers recommended names for grant of Arjuna Awards, which were supposed to be given to those who won medals at international events, including the Asian Games, the Commonwealth Games, the Olympics and world championships. 'Even the Prime Minister's Office makes recommendation of names', the Flying Sikh alleged" ("Milkha Singh Not to Accept Arjuna Award").

While sharing his wealth of experience in a college in Goa on 25 August 2014, he can be quoted as saying,

"The awards nowadays are distributed like 'prasad' in a temple. Why should one be honoured when he or she has not achieved the benchmark for the award? I rejected the Arjuna I was offered after I received the Padma Shri. It was like being offered an SSC certificate after securing a Masters degree" (Mokani)

All of his medals have been donated to the nation. They were displayed at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi but later moved to a sports museum in Patiala, where a pair of running shoes that he wore in Rome is also displayed. In 2012, he donated the Adidas shoes that he had worn in the 1960 400m final to a charity auction organised by actor Rahul Bose NGO (Singh 147).

The book (*The Race of My Life*), which Milkha wrote with Sonia Sanwalka, his daughter as its co-authored, has inspired *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, a 2013 biographical film on Milkha's life winning awards like 'The Most Popular Film' at the National Film Festival, and 5 awards at the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards in 2014. Singh sold the movie rights for a symbolic one rupee with a clause that a share of the profits would be given to the Milkha Singh Charitable Trust. The Trust was founded in 2003 with the aim of assisting poor and needy sportspeople. In September 2017, Singh's wax statue - created by sculptors of Madame Tussauds in London - was unveiled at Chandigarh. It depicts Singh in running posture during his victorious run at the 1958 Commonwealth Games. The statue is placed at Madame Tussauds museum in New Delhi, India ("Milkha Singh").

Milkha Singh was introduced to the sport only after he had escaped from Pakistan into the safety of India after the country's partition and joined the Indian Army. It was in the army where he sharpened his running skills. His autobiography *The Race of My Life* (2013) reveals:

“My most enduring memory of that year is not the birth of India and Pakistan. I could not even comprehend what was happening. As a teenager from a backward village in Pakistan, I had never seen a cycle, car or train. I was completely bewildered at the turn of events. All that mattered was how to get my next meal, usually a Roti and an Onion” (Singh 23).

After Milkha Singh finished sixth in a cross-country race with about 400 more soldiers running, he was chosen for further training. In fact, it was this particular event that set the foundation for his great and promising career. However, the lady luck was hard to come by during his initial track-and-field career—his brilliance had to wait for a few years more to shine beyond the clouds and establish himself what he ultimately rose to become—the flying Sikh of India! He writes through the prologue of his autobiography *The Race of My Life*: “When I reflect upon my life, I can clearly see how my passion for running has dominated my life. The images that flash through my mind are those of me running...running...running...” (xv). Milkha Singh’s success as the world famous racer and his struggles behind this huge success since his childhood find a hint in his autobiography through an unprejudiced and unbiased projection of his self—but equally notable is the fact that far from aggrandizing his “self”, this great sportsman prefers to remain humble and unassuming even while showcasing his marvelous achievements. These personal accomplishments apart, Milkha’s book stands as a tall beacon for the millions of young men and women who fall into the clutches of mental depression due to a series of failures in their career. Some of such passages are very inspirational:

“I am neither a writer nor an author but a sportsman with passion, who has poured his heart out in this book. Although I am not a man of words, I hope this book can inspire the youth to take up sport and strive to excel. I am proud of the fact I am a self-made man. My philosophy is very simple: ‘The lines on our palms do not decide our future, kambakht, we, too, have a say in it.’ Hard work can change destiny as I know only too well—my entire life has been dedicated to it. My early years were a struggle, but as I gradually started to achieve results, my name and fame grew. I won competitions and medals, except for the elusive Olympic gold,

which I will always regret, and yet I have always been content because I kept trying. My final words would be: life as a sportsman is hard, and there will certainly be times when you might be tempted to quit, or take shortcuts—but remember there are no shortcuts to success. At such times you should try and derive inspiration from this Urdu couplet: *Mita de apni hasti ko agar koi martaba chahe, ki dana khak may mil kar gul-e-gulzar hota hai*” (149).

He has established his life and achieved the heightened glory only through his stable decision and tough practices. The lines shared through the prologue of his autobiography are a speaking evidence to it. This is how Milkha Singh begins the passage: “When I reflect upon my life, I can clearly see how my passion for running has dominated my life. The images that flash through my mind are those of me running...running...running...” The bulleted sentences that follow, speak directly with the readers inviting no one to interpret. The straightforward man that Milkha was actually was, his urge for directness in communication is no less notable. The passage continues with the directness of communication:

- “Sprinting from one shady patch to another to escape the blistering heat of the sun in my journey to school”
- “Fleeing the massacre on that fearsome night when most of my family was slaughtered.”
- “Racing trains for fun.”
- “Outrunning the police when I was caught stealing in Shahdara.”
- “Leaving everyone behind in my first race as an Army Jawan so that I could get an extra glass of Milk.”

- “Surging past my competitors in Tokyo when I was declared Asia’s Best Athlete.”
- “Running in Pakistan and being hailed as ‘*The Flying Sikh*’ (xv).

Milkha concludes the passage with an equal directness of appeal:

“Each of these moments, brings back bitter sweet memories as they represented the different stages of my life, a life that has been kept afloat by my intense determination to triumph in my chosen vocation” (xv).

The twenty chapters of his autobiography actually showcase Milkha Singh’s long march as a sportsman during his long spanning career as a successful runner who continues to inspire men and women of the country even after years when he has stopped running for medals.

Life in undivided India: This part of his autobiography covers his life story from his birth to his fifteen years old age. Here, undivided India was referred that time, the small village of Govindpura which is in today’s Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Being one of his eight siblings he had large but loving and caring family members. Since very his childhood, he had been watching and feeling the stress and fear due to the horror of second world war fear due to the war of independence of undivided India. Though his father forced him to pursue formal education, as he himself was not educated enough to understand the fraud techniques of the enemies around him and his community, he was habituated to learn the stories of hatred and bloodshed all around his village as he shared:

“The events of those terrible days, as India was teetering on the brink of Independence from colonial rule, have had a lasting impact on my life, and I will never ever forget the hatred and bloodshed that has transformed men into beasts” (6).

Insecurity even to survive life can be imagined in the situation in which he spent his childhood. At the age of fifteen when children are supposed to be lost in their positive energy, he was being suppressed with negativity around his area.

Bhaag Milkha Bhaag: This section of his autobiography deals with the tragedy occurred to the Sikh community along with Milkha's family through conspiracy of the parties emphasizing for the division of India according to the differences of religion, especially of Hindu and Muslim soon after or along with the independence of 1947. In early August 1947, insidious rumors had begun to spread among the communities that Hindus and Sikhs were killing the Muslims; that Muslims were killing Hindus and Sikhs. This rumor became the cruel tool of the conspirator. The fast spread of such horror news was enough to disturb and spoil the peace of a simple honest living family like the family of Milkha Singh. On August 1947 British India was portioned finally into India and Pakistan just a day before India became Independent. Time came when people no longer behaved like human beings as they began behaving like demons. Hindu Sikhs and Muslims were brutally massacred, thousands of homes destroyed, mothers lost their husband and children. Bloodshed was spread all around. He was warned that catastrophe was at the door of Gobindpur as the policeman at Kot Addu had not only passed on the name and location of his village to the Muslim fanatics, but also armed them with swords, guns and all sorts of ammunition, and instructed them to eliminate the entire village of the Sikhs. He has shared the horror and attack of the ferocious mob:

“The attack came soon after at about 4 A.M... It was a bloody encounter... They were killing everyone in sight. I tried to hide running from one spot to another to escape being caught. I saw my father fighting valiantly, then I saw him fall, fatally struck by a horse – riding murderer. As he fell, father screamed ‘Bhaag

Milkha Bhaag'. I was petrified and could barely move. As the carnage continued, I thought I heard my mother's wails of anguish as our village Gurudwara, where she had sought refuge, went up in flames. It was not much later that I found out what had happened to the rest of my family that night. How my brothers, Daulat and Amir killed their own wives and daughters let they fell into wrong hands, before they themselves were slaughtered; the deaths of my baby brother, Govind and sister Makhani" (12).

The dread was unimaginable while the situation unbearable, the horror unspeakable, and the terror writ large. He continues further:

"With my father's warning ' Bhaag Milkha Bhaag' running through my head I fled for my life, sometimes running, sometimes walking... It was one of the most terrifying journeys of my life. I imagined that every sound or rustle was that of a lurking assassin awaiting to kill me. I was in such a trance and till today..."(12).

The dreadful story of Milkha Singh had drawn the sight of the film script writer Prasoon Joshi to be written on. Farhan Akhtar, portraying Milkha's role in the film 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag has shared:

"Portraying (Milkha Sing) in Bhaag Milkha Bhaag made me understand that no matter what hand life deals you, it is up to you to decide if you're just going to take part in the game, or choose to win. Milkha Singh- Ji chose to win. And in doing so.... He defined his own destiny" (Singh).

Ten Days in Jail: Through this part, he has shared those days of his hardships when he fled to Delhi after his father's suggestion of panic: *bhaag Milkha bhaag !*. Very honestly, he has shared all his deeds either evil or peer during his stay at his sister's house in Delhi. Out of his poverty he

came into bad conduct began thieving travelling without ticket etc. that he had been arrested and kept into jail for ten days. The time arrived when his brother Makhan managed to send him into school and later also managed to recruit him in army.

My Army Life: His recruitment in Army made him realize that there is another world than that in which he had spent his past years, as it brought innumerable opportunities before him. All through this part Milkha has shared the teaching and learning methods and skills of his army life.

This was not Sports: As the armed forces in India have had a long tradition of promoting sporting events and athletes, its soldiers showcase their potential and hard-work during these occasions. By way of motivating them, they are given incentives so as help themselves develop as competent professionals. He got his way to uplift himself by getting wonderful chance to join the EMC centre sports meet that held in Secunderabad in December 1954. Soon after standing first in the 400 meter race, he was sent for the southern command sports meet in which he won in the 400 meter race. After this triumph, he received great applause and cheers from the audience of his nation. He has shared the importance of the applause and cheers for a sportsperson:

“The applause and cheers I received from the spectators greatly boosted my morale and self confidence, which is very important for any sportsperson” (33).

He has exposed the jealousy and competition issues held in the field of sports as the common schedule. He had to face big challenges while passing through selection test. He has shared one of such incidents that he came across during his final selection of the Indian athletic team:

“The night before the selection race, I was suddenly jolted out of a deep slumber by a hard hit on my legs. A bunch of people had pinned me down and thrown a blanket over my head, so I couldn’t see them. They confirmed to hit me with sticks, and only stopped when my screams alerted my companions in the

barrack... This was also the first time I realized there are people who firmly believe in taking short cuts to excel in sports” (36).

Anyhow, the great day came when he was selected to represent India at the Olympics in Australia which he considered the proudest moment of his life:

“I was selected to represent India at the Olympics in Australia. My joy had no bounds. Here, at last, was the moment I had been waiting, even praying, for. It was my proudest moment yet” (37).

From the Bhangra to the Foxtrot: Though throughout his racing career, Milkha achieved glorious success one after one but, as we know success and failure both are the part of learning. While he got first chance to compete with international team, he couldn't win. But he found it very important part of his life, as he could learn several formalities including Bhangra and Foxtrot dances to be faced every now and then in his life. Only after this, he determined himself for achieving his aim of life as he shared:

“Our flight back was uneventful. By now, we had grown accustomed to flying and did not panic as we had before. I was returning home with no trophies or medals, just my resolve to be a world champion. From now on, this became my sole purpose in life” (45).

My God, My Religion, My Beloved: Returning to India without trophy, Milkha was in pressure to achieve his sole purpose of his life to win the international race in Olympics that he lost in Australia. For this he was determined to follow all the possible art. He continued his tough practice day to night, along with performing his necessary army duties. His army job was also aid to his practice for Olympics as he got support of all his co staff and seniors their as they used to exempt him from the regular duties of army service. Not only this, they used to give him extra

milk and foods so that he could practice well and concentrate on his training. Understanding the motivation from his army, he has written: “My victories made my regiment very happy more so because by setting new records, I was also bringing glory to the armed forces” (51).

Going for Gold: 1957 was the year so lucky for an unbroken record of Victories. Through this part Milkha has shared his joy and excitement of the audience as his nation while he won the 1958 Asian Games in Tokyo. All through the three chapters of his book—the ninth, tenth and eleventh chapters— he has narrates his success story along with sharing the appreciation and motivation received from his audience and many a time, also from his competitors. After Milkhas victory over ace Pakistani Sprinters Abdul Khaliq, General Ayub Khan coined the title ‘Flying Sikh’ to this great Indian racer.

Going West: Milkha’s participating in international events and 77 victories out of 80 races are discussed in chapter 12 of his autobiography in words that give the readers a glimpse into his patriotic self:

“After a few days in Delhi, I left for Germany as captain of India’s athletic team. This was the first stop on a tour of Europe that extended from May to July 1960 and culminated with the Rome Olympics in August. I was pleasantly surprised to discover how famous I was in Germany. My first race in Frankfurt was a friendly contest where I would be participating with one of their top athletes, Carl Kaufmann. When I was introduced to this splendid young man who later became a good friend of mine, he shyly told me, through an interpreter, that his countrymen believed that except for Milkha Singh, he had no equals in the world” (84).

So Near and Yet So Far: It was a dream for the Flying Sikh to win a gold for the nation during the 1960 Rome Olympics. Reminiscing his days that were filled with some reasonable amount of disappointment though he had reasons to cheer at finishing fourth, Milkha Singh writes, “All through my life, I have been tormented by the fatal mistake I made in Rome on the day of the 400-meter race. I knew that I could have won, but perhaps, luck was not on my side that day. The one medal I had yearned for throughout my career had just slipped through my fingers because of one small error of judgment. Even today, if I look back on my life, there are only two incidents that still haunt me—the massacre of my family during partition and my defeat at Rome”(Singh 98). Equating this temporary, retrievable defeat with what turned out to be an irretrievable, ultimate defeat for more than fifteen lakh innocent humans across the boundaries, speaks volumes about the love he had for hockey. It would be pertinent to quote Chandni Saxena (2013) who writes, “The violence during the Partition in 1947 was the final result of a long series of unreasonable demands by the Muslim League and the concessions given by the British and the Congress. The more the Congress became pliant, the more belligerent the Muslim League grew” (Saxena 909).

From Sports to Administration: For the sake of better opportunities to the future athletes, Milkha Singh approached the then Sports administration which was no better than a bunch of insensitive officials who hardly realize the worth of a sportsman of Milkha’s caliber:

“It was Kairon’s intention to bring up my case before Pandit Nehru so that a decision could be taken then and there. He outlined his plan of setting up a sports department in Chandigarh to train promising young boys and girls. He said that for his plan to succeed, he needed an experienced and highly celebrated athlete like me to take charge of the programme. Therefore, he requested that the prime

minister permit my discharge so that I could take up my position with the Punjab government as soon as possible. Pandit ji was reluctant to make a quick decision, knowing that my resignation would be a big blow to the army under whose benign patronage I had grown and triumphed as a sportsman. But Kairon Sahib was so persistent that Pandit ji had no option but to inform Krishna Menon and General Thimayya that they should relieve me of my duties so that I was free to enter the service of the Punjab government. He added, tongue-in-cheek, ‘Milkha Singh is an Indian, so what difference does it make if he’s in the army or with the Punjab government? We will all share the honour he brings. Besides, in any case, he has given up running races.’ Hearing this, Krishna Menon burst out laughing, but General Thimayya was not amused, though there was little he could do to circumvent a decision that had been taken at the highest level. He took me aside and embracing me said, ‘Young man, you are just like a son to me, you are making a terrible mistake. A civilian job is shaky, unlike the army where your career is assured. Besides, in a few days, we will be promoting you to lieutenant. I hope you will not regret this step.’ The die had been cast, however, and the next day a telegram was sent to my unit in Secunderabad, ordering them to prepare all the necessary papers for my discharge”(99).

