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**Dr. Abhijit Das**  
Associate Professor, Department  
of Anthropology, West Bengal  
State University, Barasat, West  
Bengal, India

## Sports clubs: Its organizational role under globalization: An anthropological case study in the district of North 24 Parganas, West Bengal

**Dr. Abhijit Das**

### Abstract

Sports are presently the inseparable part of life and culture in urban West Bengal. The sports clubs play every vital role in the institutionalised patterns of recreation by organizing variegated competitive sports in an obvious networking with the media based global sports of the city context, too. The present case study deals with the role of sports clubs in the District of North 24 Parganas, West Bengal under globalization along with their changing aspects of commercialization of sports today.

**Keywords:** Sports, clubs, culture, organization, competition, sponsor, globalization

### Introduction

Sport is a significant element of cultural behaviour is fundamental to the 'Anthropology of Sports'. It is a part as well as aspect of culture. As such, sports are subject to the same developmental forces and processes as the other components of the cultural system (e.g., religion, art, law). Likewise, sport is subject to the same basic styles of anthropological investigation and interpretation being an inseparable part of socio-cultural system. Therefore, Anthropology of Sports simply the anthropological observation and analysis of sport behaviour. Its distinctiveness is manifested through its characteristic theoretical perspectives and major concerns. These concerns include such things as the meaning, paradigm, and continuum of play, game, and sport, the ethnographies and ethnologies of these in prehistoric, small-scale, pre-literate/pre-industrial to industrial, global society, sports organizations, sports and culture change, institutionalization of sports, its variegated integrity with economy, politics, religion, education, etc. and the possible application of sports data (Blanchard & Cheska, 1985) [7].

Sport is a part of civilized culture. It has conceptual theme, symbolic meaning, rituals, institutions, a striving for perfection, a system of rules, means for enforcing the rules and competition through organizations. These elements underscore the seriousness and justification with which Social-cultural anthropologists view sport as a ubiquitous activity and microcosm of society and culture (Kottak, 2002; Jarvie, 2006) [1, 3]. As sports become more institutionalized, an increasing number of competitions and professional roles under different organizations develop. So, finally sports become more institutionalized as rules are codified, primary participants are specially trained, organizations form to manage and administer activities like competitions and public communication develops through tremendous influence of mass media especially in urban city contexts.

It is worth mentioning in this regard that, sport has occupied tenuous position in anthropology since late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Until the new millennium, there was no 'sport anthropology' - that is, a critical mass of scholars who focused on the topic and recognized the relevance of one another's work. There was instead only a small number of anthropologists who studied sports like subsistence economy, religion, and health issues. From the discipline's very beginnings, Anthropologists paid much attention to the games played by people around the world than to sports. Perhaps, the most interesting convergence of modern anthropology and sports occurred at the world's fair in St. Louis in 1904, when native sports were incorporated into the 'scientific' investigations undertaken by W J McGee.

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Dr. Abhijit Das**  
Associate Professor, Department  
of Anthropology, West Bengal  
State University, Barasat, West  
Bengal, India

The preoccupation with globalization and multi-sited research in the present century highlighted the value of sports in the effort to develop new research methodologies. The challenge for anthropological ethnography in today's globalizing world is that it is the most micro-scale of all the social science research methods, so it has been difficult for Anthropologists to figure out how to scale it up to account for micro-scaled global processes being a microcosm of the modern urban societies. The ethnography of sports have proved to be an excellent method for taking on this challenge, because at one end it concerns minute bodily actions and issues, while at the other end these actions are linked into the worldwide sports system that operates hand in glove with ambitious government officials, powerful multinational organizations, clubs, corporations, international media conglomerates, and the global culture industry. Sports offer a particularly productive contexts to conduct a multi-scaler analysis of the contemporary world, analysis in which local, regional, national, pan-regional, and global are not separate levels of analysis, but are part of mutually consisting institutional and personal networks of unequal infrastructure and power within which people both with and without migrant histories live their lives (Besnier *et al.*, 2018)<sup>[8]</sup>

It is only recently that scholars and insightful practitioners in anthropology have been critically looking at sports through its organizational milieu. Sport is a direct representation of the organized sociocultural system of a given society. The organizing bodies or clubs may be viewed as microcosm of social organizations to organize sports regularly and reflections of society's organizational behavior or culture in general.

### Methodology

The study, being a qualitative one is basically based on anthropological ethnography. It has been conducted through Participant Observation along with Intensive Interviews and Case Studies for collecting primary data. Data from secondary sources like books, journals, sports magazines, internet materials, etc. have also been utilized. The unit of the present study was the sports clubs in the urban areas of the District, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal. The present researcher always maintains his mainstay of observations on the Sports Clubs and allied organizations with the help of the help of typical anthropological methods/techniques with special emphasis on Case Studies.

### Observations and Discussions

The urban areas of the District of North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, are the abodes as well as patrons of modern institutionalized competitive sports as organized by numerous clubs like professional organizations and associations. Through rules, organizational structures, practicing, training, academies multi-gyms, spectacular competitions, sponsors, the urban sports in the district are well linked with national and international networks and are changing rapidly under globalization. Recently many corporate honchos of worldwide repute looking at the clubs with greater interest to make their business strong with sports marketing. Political leaders are also using the club platforms to spread their political prowess. The sport-club system is the primary vehicle of training and competition from youth sports to elite sports. Another organizational aspect of children and youth sports in the district is that it tends to be increasingly exclusionary as children of different age groups (like, Nursery, Sub- junior, Junior, levels etc.) become senior or youths. For the junior

and senior levels, there appears to be almost unlimited opportunities to learn sports and to compete in a variety of sports events. In some clubs, girls of the same age group levels and women, however, those opportunities become substantially fewer. It is also a mentionable fact that the local sports as organized and regulated through the clubs, is also under the parental organizations or associations of regional and town as well as district and national levels. Some clubs of excellent repute maintain their role by organizing regular competitions financed by sponsoring agencies, keeping records, and providing officials to ensure appropriate play. The range of sports involvement at this level is as broad as sport itself in the district – soccer, cricket and volley leagues and knockout tournaments, academies or sports coaching centers, age group specific leagues and knockout tournaments, and the like. Some major regional differences in organized recreational sports, participation are also observed during investigation. The winning of any sports events, players, trainers, sports celebrities, etc. are mostly appreciated and honored and also treated with spectacular ceremonies by the club officials, members, supporters, and the local people. Recently, an increasing amount of organized recreational sports is found in the private fitness-club gyms. As part of their services to their members and athletes as well as players, club organize individual and team competitions in a number of indoor and outdoor sports, most typically soccer, cricket, volleyball, badminton, table tennis, carom, athletics, swimming, etc. During investigation, it has also been found that there are many ways to be involved in sports events of the clubs besides playing or coaching. The variegated roles are created that require professional expertise to be applied to the interests of the sports and also maintaining the clubs' status quo of the performances in the area. Thus, sports vocations are developing gradually in the club-sports at the local level, typically in communities, often operates primarily with part-time and volunteer jobs. This situation strengthens the networks of relations around local sports-clubs with the sports world of the city of Kolkata which is presently the abodes of global sports in West Bengal.

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

### Concluding Observations

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

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