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Indian Premier League Cricket- An Intersecting Site Of The Globalizing Nation And Star-Power

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Abstract- This paper through a critical review of extant literature and analysis of discourse examines the bowdlerized version of the popular colonial sport cricket, Indian Premier League (IPL) in global times. A game played for nationalistic pride has been transported to a re-invented locale that combines global market-driven consumerism, popular stardom and the enormous business potential of a popular sport called cricket. IPL allows for an intersecting of multiple discourses of the liberalized nation, the global media, transnational flow of consumerism, star power and capitalism. IPL privileges the globally circulated popular Bollywood Hindi film industry to engage in a commercial collaboration with the most popular sport of the nation. A branded sporting event of IPL is a new invented post-global avatar of a formerly colonial sport

Key Words-Cricket, global, star-power, spectacularized, media, nation.

Introduction- Sports had conventionally a deep enduring relation with nation-states being their spatial anchors. This paper explores how sports of cricket in India through the league formations of the Indian Premier League (henceforth referred to as IPL) disrupts, strain even and challenges the association. This has created a new territory of sporting competition which combines capital investment to draw players relocated from or de-territorialized from national spaces to constitute an ethnically diverse composition of mobile saleable sporting prowess. These fluid compositions of teams composed through bidding is an instance of sports and its new corporate strategic planning and mobilization of stardom. Dis embedding the colonial game from its nationalist fervour of post-colonial gaming IPL negotiates with post-global realities. This is suggestive of the resilient adaptation of the game beyond territoriality of the nation and the sporting community in a bid to reinvent itself and thus charting a new corporatised, global, entertainment-based trajectory of the game. Star power as a purveyor of this new formula opens a new interface of the game with media and entertainment.

Sporting events are being ritualized and are seen as occasions of mass participation in social values and dominant beliefs. In recent times commercialization and spectacularizing of sports have allowed media to generate greater publicity, mass excitement and enhanced popular participation. Michael Real, as cited, sees the Super-Bowl American Football as a mythic spectacle and ritual and calls it a perfect marriage between sports and electronic media. Super Bowl is therefore a communal celebration of socially dominant emotions, lifestyle and values. (Sequeira,1991,p.121-122)The Super Bowl recapitulates in miniature and with striking clarity certain dominant strains in the society in which it was born and that takes such delight in it. As a mythic spectacle Super Bowl has developed as a vehicle for reinforcing social roles and values in an advanced industrial state. The structural values of the Super Bowl summarized by Michael Real as cited is : “American Football is an aggressive strictly regulated team game fought between males who use both violence and technology to win monopoly control of property in the economic gain of individuals within a nationalistic, entertainment content... The Super Bowl serves as a mythic prototype of American ideology and a ritual collectively celebrated’ (ibid, p. 122-123).

Drawing an analogy between the Super Bowl it may be said that the franchise-based, privately owned cricket as represented by Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket has come to represent an apogee of commodification of sports and the entry of large capital, glamour and pomp into the game of cricket in India. The intertwining of sports, popular culture and global economic and cultural forces explicates well in the ingeniously formulated IPL cricket tournament. The lucrative potential of this massively popular game of the sub-continent has attracted business interest of corporate giants and media conglomerates resulting in the commercialization and corporatization of this game.(Rasul et al.2011)

Sports marketing is a global phenomenon and its growth in India primarily led by cricket over the last thirty five years has been incredibly high as much as higher than the global average. The total sports marketing in India has been estimated to be Rs. 11,700 crore or \$ 2.6 billion, two-thirds of which (Rs. 7800) is by that of cricket and as per this estimate, more than half of this ‘ cricket kitty comes from the Indian Premier League (IPL)’ (Balasubramanian et al. 2011, p. 3-4).Cricket one of the most popular games in India has the largest share of sports advertisement. In addition to this in other sports marketing aspects including sponsorships, league, player earnings etc. Cricket owns a share as high as over two-thirds of the total. And for long, especially since 1980s, cricketers have been endorsing in favour of cars, bikes, colas, health drinks life insurance liquor besides sports product. (ibid. p.4-5).The prolific commercial potential of cricket, its popularity and its marketing have been attributed mainly to television viewership in India (ibidp.5). In India sports which is almost synonymous with cricket due to its prolific marketability have enabled what is ‘the biggest and latest sports marketing innovation in India, the Indian Premier League (IPL), which has interestingly fused cricket, Bollywood and business to create a multi billion dollar market.’ (ibid. p. 8)

