

## **Sports, Culture, Nationalism: Football in Colonial Calcutta, 1877-1934**

**Kausik Bandyopadhyay**, an Associate Editor of *Soccer and Society* (London: Routledge), teaches History at West Bengal State University, Barasat. A former Fellow of the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata, he previously taught at the Department of History, University of North Bengal. He is a Fellow of the International Olympic Museum, Lausanne. Author and editor of several books on the history of sports and popular culture in South Asia, he has also published a number of articles in national and international journals.

### **Abstract**

The article of Bandyopadhyay attempts to capture the nationalist fervour of the late 19th and early 20th centuries Calcutta in and through the arena of sports and more specifically football. The fact that football gave vent to the inadequacies that a people felt at being colonized and offered room for self-expression, even vicariously, by creating an alternative space of potential mastery over the game and defeat of the masters at their own game is representative of the political and economic agenda of many a colonised nation and their aspirations to date.

---

**Keywords:** Culture, Nationalism, Sport, Football

---

### **History writing and Culture Making**

If, as Tagore wrote “the most felt difference of knowledge between the educated and the uneducated lies in the knowledge of history,”<sup>1</sup> then, the crisis in the humanities<sup>2</sup>, especially history, at present emanates from the ever-widening gulf between intellectual history and popular history. In other words, historians are increasingly becoming inclined towards a system of knowledge-production that favours a complex intellectual representation of even most simplistic cultural idioms or artefacts of popular life. This trend leads to continuous ‘arm-chair theorizing’ that totally neglects the social functions of the past as well as the role of historian in the community. I personally do not believe that ‘the major purpose of history is simply to satisfy intellectual curiosity’. History will always be concerned with human affairs...hence historians can’t escape from life and also can’t shirk his or her social responsibility as a historian.

It is at this particular crossroad of history-writing that I wish to take up the issue of *history-writing and culture-making* as an integrally co-related process of knowledge-production. If the writing of history is to be truly determined by cultural realities of peoples’ life and the making of culture, in turn, to be critically represented in the writing of history, we have to break up the shackles of so-called conventional, purely ‘academic’ or ‘intellectual’ approach to history. We should not only concern

1 Shiksha, in *Rabindra Rachanabali*, Vol. 14, Calcutta, W.B. Govt. Edition, 1398, B.S. p. 453.

2 For a detailed overview of this subject, see J.H. Plumb (ed.), *Crisis in the Humanities*, London, Pelican, 1964.

ourselves with the problems which the man in the street faced in the past, but make them entertaining and instructive for the man in the street today. 'To become a true *science humane*, history must establish the interconnectedness between past and present, between individual and society, and between ideas and action. This kind of history would help man to understand, if not control, situations where the elements are human beings.'<sup>3</sup> And to achieve this target, historians must have to attach greater importance to proper proliferation of research-based historical knowledge at popular level through vernacular and critical utilization of unconventional primary sources that include, apart from oral history transcripts, audio-visual aids and family/personal documents.

In this background the paper deals with a bit unconventional domain of Indian historical research, viz. sports, to be more specific, football. It also makes an attempt, though in a nutshell, to clarify the relational complexities of 'history-writing' and 'culture-making' in realistic as well as academic terms.

### **Culture and Nationalism**

'National liberation is necessarily an act of culture' is an assertion of Amilcar Cabral.<sup>4</sup> John Plamenatz<sup>5</sup>, in one of his less-celebrated articles, has considered nationalism as 'primarily a cultural phenomenon' although it often takes a political form. He talks about two types of nationalism: one 'Eastern' and the other 'Western'. Both types depend upon the acceptance of a common set of standards by which the state of development of a particular national culture is measured. To him, the 'Eastern' type of nationalism is accompanied by an effort to 're-equip' the nation culturally, to transform it. But it could not do so simply by imitating an alien culture, for then the nation would lose its distinctive identity. The search, therefore, was for a regeneration of the national culture, adopted to the requirements of progress, but retaining at the same time its distinctiveness.<sup>6</sup> But the attempt is deeply contradictory: 'It is both imitative and hostile to the models it imitates.' It is imitative in that it accepts the value of the standards set by an alien culture. But it also involves a rejection: 'in fact, two rejections, both of them ambivalent: rejection of the alien intruder and dominator who is nevertheless to be imitated and surpassed by his own standards, and rejection of ancestral ways which are seen as obstacles to progress and yet also cherished as marks of identity'.