With a similar apathy, Pan Singh Tomar, the ace athlete, had received a criminal-type treatment during his days when he was serving the Army and was being nurtured as a sportsman. In the chapter that deals with films, a reference to the film *Pan Singh Tomar* finds place in the thesis only to underscore how we treat our sportspersons who deserve a fair treatment on the part of

administrative authorities and officials. However, it is also important to note that Milkha finally emerges victorious while his less-fortunate counterparts have had to face all those odds.

Nimmi: Milkha has not just been being appreciated but he has also appreciated others. Nimmi is the one of such athletes. He has admired her through his fifteenth chapter while sharing his dislike to the movie ‘Bhaag Milkha Bhaag’ for having inspired role played by Sonam Kapoor for Nimmi:

“I first met Nimmi in 1956 in Colombo. I was in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to participate in another athletic competition, and she was there in her capacity as captain of the Indian women’s volleyball team to play a friendly match against the Ceylonese. One day, while my friends and I were wandering around the bazaar, we came across a group of Indian girls and among them was Nimmi. As it always happens, when Indians, or for that matter any other nationalities, meet their fellow countrymen in an alien land, there is instant recognition and bonds of camaraderie are forged based on language, culture and traditions, even if they are total strangers. Inevitably, we struck up a conversation with them, and Nimmi insisted that I come to watch their match that evening. Naturally, I did not refuse, if for no other reason than to support her team. I reached the venue two hours ahead of the scheduled time, full of anticipation. The Indian team was in full form, but Nimmi’s performance was outstanding—her electric energy, superb high jumps and how she ran up to the net to hit the ball. It appeared as if she could beat the entire Ceylonese team singlehandedly on their home ground. Her skills were admirable” (107).

The Bird and a Melancholic Tree: When it came to tying nuptial knots, young Milkha's fate and circumstances were no better than many of those of common young adults who are left struggling in an attempt to marry their beloved lady. He too had his own share of obstacles and impediments marrying his beloved Nimmi, put forth by the archetypes of opposing parents only to be intervened and assuaged by the then Chief Minister of Punjab, Kairon Sahib. Happily, after all those months of indecision and turmoil the love-birds got united and settled as a family full of kids in the years to come: one handsome son, and three beautiful daughters—all worthy ones. While deciding for his family life and while planning for the future of his children. All through the two chapters (16, 17,) mentioned through this point:

“I was overjoyed that the chief minister had believed me and that he had given his consent to our marriage. But what I didn't expect, and what I should have, was how difficult it was to break the social conventions of those days. In the 1960s, inter-caste marriages were frowned upon, and my family vehemently declared that under no circumstances would they agree to their brother marrying a Hindu. By now the news of our relationship had reached Nimmi's parents, and they were furious. Her father, Choudhury Mehar Chand Saini, was an influential man and staunch Arya Samaji, and he was convinced that if his daughter married a Sikh his reputation and izzat would be at stake. When Nimmi returned to Chandigarh, she was deeply distressed and wept in my arms. Would family pressure force us to part? Was this the end of our romantic dreams? Despite her sorrow, Nimmi found the courage to confront her mother with an ultimatum—either to allow her to marry Milkha Singh or she would remain a spinster all her life. But her threats made no difference to their opposition. Finally, Kairon Sahib decided to step in

and break the impasse. He spoke to Nimmi's father, whom he knew very well, at great length, convincing him to agree to the match. He explained that both Nimmi and I were determined to marry each other, and if her family continued to object, then what would prevent her from eloping and having a court marriage? We both were of age, so didn't really need parental consent. 'Wouldn't such a step,' he asked, 'be equally harmful to your reputation? Wouldn't it be easier to just say 'yes'?' And so, with the chief minister's intervention, all the hurdles were crossed, and preparations for our wedding began" (116- 117).

I have a Dream: Milkha Singh the father

In the midst of razzmatazz and glory that Milkha Singh has earned for himself as a sportsman, his more ordinary yet far more important achievements as a worthy son to his parents, a loving brother to his siblings, a caring husband to his wife, a patronizing father to his children, and finally a caring grandfather to his grandchildren—these more humane sides remain hidden beneath his apparent and more visible identity of Milkha Singh, the flying Sikh of the country. He documents some of this in his autobiography:

“As the children started growing up, we began to think about their future. My early struggles as an athlete were always at the back of my mind, and I didn't want them to enter a field that offered little money and security. Like my father, it was my desire that the children should receive a good education and earn professional degrees, so that they could become doctors or engineers, solid and conservative careers that would reap dividends in the future. It has been an amazing journey and today, I am a proud husband, father and grandfather. Nimmi and I keep ourselves busy running the Milkha Charitable Trust in Chandigarh,

where we provide humanitarian services to the poor and needy, particularly penniless sportspeople and their families. These are causes that are very close to our hearts”(124, 128).

Once an athlete, always an Athlete: After spending his valuable time and energy for the success of his nation, he had also advised Indian government to take steps on the problem of the increasing tendency of cheating committed by Indian athletes during sports competitions. However, unfortunately he had none to take his suggestions ion the government—a fact that always kept him worrying for the future of sports in India:

“How very different this systematic approach is from the lackadaisical manner in which we try to develop our sportspeople. Selections in India are ad hoc, often dictated by political diktats, or through personal contacts and connections. What India needs today is a firm goal to aspire towards, and what could be more prestigious than aiming for an Olympic gold? Success in the Olympics should be our ambition, but to achieve that end, we need international level coaching, and for that, I would strongly recommend emulating the Chinese, right from creating a world-class sports infrastructure to spotting and grooming kids with talent. We need to overhaul our selection process and training methodology and choose only the most talented young boys and girls who show promise and have the potential to produce results. Give them professional guidance, use scientific training methods, and discipline them if their standards fall, and above all, inspire and motivate them. What needs to be instilled in them right from the beginning is: toil hard to increase efficiency, stamina and strength, be resolute in thought, word and deed, and most important of all, take pride in your performance” (137-138).

The Politics of Sports: Though Milkha achieved his presence in the hearts of the people of his nation, he couldn't save himself from the politics of sports even as struggling through most part of his sporting career. Despite all such odds and struggles, he never feels dejected at the ways the officials have been mismanaging the things. Howsoever indignant he might be, he never allows his dissatisfaction to take better of him—with a cheerful iconic smile he exhibits his uncanny ability to inspire his countrymen:

“I have always been a strong advocate for the cause of continuing official patronage for prominent sportspeople when they retire. Most sportspeople come from indigent, uneducated backgrounds, whose parents neither had the means nor the influence to develop their child's potential. But what differentiated these children from the rest was their hunger and drives to develop their abilities and succeed. But what happens when they retire? They have no family money or assets to fall back on, and their brief careers have not provided them with a secure future; they receive no benefits or any monetary gain, and once they leave the field, they are forgotten. There have been so many tragic stories of sportspeople, even Arjuna awardees and gold medalists, who have died in abject poverty, including Dhyani Chand and Trilok Singh. I have often suggested to the government that they should introduce some schemes that will help sportspeople when they retire—give them jobs, a regular pension and other benefits. The more prominent ones can be appointed to sports bodies, or even as state governors. Such incentives will encourage the aspiring youth to choose sports as a career” (145-146).

It is remarkable that Milkha Singh took every single thing with utmost sincerity and enthusiasm which is not very usual with so many others. Always hearing time's winged chariot at his back, he never allowed the people around him to become slack and smug. It is not possible to properly evaluate his mental and physical alacrity unless one reads Milkha Singh sharing his message to the sportspersons of upcoming generations who are not serious and irregular to the training session:

“When my first autobiography was released in Punjabi in the mid-1970s, I had hundreds of fans, children and adults alike, coming up to me, saying that they wanted to be Milkha Singh. I would then put them in the training programme, but after four or five days they would abscond because they could not cope with the gruelling routine. I would ask, ‘Do you think that to become Milkha Singh is a joke? A sleight of hand? No, to be Milkha Singh, you need courage and conviction, as well a goal to aspire towards.’ And for me, that goal always was to excel in running. Otherwise, would I have practiced so relentlessly?” (147).

It will not be out of place to quote how the dust-jacket of Milkha Singh's autobiography *The Race of My Life* (Rupa Publications, 2013) exalts the book as, “The inspiring story of an extraordinary man who refused to be outpaced by life or circumstances”. It could not help further glorifying the stature of Milkha Singh as sportsman who led a life running and racing which was only dominated by still more and more of: “running, running, running... From a boy who narrowly escaped death during Partition (most of his family was not so lucky), to a juvenile delinquent who stole and outran the police, to a young army recruit who ran his very first race to win special privileges for himself (a daily glass of milk)”. However, what finally followed was the stuff legends are made of. To quote it further, “In this remarkably candid autobiography,

Milkha Singh shares the amazing highs of winning India's first ever gold in athletics at the Commonwealth Games, the unbridled joy of being hailed as the 'Flying Sikh' in Pakistan, as well as the shattering low of failure at the Olympics. Simple yet ambitious, famous yet grounded, Milkha Singh was a man who defined his own destiny. He shirked the temptations all around and stayed celibate so that he could focus on racing; and even though a rich and beautiful girl wanted him desperately, he fought to marry his lady love, Nimmi. Despite the on-field and off-field drama in his life, Milkha Singh remained committed to running. And yet, remarkably for a man whose life was dominated by sports, he continues to remain disillusioned with the way sports is run...powerful and gripping, *The Race of My Life* documents the journey of an impoverished refugee who rose to become one of the most towering figures in Indian Sports” (Singh).

Unfortunately, the 18th June of 2021 turned out to be one of the most inauspicious days in the sporting history of the country when Milkha Singh breathed his last, leaving a huge vacuum in the world of sports as also the millions of bereaving hearts and the countless eyes filled with tears of grief. The cruel claws of Covid snatched away this *young* man of ninety-one (that is how he would treat himself) with the race of his life coming meeting the finishing line. As he would reveal in his different interviews, his Olympic dream that remained unfulfilled must keep pricking and prodding the young men and women of the country for the coveted medal. Only five days before his death, Milkha Singh's wife, Nirmal Kaur Saini—the oft quoted 'Nimmi' in his autobiography *The Race of My Life*, had also died of Covid. The duo could not remain separated for long—they got united again in heaven the same week. In a Whatsapp homage shared with this researcher Ashok Dhyani Chand—son of Major Dhyani Chand, pays his heartfelt tribute to the man who will continue to rule the hearts: “A humble tribute to the grand old man great grand-father of Indian sports, Milkha Singh Ji's untimely demise has left us devastated and

shattered to the core”. The very foundation stone of Indian sports, whose hard work and perseverance has enabled us to see the heydays of Indian sports, Milkha Singh will keep alive in our memories till eternity. Nothing could have been more saddening to the countrymen than his sudden death just a few days before the start of the Tokyo Olympics. He was like a powerhouse from which young players used to get uninterrupted flow of energy and inspiration.

The foregoing discussion on the autobiographies of these two sportsmen, Dhyan Chand and Milkha Singh, offers a sight for further analysis of some of the abstract ideas including ‘nation’ and ‘patriotism’ apart from treating sports as a space for reconciliation of diverging selves finally melting into the cultural ‘India’, going beyond just its land-mass that shapes its geographical entity. To these men, sports was not just a means of earning their livelihood or a way of aggrandizing their selves, rather far more than these—sports was a means of untying their selves only to melt with a higher, abstract identity—with nationalism at the center.

Chapter 3

Approaching Human Situation the ‘Prakriti Way’: Mary Kom’s *Unbreakable* and Sania Mirza’s *Ace Against Odds*

As its title suggests, this chapter is an evaluation of Mary Kom and Sania Mirza as gifted sportspersons with their sporting skills and women with human substance, the *prakriti*. In the forthcoming passages an analysis has been attempted to decipher how these women have been able to reconcile the two identities—of sportsperson on the one side and that of a woman on the other. In their autobiographies, *Unbreakable* (2013) and *Ace Against Odds* (2016) ---Mary Kom and Sania Mirza respectively reveal their stories of survival, and of success, chiefly in the midst of situations that may not have been harmonious, their aspirations, their pleasure and the usual feelings of desperation blatantly and yet gracefully. Further, it is important to note that though these two sportspersons belong to two separate geographical locales as also two different faiths yet their dedication to sports remains predominant, overshadowing any other identities whatsoever. The upcoming discussion will touch upon all of these abstract stuff as well as the concrete things of their sports within the wider arch of the pattern that speaks of a generation of women, politicised by different realities and impulses, from the feminist activism in different spheres including sports to the global climate movement and even beyond their specific trajectories, their greater political assertion and more visible presence in public spaces is a culmination of deeper changes — from the steady rise in numbers of women in higher education to their emphatic presence on the green turfs and to the silent changes incubated around a gendered identity.

The Sanskrit word *Prakriti* means ‘creature’, and by implication, nature in all its aspects. It is that created power which is capable of creating something new. According to almost available

basic languages, *Prakriti* refers to the feminine aspect of all life forms, and more specifically a woman is seen as a symbol of Prakriti (Mother Nature). It is also seen as the counterpart of the Purusha which is often linked to the extra-terrestrial powers of the sun, the source of energy whose rays are as important as Adam for Evie, or even pen for paper or water for plant.

If the Purusha is the mind, Prakriti is the soul—and for survival of humans in this world, mind and soul both are equally indispensable. *Prakriti*, being the source of regeneration and life, is the mother who plays the role of the creator on the earth. Comprised of two separate units, **Pra** and **kriti** where ‘pra’ denotes intensity, excellence and beauty; ‘kriti’ denotes action and creation—the concept is also referred to as the Universal Mother. Gaurav Mandal explains, “Symbolically, *prakriti* represents the materiality and dynamism of the whole creation. She is responsible for all activity, movement, liveliness, awareness and diversity. In her primal state, she is stable and silent, out of which, she manifests chaos, and from chaos order, with Purusha in the background, nodding his approval. Therefore, in the scriptures you will find descriptions of both her fierce and pleasant forms” (Mandal).

It can be argued that *Prakriti* and *Purusha* are the two different aspects of the same manifest ‘being’, contributing as they do, towards regulating and implementing the universal creative process including the creativity that we witness in the grounds and turfs where each of them compete with the other to excel in their individual sports. The foregoing analysis of the autobiographies of the two sportspersons –Mary Kom and Sania Mirza—attempts to comprehend their different dimensions of personality that each of them have tried to project through their writings.

Beginning her journey from a remote village in Manipur to becoming the queen of the boxing ring, Mary Kom is no less than a role model. She is the only Indian woman boxer to qualify for

the 2012 Summer Olympics, where she won a Bronze medal. The last second paragraph of the prologue to Mary Kom's autobiography *Unbreakable*, one can get the glimpse of her struggles and challenges of the sports life:

“These visual reminders root me to the present. They tell me that I will not wake up the next morning to find myself back in Kangathei, my family and I getting ready for another day of grinding labour in the fields. As soon as I walk into the house, my twin sons come charging at me and right into my arms. They are quite a handful, always up to some mischief, and they are the centre of my life. Now, there is my third son. Yet another focus for my being. Onler – husband, friend, partner – smiles at this all-too-familiar scene. My family: the surest reminder that I am here, that none of this is a dream. My years of relentless labour, hard work, the refusal to give up, pushing every boundary I encountered. The thrill, the joy of fighting and winning, all my successes. Boxing, the sport I gave myself to. And the bronze medal from the 2012 London Olympics, my most prized possession. It is all real. All of it. I was the David who took on the Goliaths in the boxing ring – and I won, most of the time. I thank God for making all of this possible” (2).