India has emerged as a pre-eminent nation in the league of international cricket and the rise of IPL is a significant step in realigning the power structure of international sports and its political and economic dynamics to global market forces. This is also seen as an attempt by non-Western erstwhile colonies to counterpoise vis-à-vis the near monopoly control of Western nations. (Gupta,2009,)

Film stars like Shah Rukh Khan is now a sports entrepreneur. A reigning icon in films as well in advertising an expanding celebrity culture almost inevitably drew him towards it where crickets marketability met and coalesced with that of the star's own marketable value. The combination of the two was perceived to be a lucrative proposition for both ends. In a liberalized market this can be seen as infusion of a new brand viz. Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) of the IPL termed as 'Indian profit League' (ibid) where brand SRK combined his marketing value with that of cricket already known for its mammoth share in global sports marketing.

Television media and international brand was already a 'potent combination to drive money into sports marketing' with young cricketers benefiting by being launched in product endorsement. (Balasubramaniam ibid. p. 14). As cricketing celebrities had already had a reasonably long engagement in advertisements campaigns, it made film celebrities, like Shah Rukh, Preity Zinta, Shilpa Shetty and so on known as 'brand-ambassadors' in the realm of advertisement, take an easy stride towards sports (cricket) entrepreneurship. Fighting for advantage in consumer and brand marketing in the cola market in India both Pepsi and Coke launched campaigns that brought cricketers and Bollywood stars together as endorses in unison. (ibid.p. 61) The biggest campaign was by Pepsi that brought in Sachin Tendulkar, the legendary Indian cricketer with SRK. It was also that cricketers like Gavaskar, Sandeep Patil had made forays into Hindi films and the formation of IPL can be argued to be 'the eventual merging of the cricket and entertainment industries years later' (ibid. p. 15).

In an emerging market like India, a nationalist view of a sport can be limiting. For the sports market in India to expand, it cannot be limited to Indian cricketers, and hence the logic to create room for international cricketers and international sports. Non-players have much a role to play in sports as players do, though more off-field than on.' (ibid.p. 19). It is this logic that worked to draw Indian and international cricketing talent and non-playing entrepreneurs like Shah Rukh and so on. Commercial relevance of cricket. India's rising cricket ranking, best cricketing talent, capital and India's potential of sports market has facilitated the formations of IPL, in conjunction with each other.

Shah Rukh's entry into his role as a league owner allows him to reach an apotheosis of stardom, where he is not only constructed as a star persona or as a star by the entertainment industry or as a commodity by the advertising media but where he consciously deploys his agency to undertake business ventures by transforming his media-constructed brand image and stardom into his own capital. Shah Rukh turned himself as a 'delivery vehicle' (ibid. p. 36) or purveyor of marketing commercial cricket. This entry has formalized the bounding between cricket and Bollywood. Turning a full circle, as an entertainer turned entrepreneur Bollywood stars joining cricketing business has cemented this relationship through IPL.

Advertising media, global companies sponsorships, global television media, Bollywood stars, formation of transnational teams, sub-national representational nomenclatures (Mumbai, Indians, Kolkata Knight Riders(KKR,henceforth), Rajasthan Royals, Delhi Dare Devils, Pune Warriors, Chennai Kings etc.) makes the IPL a packaged cricketing entertainment departing from standardized format. It meant cricket league to function as club franchise system, engaging high profile business men and actors for franchise ownership and putting up world class cricketers on auction.

To the dismay of many purists cricket's transition from competitive nationalism to pure entertainment involving star presence thereby provide the tournament high publicity through media. The IPL drama around the bids and player auctions was based loosely on the US-based National Football League draft, which is a complete media event in US but 'The fact that leading film stars were invoked in the IPL gave it an Indian twist... The presence of Bollywood did one more thing for the IPL. It made the IPL an achievers club, with the result that people paid lots of money to buy clubs. It was a status symbol, the new private island. This attracted a lot of very successful businessmen who for commercial and personal reasons wedded to show their peers who the boss was in their hometown. Not everyone could have known at the stage whether the IPL would be a business success, but the presence of celebrities at least guaranteed a certain media value and status" (ibid. p. 147-148).