---

3 S.N. Mukherjee, *Citizen Historian: Explorations in Historiography*, New Delhi, Mahonar, Sydney Studies, 1996, p. 9.

4 Amilcar Cabral, *National Liberation and Culture*, (the Eduardo Mondlane Memorial Lecture Series at Syracuse University), New York, Syracuse, February 20, 1970, p. 43.

5 John Plamenatz, 'Two Types of Nationalism' in Eugene Kamenka (ed.), *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, London, 1997, pp. 23-36.

6 Partha Chatterjee elaborates this point in his *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, London, Zed Publishers, 1986, pp. 1-2.

Partha Chatterjee<sup>7</sup> offers the most clarified version of this culture-nationalism equation. By Chatterjee's reading, anti-colonial nationalism creates its domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it began its political battle with the imperial power. 'It does this by dividing the world of social institutions and practices into two domains – the material and the spiritual. The material is the domain of "outside", of the economy and of statecraft, of science and technology, a domain where the West had proved its superiority and the East succumbed. In this domain, then, Western superiority had to be acknowledged and its accomplishments carefully studied and replicated. The spiritual, on the other hand, is an "inner" domain bearing the essential marks of cultural identity. The greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the material domain, the greater is the need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture. This formula, to Chatterjee, is a fundamental feature of anti-colonial nationalism in Asia and Africa. He says that nationalism declares the domain of the spiritual its sovereign territory and refuses to allow the colonial power to intervene in that domain. In fact, here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative and historically significant project: to fashion a "modern" national culture that is nevertheless non-Western. In this, it's true and essential domain, the nation is already sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power.'

Finally, we may turn to Ashis Nandy<sup>8</sup> who brilliantly deciphers the psychological underpinnings of this culture-nationalism equation. He talks about the victim's construction of the West, a West which would make sense to the non-West in terms of the non-West's experience of suffering. 'However jejune such a concept may seem to the sophisticated scholar', says Nandy, 'it is a reality for the millions who have learnt the hard way to live with the West during the last two centuries.' This 'Non-West' of Nandy constantly invites one to be Western and to defeat the West on the strength of one's acquired Westernness. Beating the West at its own game is the preferred means of handling the feelings of self-hatred in the modernized non-West.

It is in this particular historical context that I am trying to situate a bit unconventional phenomenon of sport, viz. football to explain, in much simplistic terms, the realistic equation /co-relation between culture and nationalism in colonial Calcutta.

### **Anti-Colonial Nationalism and Sport in India**

British imperialism in India was not merely a political or economic venture; it was more so a social and cultural one; and it remains to be a psychological hangover. The relational complexities of mind, body and society under imperial rule had had far more interesting and lasting repercussions on Indian life than the ongoing socio-

7 Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories*, Delhi, Sage Publication, 1995, pp. 6-7.

8 Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. xiii, 8.

political movements of the period. Colonising the polity, economy and society under imperial rule went hand in hand with colonising the body and the mind through cultural idioms. Physical education and sport furnish a cultural domain where both body and mind interacted and reciprocated to colonize or indigenise each other. Anti-colonial Indian nationalism, too, in the same vein, was not simply political in origin or character. Rather, socio-cultural nationalism may be said to have predated its political variety. The former found prolific expression in certain specific domains of society and culture: language, literature, education, art, science, family and women's position, theatre, music, dance, sports and perhaps even cinema. An atypical representation of such unconventional cultural nationalism was reflected through Bengali pursuit of football as a daily cultural activity in late-colonial Calcutta.

The selection of football rather than other foreign sports like cricket, polo or hockey where international success was gained as a suitable object of study emanates from two basic considerations. First, from the point of acceptability, popularity and universality at the grass-root level, football proved to be much ahead of other foreign sports in Bengal at the turn of the century.<sup>9</sup> Second and more important, to reproduce the words of one of the renowned historians of Indian cricket, 'If anything the pre-independence link between nationalism and sports was provided by football'.<sup>10</sup> It was football and football only among foreign sports, which, as an integral and inescapable part of Bengali popular culture, provided the real toast of nationalism.