Chungneijang Mary Kom Hmangte, popularly known as Mary Kom was born on 24th November 1982 in a small village called Sagang in Manipur's Churachandpur district. She is honored to be the only female to make a six-time winning record for World Amateur Boxing Championship and the only female boxer to win a medal in each of the total seven world championships. Mary Kom's background was not too strong to push her up towards her career that she opted for as she belonged to the family of rural background, though she was a darling girl child for her parents:

“My life has been a tough one, and my beginnings were extremely humble. But I

don't wish for it to have been any different. At least in hindsight. Not at all. Because I realize that the hardships I faced in my formative years are the foundation of my strength. I am tough because of my background. They made me who I am today. They gave me the strength to keep fighting. Indeed, they made me want to fight in the first place" (3).

The lines written by Mary Kom about her father's affection to her explicitly indicate that she was not a neglected daughter of her father like some unfortunate girls who are mistreated since their birth by their parents as a burden to them. However, with utmost honesty, she admits the chilling penury that she and her family members had to undergo. The words are specially notable in that they remind the reader of her courage that she would be displaying later in her boxing ring:

"To return to the story of my birth, it was a time when my parents had nothing to call their own. I was Apa's only proud possession. He called me 'sanahen', my eldest precious one. That's the endearment he uses to address me to this day" (7).

She further writes:

"As the family grew, so did the expenses, and this led to frequent feuds among the brothers. The atmosphere at home became increasingly unpleasant. Apa claimed his birthright – his share of grand- father's farmland. But the division of a small paddy field into four parts was far too painful a decision for grandfather to make. Instead, he told Apa:

Tonpa, Chan mak jo roh, Inreng kho in ada lhon jo che Hoi Kho in angak jo che.

Tonpa, be anxious no more hard times have abandoned you good times lie in wait for you" (7).

The Kom Society to which she belonged was biased about gender as the people there believed that since a girl child was to be married and sent away with her husband no need to educate them by spending money; though it was her luck that she had gotten such a loving father who was proud while he secured her admission in the town's best school of that time despite his meager earning. Mary Kom writes:

“In the Kom society of those days, boys were given preference when it came to education. Most people believed that, since a girl would get married and go away to her husband's home, there was little point in spending money educating them. But not my dad – he wanted his first-born to be the first in the family to pass class ten. Apa could have let me stay at home and then married me off early. Heaven knows he didn't have the wherewithal to do much more. But I am proud that he dared to think differently, and grateful for the farsightedness that has brought me so far. My first school was the Loktak Christian Model High School, run by a Presbyterian mission in Moirang. It was one of the town's best schools. My father had kept small sums of money aside from his meagre earnings so he could enrol me in a good school. And I remember how proud he was when he secured admission for me there” (12).

She always looked forward to the Annual Games and Sports meet in her school, and competed in practically every individual Sporting event; 100 meters, 400 meters, Long Distance etc. While her father noticed her spending her time in sports instead of her full focus on her study he remind her loss he had met due to lack of his education. Her father was also not interested in her interest in sports. After her middle class VI she was shifted to St. Xavier's School where she continued to participate and excel in all individual sports. Her interest and performance impressed her

teachers that they suggested her father to take her to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) in Imphal. They also guided Kom to consider her Career in Sports. Thus, at her school level, she was given equal opportunity without any gender bias:

“I always looked forward to the annual games and sports meet in school, and competed in practically every individual sporting event: 100 metres, 400 metres, long-distance and so on. Then there were the less serious events, like the spoon race (in which we ran the race with a spoon in our mouths, careful not to drop the marble balanced on it) and the needle race (run, thread a needle, run back). I bagged the first prize in most events I participated in. The prizes were household items like plates, cups and tiffin boxes, much to my family’s delight. My brother was very excited about the tiffin box, because now he could take rice to school like his friends did. As my focus moved to sports, my academic performance started sliding. Father was very distressed by this. He wanted his children to never have to face the discrimination and disadvantages that his own lack of education forced him to bear with. He did not want me to waste my time playing.... After my class six exams, I was shifted to St Xavier’s School, also in Moirang. I don’t remember why I made the move. My brother was at Xavier’s, and perhaps my parents wanted us to be in the same school. The best thing about the new school was its huge playground. At the new school too, I continued to participate and excel in all individual sports. So much so that my principal and teachers suggested that I should consider a career in sports. One day, the principal summoned Apa and suggested that he take me to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) in Imphal” (21-23).

Though Mary Kom's father couldn't take her to Imphal, it was not because of gender bias but just because of his too poor economic conditions:

“After my class six exams, I was shifted to St Xavier's School, also in Moirang. I don't remember why I made the move. My brother was at Xavier's, and perhaps my parents wanted us to be in the same school. The best thing about the new school was its huge playground. At the new school too, I continued to participate and excel in all individual sports. So much so that my principal and teachers suggested that I should consider a career in sports. One day, the principal summoned Apa and suggested that he take me to the Sports Authority of India (SAI) in Imphal. This worried my father more than it pleased him. Where was he to find the resources to send his daughter to Imphal? He decided not to think about it just yet” (23).

It is notable that Kom never took her womanhood as a handicap or a disadvantage. In fact, she celebrates her being a woman and felt gifted or blessed about this, at least till she was in her younger days, living a life of freedom under the care of her parents. She recounts in her autobiography how happy she had felt even while travelling on the roof the bus while going to Imphal to participate in the Students' Union at Thayong village in 1998:

“But I still have my own little sporting memories from the time. The most vivid of those is the annual meet of the Kom-Rem Students' Union at Thayong village in 1998. It was a gathering of Kom youth from all over Manipur. My parents tried to dissuade me from going. Perhaps they were worried about the expenses. But when I insisted they relented, and my friends and I set out. I travelled on the roof of a bus with the boys throughout the eight-kilometer

journey. I was happy and excited. Sitting at that height, a bright scarf around my head, I felt on top of the world. Nothing that followed – my first train ride, my first flight, my first visit abroad – ever matched the sheer delight of that childhood journey. We reached in the evening and I was amazed at the beauty of the village and the scenery. I seem to remember someone telling me that Thayong is famous for its juicy pineapples. At the meet I participated in all the athletic events and outshone the others easily. I made friends as well as quite a name for myself in the community” (23).

After her daring participation in all the athletic events Kom got appreciation even from those who used to raise doubts about the girl’s talents. A beloved daughter of her father, when she came back to her village, she received from him brand new Captain cycle to make her more confident. Her father came up to support and push her up to gain the highest peak in sports that he took her to Nipmacha kunam, a National Institute of Sports (NIS) - trained coach at Moirang. After joining him Kom had to practice and exercise along with cycling between Moirang and her village. Her toughness and hard work never went unnoticed by the onlookers around:

“But back in the village life continued as before – except that Apa had saved enough money by then to buy me a Captain bicycle. I would ride with my friends, my sister usually perched on the carrier at the back. One day I pedalled so fast that my sister fell off. I heard my friends yelling at me to stop and turned back to find the carrier empty. I had to cycle back quite a distance to pick her up. My friends and I would often race to school and I would beat boys even bigger than I was. I used to pretend I was riding a motorcycle, like some of the boys zooming past us. As the days and months passed, Apa gradually began to accept my fierce

passion for sport. He began enquiring about the best options available, so he could send me for further training. He wanted to find a way to indulge me without disturbing my school and studies. He took me to Nipamacha Kunam, a National Institute of Sports (NIS)-trained coach, at Moirang. Oja Nipamacha was an athletics coach and had nurtured many youngsters. I was thrilled when he accepted me as his student. ‘Will you come early in the morning for exercises and training?’ he asked me sternly. I assured him I would do my best. There was no admission fee to this course, nor were there equipment charges. All I had to do was show up and train alongside the other athletes. The only concern was that I did not have a balanced diet to support my training. Sure enough, the strain of cycling between Moirang and my village four times every day became too much. It was also clear to me that athletics was not my cup of tea. In about twenty days I gave up. Still, there was a lot I learnt in that short stint, most crucially, the right techniques of exercise” (23- 24).

Imphal’s SAI Institute was the next place beckoning Kom to exhibit her prowess and punches but not without keeping in mind the lessons given to her by her father:

“Apa may not have been educated but he knew about life, and was keen to share with his children all that he knew. He would say to me, ‘Sanahen, being a woman, you should be able to do everything.’ Or ‘Don’t tell lies. Be good and kind-hearted. Treat your elders with love and care.’ So I strove to learn how to run a home, and cook and clean – even as I learnt to work alongside him and play alongside my peers. The most significant lesson I learnt was one Apa taught me: of the dignity of hard labour and honesty. *Nangna toubu, nangna phangba Eina*

touba, eina phangba. “What you sow, you will reap. What I sow, I will reap”
(27).

Later, much to her good luck, she got such a coach at SAI in Imphal who was so much impressed by her determination that he agreed to train her until it was time for the formal selection to be done. Kom got her admission in high school there in Imphal only so that she could continue her study also. Again there was a man Chungthang who had helped her to be admitted in school in class IX there. Her new school and her academy were little distant to each that she had to cycle so long to manage her attendance and performance at both places. Though she learnt several new kinds of sports under great guidance of Coach Gosana. One day even without informing the coach she left SAI Academy while realizing that she should leave before the formal selection for athletes was done there. Though she left the Academy without informing Coach Gosana she felt guilt for that. Gosana gets a very favorable, though a brief one only, description in her autobiography:

“I had joined SAI as an outsider - by which I mean, just on the basis of an understanding between Coach and me. So there was no strict rule about leaving. Though, I did feel guilty about leaving without speaking to Oja Gosana. At about that time there was talk that women’s boxing might be introduced at SAI. I was very excited. The idea of boxing appealed to me immensely. During the National Games in 1999 at Khuman Lampak, there had been an exhibition bout by senior women boxers L. Sarita Devi and Sandhyarani Devi. Sadly, I wasn’t able to go see the matches. Then came the news that Dingko Singh, a Manipuri, had won the gold in the 1998 Bangkok Asian Games, which led to a greater buzz around boxing in the state. He was our newest icon. Although I had never seen Dingko, I

secretly wished to be like him. Talk was that Dingko had made that gold after having been dropped from the national team and then reinstated again. He was not a hero only to me, but to all of Manipur” (29).

Very soon after her leaving the SAI academy she became highly excited as soon as she heard the news that Dingko Singh, a Manipuri had won the gold in the 1998 Bangkok Asian Games, which led to greater buzz around boxing in the state. By that time Boxing was introduced in SAI academy. Being highly interested in Boxing she moved again to the very academy and met the chief coach named L. Ibomcha Singh with her effort to be selected there.

At first, while she met L. Ibomcha Singh he doubted Kom’s talent for the reason she was a girl while he asked to her:

“Why do you want to join Boxing? That day, I was wearing a gold earring my mother had bought for me with her kitty money. ‘You are a small, frail girl. With your gold earring, you don’t even look like a boxer. Boxing is for young boys” (31).

But a good soul and unprejudiced man which he actually was, Singh sent her to SAI and trained her in the best possible manner so much so that Kom later recounts his goodness as her best coach ever:

“This was the regimen I followed for most of my early years in boxing. Following a systematic, well-balanced routine prepared my raw talent for the rigours of the sport. I also gathered that the best way to defeat an opponent was to be fast and furious. My coaches down the years also appeared to agree that intimidating the opponent early on is good strategy. I learnt all I could from Oja Ibomcha, and he remains one of my best coaches ever. The Government of India

recognized his contribution to the field of boxing by giving him the Dronacharya Award in 2010” (34).

Kom left SAI when she got to hear that SAI students may not be allowed to participate in the state level tournaments. After that she moved to Oja Narjit for further training of Boxing. Oja Narjit also cooperated and trained her both as her coach and also as a good guardian. The male boxer showed no prejudices and biases on account of her gender:

“I didn’t want to take any chances, so I decided to leave SAI in order to qualify for the state-level tournament in May 2000. Oja Ibomcha knew how things worked and did not object when his students moved out of SAI. I had been boxing for a little over a month when I shifted to the state coaching facility. But after the competition, I came back to Ibomcha, as did several other boxers. This came to be something of a pattern. After leaving SAI, I approached Oja Narjit. He accepted me, and I trained for a few weeks under him. He was very dedicated to his work. Women’s boxing was a new department back then, with practically no facilities to support it. But the coach was enthusiastic and the girls were passionate, and so we managed without proper infrastructure. Most of us had come from places outside Imphal, and were struggling to find good, safe accommodation. Oja Narjit arranged for us to stay on campus at Khuman Lampak in one of the office building rooms. He personally came to check on us to ensure that we were safe. To us, he was both coach and guardian. His motto was: discipline, dedication, determination. Today, with only a few years left before his superannuation, Oja Narjit still coaches his students in an open ring with just a roof over it. He hopes

that the Ministry of Sports will upgrade the boxing arena in Khuman Lampak during his tenure” (34-35).

Everything was done to Mary Kom by her father for her successes and freedom except accepting her boxing career easily for the reason she was a girl who should have kept herself humble and beautiful as while he knew her championship in state through the column of a newspaper he without any delay met and questioned her that why was she interested in boxing while counseling her:

“The first thing he asked me was, ‘Why? But why are you interested in boxing? You didn’t even tell me about it. I had to learn about it from the newspaper’. With a stern look he added, ‘I do not like it at all. Stop it before it’s too late.’

‘I like boxing, and will not stop. Please understand, Apa,’ I said. He paused to think about it and replied gently, ‘You are a girl. One day, you will get married. Should anything happen, should you get injured, it will be a big problem. Many boxers get serious injuries; I have seen blood streaming down their faces. If you get injured, it will cost a lot of money, which I do not have.’ Apa remembered that I used to devour martial arts movies, that I wanted to be like the fighters in them. If you’re really interested in combat, why don’t you join judo or karate”?

(41)

But Kom had made up her mind with strong determination that she was meant for nothing but only Boxing which happened to be her fortunate *fait accompli* for life. She has indeed seen a tough time. Mary Kom says, “For a large part of my career, I had no sponsors. I have even, on occasion, paid for my travel to participate in competitions and camps”(Bhalla 17).

As Mary Kom determined herself once for Boxing, she recorded her name for the:

- Gold in 7th East Open Boxing Championship, Bengal in 2000.
- Gold in 1st Women's National Boxing Championship, Chennai in 2001.
- Gold in 2nd Senior Women's National Boxing Championship, New Delhi in 2001.
- Silver in 1st World Women's Boxing Championship, 45 KG Pennsylvania in 2001.
- Gold in Witch Cup Boxing championship, Paes, Hungary, 45 KG in 2002.
- Gold in 2nd World Women's Boxing Championship, Antalya, Turkey in 2002.
- Gold in 32nd National Games, Hyderabad in 2002.
- Gold in National Women's Sports Meet, New Delhi in 2002.
- Gold in 3rd Senior Women's National Boxing Championship, Aizawl in 2003.
- 03 Gold in Training-cum-competition, Rome, Italy in 2003.
- Gold in 2nd Asian Women's Boxing Championship, Hisar, India in 2003.
- Gold in 4th Senior Women's National Boxing Championship, Assam in 2004.
- Gold in 1st World Women's Boxing Tournament, Tonsberg, Norway, 46 kg in 2004.
- Gold in 5th Senior Women's National Boxing Championship, Kerala in 2004.

(Kom 142-144).

These successes came to her continuously. Then the time came when a girl is supposed to go under control of her partner whom she marries. It was the lucky time for Mary Kom on 12 March 2005 that she got married with Onler Kom the boy as supportive as her parents being her true guy since 2000 during her training session in New Delhi (67).

Fortunately, even after her marriage with Onler Kom, Mary Kom continued to remain as free as before and went ahead with her winning spree:

- Gold in 6th National Senior Women's Boxing Championship, Jamshedpur in 2005.
- Gold in 3rd Asian Women's Boxing Championship, Taiwan, 46 kg in 2005.

- Gold in Asian Cadet Boxing Championship, Hanoi, Vietnam, 46 kg in 2006.
- Gold in 4th World Women's Boxing Championship, New Delhi, India, 46 kg in 2006.
- Gold in Vjile Women's Boxing Tournament, Denmark in 2006.

(143-144).