The present avatar of cricket in India, termed as IPL has emerged as a site for the rich and famous celebrities and entrepreneurs to brandish their wealth powers and status. For Bollywood Superstars like Shah Rukh besides being a status enhancer to his already consolidated position in the top legion of Indian film Stars, it also had other implications vis-à-vis his public image and film promotions. The star discourse hence intersects with a large public domain and this allows them to 'spill their effect' much beyond films, since this stardom becomes part of nation's social, political and economic discourse. Arora argues further to establish how ownership of IPL gave the star an added advantage to promote his films and also a competitive bid to project his financial might among other Bollywood stars and also settle his personal score with his critics. (Arora. 2008. p. 48-49).

While it might be argued that the star's decision was informed by his both business wisdom and his initiated by his personal choice, desire or aspiration, it was also IPL that was equally benefitted. Presence of popular icons ensured viewership of their frenzied fans and with cricket's popularity forging ties with the 'glamour and cinema world' allowed 'to sell more and more tickets and pull more and more crowd to the stadium ... Crores of money in IPL iced with Bollywood's glitter and media support in totality has indeed made the cricket a perfect saleable commodity that no consumer, specially the youth, could resist from enjoying at least once. Meanwhile IPL has indeed for the moment given a new dimension to the game of cricket. It's going great and has endeared the glamour loving crazy youth with its sheer mixture of glitter, glamour and game.' (Arora; 2008. p. 53; 56).

The alignment of cricket with the charm and charisma of film stars rendered IPL to a kind of hybrid entertainment typical of post modernist times - wherein the conventional cricketing vocabulary flexibly incorporates changes that has it's roots in Kerry Packer's purposed formula for modern cricket.. An altered format that included auctioning of players, hard core media manoeuvring and vibrant publicity method, has allowed it to emerge as a highly successful business venture. with the high corporate investments from various business houses (Arora. 2008. p. 55; 56). This can be read as postcolonial transformation and transformation of the colonial game of cricket. Postcolonial India, under the influence of globalizations reflected a readiness for what may be seen are 'Toning Down the National Passion' and 'with foreign players allowed to take part in the IPL format ferocity for the national passion is bound to die down in due course of

time. The reason is simple, frequent interaction with important members of rival teams and having occasions of on and off the fields will lessen the sense of passionate desire to win. A survey conducted by the Professional Cricketers' Association of England says that nearly 97% of state level players and 50% of international level players have expressed their willingness to take early retirement in order to make themselves available for IPL bidding (Arora.2008. p. 51)

The transnational formation of cricketing league often prioritised over national game heralds a significant departure and hints towards rising relevance of global media capital and business ventures wherein national boundaries and national competitiveness appear to be undermined in the name of business and entertainment. The T-20 format of the game, its transnational - character purely commercial imperatives is a postmodernist intervention where in the game besides being bowdlerized also privileges entertainment over nationalist zeal. The 'postcolonial and postmodern transformation' (see, Ashcroft,2012) of the game of cricket its IPL avatar and the involvement of business elites and film stars signals in favour of a more fluid., trans nationalized site for entertainment. Entertainment redefines itself within an altered rubric of cricket turned glamorous, less rigorous de-nationalised, and more instantaneous (compared to long hours of both test and one-day national tournaments). Shah Rukh's involvement in the business of cricket besides adding an entrepreneurial dimension to his extra cinematic ventures affirms his image as a global celebrity owning a league of cricket which is transnational in composition.

