

Globalization of Sports: In Light of Glocalization, Grobalization and the Resistance

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Abstract:

Sport is a very important cultural phenomenon, it is globalizing to a great extent. This process is studied with reference to three different perspectives. These are cultural hybridization in light of glocalization, cultural convergence in light of grobalization and the third perspective is the resistance to the global cultural flow. The globalization tends to change the sports. Some are accepting the global flows and some are resisting it. The whole process is subjected to market economy, power politics and capitalism. The resistance for the globalization is comparatively weak.

Keywords: globalization of sports, cultural hybridization, cultural convergence, glocalization, grobalization and resistance

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Sport is a very important cultural phenomenon, it is globalizing to a great extent. Globalization of sports is the most studied topic by the Sports sociologists in recent years. Till now many studies regarding the various issues of sports have been conducted by the sport sociologists including the globalization of sports.

Though the present paper is dealing with the globalization it is emphasizing globalization of culture and focuses sports as one of the significant cultural phenomena. The three different perspectives of globalization of culture have been analyzed in this paper. In the first part of the paper the researcher has analyzed the globalization of sports in the context of cultural hybridization (glocalization) and cultural convergence (grobalization) and in the second half the strong denial to the process of globalization of sport by some nations or organizations has been analyzed as a third perspective to show the contradictory process to the global flow.

II. METHODOLOGY:

The researcher has used qualitative method for the present paper. Primary as well as secondary sources are used for present study. To develop a theoretical and conceptual framework mainly secondary sources have been used and some detailed interviews have been conducted to explain the reality of the Indian sports that are undergoing the processes related to globalization.

Globalization: The Different Flows

Cultural hybridization stands for mixing of cultures as a result of globalization. It is an integration of global processes with a variety of local realities to produce new and unique hybrid forms that include continues global heterogenization rather than homogenization. Out of hybridization new cultural realities emerge in many different locales. One more important global process related to hybridization is glocalization. The term was coined in the Harvard Business Review, in 1980, by sociologist Roland Robertson. It means the interpenetration of the global and the local resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas. (Ritzer: 2010: 255) Glocalization can be observed in various cultural aspects, for example, arts, crafts, food, sports etc.

The 20th century is marked by the beginning of a global economy and a global cosmopolitan culture. Modern technology helped people, money, images, and ideas to travel the world with a great speed. The development of modern sports became possible by the interconnected economic, political, social, and cultural patterns of globalization. The globalization of sports has been characterized by the creation of national and international sports organizations, the standardization and worldwide acceptance of the rules and regulations for individual and team sports, regularly scheduled international competitions, and the establishment of special

competitions, such as the Olympic Games and the various world championships, that seek to absorb athletes from nations all over the world.

The beginnings of this development can be traced to the late 19th century and the early 20th century. Tennis was the first global sport. The first Davis Cup tournament occurred in 1900 with limited number of teams, but by the 1960s, 50 or more nations were competing for the Cup. Now it is a global sport because many nations participate and many people come from many parts of the world as players and as audience. The same has happened in case of Olympics. Both have become great global media events. The global corporations and brands look at it as a great opportunity to earn a huge profit and they have increased the sales of their products enormously. Even the World Cup Football is famous for market turnovers. There is a giant global market for things associated with major Foot Ball teams. The famous brands also earn a massive profit by selling their goods associated with these particular sports. They use the names and faces of popular players selling their products worldwide and even those players earn a good amount.

All this has led to promote the process of globalization of sports. The deliberate efforts have been taken by concerned nations to globalize their traditional sports, for example Tennis, Cricket and Football. Here one could understand the process of cultural hybridization of sports with glocalization. The traditional sport of a nation changes in this process and it develops heterogeneity in it with peculiarities of that particular culture.

Sometime a nation or a sport organization tries to diffuse a sport in order to make it globalized for several purposes. All the time the commercial gain is not the only objective but it is a source of getting identity or domination over the others. In this process the hybridization and glocalization take place. The example of cricket will be appropriate here. Today Cricket is a highly globalized sport. Appadurai's work on globalization of cricket is well known (1996). His argument is that cricket has become decolonized, indigenized in India so that it is "no longer English-mediated" (Appadurai 1996: 104). That is, it has been glocalized, if not localized. He recognizes that cricket was brought to India by England; it was one aspect of colonization. England needed to create teams that it could play against. India and the other colonies were perfect for this role. However, the Indians have transformed cricket and made it their own. He further added that media and language have played an important role in transformation of cricket in India. They made cricket free from "Englishness" and they "vernacularized" cricket. The game is played in the streets, playgrounds, and villages of India as a part of routine life.

In India and in other former English colonies, cricket is being dominated by others and not by England. In this process they have made cricket more spectacular in Appadurai's View. According to Appadurai (1996: 107), cricket "now belongs to a different moral and aesthetic world." It has become an "instrument for mobilizing national sentiment in the service of transnational spectacles and commoditization" (1996: 109).

Here the transformation in the original form and the growing heterogeneities are clearly visible. The original game, its rules, styles and very purpose gets altered. These changes are not necessarily negative in nature all the time rather they are much more positive and helped the particular game to develop differently. These examples help us to understand the processes of cultural hybridization and glocalization.