Life is not all a bed of roses; humans on this earth have their own share of pain and pleasures. But what is important in this general drama of pain, as the famous Victorian novelist Thomas Hardy would put it, there always remains a scope for amelioration, an improvement in our situation. Mary Kom's had her own share of travails even as she was preparing herself for the upcoming battle for existence and survival not just in boxing but also in life in general. By the way of foregrounding the of words like 'coping', 'hardships', 'poverty', the following passage from her autobiography reveals not just the hard days that she had undergone but also her fighter-like attitude and bravery that has been demonstrating in the boxing-ring as well:

“My own life had been limited to coping with the hardships of poverty and then the rigours of my sporting life. But that one incident woke me up to the reality of the world around me. Manipur has been an insurgency-torn state since the 1980s. With a population of a mere twenty seven lakh, it is home to over thirty militant groups. They are best known to the outside world by their acronyms, most notably NSCN-IM, NSCN-K, UNLF and KNO. These groups dominate different areas where they run parallel governments, each with its own constitution and vision for the future. People who live in remote villages with no police or army security are the most vulnerable. Chiefs of villages are given demand letters, and if they fail to fulfil the militants' wishes, they are kidnapped, very often never to return. Sometimes the demand is for supplies, at other times that the village should

arrange recruits for one or the other organization” (74).

There were times, dark and gloomy, when Mary was forced to play the role of a wise guardian to her husband Oler Kom when he had lost his father in a terror attack even as keeping her equanimity intact—she never allowed her Boxing matches to suffer on account of her personal tragedies. Finally, the family recovered its happiness with the birth of their twins on 5th August 2007. It is interesting to see how the new-born kids were christened:

“Father came up with the idea of adding ‘world’ to their names – ‘Worldthang’ or ‘Worldchung’ – in honour of my World Championship titles. My parents refer to all World Championship titles as ‘World Cup’ titles. So the word ‘world’ is dear to my father. This is not an uncommon practice in my part of the world. It wasn’t unusual for children in the village to be named after a significant event or a prized possession of the family. For instance, I remember this one kid who was named ‘Cyclethang’ after his father bought a cycle- probably the most expensive property they owned. But in the case of my sons, the other elders vetoed my father’s idea. Finally, the elders agreed upon names that were derived from those of the two grandfathers. The elder twin was named ‘Rengchungvar’, derived from my father-in-law’s name, ‘Rekhupthang’. The younger twin was ‘Khupneivar’, which came from my father’s name, ‘Pontinkhup’ (80-81).

Striking a balance—that’s what a boxer does while facing her fierce opponent in the ring. Mary Kom’s act of balancing came to her in legacy. The big joint family was struggling hard between the mutually opposed values of modernity on the one hand and the native Manipuri on the other.

Living between the poles has never been easy, but it has its own great advantages. Mary Kom underlines her conundrum which was also the enigma of the entire clan which she represents. Her personal sporting career can be summed up as something comprising the same divergent poles where ‘boxing’ and ‘unboxing’ both converge in her own family life, adding yet more or precious laurels to her cap, both in and off the ring where it really gets tough to do the things without receiving the much-needed emotional support from the near and dear ones especially during those trying moments. Like a grateful woman and a worthy wife to her husband, she never fails to acknowledge the mental succor provided by the father of her twins:

“My success my marriage the children all of this was grist for the gossip mills in the village and outside. When I was getting married everyone cautioned me against it. Afterwards, they all said that I would lose steam and ambition...Then, when the babies arrived, they said this is the end...I wanted to prove them all wrong” (82).

It was not without the strong backing offered by her family and friends that she could achieve what remains a dream for many. And to name only a few:

- Silver in 4th Asian Women’s Boxing Championship, Guwahati, India in 2008.
- Gold in 9th Senior Women’s National Boxing Championship, Agra in 2008.
- Gold in 5th World Women’s Boxing Championship, Ningbo, China, 46 kg in 2008.
- Gold in Indo-Sweden Dual Match Boxing Tournament, Gothenberg, Sweden in 2009.
- Gold in Indoor Asian Games, Hanoi, Vietnam in 2009.
- Gold in 57th All India Police Meet, Pune in 2010.
- Gold in 5th Asian Women’s Boxing Championship, Astana, Kazakhstan, 51 kg in 2010.

- Gold in 6th AIBA Women's World Boxing Championship, Barbados, 48 kg in 2010.
- Bronze in 16th Asian Games, Guangzhou, China, 51 kg in 2010.
- Gold in Asia Cup, Haikou, China, 48 kg in 2011.
- Gold in 12th Senior National Women's Boxing Championship, Bhopal in 2011.
- Gold in 6th Asian Women's Boxing Championship, Mongolia. 51 kg in 2012.
- Bronze in Olympic Games 2012, London, 51 kg in 2012.

(143-145).

Hardly any deserving award is left to be conferred upon her:

- Arjuna Award, 2003 (21 September 2004)
- Padma Shri Award, 2005 (20 March 2006)
- NETV People's Choice Awards, 2006
- People of the Year, 2007, Limca Book of Records: India at her best
- Indian Real Heroes Award, 2007, CNN-IBN, Reliance Industries Limited, Mumbai
- Pepsi MTV Youth Icon, 2008
- Param Poojaniya Shri Guruji Puruskar, 2009, RSS Jankalyan, Maharashtra Prant
- Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award, 2009 (29 August 2009)
- North East Excellence Award, 2009 (8-9 January 2010)
- Sports Women of the year 2008-09, Sahara India Parivar
- YFLO Women Achiever 2009-10, FICCI Ladies Organization
- Sportsperson of the Year, North East, 2010, Assam Sports Journalist Association

- Sports Women of the Year, 2010–11, Sahara India Parivar
- Spirit of Sports Award, 2012, NDTV India, 5 March 2012
- Tribal Achiever’s Award, 2012, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India
- Padma Bhushan, 2013 (146).

Mary Kom has been nominated as a member of the Rajya Sabha on April 25th, 2016. She has also been appointed as National Observer for Boxing by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India in 2017 (PTI, “Government Designates 12 Olympians as National Observers”). Recently only, when former India boxer Dingko Singh passed away after battling cancer, Mary Kom could not contain her tears of mourning at the loss of her senior fellow:

"He was a rockstar, a legend, a rage. I remember I used to queue up to watch him fight in Manipur. He inspired me. He was my hero. It is a huge loss. He has gone too soon, Life is so unpredictable" (PTI).

Mary Kom stands out as a message and warning to her detractors who neglect girl children, and stands tall not only as a six-time World Amateur Boxing Champion but also an embodiment of women empowerment and their invincible spirit.

Sania Mirza : *Ace Against Odds*

“Every once in a while, the universe throws up an anomaly in the context of Indian sport. In my opinion, to call Sania an anomaly is an understatement. I won’t go into all the reasons why I believe so, as most of you already know them and that’s why you are reading this book” ---that’s how her fellow tennis champion Mahesh Bhupati beautifully describes Sania Mirza in the Introduction to her autobiography *Ace Against Odds* which was published in 2016.

Born on 15th November 1986 in Mumbai, Sania Mirza grew up in Hyderabad in a forward looking family where she received every imaginable guidance and support from her parents. Writing in her

autobiography, Sania proudly reveals, “All through my life and especially while I was growing up, I was never made to feel as though tennis was my only option. I played because I enjoyed it, and my parents gave me to understand that I could continue to play for as long as I wanted to (Mirza 19).

To a sportsperson like Sania, the proverbial one life is not enough—her grand achievements need a space beyond words can describe. No wonder, she keeps no secrets about her sporting virtuosity:

“Everything I have achieved on the tennis courts in the last decade is only half the story. In this book I hope to recreate the other half as well. The story of years of struggle, of the methodical planning and single-minded dedication of ‘Team Sania’, the countless sacrifices – especially those made by my family – the pain and heartache, the shedding of sweat and blood, interspersed with priceless moments of exultation and glory. All this and more went into making me a multiple Grand Slam champion and the No. 1 player in the world” (11).

Mirza was really lucky that she got her parents who understood her feelings and pushed and up according to her choice without any barrier got the reason she was a girl child. Initially being coached by her father, Mirza joined Zizam Club Hyderabad to receive the training for swimming and roller skating. The Tennis court just next to the swimming pool was most attractive field to her that she began giving her hours to tennis together with swimming and roller skating. Mirza was just six years old when she joined there that the coach Srikanth, in starting was hesitated to admit her to such tough skill of hitting the tennis ball because he had probably not seen a six year old girl or child hitting the small tennis ball so clearly. But as soon as he observed Mirza’s power he called her father very excitedly and urged to him:

“You have to come, Sir! She was tremendous ball sense and timing. You cannot teach that. It’s pure talent”(18).

The day onwards Mirza's father took tennis seriously for her. In the early days of her sports career though Mirza was busy enjoying the sports such as swimming, roller skating, cricket and tennis all together. Mirza writes while recalling the moving words of her coach Srikanth:

“He explained that there was no chance a seven year old girl would develop a wrist strong enough to be able to lift the low balls, give the awkward way in which she held the racket. If it had been a boy in similar situation he might have let him continue with his unique grip and concentrate on developing strength in the wrist and forearm muscles for support” (23).

It has been argued that the coach Srikanth underestimated Mirza for the reason she was a girl and not capable enough to make her wrist strong enough to be able to lift the low balls. But he decided to work on the same point though Sania Mirza reached only to 70 percent closer to where she needed to be according to the coach. After that she realized that even as seven years old girls found the forehand grip that suited her and she was confident enough to live with it. Her coach gave up and she stuck to the semi- western grip that (23).

School education was never of less priority for Sania Mirza despite her successful entry in Sports field:

“There were many days when I was unable to finish my homework after coming back from tennis lessons and crashing early. My mother would then read out the chapters or long poems in the car while my father drove us to school in the morning and I would memorize it all before we reached. That's how I prepared for many of my examination” (25).

The First Miss of My Life: During her childhood, Sania was not much aware about the importance of time and she used to spend time just sitting at the print shop when she should have been out

playing with friend's or in school. It was not liked by her father as her father was conscious enough about the value of time and place one has to follow. It was his consciousness that he returned back to his motherland India as soon as he got the least way to return in February 1992 from Columbus, USA. Though she used to appeal her mother and father to let her admit to Tennis class there only in Columbus, but it wasn't taken seriously until they returned to India (Mirza 4).

Mirza (2016) writes:

“I was an athletic young girl who liked to spend more time outdoors than inside. I remember asking my mom to enroll me for tennis classes. She was heartbroken because she had to deny me this luxury they just could not afford. The classes would have cost around \$40 an hour, way too much for them to set aside for a four-year-old when they were surviving hand-to-mouth, working long hours. My mother told me later that she cried when she was alone, overwhelmed at not being able to give her daughter what she so badly wanted. Just like my education, tennis would have to wait” (15).

Early Lesson: As soon as they returned to India, her mother admitted her to the classes that Sania was desirous for in the US but couldn't be admitted there due to their financial condition. At first, she was admitted to swimming class, then, joined tennis-class under full supervision of her mother, father and coach (6).

Mirza (2016) discusses how she learnt from her father on the importance of sports in one's routine.

She writes:

“What I learnt from my father very early, even at that age, was that sport should be an essential part of one's routine. He truly believed that sport teaches us a lot about life. It was his conviction that a seven-year-old who has learned to deal with

wins and losses would be better able, at thirty, to deal with anything that life might throw at her – certainly better than someone who has never played sports. Athletes handle losses on a daily basis. You have to dust yourself off after each painful loss and prepare for the next win, day after day. I grew up believing in this and am convinced that this attitude placed me ahead of most opponents I faced then and even much later in my career”(20-21).

Getting a Grip: Her forehand was her biggest weapon and was primarily responsible for catapulting her to a career high singles ranking of No. 27 and doubles’ ranking of No.1 in the world, a part from helping her win three Grand Slam titles in women’s doubles and three in mixed doubles. But it did not always look like it does today.

Her coach and father decided to work on the same lines with her forehand technique and over the next few months. She gradually shifted her grip until she reached a point that was 70 percent closer to needed to be according to the coaching manual (11-12).

The First Breakthrough: It was during her eight years old career that she played her maiden state ranking junior Tournament in Hyderabad and lost in the second round, trying to be over aggressive without much success. However she cherished the award she received for being the most talent junior in the tournament. Soon after she turned nine years of her age, she became the Hyderabad Schools Tennis Champion. She played in a number of state ranking tournaments the following years and began to dominate the Under 14 section in her home state of Andhra Pradesh, winning a handful of trophies. These match prepared her well for the All India Tennis association circuit and she had some impressive wins in the South zone tournaments (14, 17).

An Unforgettable Experience: AITA had announced that the top three ranked players in the Under 14 category would represent India in the world junior championships in Jakarta. After

much struggle she clinched the coveted spot in the under 14 Indian team. It was the first unforgettable chance for her to wear the national colors (19).

Mirza (2016) writes:

“I performed consistently to come within striking distance of a place in the junior national team but I still needed to make it at least to the semi-final in a tournament in Guwahati to clinch my spot. That trip proved to be one of the most horrifying experiences of my life”(30).

Junior High: One of the higher ranked seed decided to withdraw from the juniors draw in order to concentrate on her professional career and she moved in to become the youngest player to compete in any event Wimbledon that year, at the age of fourteen years and seven months (26).

Playing for India: Mirza got the wonder chance to represent India in the Asian Games, for the first time, in 2002. She has written:

“However, I can never forget the thrill of being selected to represent India in the Asian Games for the first time in 2002. The games were to be held in October that year in Bussan, South Korea. The feeling of walking out for your national flag for the first time stays with you forever” (42).

First Brush with Stardom: She reached London to prepare for Wimbledon in June 2003. It was definitely a revenge match for her. She took it as challenge. She writes:

“I distinctly remember the championship point. I told myself that I would not take any chance and would concentrate on keeping the ball in play from the base line. I engaged the rival duo in a long rally finally forcing a feeble lob from over opponents which Alisa, at the next, needed to barely top in for a winner” (50).

The whole India erupted! It was the first time ever that an Indian girl had won at Wimbledon and the achievement was celebrated with excitement and fanfare all over the country. Crowds thronged in huge numbers to the felicitation and celebratory functions arranged in Hyderabad and in several other Indian cities- on streets at the airports, almost everywhere. Perhaps, the country had been desperately in need of a female supporting icon, and I was filling that vacuum. It was her first glimpse of Stardom and she felt humbled by the experience. Such scenes of people's reaction are the direct motivation to any sports person that push-up him or her to achieve more and more (50).

Of Coaches and Critics: She is though very laborious that she never left any chance to heighten her glory, she has always been thankful to her coaches who trained her long before she become a well known name in India and beyond. Not only to her positive guides or coaches but also to the persons who have criticized her about her shortcomings, she has taken them seriously while trying to enable them to admire her work through her tough labour to improve her weakness. She has written:

“I never shirked hard work and if I had not improved substantially upon all those weakness that I had when I broke into the elite group, I know I would have been blown out of the top 100 within weeks. What disappointed me was the scorn directed at me by some critics, on account of my not being able to develop a good enough serve to win Grand Slam in singles or not improving my fitness to match a natural athlete... They attributed it to a lack of effort ambition on my part...

What works for one may not suit another” (58).

Champion at Home: The third WTA tournament in Mirza's hometown of Hyderabad was her so important target. She had been given a wild card the two previous years but failed to win a

round in singles. She thought that she had played well on both occasions but lost in three sets to the Aussies. Now she had won a WTA singles title the first Indian women ever to do so. She would now break into the top 100 of the women's world rankings list. She received great applause from her audience including the president of AITA, R.K. Khanna as she has shared:

“He called me aside. ‘God bless you, Sania,’ he exclaimed. ‘You have given me great joy today. It had always been my dream to have an Indian win a prestigious tennis title in India before a full house. You not only won the title, but you also filled up the stadium, my child. I watched your match on television and the fact that I could not even get inside the stadium because of the huge crowd that came to watch you play makes this one of the happiest days of my life’ (67).