Proprietorship of franchise enables the star to bid for cricketing talent as IPL allows for 'projecting the players as consumer items that could be traded easily. Franchisees unhappy with performances of their icon players have begun exploring avenues to sell them off. Franchises have indicated that the players could be traded to some other teams when IPL trading window open' (Arora, 2008. p. 57). It is also argued that the game with its altered idiom is what 'is now a big trade where any investor could easily pitch in and players are their employees who have to yield as per the intentions of their masters or prepared to be sacked and traded to other organizations... the company had every right to hire and fire persons... If a franchisee has invested its hard earned money it will also like to see the outcome. And if the result fails to square up as per his intentions players and management are bound to be on firing lines. No business person will like to lose his money and if that happens he will miss no opportunity to fix the snag. He is more interested in obtaining to fix the snag. He is more interested in obtaining the mechanical results from the team.' (Arora. 2008. p. 58) Thus, capital-empowered businessmen and Bollywood glitterati turned entrepreneurs have applied business professionalism in both corporate style of franchise management and in placing 'rigorous demands for absolute success in business' (ibid. p. 58) leading to even expulsion of under-performing iconic cricketers from their owned- team. . Under such 'workings of cricket Inc' that even performers and professional actor owning leagues seek to discipline the team and place high expectations for delivering good performance and hence monetary returns for his investments, turning down considerations that performance are not always consistent. The carnival of cricket, IPL- a post modern, postcolonial avatar of the game is hence more than a game. Besides monitoring performance standards. Bollywood stars have entered the stadium and even the field to both cheer their respective teams and brazen display of pride of ownership. The cricketing arena provides a popular and a populated site during IPL matches for film stars especially franchise owners to

remain in public gaze and memory independent of whether their films are being released or being successful or not. This allow stars to draw both media and public attention.

Cricket if seen as masculinized national game as Nayar doubts (Nayar 2008 p14), looking at IPL's format one can argue that it has robbed it of its colonial and later nationalist trappings and rendered it into a marketable, packaged entertainment. In a professional style, Shah Rukh's role in the IPL has not been confined to ownership of KKR franchise alone, but has seen him being engaged in multifarious interface with the public domain. This includes his negotiation with the team members, its management as the franchise owner, his public appearance amongst the larger audience as a cheering team owner with his celebrity friends and family, his comments and public posturing and his relationship with the larger popular culture of city life, especially Kolkata the home town of his team.

Advertising agency directors, like Alyque Padamsee, Prahlad Kakkar, Padamsee attributed it to Brand SRK that has gone into the making of Brand KKR. Kakkar hails it as SRK's marketing genius, he says: 'KKR's brand value has soared post the win...all thanks to Shah Rukh Khan the marketing genius. His personal endorsement clients were the ones who had put their marketing muscle behind KKR and now all the promises that he has been making to them come true. All these years, Shah Rukh Khan was a bigger brand than KKR but after Sunday night, the brand value of KKR has shot up and almost become equal to Shah Rukh's..'. Reiterating almost the same note, Agnelo Dias, Chariman and co-founder Taproot Indra said '...KKR also had the advantage of being associated with a powerful brand like Shah Rukh Khan. In fact, there is a lot of similarity brand wise between KKR and Shah Rukh. Both have been outsiders who have come in and made a name and established a brand value for themselves'. In the same report, CEO, Future Brands, Santosh Desai draws a similar parallel between KKR and Shah Rukh – their successful marketing and brand building Desai says: 'Among all the teams in the IPL, KKR has always been the one that has been marketed best. They have a strong business model ...there is a certain clever way in which they have gone about choosing their players, especially this season. They have resurrected themselves and scripted a dream run, all thanks to the fact that they now work in the team as a unit...Shah Rukh's presence has always given brand KKR the much needed fillip all these years,...The way forward for Brand KKR is that they have to keep doing what they have been doing...There is the classic under dog coming right on top story and that's what makes a valuable brand' The report continues: '..That so many people turned up at the stadium was because of Shah Rukh Khan a senior official said' (30.5.12. The Telegraph p 19). Ventures like IPL (and even brand endorsements) keep him in circulation, pre-empting him from settling or receding to oblivion. The star image receives fresh boost and reinvigoration in his appearances made during the IPL and his active role in managing his ownership stakes.