The present paper thus seeks to explain how football as a mass-spectator sport introduced a new and unique means of 'cultural self-expression' into Bengali society and came to represent an unconventional type of cultural 'sporting' nationalism in colonial Calcutta against the background of highest anti-colonial nationalist upsurge and in times of comparatively high socio-political tension.

### Socio-Historical Background

The tide of evolution which rose high and rolled on throughout Bengal with the advent of the English, before it settled down in its calm and fertilizing course, swept away many old landmarks... Among them were some of our national games of pre-British days. It ushered in football which very soon became a new milestone in the course of our progress and advancement in the field of sports. It captured the imagination of the youths of the land and thrilled our people through and through as no other game had done before.<sup>11</sup>

9 Cf. my letter on 'Bangladesh-o-Cricket' in response to Boria Majumdar's articles, in *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 02.01.2001.

10 Mihir Bose acknowledges the prime nationalist importance of football compared to that of cricket in colonial India in both of his celebrated studies on the history of Indian cricket. See, Mihir Bose, *A Maidan View: The Magic of Indian Cricket*, London, 1986, p. 34 and *A History of Indian Cricket*, London, 1990, pp. 16-18.

11 *IFA Shield Souvenir*, 1945, I.F.A., Calcutta, p. 9. It would be useful at this point to mention the most important pre-colonial Bengali sports and games. It has generally been argued that games and sports of the Bengalis were, for the most part, sedentary. The list included *shatranj*, *pasha*, *cards*, *ashta-kashte*, *das-panchis*, *bhag-bandhi*, *the sling*, *hadu-gudu*, *danda-guli*, *kite-flying*, *wrestling*, *ram-fight*, *bulbul-fight*, *jugglery*, *cock-fight*, *gymnastic*, *yoga*, *sweeming*,

The socio-historical context into which football was inducted and popularized in Bengal was itself situated in a transitory phase of cultural development in a colonised society. The official policy to anglicize Indian population that had begun with the famous 'Macaulay Minute' of 1835 was aimed at creating a band of educated anglicized Indians who would imitate the British in their behaviour, values and attitudes and ultimately become the protectors of the Raj. The wave of pioneering and creative endeavour that flowed out of the turbulence generated in literature, art, religion and society by the Bengal Renaissance had later sent ripples to the football fields as well. The Bengalis, however, in the changed socio-political context of the late nineteenth century popularized football not as a simple means of entertainment but as a culturally unifying force among themselves.

The British, on the one hand, in the aftermath of the Revolt of 1857, as an integral part of their new modified policy towards Indian aristocracy, began to redefine their relations with the Indian princes. In the 'orientalization'<sup>12</sup> of British rule after 1857, however, imperial values were to remain distinctly superior, and were diffused with total conviction. The princes were not just to be imbued with Western values but with a distinctly British sense of priorities. British hegemony in India was to be underpinned by the princes themselves, who were not merely to be 'bought off', but rather were to become honorary English gentlemen.<sup>13</sup> In this way they would come to see the superiority of British culture at first hand and uphold the status quo out of conviction rather than from greed or from fear. It was in that particular context that sports like cricket came to be utilized by the British as an important means of anglicizing the indigenous rulers from 1880s onwards.<sup>14</sup> The rich Gujarati Parsees of Bombay too used cricket as a symbol of their anglicized behaviour. Ashis Nandy aptly remarks in this context, "Anglicized Indians were bound to see cricket as an identifier of social status and as a means of access to the power elite of the raj."<sup>15</sup> By 1930s although cricket had become a major urban spectator sport, especially in the south of India, at the top level it remained something of a princely or elitist enclave.

On the other hand, British colonialists, perhaps out of their deep dislike of the climate, topography and inhabitants of Bengal, made the Bengali a butt of satiric criticisms for his supposed physical effete-ness – a stereotype that ran all through the period of

*chaughan, gendua and marble throwing or gulti.*

12 The term 'orientalization' is usefully employed by Francis Hutchins in *Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India*, Princeton, 1967, p. 154.