The Best Match of My Life: In the fifteenth chapter of her autobiography, *Ace Against Odds*, Sania has shared about her best match that she had ever played:

“If I were to pick the greatest singles tennis match of my life, it would have to be the second round of the Dubai Duty Free Championship in March 2005, in which I made an unbelievable comeback to turn the tables on the reigning US Open Champion, Svetlana Kuznetsova. It was not just the quality of tennis that I managed to conjure up to come back from a hopeless position but also the unique circumstances that made it one of the greatest wins of my career” (71).

She was sure and proud to know the joy of her grandmother that she would feel while being proud of her performance that day.

With Fame Comes Controversy: Unlike what people think, lives of celebrities are not bed of roses. They have to be ready to face their audience both in their happy and sorrow time if

audience loves applauses with the success of the celebrities, it also abuses, criticize and dislike at single fall. Mirza has not been exception in this case. She has shared through her autobiography:

“It did not take a genius to assess that some of the people present in the room had made up their minds already about what they wanted to hear from me that day. Controversy was in the air and they were not going to waste the opportunity. I felt claustrophobic as attempts were made to put words into my mouth which would suit the storyline they had already decided upon” (89).

Sometimes, even negative reinforcement works behind the success of the person. It is up to the person that how does he takes the comment.

Double the Fun! : At the time she could not have imagined that she would create history by winning six Grand Slams and also becoming the first Indian woman to be ranked No. 1 in the world in Doubles. But these two significant wins of 2007, at a time when she was still developing as a tennis player and against a couple of world class teams were definitely a forerunner to the way things would pan out for her in doubts and will remain fresh sweet memories long after she was gone away from the game (109).

To the Brink and Back: A case was filed against Mirza during 2008 making her accused of putting her leg close to the national flag and thus courted one of the worst controversies in her life which, understandably enough, had the potential to make deep dents to her career. However, Sania managed to overcome the running imbroglio with her sports spirit:

“There was one major fall out of the flag controversy, and it still rankles. Despite finishing third for the second year in row, the organizers of the Hopman Cup perhaps disturbed to omit India from their list of elite nations. They were not invited to Perth the following year” (118).

Olympic Dreams: Life without dreams is not worth living. And if a few of those dreams come true, they give you the greatest high you can ever experience. Further Sania Mirza writes “when I set out to become a tennis player ages ago, I always dreamt of playing at the Centre Court at Wimbledon and I was lucky to fulfill my ambition. Somewhere along the way, the dream of representing my country at the Olympics began to take shape and gradually, the dream turned into an obsession. After my wrist injury in March 2008, I had just one goal in mind – to recover in time to represent my country at the Beijing Olympics that were scheduled for August that year” (126).

Heartbreak Time: Towards the early part of year though, she struggled a bit in her personal life as she got her wrist injury, her brother cum friend’s accidental injury, etc. Though, they come out of danger. She also faced her break- up with her first husband Mohammad Sohrab Mirza (135).

Finding Love: After her break up with Sohrab Mirza fell in love with Pakistani Cricketer Shoaib Malik and also married him in 2009 though she again had to face some negative comments for the reason she had married a Pakistani national (140).

Commonwealth and Asian Games 2010: Despite having a severe wrist injury along with responsibilities of her married life her eyes were set on the Common Wealth Games. Not only had she participated in this but also won silver and bronze. She has expressed her joy here:

“With a silver and a bronze at the Guangzhou Asian Games, I had now rounded of my personal tally of medals won for India to a dozen in various multi-discipline international events. For me, each of these medals shines with a moving personal story that I take special pride in and this, as much as anything else, has made me feel complete and fulfilled in my career” (146).

Goodbye to Singles: After a long single match apart from having to deal with a swollen knee her wrist, back and ankles would be carrying out for rest. She fought back three times after surgery, apart from getting over a number of serious muscle injuries in various parts of her body. After having competed at the highest level, finding the motivation to return to play in the smaller \$ 25,000 ITF tournaments was tough. But she had done just that every time her ranking plugged due to along break from the game post surgery (152).

She knew that she still had the skills and the game to compete against the best singles players in the business but her body was now battered to carry on in this unforgiving format. Ten years of professional tennis, competing in singles and doubles, had taken their toll on her and the writing was on the wall. It was finally time to move on. She writes:

“My goal changed to becoming the No. 1 doubles player in the world. The focus would now be on winning as many Grand Slams as possible. It was the start of a new journey. Of course, there are occasions when I still miss playing singles but it was the best choice I could have made at the time, setting aside my ego. It was certainly one of the hardest career decisions I ever had to make, but looking back today, I am convinced that I made the right choice” (153).

The Doubles Mission: Being a woman, Mirza was not exception to be burdened with responsibilities of husband and children. She was also blessed with twins after her marriage with Shoaib Malik, it become very tough to balance the responsibility of family and the responsibility of career together but Mirza proved herself with great dare, hard work and her will power. With two big title wins, 2013 come to a brilliant end for her and also for her loving audience (169).

On the Top of The World: Her 2015 season in January with Su-Wei Hsieh in Brisbane, She felt confident that she had a very good chance of achieving her goal of becoming No.1 in the world

in women's doubles. As she determined herself to do so, history was made by her from the unlikely city of Hyderabad, who had been teased almost two decades ago for daring to follow in the footsteps of a superstar called Martina Hingis. Fittingly, her partner at this incredible moment in her career was none other than Martina Hingis. After she proved herself being the No.1 in the world of tennis, she was welcomed with great applause and blessings. Her husband Shoaib had flown down to join the party organized by AITA on the occasion of her grand Success. He not just joined the party but also touched everyone's heart with a speech that was not just an ode from a husband to his wife but also from one athlete to another (180).

Last part of Shoaib's speech, on the grand success of his wife Sania Mirza, can be mentioned here to retort the males who do not let their female members be free to prove themselves in the **manner** they wish:

“This occasion also gives us hope. The hope to dream to be the world's No.1. Sania is a living example of what is possible for tennis in India at a global level, especially for women. So, to Sania, I'm so proud of you, and I will always be your No. 1 fan. Thank you all and have a great evening” (185).

Wimbledon Champion! By winning the title here, Mirza had won in all the four Grand Slam centre of the world to complete her set of trophies. Significantly, she had scored her first victory in women's doubles. That this should happen in Wimbledon made it all the more special, a dream come true!

Flying High: The twelve month period that began with the Indian wells tournament in March 2015 and ended with Doha in February 2016 had brought Santina as many as thirteen titles including Wimbledon, the US Open, the Australian Open and the year-end WTA finals. Speaking of the successful period, Mirza (2016) writes,

“The twelve-month period that began with the Indian Wells tournament in March 2015 and ended with Doha in February 2016 had brought Santina as many as thirteen titles including Wimbledon, the US Open, the Australian Open and the year-end WTA finals. This was undoubtedly the most successful period of my career” (196).

A Blessed Life: Though Sania Mirza stood bold enough throughout her career, it was not easy to deal for a girl or woman leading her family life. While sharing her journey’s parts Mirza has written through her autobiography in the last part of it:

“Life as a professional tennis player was never a bed of roses for me and yet I would not exchange it for any other. I missed out on a lot of time with my family. I have lived my life out of suitcases, unable to cultivate lasting friendships or even relationships” (197).

She started playing her maiden State ranking junior tournament in Hyderabad while she was just eight years old. She cherished the award she received for being the most talented junior in the tournament. When she turned her nine years old, she was selected for under 10 Karnataka state ranking tournament at Mahila Seva Samaj though she lost it in final being runner- up. She played in a number of tournaments after that, all of State Ranking. She won the Under- 12 Maharashtra Ranking title for good measure. She got several lessons from these loosing and winning for further more heighten rank.

It was 1999 when she got her entry as one of the three top ranked players in the under -14 category to represent India in the world junior championships in Jakarta. She was just twelve years old that she was the baby of the Junior national team that include her State mate, Sasha Abraham and Mumbai’s Isha Lakhani (34). She proved herself No. 1 ranked player in India in the under 14

category in 1999 (35). She didn't stop here but she began concentrating more and more for all further opportunity in the very field. On the International junior circuit her performance had become quite consistent and she soon broke into the top 250 players in the world record ranking tournaments (36). In June 2001 she felt on the top of the world as she entered Wimbledon Park for a practice session (37). She was selected to represent India in the Asian Games for the first time in 2002 (42).

Further Mirza won the 2003 Wimbledon championships Girls' Doubles title, reached the semifinals of the 2003 US open Girls' Doubles 101 (225).

Further Mirza writes "I would have risen higher in the rankings, but I still managed to reach a career best of 27 in the world in singles, on 27 August 2007. I sometimes wonder what a numerologist would make of such a remarkable recurrence of the digits 2 and 7! During the course of this year, I also climbed to a ranking of No. 18 in the world in doubles in September" (106). She became the first South Asian Woman to become the UN Goodwill Ambassador for south Asia in November 2014 (199). She received six Grand Slam titles in her career, she won the Wimbledon championships in 2015 along with the Swiss Tennis player Martina Hingis. She also achieved # 1 WTA rank in the Women's' Double event (225).

Mirza despite being always busy in her sports career proved herself lucky enough to marry whom she found true to be her life partner. The man who, she selected was the well known Pakistani Cricketer Shoaib Malik, though she once engaged to her childhood friend, Sohrab Mirza but was parted due to some misunderstanding. Whatever controversies went on Mirza went on and on according to her choice either it was related to her sport career or to her personal life career with full support of her parent's friends and husband.

Today Mirza is world fame sports icon along with an inspiration to the whole females either Indian or Pakistani. Very recently on November 25, 2020 she has conveyed through the Column of Hindustan Times; “pregnancy and having a baby made me a better person” (Hindustantimes.com). The line of Mirza must inspire and encourage the females who depend on others while talking the most important decisions of their life, and many a time get their career finished. Later came the part to overcome the physical obstacles and get back to her earlier self to make a comeback to the court. Mirza said, “Getting back to shape and form after pregnancy can be a challenge and I can relate to Serena and every other woman on that. I think it’s normal for everyone because you don’t know how your body is going to react post-pregnancy and during pregnancy” (Hindustantimes.com).

While sharing her happiness to her blessed life through last part of her autobiography *Ace Against Odds*, Mirza has shown her shocking reaction on the severe condition of girls or women:

“My research on the subject revealed some chilling facts and figures about the dreadful plight of girls in our country. In many parts of India new born girls are mercilessly killed and some are destroyed even before their birth in their mother’s womb in a savage, inhuman and unforgiveable practice that has been prevalent for far too long...” (Mirza 199).

Mirza seems active enough to avail equality to woman as she has been availed by her parents, husband and friends along with her coaches, guides and mentors. Really women must be inspired by the life stories of such hard working and confident icons like the great boxer Mary Kom and the great tennis sensation Sania Mirza who have proved themselves Sania Mirza who have proved themselves the tight slaps to the hypocrite beings who avoid their daughters, sisters and wives passion for freedom equality and upliftment.

Life and career of a sportsperson are a little different from the career of individuals related to any other field, as while doing my work related to his or her career as sportsperson has to think of his audience first who are live to comment on each and every touch of the matches in field but individuals other than the sportsperson cannot even imagine the pain and emotion that sportspersons have to bear when despite their hundred percent effort they won't get success, finally, and they have to face their audience with patience. All this become possible for them only through their spirit of excellence. Hardly there is any sportsperson who has won all the time without any single miss. In comparison to any other field, the field of sports is more challenging and daring as there is 50-50 chance only to win and also to lose. It is the field where sportsperson have to be full attentive both physically and mentally. Winning cannot be imagined in absence either of mind or of body. For making balance between these two sportspersons must require external push up in the manner of motivation of their audience time to time.

For the sportspersons, the presence of their audience is the great motivation what works immediately. Each cheer up of the audience drew the frozen dare of the sportspersons even if they have any physical unfitness. Sports persons like Dhyan Chand, Milkha Singh, Mary Kom and, Sania Mirza are not exceptions from this point of view, but they are those who also accept the role of their audience behind their huge success in their lives. They are proud not only for their successes at winning several trophies, but more than this, they feel highly proud and lucky for they have won the heart of their nation as their loving audience.

While observing the life and career of the sportspersons in India, we must be happy and satisfied to learn that background of the sportspersons left aside while they dared to prove themselves on the fields. Either one is male or female, opportunity is open to all. Dare has no barrier even if the path is full of barriers, as even a single jerk of dare is enough to dissolve the thousand barriers.

No doubt Indian female athletes like Mary Kom and Sania Mirza have made their nation proud approaching through the Prakriti way to the most challenging human situational field by crossing all the barriers what tried to chain their flight in the sky of high stardom proving themselves tight slaps on the face of discriminations based on gender, caste, colour and creed.

It won't be entirely out of place to quote Mahesh Bhupathi by way of summarising the chapter, "To be singled out as special in life, one has to go through trials and tribulations. Sania has had more than her fair share, whether it was the fatwa against her, the surgeries she had to undergo, the constant public scrutiny of her personal life or just random folks asking why she had to play tennis wearing a skirt. She has always faced adversity with the same principles her life is built upon – single-minded focus, self-belief and self-respect. I believe she has been instrumental in changing the face of Indian sport, especially where women are concerned. Time will surely prove that. But in the meantime, we need to applaud how comprehensively she has made her mark in arguably the most popular individual sport in the world and the manner in which she continues to be India's ambassador on the global stage" (8-9).

Chapter 4

Sports and Bollywood

This chapter deals with the representation of sports and sportspersons in the films produced in Bollywood (Mumbai) for a target audience of mostly the northern Hindi-speaking parts of India. Popular hindi films like *Lagaan* (2001), *Chak de India* (2007), *Paan Singh Tomar* (2012) and *Dangal* (2016) have been examined with a focus on the para-technical cultural issues as driving forces behind their shaping as also their mass appeal. All these four movies chosen for discussion in the chapter have an Indian locale as also Indian themes, and have been produced by film-producers –the two notable contexts for our discussion to grow in terms of the possible application of critical tools relevant for such a study as the present one. In the sections that follow, an attempt has been made to throw light on the history of cinema with sports at the centre followed by a discussion on these four movies mentioned above.

The history of cinema in India goes as back as to the first films made in the world. Following the screening of the Lumiere and Robert Paul's moving pictures in London (1896), commercial cinematography became a worldwide sensation and by mid-1896 both Lumiere and Robert Paul films had been shown in Bombay while the following year 1897 saw a film presentation by Professor Stevenson featuring stage show at Calcutta's Star Theatre which remained as the inspiration and encouragement behind Hiralal Sen's "The Flower of Persia" in 1898(Luke McKernan). Incidentally, *The Wrestlers* (1899) by H. S. Bhatavdekar, showing a wrestling match at the Hanging Gardens in Bombay, was the first film to be shot by an Indian and the first Indian documentary film (Hansdah). Cinema in India has a pretty long history with an uncountable number of films being produced every year for the last one hundred years when the country watched one of its remarkable productions like, "*Raja Harishchandra*", by the legendary film-

maker Dadasaheb Phalke. During its long and fruitful journey spanning over a century, it has established itself as a powerful medium of entertainment, expression and communication (GHOSH). According to an estimate, in the year 2019 there are 24 Bollywood films were produced in India (Pradamini).

India has a rich trajectory of cinema on sports –almost since the birth of films in India, sports have been a dominant theme, and in fact, the first ever film made by an Indian was none other than *The Wrestlers* (1899) by H. S. Bhatavdekar (as already mentioned above). In the lines that follow, due to the limitations of time and space it is pertinent to refer to only a certain number of films that focus on sports as central plot, for instance: *Cycling (Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar)*, *Boxing (Boxer, Mary Kom, Apne, Mukkabaaz, Brothers)*, *Kickboxing (Lahore)*, *Athletics (Pan Singh Tomar, Bhaag Milkha Bhaag, Budhia Singh: Born To Run)* *Wrestling (a yester-year’s movie Rustam)*, *Kabaddi (Panga, Kabaddi)*, *Hockey (Soorma, Gold)*, *Cricket (M S Dhoni: the Untold Story, Sachin:A Billion Dreams, 83, 22 Yard, Kai Po Chi, Awwal Number, Jannat, Dil Bole Hadippa, Victory)*, *Badminton (Saina)*, *Football (Dhan Dhana Dhan Goal, Hip Hip Hurray, The Goal)* among others.