Locating Shah Rukh the icon of a globalizing nation, within the bounds of IPL. serves as perfect cultural site marked by collapse and fusion of political boundaries of nation, status and all those categories that seek to divide us. Following the victory of the team in the finals illustrated a moment of popular celebration transcending all parochial divides with the coming of the state, the common people, celebrities from entertainment and sports onto the same platform The IPL ground, the stadium empowers Shah Rukh Khan the franchise owner to perform his stardom, display physical feats like cartwheels, somersaults and dance,

and display his control over his playing team KKR. IPL has re-defined Shah Rukh's stardom. Building up the team marketing the team and managing it draws from what is part of his real life trajectory and his ascendancy from an TV actor, a middle class Delhi youth, without genealogical antecedent in the industry emerging successful as one of top heroes of the Bollywood filmdom. His role in the film Chak De, as Kabir Khan seemed to be a reinvoked filmic image in his IPL ventures, especially his role on the grounds the day his team won the finals of IPL V. His presence allowed his stardom, his filmic persona to enter into active engagement in the game of IPL's cricket. 'As he stood there, hand raised in triumph...in the Chepauk stands, he looked less Shah Rukh Khan and more Kabir Khan. The coach of the women's hockey team in Chak De ! India who had fought many difficult battles – personal and public – to steer the gang of girls to victory in the world cup for the country..At times a motivator, at times a mentor, he has even been the big bad gunda of the purple and gold team if and when required.' (28.5.12 The Telegraph metro Why he never went down "Pratim D Gupta). The star image beyond being a construct to appear more of a rallying point, a mobilizing force, a leader and a perfect icon for India and Indians aspiring to maximize the most of the opportunities that has opened up in a post liberalized regime.

. The personalized drive to perform well in the IPL against all odds and criticism and the penchant of league owning stars for success articulates the drive of a liberalized nation: its competitive bid – a clear departure from Brahminical values, Hindu growth rate, socialist restraint and other worldliness. Embodying the typifying spirit of urban, middle-class India, these stars replays desirous cinematic roles that looked for consummation and wish fulfilment. (29.5.2012, Calcutta Times, The Times of India).

Putting himself at the helm of his team, franchise owner of the team KKR, Shah Rukh extended his stardom and once again reformed his ascendancy in the world of film to private sports. His professionalized management of the team and his firm resolve to lift the trophy (ibid) espoused the competitive idol of a nation opening up to new opportunities. Notwithstanding the personal feats of team members of KKR at the finals of IPL V, the championship came to be associated with Shah Rukh a celebrated star and achiever in his own rights. (29.5.12 Sport Page, The Telegraph: Coronation & a crazy night by Lokendra Pratap Singh). Such was the star's physical presence that registered extreme emotional engagement with his team, more than being just a franchise owner, that the victory was seen as equally attributable to Shah Rukh's genius for strengthening the team's brand value and mobilizing it. Analogue were drawn from his filmic roles and dialogues with the final match of the tournament and its victory ..to his cinematic heroism in Baazigar My Name Is Khan and so on (28.5.12, Anandabazar Patrika Article Sabyasachi Sarkar).

The state of West Bengal supported celebration at the victory of KKR and this instance may be read as as a prompt bid.to appropriate the success of KKR by organizing an open victory parade and this celebration was steeped in a temper that appeared more carnivalesque in spirit. And the star -power was equally alert to respond to unleashed, unbridled, frenzied emotion of the massive gathering. The sheer discursiveness of star popularity was well testified in the celebrations amidst state functionaries and the people. The triumphant mood and the event appeared as a representative and realistic instance of the star's iconization intersecting with state's attempt to hegemonize its control of over popular success driven by market and capitalist

imperatives and the sheer exuberance of a gathering identifying the triumph as a biographical extension of the star's own successful trajectory that reinforces him as an achieving idol for the millions aspiring for success and mobility.

Conclusion-The robust neo-liberal economic growth potential of India , the burgeoning purchasing capacity and consumption pattern of India' s new -middle class has created a 'glocalized' performative space and scope for franchised cricket. Cricket a popular colonial sport has been bowdlerized and has found a celebratory locale infused by capital, glamour, consumption and stat-power. Heavily invested with the coalescing of these cricket stands reinvented by a global marketable idiom mediating consumerism and celebrity culture. This new address of cricket departs from nationalist fervour of conventional sporting paradigm and explores sports as a heavily invested capitalist venture producing a glamourised and hybridized visuality. Robbed of being ethnically homogenous the teams are invested with a compulsively transnational, unevenly global and reflexively global through a dynamic interplay of the global and the local.

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