13 Lord Curzon outlined the proper education of an Indian prince as follows: 'Young chiefs... to learn the English language, and become sufficiently familiar with English customs, literature, science, modes of thought, standards of truth and honour, and...with manly English sports and games...' quoted from Sir Thomas Raleigh, *Lord Curzon in India: Being a selection from his speeches as Viceroy and Governor General. 1898-1905*, London, 1906, p. 245. It was this kind of thinking which lay behind the setting up of the 'chief colleges' on the model of public school system of Eton and Harrow in the 1870s and 1880s.

14 Other such sports included horse-racing, polo, snooker or billiards and hockey.

15 Ashis Nandy, *The Tao of Cricket: On Games of Destiny and the Destiny of Games*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 53.

British rule. 'A low, lying people in a low-lying land' ran the colonial sneer. A Bengali had 'the grit of a rabbit' – an image with which the Bengali elite itself appeared to concur. It was against this 'self-image of effeteness'<sup>16</sup> that a number of Bengali cultural nationalists took issue from 1860s onwards. They rejected any involvement in Anglo-Saxon sports and urged the restoration of the ancient physical culture of the Bengali people, in which circus strong men and acrobats featured prominently.<sup>17</sup>

It was in this cultural scenario where British 'games ethic'<sup>18</sup> tuned up with colonial masculinity to construct a stereotyped view of 'effeminate Bengali' who in their turn reacted and returned the compliment through a 'neo-traditional physical culture' to efface that 'self-image of effeteness' that football, a British cultural import, was introduced in Bengal. In that context, football became, on the one hand, a cultural weapon to reassert Bengali masculinity and on the other, a worthwhile medium of social intercourse between the ruler and ruled. The growth of Bengali clubs around Calcutta from mid-1880s onwards added a new dimension to Bengali socio-cultural life and football struck deep roots in the remote parts of Bengal at the turn of the century.

### **Football's Introduction in Bengal**

To ascertain as to who introduced the game in India and how it was first played in Calcutta is a matter of historical controversy. It is pretty clear, however, that this game came out in this country with the East India Company. Its early pioneers were the I.C.S. men, officers and men of Trading Farms and Regimental Battalions, European professors of educational institutions, and Navymen who used to play at ports of call like Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Karachi. First football match in Calcutta was played in April, 1854 between a 'Calcutta Club of Civilians' and the 'Gentlemen of Barrackpore'. It was followed by two more notable matches, one in 1868 between the Etonians and the Rest, and the other in 1870 between the Public Schools of Eton, Harrow and Winchester and the Private Private Schools, composed of Miss Tina's pupils.<sup>19</sup>

The oldest football club as such in India was the Dalhousie Club of Calcutta (1878) although the Calcutta Football Club (1872), devoted to playing rugby initially, predated it. Other important soccer foundations of the Europeans included the Naval Volunteers, the Howrah United Club and the Armenian Club as well as the college-based football teams like Presidency College, Sibpur Engineering College, Bishop's

16 For a detailed study of this concept, Cf. John Rosselli, *The Self-Image of Effeteness in Past and Present*, February, 1980.

17 Instances of such opposition to Anglo-Saxon sports, though rare, are available in contemporary literature. See for instance Pramatha Nath Bose, *Swaraj-Cultural and Political*, Calcutta, 1929, pp. 222-24.

18 A brilliant in depth treatment of this British colonial 'games ethic' can be found in J.A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism*, Harmondsworth, 1986, especially chapter 5, pp. 122-141.

19 *IFA Shield Souvenir*, 1945, *op. cit.* All the standard sporting literatures, too, testify to these dates.

College, Calcutta Medical College, the Scottish Church College and La Martiniere. These colleges played an important role in popularizing the game among the Calcutta youth.