It can be argued that sports organizations have not been without the usual ills that have potential to mar the spirit of sportsmanship thus being accountable for spoiling the career of individuals, while its awareness is no less demoralizing and dispiriting to the young men and women who aspire to start a career in sports. It is beyond argument that the evil of nepotism and favoritism has become pronounced feature of sports competitions in modern times. Films and literature are replete with such accounts of sportspersons being affected at the altar of these evils. It is in this context that the passages that follow present a critical evaluation of some of the movies relevant for this study. With an increasing attention being given to sports, their projection and

representation through movies has acquired unprecedented attention with the genre of film on sports becoming popular across the world. Sports films or films dealing with sports have grabbed a serious attention by researchers across the world. On the other hand, film makers have increasingly realized that sports films are a good medium to communicate with several social issues just within a span of a couple of hours. Raney observes, “As a matter of fact, sports narratives through films have gained a brighter space in the world of entertainment” (Raney 198).

It can also be argued that sports offer everything which a good story is expected to have: powerful heroes and mighty villains, triumph and disaster, achievement and despair, tension and drama. Accordingly, sport makes for a compelling narrative for literature and films, both, while an integral relationship between sports and films which are actually mutual beneficiaries of the entire project cannot be overlooked. However, there are certain important issues which Poulton and Roderick discover during their analysis: “Yet despite its regularity as a central theme in motion pictures, constructions and representations of sport and athletes have been marginalized in terms of serious analysis within the longstanding academic study of films and documentaries. It seems unusual that so little attention has been paid academically to such an endeavour given that both sport and film occupy such dominant positions in contemporary social life. We agree with the sentiments of King and Leonard¹ who point out that film with a sporting focus are rarely taken as serious pieces of visual art worthy of critical examination. For us, the intersections of sport and film demand serious study because of their centrality as popular cultural forms. The experts in the field approached for the purpose of contributing to this edition were encouraged to undertake a critical analysis of a film, a category of films or non-fictional documentary that could be understood by all readers and not just those already interested in

analyzing, comprehending and evaluating the techniques of film production” (Poulton and Roderick 107).

The foregoing analysis reveals how movies, like all other forms of visual culture, are basically texts comprised of images, words and sounds that bestow meanings. Arguably, the text of a film is generally complex which is “produced and ‘encoded’ by the film-makers (who are a major part of the text themselves), then consumed and ‘decoded’ by audiences in cinemas and households. In order to understand what people do with the films they watch, socially, culturally and personally, we need to understand how people ‘read’ (or interpret) films” (107). The idea of “reading a film” involves an active process of making sense out of “what we are experiencing and trying to understand the interrelationship between the film-makers, film texts and audiences. Audiences are understood to react to (or ‘decode’) a film text in one of three ways: they can accept the preferred meaning encoded by the film-makers; accept parts of the text while rejecting others (‘negotiated’ reading); or reject the text’s preferred meaning (‘oppositional’ reading). Of course some members of an audience – notably, professional critics or reviewers – are more aware than others of textual construction, for example, in terms of being more knowledgeable about the techniques and strategies used by film-makers” (107). The world over, cinema has successfully established itself as the microcosm of the bigger entities including social, political, economic, and cultural life of societies and nations.

Usually, Indian films have been dealing with a considerably good number of themes: starting with as far-fetched as space expedition, rise of machines and robots, alien wars, inter-terrestrial affairs, science and engineering, human relations including different relations, love triangles, drug abuse, child-labour, women empowerment to enumerate only a few out of so many, exploring every known as well as unknown dimension of human existence. In this chapter a

discussion has been carried out on how films— particularly the ones related to sports - rather than any other media influence the minds of the masses and effect a change in the mindset of the people. Notably, the chapter has included ‘sports films’ since it has been observed that usually this is one such area of cinema that has remained much ignored as a popular subject for academic and research discourses.

According to Yashmin Rohman, “Cinema or motion picture can be defined as the art of moving images where it tends to tell stories in a visual medium. As it is known to all that the human mind is constructed in such a delicate way that it understands the visual medium very well and through cinema people develop an art of communication with the film which helps them to interact more with it” (Yashmin Rohman 58). During early days of cinema, the use of motion cameras was very limited while people used to record their daily humdrum such as the busy streets, the arrival of a train, the movement of a horse-cart etc. but after the advent of documentary film-making people developed more skills on using a camera and ventured out to explore yet some more possibilities of real-life events. Meanwhile great minds and artist figured out the potential of cameras to narrate stories and to record actions which made the camera a vital tool for shooting the scenes including events, and this way the narrative film making was born. Later, cinema stepped into a new world where it became an object of profit which delivered immense entertainment to the people. With its high demand it became a gateway for many filmmakers to showcase their talents. Theatres evolved, tickets became mandatory, movies became long, black and white evolved to coloured films and people became more attracted to the world of a new fantasy called as Cinema. (58).

The term ‘Bollywood’ derives its origin from the city of ‘Bombay’ (now, Mumbai) with its professional likeness and association with the American ‘Hollywood’ the centre of American

film industry. It also discovers its inspiration from the word ‘Tollywood’ which used to be the main hub for the cinemas of West Bengal during the 1930s. ‘Tollywood’ was the earliest inspired name from ‘Hollywood’ where it referred to the Bengali film industry placed in Calcutta and was the main centre of cinema of India at that time. However, the term ‘Bollywood’ was coined in 1970’s and now a day’s ‘Tollywood’ is mainly referred to the Telegu film industry in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh (59).

History of Sport Cinema

By way of producing movies on sports and sportspersons, the film-makers have endeavored to draw a line of fantasy, as Rohman observes, “between the people and the sports where it helps the people to know more about it and also gets to watch them visually. People can easily trace out the lives of their favourite sports person in a film which not only helps them to connect but also adds an entertainment factor to it. And also, the melodrama infused in the sports-based films gives the audience a new dimension to look upon where the melodrama the film more interesting” (60).

Crosson discovers that India's regional film industries too have a history of producing films on sports. Thus, *Mohanbaganer Meye* (1976) happens to be one of the significant Bengali films depicting the sport of football as its main theme, a sport which appeared later in Bollywood a decade later with *Hip Hip Hooray* (1984, directed by Prakash Jha). Similarly, *Saahab* (1985), a remake of the 1981 movie, explores the social duty and individual passion for football. In many sport themed films ‘sport’ rarely became the central concern.

It has been observed that sports-based movies like *All-rounder* (1984) including the ones already quoted above, have set in vogue the production of sports biopics like *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, *Paan Singh Tomar*, *Mary Kom*, *Azhar*, *M.S Dhoni: The Untold Story*, *Mary Kom*, *Soorma* among many

others. This trend has been responsible for a brilliant and fruitful cross-fertilization of Bollywood and regional films, refreshing and generating new content which, as Rohman feels, are far better than old school drama in Bollywood while “this evolving trend of film making the directors and film makers are mainly concerned about the taste of the audience and for example if a sports person has about millions of fans or an athlete whose story will inspire people then the film makers and directors will not back out and will produce a film out of it which will touch not only small mass of people but also millions and billions hearts” (Yashmin Rohman 60).

It can also be argued that the Bollywood is usually known for its films as source of sheer entertainment, drama, songs, stereotypic concepts etc., which, as Rohman critiques, “adversely affects the mindset of an average Indian people regarding their understanding of sports through its visualization. The strong projection of sports in Indian cinema leads the audience to create a connection with sports and the sportsmen even though if they have least idea about sports” (61).

Movies through their vivid images, as Bora and Jimmy observe, “can persuade and motivate the human thinking process to react to the existing social conditions. A famous Soviet Russian film theorist and director had also said that film as a medium is self explanatory. As an art form and media, cinema can effectively communicate to the target audiences by its visuals and the presence of audio further gives the other dimension of understanding these visuals” (Bora and Jimmy 6). While these sports films are responsible for offering fueling the minds of audiences with a good amount of fancy, they also provide imaginative possibilities which force people to think about new models, roles and opportunities necessary for human existence and their survival.

Edgington observes that the art of cinema has also been successful in presenting two important aspects to the fore. Firstly, that women power in India is also capable of doing great acts of

miracle. This is reflected also in the London Olympic Games 2012 where two Indian woman players clinched medals for the first time in history for that particular game. With a constant increase of awareness about the rights and privileges the woman of modern India have realised their potential and importance in the society. Another aspect in this film was the refusal of two of the actors in the film to become stereotype housewives and withdraw from their area of expertise in hockey. Being a country of traditional values and customs this is a strong message aimed at the upcoming young girls serious about making an identity of their own in a world dominated by the men folk.(Edgington K). It can also be argued that sports movies can create popular consciousness among the audiences which has no limitation to any kind of boundaries: “The real life actions of people get reflected through such sports films, resembling life to hurdles in which they struggle against man and the environment” (Johnston).

It can also be argued that the movies made on sports are infused with the feeling and emotions of nationalism. It is this penchant alone that makes it difficult in Bollywood to tell stories without inscribing them with some patriotic meaning. Mazin Ali reveals that “sports dramas always act as strong tokens for exporting nationalism. Consider *Chak De! India*, *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag* (2013), *Mary Kom* (2014), *Dangal* (2016), *M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story* (2016), *Saala Khadoos* (2016), *Sultan* (2016), and *Lagaan* (2001) each one of them involves securing the nation’s glory and narratives of rising above difficulties for the nation. But the protagonist of Anurag Kashyap’s *Mukkabaaz* was distinct. For him there wasn’t any lofty nationalist sentiment but only private dream of securing a job in sports quota” (Ali).

While sports cinema may be defined as a kind of production in which sport, sporting events, sport enthusiasts and the spectators are prominently featured, even as a particular sport may or may not be featured as its central concern. It has also been observed that sport performs

primarily an allegorical role in the sports film genre. Furthermore, sports fans are not necessarily the target audience in such movies, though they happen to be the largest section of target audience for such movies.

***Lagaan* (2001)**

The achievement of Hindi film *Lagaan* is that it obtained an Oscar nomination for best outside dialect film at the 2002 Academy Awards. Coming up as a popular Bollywood movie in 2001, it had won the Audience Award at the 2001 Locarno film festival and had also earned for itself the distinctive reputation of being nominated in the Best Foreign Film category for the 2001 Academy Awards. As various critics and journalists have noted, the film's cinematography set in Gujarat, melodious songs and star actors have all played their part in the success of this film in the box office. *Lagaan* repeats the popular motif of Bollywood films – the defeat of British (colonial) rulers at the hands of Indians, but situates the struggle for decolonisation on apparently mutually exclusive domains – cricket, an 'elite' sport, and subaltern politics. The film's primary appeal for the Indian masses lies, in my view, in its choice of this innovative theme – the subaltern's destabilizing of the history of cricket.

Lagaan is a significant contribution to popular culture for its ability to convincingly portray how cultural improvisations of subaltern groups can co-opt and critique master forms and tropes of the west. In the film, the indigenous, non-official village game of 'gilli-danda' is placed in the same trajectory of the 'official' colonial game, of supposedly Victorian origins, when Bhuvan makes the game of cricket familiar to the Champaner masses by comparing it to 'gilli-danda'. This desecrates the 'purity' of cricket's roots since the sacrosanct space of imperial performance, the cricket pitch, and the cricket paraphernalia (ball, bat, wicket, gloves, etc.) that are kept rigidly 'pure,' free from native contamination are now alleged to have links to indigenous sports.

The English subject's originality or cricket's 'purity' as an Englishman's game is destabilised through the assertion that the peasants of Champaner, i.e., the natives, have been playing the game for centuries in the villages of 'barbaric' India. It gestures to the possibility that the English subject, the assumed original is perhaps merely a sophisticated copy. The implication of cricket being born outside the logic of Englishness or Victorianism shows the appropriation of cricket at the margins of Englishness, i.e., outside the legitimated culture and British nationality. By wresting cricket away from Englishness and de-Victorianising the national sport of the modern UK, the monolithic structures of Englishness is destabilised and a non-English/native identity is weaved in "modernist instruments which had hitherto made the colonised subject into an object". Vernacularisation of the game and making the game of the 'master' seem to be a variation of a rural children's game not only denies the game its glamour, but also reduces cricket to an immature behaviour of the British citizen. A reversal of the terms and tropes of colonialist discourse is evident here as the 'childlike,' 'ignorant' native now names the 'civilised' as child. The villagers' performance on the cricket field eclipses their subordinate position off the field. Their fortitude and goodness of character compensates for their lack of social grace, wealth and education. It asserts their agency and points to the strength of the peasant community. For the peasants of Champaner, appropriating cricket competence becomes a tool for recuperating their subjectivity and articulating their agency in the process of decolonisation. Boria Majumdar in his article argues that through European sports the Indian natives' "self-worth and strength of character could be articulated without the tension and fury that would accompany such articulation in the 'political' sphere". This distinction between the sphere of leisure (sports) and the political sphere is questionable, since *Lagaan* explicitly links subaltern politics to sports culture. The film's narrator comments that a defeat in the cricket pitch is such a blow to English

honour and pride that the English contingent decides to pack up and leave Champaner. Manthia Diawara in the context of the Caribbean writes: “The very introduction of cricket to new places is a way of asserting British cultural presence, a way of linking sports to politics”. Another critic notes that cricket was “an unofficial instrument of state cultural policy,” which attempted to teach the ‘barbaric’/‘uncivilised’ natives “sportsmanship, a sense of fair play, thorough control over the expression of strong sentiments by players on the field, subordination of personal sentiments and interests to those of the side, unquestioned loyalty to the team”. All these valorised ethical codes of masculine and essentially sportsmanship behaviour, “the gospel of cricket,” are questioned in *Lagaan*. The cricket match between the British officials and the peasants is not begun as ‘fair play’. There can be no level playing ground in a game initiated by an egoist to feed his desire for power and domination over a poor, uncoached group of villagers who have their life at stake. Self-effacement is not possible in a game, which is so inextricably tied to English honour, colonial pride, superiority, and at the end, economics. Captain Russell and his men constantly make fun of the villagers’ clothes, physical characteristics and their poverty. They provoke the Indian team players to anger reminding them of their abject poverty and when deemed fit deliberately injure them, to punish them for their loyalty to their team or their ability to play well. Thus the film itself points to the fallacy of Majumdar’s description of cricket as being a “non-violent arena of assertion” during colonial times. While Majumdar tries to find in the historical archive of Indian sports ‘evidence’ of cricket’s roots in colonial India, Appadurai writes that cricket’s “history in England goes back into the precolonial period, and there is little doubt that the sport is English in origin”. Thus, whether cricket was a game that the British (accidentally) discovered in Indian soil or a game that was taught to the Indians by the British is a historically contested terrain.

Lagaan does not try to answer whether cricket originated in India or England, but raises the twofold issue of postcolonial nations trying to resist western hegemonising gaze (and occasionally reverting it) and subordinate classes appropriating elite discourses to voice their suppressed/erased histories. The inconsequentiality and marginality of the subalterns are interrogated, exclusionary practices are resisted and elite (British/Indian) privilege and dominance over the domain of aesthetics and culture is successfully undermined through *Lagaan*'s destabilisation of originary discourses.