One more important process in this regard is cultural convergence or globalization. Cultural convergence is based on the idea that globalization tends to lead to increasing sameness throughout the world. The cultures of the world are seen as growing increasingly similar, at least to some degree and in some ways. Generally such assimilation takes place in the direction of dominant groups and societies in the world. However globalization of the local cultures does not vanish it completely. Globalization often overwhelms local cultures, or at least changes them considerably, generally it survives in some or the other form.

Glocalization is the imperialistic ambitions of nation-states, corporations, organizations, and the like and their desire, indeed need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas throughout the world (Ryan 2007:2022-3). Their main interest is in growing their power, influence, and profits throughout the world (the term glocalization is a combination of grow and globalization). Thus it can be said that the sport of cricket has been globalized by the English. It was lacking in distinctive content ("nothing") and then rich in distinctive content cricket ("something") produced by glocalization in India and the distinctive form of Indian cricket emerged (Ritzer: 273).

According to Ritzer, "As with all other cultural forms, cricket cannot be reduced to glocalization or globalization, or something or nothing. In today's world, all cultural forms involve elements of all of these." (Ritzer: 273) Some other examples of globalized sports are also there such as Football or Basketball or some form of athletic sports played in Olympics. Actually Ritzer's view is true in cases of all these sports.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries many international sporting organizations and competitions, national governing bodies, leagues, multinational corporations, and the media played an important role in the globalization of sports. This led to globalize sport and produce increasing homogeneity in sport throughout the world. It can be considered as a globalized sport and produce increasing homogeneity in sport throughout the world. It can be considered as a globalized sport and produce increasing homogeneity in sport throughout the world. It can be considered as a globalized sport and produce increasing homogeneity in sport throughout the world. At the same time there were the transformations towards the heterogenization also that can be considered as glocalization of something.

‘Something’ stands for forms that are loaded with distinctive content and ‘nothing’ involves (largely) empty forms; forms largely devoid of distinctive content (Ritzer: 2010: 267). Thus it can be said that there were the forces leading towards homogenization and heterogenization simultaneously. It means the process creates a unique combination of glocalization and globalization

Resistance for Globalization:

Beyond these processes one more cultural flow is evident. Some nations or sport organizations are strongly protesting some changes in the sport. This kind of resistance is always not necessarily the resistance for the globalization. Protesters are not against the dispersal of the sport however they want it to be spread in its original form with all the peculiarities that have helped the sport to become distinctive in nature that is ‘something’ and are opposing the changes that are leading the sport to be ‘nothing’.

The unequal power relations in the dispersion of modern sports are evident. No doubt that there is a domination of Europe and North America. As modern sports spread throughout the world, traditional sports of Asia, Africa, and South America were marginalized. Sports such as Japanese *kemari*, Afghan *buzkashi* and Indian *malkhamb* survived as traditional sports or performing sports (a form of folklore). Those who tried to disperse the sport had to accept the changes as per the convenience of the dominant groups or as per the market trends which led major changes in original form, for example Indian Hockey or *kabaddi*. Both the sports lost their peculiarities especially *kabaddi*. Now what is played in the *kabaddi* leagues is not an original form of *kabaddi* with all its characteristic features. This process is beyond the glocalization. Actually it is a cultural loss of the particular society however the picture is being created that it is a ‘development’ of the particular sport. At the same time there are examples of resistance to the whole process by some nations or sports organizations, e. g., ‘*kho-kho*’ an Indian sport. Some sport organizations of *Kho-Kho* are strongly opposing the changes that are contradictory to the original game.

Kho-Kho is a popular team game invented in Maharashtra, India in 1914. It is played by two teams of 12 nominated players out of fifteen. The sport is widely played across South Asia and has a strong presence in South Africa and England.

The Deccan Gymkhana club of Pune, Maharashtra drafted the first-ever rules and regulations which symbolized the transformation of the sport. The game demands the highest degree of quick and brisk movements, very high grade of nerve reflexes and tremendous stamina which are the characteristics of a supreme athlete. The game requires all motor qualities like speed, endurance, flexibility, agility, strength and neuromuscular coordination. As per merit, it is appreciated by press, media and spectators.

The years 1923 and 1924 were marked by the foundation of the Inter School Sports Organization, and *Kho-Kho* was introduced to develop at the grass root level, which consequently helped to popularize the sport. In 1982, the *Kho-Kho* Federation of India organized Men's and Women's Yearly Championship as Federation Cup. *Kho-Kho* was featured in the Asian Games in 1982 for the first time in New Delhi. It was appreciated by Asian countries. After looking at its grand success Sports Authority of India and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Govt. of India deputed their coaches all over the country to develop the sport scientifically at grass root level. In 2018, the 'International *Kho-Kho* Federation was formed to govern and guide the sport in order to diffuse it on international level.