Despite a few conflicting opinions in Bengali sporting literature, Nagendra Prasad Sarvadhikari is still gratefully remembered for his trend-setting football game with his fellow-students at Hare School in 1877. Hence, the year goes down in history as the beginning of Bengali's or rather India's tryst with soccer and Nagendra Prasad came to be regarded as the 'Father of Indian Football'<sup>20</sup>. The Boys' Sporting Club, founded by the schoolboy Nagendra Prasad was the first Bengali venture at football organization. Two British professors of the Presidency College, Stack and Gilligan<sup>21</sup> later encouraged Nagendra Prasad and his companions to popularize the game among Bengali students of Calcutta. After leaving the colleges, this first generation of footballing Bengali students led by Nagendra Prasad took active interest in the formation of Bengali football clubs. Nagendra Prasad himself founded the Wellington Club in 1884 and later rebuilt the foundations of the famous Sovabazar Club the following year. His effort was quickly taken up and followed by enthusiastic Bengalis like Sir Dookhram Majumdar, Kalicharan Mitter, Manmatha Ganguly and Haridas Seal. As a result, sporting clubs cropped up in different localities and suburbs of Calcutta during the late 1880s - National Association, Town Club, Kumartuli, Chandannagar Sporting, Chinsura Sporting, Mohun Bagan and the Aryan. The early patrons of Bengali football included aristocratic families of Calcutta like Sovabazar, Bhukailas and the Lahas, Maharaja of Coochbehar, zamindars, Calcutta babus and educated middle class.

The first open football tournament in India was the Trades Cup in Calcutta started from 1889. At once, it became a popular competition and clubs of all communities and categories—Europeans, Indians, Armenians and college students—regularly took part in it. The continually growing interest in the game brought up the whole question of control and coordination of the game. As a result, the necessity of a well-constituted controlling body was felt, which culminated in the formation of the Indian Football Association (I.F.A.) in 1893. The IFA, in the same year, started the IFA Shield Tournament. The First Division Football League which was confined to British teams only till 1914 was started under the aegis of the IFA in 1898. The first prominent victory of a Bengali team at competitive level was the win of Sovabazar Club over the military team East Surrey Regiment by 2-1 in 1892 Trades Cup. Newspapers in England gave prominence to the news, and some concern was expressed at the win of an Indian team against a team representing a British Regiment.<sup>22</sup> The first worthwhile win of

20 Nagendra Prasad's biographical sketches, one in English and the other in Bengali, are worth-reading in this regard. These are: P.L. Dutt, *Memoir of "Father of Indian Football" Nagendra Prasad Sarvadhikari*, Calcutta, 1944 and Sourindra Kumar Ghosh, *Kirita Samrat Nagendra Prasad Sarvadhikari*, Calcutta, 1370 B.S.

21 According to the Jubilee Number of the Presidency College Magazine, football was introduced in the college at the instance of G.A. Stack, a Professor of History in 1883. For further details, see 'Presidency College Centenary' Volume, 1955, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 195-97.

22 I have got this information from J.N. Basu, 'My Reminiscences', in Pankaj Kumar Gupta (ed.), *I.F.A. Golden*

a tournament was achieved in 1893 by the Fort William Arsenal consisting of Indian employees of Fort William when they lifted the Coochbehar Cup. Sovabazar's football prowess gradually subsided with the rise of Manmatha Ganguly's National Association which became the first ever Indian team to lift the Trades Cup in 1900 and repeated the feat thrice in the next five years. Then, came the age of Mohun Bagan, which became an emblem of Bengali self-esteem, football prowess and sporting nationalism in the first half of the twentieth century. Mohun Bagan created history on the sporting field when it defeated the crack British military teams one by one and the East Yorks in the final to lift the IFA Shield in 1911 as the first Bengali outfit.

### Popularization and Indigenisation

It is an interesting question as to why the Bengali so readily took to the game of football, which became much more popular than other foreign sports. Swami Vivekananda's often-quoted remark 'playing football rather than reciting Gita will take one nearer to God' might have had a far-reaching impact on Bengali psyche. From a more pragmatic point of view, it seems, certainly the low cost and easy laws of the game made it more popular than other sports. As for the 'babu' patronage of football, one may relate it to their aristocratic luxury and reflections of anglicized behaviour. The Bengali youth, on the other hand, saw in football a worthwhile cultural weapon to reassert their hurt self-esteem and injured masculinity.

More importantly, perhaps, the imaginative Bengali mind tended to accept football as a means of crossing of with the ruling British on a cultural battlefield. "It was a time when Bengal was caught in a surge of the nationalist movement. The social antagonism, the battle between the 'whites' and the 'natives' on the political plane transgressed its boundaries and entered the social sphere, or more specifically, the world of sports. Historically speaking, the ills of an unequal political structure threw up contradictions which quite naturally had a deep impact on the social psyche. The age of Swadeshi had celebrated the brawn and cult of physical fitness through numerous festivals, rituals and physical culture clubs."<sup>23</sup> Failing to attain a control over political power, the Bengali mind naturally searched for apolitical ways to avenge their socio-political degradation at British hands. Football afforded the Bengali society one such opportunity.