Lagaan also consciously attempts to reverse the colonial gaze of Euro-imperialism by racialising the white characters – an issue not discussed in earlier published articles on *Lagaan*. References to the British officials using the colour of their skin abound. Filtered through the lens of race, the love triangle in the film between Bhuvan, Gauri and Elizabeth is replaced with the tensions of racial difference. I will try to highlight in the next few pages the film's depiction of the unique position of the white female in the colonies. An analysis of the ambiguity of the white female character in *Lagaan* allows us to see how the 'other' gender ruptures colonial masculinity and disrupts the simple binary of the British versus the 'Indians' that Mannathukkaren identifies in *Lagaan*. It is indeed ironical that Mannathukkaren does not see the possibility of restoring presence without essentialism. The Manichean categories of 'coloniser' and 'colonised' that he reads in *Lagaan*, dichotomise the tense and complex relationships involving subjects that are situated very differently in terms of power within those categories. His profound silence about the white female character in the film helps one in locating another kind of silencing and the politics of 'speaking' that Mannathukkaren participates in while expressly attempting to foreground "The Silences of 'Lagaan' "

Lagaan recounts the account of a little cultivating group in Central India in 1893. Beside the town Champaner is a British cantonment under the summon of aggressive Captain Russell who manages the range with an iron clenched hand. In view of the proceeding with dry season, the villagers can't pay the devastating area charge, *Lagaan*, forced on them by the British rulers and expanded spontaneously of the leader. However Captain Russell proposes a fantastic bet: if the villagers can beat the British group at a session of cricket, the assessment will be postponed for a long time, for the town, as well as for the whole region, yet in the event that they lose, they should pay triple the duty. The vivacious youthful agriculturist Bhuvan with boldness and conviction needs to persuade his town that his acknowledgment of the wager was the best thing to do and needs to amass a group and take in an amusement they have never known about. *Lagaan* could be viewed as a type of subaltern history and maybe could even be viewed as India's answer, though remiss, to the Raj sentimentality that erupted in the UK in the mid 1980s with the TV show *The Jewel in the Crown* and movies, for example, *Gandhi* and *A Passage to India*. In *Lagaan* it is clear who the antagonist of the piece is. Skipper Russell is depicted as the perverted oppressor who delights in the power put resources into him and controls his area with an iron clenched hand as indicated by the aphorism 'separation and lead', critically playing the nearby Rajahs off against each other. This has driven the preservationist daily paper *The Sunday Telegraph* to censure the film as hostile to British. This claim can without much of a stretch be refuted. While Captain Russell is the antagonist of the piece, his sister, at first out of a feeling of reasonable play, helps the villagers, while Russell's bosses are especially worried that the tenets of the diversion are clung to fastidiously and stipulate that autonomous umpires ought to officiate the match. This takes into consideration a more adjusted view to develop while as yet depicting the merciless and onerous nature of frontier manage in India.(Prasad)

In India too, a number of films have utilized the theme of sports for successfully highlighting various issues and problems of the society – with a deep influence on the target audience. These sports films have ample scope for the younger generations to be influenced and build leadership qualities in them. This includes films which have become highly popular such as Lagaan, Chak De India, Iqbal, Chain Kuli Ki Main Kuli, Striker, Awal Number among others. Through its exaggerated emotions Lagaan depicts the Indian society under the colonizers. It recalls the history of British rule in India before Independence and how people had to be captive in their own land. It creates emotional nationalism among the audiences recalling the past history of double taxation, which is a sign of exploitation under the rule of the foreigners. It ignites the questions of global domination of the West in all aspects of human life. The rejection of British rule by defeating them in their own game of cricket sends a clear signal of modern thoughts where liberty of every individual needs to be respected. The mere rejection by Bhuvan (Amir Khan) to marry Elizabeth (Rachel Shelley), sister of Captain Andrew Russell is actually the rejection of the white feministic superiority complex. And acceptance of Gauri (Gracy Singh) by Bhuvan sends out the message of great Indian tradition and culture on which every individual is brought up with.

While there is no need to discuss about the stories of these films it is worth mentioning the way they have been focusing on different issues in our everyday life. In other words – an adequate effort at expression of our feelings through the theme of sports presented to the wider audiences. In India the issues highlighted by the game of sports through films have been able to reflect peoples' love for sports. The game of cricket which is the decider of double taxation sends out sentiments of nationalism among the masses against the foreigners. It can be mentioned here that

real life stories of some of the great players have been highlighted in films to show the sentiments of individuals' love for the country.

Lagaan symbolized the enterprising spirit of the common people several hundred years from now – people for whom cricket was something out of the blue. The planning and the learning of the unknown game of cricket to fight for their rights and win over them prove the power of self determination of individuals. It also showcases how people across the world have been captured with the blanket of corporatization. It is important to note that the film is a fine metaphor of the prevailing society at present shown with the help of a story set several hundred years ago. Every aspect of human activities speaks about investment, money and profit. The presence of the divisions of people where the rich are always kept on the high esteem and continuous struggle of the common people in the hands of the elite symbolizes the present day situation. The oppressive rule, illogical taxes levied on the common man, in the name of the country's development are reflected in the film. 'Lagaan' also depicts sentiments of diversities through the use of different settings used in the film. The dry land along with the usage of three dialects (Avadhi, Bhojpuri and Brajbhasha) symbolizes diversity.(Bora and Jimmy)

There is always a huge amount of energy that is generated from sports films because of the immense power shown through individual hard work, intelligence, disciplines, self-determination etc. Such films can bring about a change in the attitude to work together and achieve their desired goals. The aggression shown in the average of two and-a-half hours in sports films defy their sheer attitude to win over their rivals but it can have an endless and enormous impact on games of life which people play for their own existence. Films play with the sentiments of the people and generate a positive aggression to perform better in real field. Now with the sentiments rooted in the Cricket World Cup final, the Indian Premier League (IPL) in cricket has seen how

quite a few celebrity women are owning and actively participating in these games. Coincidentally Chak De India was produced in 2008, a year ahead from the first session of IPL. In fact there has been a continuous influence of sports in the films as Chak De India was filmed by Shimit Amin after the success of the Indian Women Hockey team in Commonwealth Games, 2002.(Bora and Jimmy)

The film is a metaphor for national unity and identity defining the feminine identity to the face of the world. With women empowerment programmes coming into force in the 21st century, it has pushed the morale and dignity of the womenfolk to newer heights. No woman wants to be left behind and being second in the line of life's activities.(Bora and Jimmy)

Chak De! India (2007): *Chak de India!* plays a role model for many where Kabir Khan and his mother were asked to leave their ancestral house because of the anti nationalism attitude shown in the game of hockey played against Pakistan in the World Cup. Kabir Khan, on the other hand has a deep love for his country and the game of hockey for which he struggles keeping aside his deeply-hurt ego even after being termed as 'betrayed' for his past mistake. His adamant decision to train the Indian Women Hockey team for the World Cup proves his disciplined character. He constantly struggled to emerge the winner in the end. He satisfies his inner self through the challenges he faced while making the Indian Women Hockey team the winner. Films like this one depicts religious bigotry, attitudes, the legacy of partition, ethnic or regional prejudice and sexism in the contemporary India through the genre of hockey. (<http://thebabetudeblog.blogspot.in/>). It establishes the leadership qualities in the minds of people to challenge the authorities but with a solid foundation of truth and temperament.(Bora and Jimmy)

Initially though, the movie *Chak-de India* courted a considerable amount of controversy outside the country among viewers of non-Indian origin, the final edition falsified all the claims that the title "Chak De! India" was non-representative and was supposed to mean to only a niche of moviegoers. This movie would have been just what it is no matter what it was called or which country made it. Director Shimit Amin's entry simply transforms the entire perspective of movie-making and movie watching, both for the production house and the viewers. Initially a sports movie, Chak De is rather a story of hope, courage, unity, integrity and the dreams. There are lots of heroes in the movie - the women's team and these ladies simply steal the show. Mainly Bindhya, Balbir, Priya and Komal. It gets very hard when there is an incredible amount of character development to do. There is a ghost that follows Kabir throughout the film. All in all, this is one of the best Hindi movie, not because it's got SRK but the script, the witty one-liners where sometimes with multiple meanings, every girl with her story, well coordinated game sequences, and above all the message the film delivers - when united, there's nothing you can't win over. The message is pretty well conveyed. You feel the adrenaline rush through the World Cup matches, a lot of Goosebumps, well crafted script and good direction. Shahrukh Khan, as usual is great with his acting (and beard,) Vidya Malvade is the overly publicised captain but unfortunately other girls outdo her, the Jharkhand girls provide a dimension against contrasting Bindhya and her queen bees. Segarika Ghatge's character Priya Saberwal is most memorable for her style and everything. The North East girls do answer some of vital questions of the North East Indians about their existence in their country as foreigners. The class conflict, egoistic girls and their attitude problem and stuffs are absolutely well portrayed in the film.(Prasad)

In 'Chak De India', the Muslim Hockey coach of the Indian women's Hockey team takes it upon himself to prove his patriotism and ensure that the team wins the world cup. He is forced to

prove his patriotism to the country and ensures that the team wins the world cup. He is forced to prove himself after he loses the Men's Hockey match as captain, against the Pakistan team and is accused of being a traitor (Ali).

Paan Singh Tomar (2012): A gripping 'biopic' around the life of a sportsman and an Indian steeplechase champion from a village in Madhya Pradesh, who after retiring from the Army turns out to be a notorious dacoit who loves his tag-line: 'Dacoits are found in the parliament'.

Paan Singh Tomar is a biographical film on the life of Paan Singh Tomar, an Army cadet turned-steeplechase runner who is driven or in fact compelled by the prevailing circumstances to take to arms and compelled become a dreaded dacoit in the valleys of Chambal. Paan Singh Tomar (Irrfan Khan), a village man, joins the army, but looking at his interest in athletic sports, he is sent by the army officers to become an athlete for the Services. He successfully grabs the gold in the Steeplechase race and brings glory to India. One of his cousins in the village plays dirty games with him for some land related issue and even beats up his son mercilessly. The police officer refuses to lodge a complaint against the cousin and instead insults Paan Singh who shows him that he is a proud athlete and the medals he has won. This provokes Paan Singh for revenge as he is hot-blooded. The family fight takes a drastic turn when the cousin kills Paan Singh's mother. After all this, Paan Singh picks up the gun to teach his cousin the lesson of his life. With the help of a group of friends and relatives, he soon becomes the dreaded dacoit of the Chambal valley. The police are on the search for Paan Singh Tomar. He finds it odd that nobody really cared for him when he brought glory to the country but now when he was a dreaded dacoit, the police and the government were after him. The first half of the film showcases his sporting career and his family, living a happy life. The scenes where he sprints to deliver ice cream to his superiors' residence within four minutes, or his sweet efforts to pack off his children elsewhere

to enjoy few moments with his wife (Mahie Gill), or the encounter with his sporting coach (Rajendra Gupta) portrays the human side of the talented sprinter. The other half of the film focuses on the circumstances which forced this simple man from a rural background to let go of his athletic talent and chose the gun over. His property in his home village gets taken over by a village strongman, his cousin brother. Violence takes over the screen from this point and continues the flood of violent activities till the end, meanwhile the protagonist quite obviously succumbs and forces us to question the system that makes criminals out of such talented sportspeople. The protagonist uses the rigorous physical training methodology he underwent during his training days in the Army to train his gang members later. Paan Singh is betrayed by one of his gang members who plan a trap against him and the gang by letting them stay for the night in a village while informing the police about the stay. Before Paan Singh knows it, he and his team have no escape route. They give the large police constant a tough fight but soon realize, their drink had also been poisoned.

The film talks in the Bhind- Morena dialect and does not make compromises for viewers who may not understand it. But they do. Because Paan Singh's life is affecting, distressing and heartwarming all at one go. The perfect camerawork in this Tigmanshu Dhulia directed film captures the mood in the unfolding sequences superbly - whether capturing the athletic events, or depicting the rural backdrop, it is spot on. The scene where Irrfan wins a race and his coach erupts in joy shows how visuals can effectively convey the emotions of situations without dialogues. The entire narrative grips us through flashback with the protagonist giving an interview to a reporter at his secret hideout. The film is realistic in its depiction.

A brief narrative analysis of *Paan Singh Tomar*

Narrative 1: In the beginning of the film when the interviewer, who after boasting to a paanwala in the morning that he is going to be famous the next day, he goes to interview Paan Singh and the first time he saw him, he became nervous in front of the rebel: “*aap daaku kaise bane?*”, Paan Singh, with his razored eyes and equally sharp voice replies, “*bihad me baagi hote hain, daket milte hain parliament me.*” The subtle irony and sarcastic remarks against the Indian laws and the system suddenly becomes poignant with a scathing disdain of the improper management and political agendas that affect an innocent lives comes alive in the first half of the movie.

Narrative 2: In the first half of the movie, we can clearly make out that Paan Singh is one who takes order very seriously, whether it's about the punishment he got from his Lieutenant Major or when he is asked to deliver the ice to his Kernels house before it melts. All this shows the masculine features of Paan Singh. Till the end his features include being a good leader, an obedient man and he was hot blooded when things pointed straight on his life priorities that include his family and his nation.

Narrative 3: In one of the sequences, Paan Singh narrates his story to a journalist that how he was ignored by the media when he won medal in steeplechase race in an international sports meet and brought fame to India but now when he chose a different way gain back his lost pride the government and the police were after him, in the custody. This shows the bitter truth of the Indian society and the director tries to weave every loophole in our Indian judiciary system perfectly through this movie.

Narrative 4: In every element of the movie we feel the touch of traditional lingo while the director has very beautifully used the language in the film. The usage of the typical language of the village adds authenticity to the story.

Narrative 5: The story of Paan Singh and its plot was smooth and explained the biased system of Indian politics. Even the caste system issues were featured in the film and supported by the police and politics. In the scene when the policeman comes in search of Paan Singh and tells one of the village men to inform him when Paan Singh arrives. In that scene that person addresses the policeman with great respect and tells him about how he belongs to a minor caste still he is drinking water from his house.

Narrative 6: Movie is focused on small things in a very amusing way. Like Paan Singh's love for food and ice-creams. The director is successful about delivering the message through the film like how Paan Singh learned from his passion to run. Life is like a race you don't look back and never give up till the end.

Narrative 7: Paan Singh never knew about his brother's bad intention towards his family, he always addressed him as Big Brother. His brother was jealous of Paan Singh's position in the army and he was not able to see him as a well settled man. He betrays him for land possession, and then the story takes a turn when Paan Singh becomes a dacoit. When Paan Singh returns to take revenge, he is successful in making his brother kneel against him for killing his mom and beating his son. In that scene, Paan Singh is still addressing him as Big Brother. Paan Singh being raised under Indian traditions and rituals is the symbol of being this and his good heart.

Narrative 8: In the last scene, Paan Singh dies as he was betrayed by one of his gang members and was encountered by the Policeman, he gets the flashback of all the proud moments of his life - When he in the stadium and the crowd was cheering for him, his time with his Wife and all his happy moments of life. His last words were to tell people that Paan Singh did not surrender. He fought till his last breath but didn't surrender. Here, the director's idea of not making his protagonist surrender but he makes sure that he makes a fair ending. So he decided that getting

his protagonist shot by a gun would give justice to the end and the use of smart editing and screenplay made us believe that he died a heroic death.

And if we talk about Paan Singh Tomar, this film also belongs to the same genre and the purpose behind this film was also about the awareness of all the miss-management and how the government and police officials respond to people in isolated villages.(Shah)

The film is based on a true story of Paan Singh Tomar forgotten champion athlete who had also served in Indian army, a seven-time national steeplechase champion who had won many gold medals—finally turning into a bandit in his later years of life. The film covers his struggle as an athlete where due to some injustice he was forced to take a wrong path and at last met his fate.

Dangal (2016): In many rural India and even some parts of the urban centres, wrestling has been a way of life. Spartan men in loincloth, leading monkish lives, grapple on mud or mat. In villages, dangal stars often get called home to bless the ailing and children are goaded to apply the akhara sand on their foreheads. The emphatic acceptance of “Rustam-E-Hind” Dara Singh as the silver screen Hanuman, the mythical figure who epitomized devotion and dedication, confirmed the popular reverence for the pehalwans. At the same time, some wrestlers have also worked as heavies for the politicians, gang lords and night club owners — but they were seen as the akhara rejects, the bad apples that fell off the assembly line. That may have changed now — after Sushil Kumar, India’s greatest-ever wrestler and the country’s most-decorated Olympian, was named as a murder accused and paraded in public view. The spotlight is now searching out the grey areas of Indian wrestling.