Some organizations or federations at national and international level are also interested in dispersal of the sport on international level for the monetary purposes. For dispersal of the sport on international level some changes in the traditional sport are suggested by some people, organizations and *kho-kho* Federation. The suggested changes are; the game should be played on the synthetic mat; players should wear shoes and they also have suggested some changes in rules of the sport in order to make it little easier so that others will be attracted towards it. These changes are not suggested by any players or sports clubs who are associated with the sport for a long time in India. Rather the changes are suggested by those who may be the beneficiaries e. g., the event organizers or *kho-kho* Federation, or the producers of sport equipments or who wish to establish leagues for *kho-kho* matches on national and international level mainly for the monetary purposes.

To understand the whole story one of the dedicated player of *kho-kho* and the *Shiv Chhatrapati* Award, *Dadoji Konddev* Award and *Arjun* Award (the highest award in sports in India) winner in *kho-kho* Mr. Shirang Inamdar has been interviewed. He is a General Secretary of *Nava Maharashtra Sangha* (NMS) Pune, Maharashtra since last 45 years. NMS is an association working for the promotion and development of the sport (*kho-kho*) since last 6 decades. Mr. Inamdar and his co players are strongly opposing the proposed changes though they are not against the dispersal of the sport. They are also not against the changes rather they are of the view that these changes are not in favour of the development of the sport but they are in favour of commercial gain. He said, “We are ready to play on synthetic mats but the mats should be specifically made for this sport taking into consideration the requirements of *kho-kho*. The ready mats that are used for hockey or other sports are not suitable for this sport.” He further adds that, “These mats are very expensive and require a high maintenance which is not affordable to all the local *kho-kho* clubs in India. Thus all these clubs which are

promoting the sport will not exist longer. This will cause the entry of foreign associations in the picture and the sport will be dominated by the external forces. The new rules will completely change the spirit of the sport and the traditional content wise rich game will be converted into a diluted version.” He also said that, “We will oppose these proposed changes as far as possible.”

One *Shiv Chhatrapati* Award winner in *kho-kho* (who is now working as an umpire for the National level tournaments), Ms. Niramala Medhekar argued that, “The synthetic mats can cause serious injuries to players, as it is evident in the international *Kusti*, which is now played on the synthetic mats instead of natural soil ground.”

Mr. Shantanu Inamdar, *Shiv Chhatrapati* Award winner in *kho-kho*, told that, “The the *kho-kho* Federation of India has given a proposal for the ‘Ultimate *kho-kho* League’ a separate company. However the strong support has been given by the federation. It’s a matter of power and money. The people or organizations or even the *kho-kho* Federation of India who are supporting such changes are just concentrating on the commercial profit. The leagues, the players and the coaches will get monetary benefit and the local clubs, the real game and the national pride will be disappeared and everybody will start playing for money, as it has happened in case of *Kusti*, *kabaddi* and Hockey.” He further added that, “The winning Hockey teams of India and Pakistan are now nowhere in the international ranking because most of the players usually practice on natural ground and in international tournaments they are playing on synthetic mats. It affects their performance at the international level. All private clubs and sport associations cannot afford synthetic mats. The same will happen in case of *kho-kho*.”

Almost all the interviewees were aware of the fact that their opposition may not work in due course but still they are opposing the proposed changes as they are all dedicated players and want their sport to exist in an original form. They are a part of the movement not only for the conservation of the traditional sport but also for the protection of the cultural identity and national pride.

However the other side of the picture also has to be analyzed. Those who are demanding and supporting these changes are of the view that if we resist all the transformations then the sport in traditional form will not attract the younger generations. It will definitely affect the development of the sport. Media, sponsors and the federations on the national and international level won’t be attracted towards it. Resultantly the particular sport will be disappeared in the world of all globalized, popularized (by media) and market oriented list of sports, e. g., Cricket, Football, Tennis or Athletics, where not only the federations or leagues or multinational companies get the profit but the players also are benefitted. If we deny the proposed transformations, *kho-kho* will remain a local sport, played in some old clubs with old coaches and the players will try to get jobs in Government services or on the Railway board but the sport will be played with all the peculiarities.

Protesters’ view is that the changes can be accepted but they should not affect the characteristic features of the sport and the shoes and the synthetic mats should be designed for this particular sport and it should be made available at affordable prizes. If it doesn’t happen then the sport will be handed over to the strangers and we will lose the control and domination on our own sport. It won’t be a *kho-kho* then but will be a diluted form of the traditional sport of vigour and speed. Their thinking is beyond the glocalization or globalization. They strongly believe that the sport is symbolizing a cultural identity associated with a particular place.

Unquestionably, there is a political economy working for the production and consumption of leisure products that has resulted in the relative dominance of Western sports, but non-Western sports have not completely disappeared. Not only have they survived, but have also found a prominent place in the sports in Europe and North America, such as the martial arts and yoga. According to Eriksen (2007: 56) it is difficult to think of *any* phenomenon in the world of sports, or any other realm, that is totally self-contained, devoid of any impact from the global.

Thus it can be concluded that there is not a designed pattern of the globalization of any cultural phenomena. As with all other cultural forms, any sport cannot be considered as glocalized or globalized, or something or nothing. In today’s world, all cultural forms involve elements of all of these.

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