Last but not the least, Bengal is a land where emotion reigns supreme in social life. Less pragmatism and high obsession are features that characterize the Bengali from earliest times. Football as a mass spectator-sport reinforced this particular stint of Bengali psyche. The emotions of Bengali mind found ready expression in the joy, frustration or sorrow associated with win, draw or defeat of the game. There may be another reason for its wider and almost universal popularity *vis-a-vis* other foreign

*Jubilee Souvenir*, Calcutta, 1943.

23 Soumen Mitra, 'Babu at Play: Sporting Nationalism in Bengal, 1880-1911' in Nisith Roy and Ranjit Roy (eds.), *Bengal: Yesterday and Today*, Calcutta, 1991, pp. 45-46.



sports like cricket, hockey or polo throughout Bengal. Perhaps, the elitist character of the latter sports could not reach out the commonplace Bengali suburbs, mofussils, paras and villages. In that sense, football remained somewhat 'subaltern' in its appeal and occurrence compared to those sports.

The almost universality of football in colonial Bengal went hand in hand with its unique character of cultural indigenisation. It has been stated, quite rightly, with some authority that Calcuttans and the rest of India in their trail, were the only people in the world to transform football skill and technique into their own indigenous ways, playing unshoed, as they did from the very beginning. The rest of the world played in the original British way, India alone, inspired by Calcuttans showing the way, imparted to the game a distinct Indian touch. Nagendra Prasad himself never cared to don the boots, even though the play which first inspired him comprised kicking the ball not with the feet but with boots. 'As a result, the foreign plant, transplanted in our soil, grew up a distinct Indian character.'<sup>24</sup>

Basically because of Indians not being naturally fond of boots in their normal daily life, they preferred playing barefooted. Putting on tied-up shoes playing the soccer game considered only an imposition which an Indian could not digest to be clamped on him. In fact, barefooted jugglery of Indian legends like Gostho Paul, the Bhaduris, Samad and Kumar against booted European teams even on slushy surfaces was a constant source of a reconstructed masculine satisfaction for the nationalistic Bengali spectators. The barefooted genius of Indians made P.B. Clark, the captain of the visiting Islington Corinthians, an amateur British side, in 1938, remark: 'Indians alone play really football, what they call football in Europe is after all only bootball.'<sup>25</sup>

Without going into the respective merits and demerits of football and boot ball, what demands emphasis is that Calcutta's native soccer players were probably the only coloured people of the world and undoubtedly the first to make football their own, transforming it into a part of their pattern of life and attaining therewith excellence on par with British military skill. The new brand evolved by Calcuttans, which even though forsaken later, had given Indian soccer a charm of its own and made it spectator's delight.

By the end of the nineteenth century football in Calcutta had come a long way. From being an occasional recreation of military men, or merely a leisure activity among Europeans, football in Calcutta soon rose to the height of becoming an arena for competition and conflict between the British and the Indians.<sup>26</sup> It's not all too easy,

24 ARBI, 'Calcuttans Showed the Way' in *I.F.A. Shield Souvenir*, Calcutta, 1973.

25 *Ibid.*

26 This transformation of football's social dimension has been elaborately discussed by Soumen Mitra in his unpublished M. Phil Dissertation, 'Nationalism, Communalism and Subregionalism: A Study of Football in Bengal; 1880-1950', Centre for Historical Studies, J.N.U., 1988, especially chapter 3. Also see Soumen Mitra, *Babu at Play*, *op. cit.* pp. 48-49.

however, to speculate that Bengali football clubs of 1880s and 1890s from their very inception began to reflect or represent purely nationalist instinct on the sporting field. Football, however, at the turn of the century, may be said to have introduced a new and unique means of 'cultural self-expression' into Bengali society, although the approach of different clubs to the articulation of the game in Calcutta was not unitary. The earliest of these clubs that represented three distinct trends of socio-cultural expression were Sovabazar, National Association and Mohun Bagan.