Wrestling always had a knack for throwing up feel-good stories. Away from the city lights, parents with modest means would send their pre-teen sons and daughters to akharas and academies, hoping wrestling would help them climb the social ladder. Medals around the necks

of battered and bruised wrestlers were fitting final frames of tales full of heart-breaking grit and sacrifice. The wrestling tradition of seniors passing tactical knowledge to juniors, and they in return putting themselves in their service, also glorified the akhadas as learning institutions. Bollywood fictionalized the inspirational story of the Phogat sisters to make a box-office killing. It is said to have encouraged more girls to take up the sport as wrestling was to become the only sport to win at least one medal at the last three Olympics. But the poster boy, who won two of them — Sushil won a bronze in Beijing 2008 and a silver in London 2012 — has now invited attention to the sport's underbelly with his recent arrest in a case involving death of a fellow wrestler, an episode that has left the Akhara rivalries exposed and bad blood between top wrestlers triggering the brawls at trials. A prevalent star culture appears to have stifled the growth of the second rung in wrestling. The fabled Guru-Shishya tradition has been unfortunately replaced by an unhealthy growth of city-culture and mushrooming of gangs that are responsible for the present decline and loss of a tradition that has given a number of wrestlers through its various akharas. It was hard to keep them away since those governing the sport too weren't squeaky clean.

Dangal offers many surprises as the sister-duo Geeta and Babita's achieve historic wins at the Commonwealth Games including several other such places. However, this screen adaptation serves as a recap of their arduous journey and it vigorously recaptures their stubborn father's resolve to make them professional wrestlers against the odds. Since it encapsulates the historic wins of the Phogats, who brought India glory, the film is also bound to inspire more women to seriously consider kushti as a sport. What has worked wonderfully here is the writing. Director Nitesh Tiwari, along with Piyush Gupta, Shreyas Jain and Nikhil Mehrotra should be complimented for their tongue-in-cheek quality, peppered with humour and several poignant

father- daughter emotions all through. Of course, a little bit is lost in translation because of the Haryanvi twang. But, messages on our obsession with the male child (prevalent since the dark ages), myopic stand on bringing up our daughters and the administration's pathetic disposition towards sports, are loud and clear.(Prasad)

These are just a few of the many sports films made over the decades in India till date. The point the researchers would like to emphasize upon is that sports films as a separate genre have a lot to say to the society and it is better if we can have better academic and social discussions about this genre. It seems that though sports films as a genre was a neglected lot for many long years, over the last few years its acceptance has been growing across the society because of the theme's uniqueness as well as its inherent message to the society. This is a newly-established way of delivering meaningful messages to the masses.

Cutting across all that is represented in such films, sports films generate immense energy and power and forms positive attitudes which are very necessary in real life. The game of sports filled with rules and penalties restrict human ideologies to think in the right and correct direction for the society's future improvement. Most of these themes in sports film are regeneration of the events happening around us in real life. Irony is - most of the times people do not have time to think or have ignored them for some reason or the other. But film being a popular media for the masses it uplifts the entire messages to give it a higher and immediate effect. A good sports film is not only about losing or winning on the field, it speaks about the deep meaning associated with the sports itself. Sports films appreciate the struggle of the participants by showcasing losers as the temporary pain to achieve greater rewards in the future. Sports films penetrate into human emotions which results in the positive attitude in the way we think and live in the society. The

characters that depict the issues in the sports films transcend the human realities of racism, gender, policies that are very prominent in this fast moving society of today.



Chapter 5

Conclusion

The present study carries out a definitive discussion of cultural representation of select sportspersons through their autobiographies and the Bollywood movies inspired by the individual sports as also the sportspersons associated with them. In all modesty, the researcher has endeavored to discover the inseparable link between sports and literature as two entirely different sides of the coin only to be jointed within the wider matrix of culture. In the academic exercise that involves a scholarly analysis of sportspersons including the *magician* of hockey, Dhyan Chand (popularly known with his prefix ‘Major’) and the ace athlete, Milkha Singh –the Flying Sikh of India, the thesis (in its second chapter) details how these two men perceived themselves in relation to the world they have had to experience. Having discussed issues as diverse and as relevant as imperialism, cultural-imperialism, colonization and decolonization, marginalization, discrimination, hegemony and ideology among others by way of setting the background through its introductory chapter, the thesis further moves on to discuss the autobiographies of women sportspersons like Mary Kom and Sania Mirza. As depicted in these writings, some of these issues have been deeply accountable for shaping these players into what they actually happened to be—at heart, simple sensitive souls delicately hidden within the guise of a glamorous, superhuman winner of games. The issues ranging from native/alternative to foreign/alien particularly in terms of sports, the impact of successive invasions eventually leading to the dehumanizing process of colonization, and an overall adverse effect of all these on the local traditional sports— lend a theoretical framework to the thesis which also deals with

exemplification of these and other serious issues in the fourth chapter titled *Sports and Bollywood* where some of the important movies find a critical analysis in detail.

The four autobiographies chosen for this study depict four different world views though with some good amount of similarity between the first two. Dhyan Chand's *Goal* and Milkha Singh's *The Race of My Life* – focus on the 'self' in relation to 'society' whereas in the next two –the *Unbreakable* and the *Ace Against Odds*, it is 'self' in relation to the 'self' itself. Words like 'nation' 'nationalism' 'patriotism' 'humanity' 'eternity' 'brotherhood' find a very common and usual recurrence in the autobiographies of Dhyan Chand (*Goal*) and Milkha Singh (*The Race of My Life*), speaking for their larger concerns. Words denoting gendered and religious identities find prominence in the writings of Mary Kom (*Unbreakable*) and Sania Mirza (*Ace Against Odds*). Arguably, the limited projection of individual self and other selfish concerns can be attributed to the age and times during which Dhyan Chand and Milkha Singh had been playing—an age when there was not much of media glare and scope for glitz. In an age of fewer photos, and that too confined to black-and-white pictures sans any colours, one could not expect any marked distraction in the case of those humanely grown sportsmen of yesteryears. How a feeling of nationalism could overpower and motivate a player, can be best visualized with an incidence that took occurred in the life of Dhyan Chand when his team won the final match of hockey (India vs Germany) during the 1936 Berlin Olympics with everyone celebrating the grand unimaginable success except their captain. A somber-looking Dhyan Chand with tears in his eyes, was found beneath the unfurled Union Jack that symbolized the victory of the British-Indian team. In an interview with this researcher, his son Ashok Dhyan Chand disclosed how this same victory had induced a feeling of unhappiness in the senior Dhyan Chand who, in the heart of his heart, never wanted to be part of a team that he could not call his own—to be in the team

of his colonizers was never his dream. Dhyan Chand must have been the happiest Indian on 15th August 1947 when his country became free from the British reigns. It was the same ethos of a self-respecting nationalism that pushed Dhyan Chand to reject a lucrative offer for coaching the Australians. Not many people let alone the players can have a heart as big and bubbling for nationalistic concerns as Dhyan Chand had.

The feeling for their nation which was yet to be independent and yet to find footings, sportspersons like Dhyan Chand and Milkha Singh did not find any major fruitless and often harmful distractions in their sporting career. The two most iconic personalities affiliated to Hockey and Athletics respectively, will continue to thrive in the popular imagination, inspiring writers, artists and film-makers by virtue of their cardinal contributions to the sports as well as through the manifestation of various shades of their humane sides—it is through their autobiographies that one can have a better assessment of their personalities as celebrated sportspersons and the real inner selves that they actually were. What Dhyan Chand was for hockey, Milkha Singh was for athletics—an athlete running for the nation, not just for medals or money. The present study focuses on this aspect of sportspersons which often remains veiled by the more external accomplishments which they do in terms of victories and medals.

However, it still remains a pathetic experience to see Indian sportspersons ending up helpless pitted against the insensitivity of indifferent fellow countrymen, the selfsame people for whom they brought medals and made them proud with their victories. Invariably, many sportspersons have had to face callousness of authorities especially during the twilight years of their life, a bitter reality that has been plaguing the country and discouraging the newcomers who want to join sports as a career. Chetan Chauhan, the former cricketer died recently in a helpless situation even as the doctors at the PGI hospital of Lucknow continued to harass and humiliate him

instead of showing the modicum of sensitivity expected of them. (National Herald, 23 August 2020, Lucknow). Despite being a powerful man in the Govt, he was subjected to an unspeakable harassment as well as humiliation the hands of his physicians who continued to ask all those personal questions related to his life. Instances of sportsmen receiving similar treatment are not few. Understandably, these sportsmen must have sacrificed their personal comfort and often putting their financial prospects at risk at the altar of their ambition to bring medals for their nation. It is also logical to conclude that they were solely engrossedly in their cause that their superannuated life failed to bring them the much needed financial security, thus leaving them to fend for themselves. It can also be argued that the ungrateful people simply forget the contribution of these sportsmen who must have given everything they possessed—time, money, comfort and much more—during their sporting years when they were young and physically fit. The autobiography of Dhyan Chand reveals similar issues which he was pitted against towards the end of his life. Ashok Kumar describes how his father had to experience callousness of the selfsame people who used to cheer him up when he brought laurels in hockey. The autobiographies of Mary Kom and Sania Mirza have been useful in that they present an altogether different vista—one can hardly ignore a feminine perspective on sports especially after recognizing the seminal role of women in transforming the entire sporting scenario. One can hardly fail to acknowledge what women like P T Usha, P V Sindhu, Sakshi Malik, the Phogat sisters, Hima Das, Saina Nehwal, Dipa Karmakar, Karnam Malleswari, Dipika Pallikal, and of course Mary Kom and Sania Mirza—to name only a few, have done to the sports. The phenomenal rise of these women sportspersons and their dominance in Indian sports has been much appreciated by one and all, but the hurdles and impediments traversed by them in their march for medals and accolades remains largely hidden and unknown to the world which has its

own prejudices against women in no small measure and which can be best comprehended through their autobiographies or other creative modes of expression. It is with this intention that the researcher finds Mary Kom's *Unbreakable* and Sania Mirza's *Ace Against Odds*, though two of the very modest attempts in autobiographical writings, as useful in understanding the mind and sport of women as sportspersons.

Sports are essential components of human resource development of any country, helping to promote good health, camaraderie and a spirit of friendly competition, which in turn has positive impact on the overall development of personality of the youth. Excellence in sports enhances the sense of achievement, national pride and patriotism. Sports also provide beneficial recreation, improve productivity and foster social harmony and discipline. After World War-II, the Cold War era has prompted the super powers to prove their supremacy over their opponents in the sports field instead of in the battle field. As a result, the scientific approach to enhancement of human performance in sports had received boost and countries started using the international sports arena to prove their superiority. Performance in sports events has been, and continues to be, a showcase of national pride. Sports, particularly at international level, provide an opportunity to each participating nation to present before the world the vitality of its youth, their skills and fighting spirit. Considering the impact of sporting prowess on the human psyche, it becomes a matter of prestige for each participating country to go all out in the hunt for excellence. Apart from the fact that achievements in competitive sports lends prestige to the nation, there are other spin-offs in the form of healthy motivated youth, which in turn, lead to higher productivity and a more positive and integrated personality. This has led to a race among the Nations for development of new techniques and methods of sports training and performance. Though the modern technology has been responsible for bringing about an unprecedented

revolution and enhanced the position of sports in the cultural discourse, it is still a question left to the researchers to answer: how long will the native sports from some of the so-called underdeveloped or developing spaces continue to be marginalized? By applying some 'scientific' and 'modern' ways, is there a possibility to protect and promote these local games which are on the verge of extinction or have even got extinct with the advent and imposition of 'modernity'? The present researcher has made an attempt to answer some of the basic questions raised in the thesis in the concluding passage below which briefly enumerates some of the notable findings,.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Promotion of Indigenous Games: There is a need to revive the indigenous games and sports as well as martial arts prevalent in the country which will also result in producing outstanding sports persons in modern sports akin to indigenous games and martial arts. Wrestling is one such traditional sport. India has won many international medals in the past in this game and has been a force to reckon with. However, with the recent change in conditions in which this sport is played in the international competitions, the Indian dominance has been reduced considerably. The infrastructure for traditional native sports like wrestling, kabaddi, all the Indian forms of athletics, archery, fencing, kho kho, yoga, and chess among others, should be ramped up and made more effective. Akharas—the native academies for wrestling—should be appropriately accredited and their position enhanced by way of providing them support in terms of equipment and an authentic knowledge base. Institutions having a cluster of schools in the rural areas should be identified and the children who are selected should be provided with training in these indigenous games to revive these games and martial arts. National Indigenous Games and Martial Arts should be required to introduce to encourage all indigenous games and other Non-Olympic disciplines in line with National Games.

Promotion of Sports in Rural and Tribal Areas: Enough talent remains dormant and hidden in rural, tribal areas of the country. People, living in these areas, have an advantage over the others by virtue of the fact that either due to their genetic characteristics, geographical advantages or due to their social traditions, sports is a way of life for them. Thus, a good amount of sports can be tapped and the talent of rural and tribal youth can be channelized and shaped for advancement of sports in the country. The governments and policy-planners would do well to challenge the prevailing cultural imperialism and international hegemony in sports.

Ensuring Financial and Social Security to the Sportspersons affiliated with Native Sports: This study observes that the players associated with Indian sports like hockey, kabaddi, athletics, fencing, archery, wrestling, yoga, kho kho, weight-lifting, mallakhambh and other similar games, have often remained disadvantaged in terms of their financial security during their active years while in their later retired years they have to face social insecurity as well. The government and policy-planners should promote these native sports which have been pushed to the pathetic state of extreme marginalization while at the same time their players should be provided with adequate social security. The hegemony and one-upmanship of colonial sports like cricket must be checked—it has been argued that the dubious dealings of the elite and powerful cricket lobby was responsible for the proffering of Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian award, for the year 2014, upon a contemporary cricketer in place of the legendary Major Dhyan Chand the hockey wizard, speaks volumes about the hegemony of the sport that has no dearth of sponsors and financiers of all types. It is no wonder that incidents of match-fixing and other suspicious activities have been mostly linked with this colonial cricket which continues to thrive at the altar and the expense of the lesser preferred native sports including hockey which is India's national sport.

The researcher also observes that there is a palpable lack of academic infrastructure in Indian education system in terms of the inclusion of sports in general curricula. It is also proposed that the syllabi in the universities may include the history of sports including their rise and fall, the popularity of sports and sportspersons as key components of history in particular and historiography in general. The obsession of Indian historians and their unqualified preoccupation with the rise and fall of empires and emperors could well be replaced with the stories of rise and fall of native sports and sportspersons from different ages so as to promote a feeling of belonging and to develop an emotional bonding with the sports that our young men and women play. This will also help promotion of local sports and their events, thus adding to the possibilities of earning more medals in the global meets like Olympics where these sports are yet to find a pride of place.

Limitations of the present work and Further Research: While no study can claim to be an end-all project unto itself, the present work is also modestly aware of its limitations. For instance, due to limitations of space and time, sportspersons from other countries could not find space in this thesis. Autobiographies of sportspersons like Jesse Owens (*Jesse: A Spiritual Autobiography*), Muhammad Ali (*The Greatest: My Own Story*), Pele (*Pele: The Autobiography*), Diego Maradona (*Maradona: The Autobiography*), Shane Warne (*No Spin*) and Serena Williams (*My Life*) could not be attempted due to the specific requirements of this study. The researcher recommends that autobiographies of important sports personalities could be taken up for further researches in the area of sports studies and English Literature. Similarly, authentic biographies written by major writers around the life of sportspersons who could not record their life in the form of an autobiography due to their limitations of language or otherwise, should be researched upon in equal measure and with a similar sincerity.

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Annexure



25-year-old Milkha Singh with Dhyan Chand and Dara Singh. This photograph of three legendary sportspersons was taken in 1955-56. Punjab CM Pratap Singh Kairon invited them to his residence in Delhi where it was clicked.

Source: Web Page