The Sovabazar club founded in 1885 under the patronage of the Sovabazar Raj family had its tent in Calcutta maidan amid those of the Europeans. 'The grandeur associated with it was directed in showing the British that they also appreciated modern activities. To them, football was more of a social factor, in trying to associate with the new masters. It was thus more of an institution for merry-making for the decadent feudal family of Sovabazar and hence was not quite guided by any constructive disciplined ideology'<sup>27</sup> even despite the best efforts of Nagendra Prasad.

In sharp contrast, National Association founded by a Kalighat schoolteacher, Manmatha Ganguly, was disciplined and had a strict ideological motivation. Ganguly was unwilling to field his team against Europeans until and unless his players became fully prepared through vigorous training to offer a befitting reply to European challenge. Though the club gradually drew patronage from some feudal aristocrats,<sup>28</sup> Ganguly's disciplined ideology continued to provide mental strength to the members and players of the club. Unlike Sovabazar, National may be credited to have fostered a sense of national unity through games.

It was Mohun Bagan that rose up from amongst the host of Indian clubs to represent the true nationalist response of the injured 'cultural self' of the Bengalis against the Britishers. Originally founded in 1889 by a few idealist north Calcutta gentlemen at Mohun Bagan villa, it proved, from its very inception, to be more than a club, rather an institution with the avowed objective to not only produce excellent sportsmen, but to impart in them impeccable moral and social values. The ideals that the founders had set before themselves were high indeed.<sup>29</sup>The executives of the club saw to it that each member combined development of the body with that of the mind. They prescribed a high moral code for its members. Little did the pioneers envisage that the club would, through its epochal victory over East York Regiment in the 1911 IFA Shield final, catalyze a national awakening.

Thus, within a span of three decades, football had become inescapable part of Bengali popular culture in colonial Calcutta. However, it transcended the sporting contours of leisure-space very quickly to become a cultural weapon to fight the British.

27 Soumen Mitra, *op. cit.* p. 49.

28 The most important of those aristocrats were the Rajas of Bhukailash, viz. Satyadhenu and Satyabhanu Ghosal, and the Raja Jogindranath of Natore.

29 Mohun Bagan Club, *Platinum Jubilee Souvenir*, Calcutta, 1964, pp. 1-5.

### **Cultural Imperialism at Play**

In tracing the roots, forms and character of Bengali cultural nationalism at the playing field of Calcutta maidan, it would be interesting to examine the dialectic between a colonial set-up posing a wide array of constraints against the cultural regeneration of the colonised people and an exceptionally gifted band of Bengali players continually enthused by thousands of die-hard spectators but struggling against all odds to establish credibility of the indigenous pursuit of the game. Although football did not find much favour with the protagonists of the British imperial 'games ethic' in late nineteenth century India, its sporting dimensions began to be appreciated by the British with the changing political contextualities in Bengal at the turn of the century. British imperialists perhaps intended to utilize elements of popular recreation like sports to channelize the rising nationalist fervour and excitement of Bengali youth and divert their attention to a constructed 'imitation culture'. However, they did not spare the sporting field of their imperial hegemony and imposed over-arching constraints on the organization and control of the game.

Since football's inception in Calcutta as an organized game, the British had owned, managed and dominated the football scene. Like other walks of socio-political life, the British, in the sporting arena, too, followed a systematic policy of discrimination against Bengali clubs which came to face extreme bars in the organization, participation and control of Calcutta football. The story began with the IFA which ever since its foundation in 1893 was completely non-Indian. An Indian had been taken as joint secretary at the turn of the century but he was nothing better than the European honorary secretary's 'personal clerk'. The affiliated clubs were classified as Europeans and Indians, the former enjoying a heavy weightage in the IFA governing body and the council. The Indian teams always felt cornered and suffered numerous disadvantages at the hands of the European majority of the IFA in the next four decades. On the other hand, even though Bengali teams were allowed limited participation in the IFA Shield ever since its inception mainly to maintain its 'open' character compared to tournaments like Durand Cup (Simla) and Rovers Cup (Bombay) that remained totally confined to and dominated by British Regimental teams until mid-1920s, the IFA League from its very start (1898) was taboo for Bengali clubs and the same restriction was applied to the Second Division added to the League in 1904. The Calcutta Football League remained a more or less 'White' competition until 1914 when only two Bengali teams were allowed to enter the scene. Even in the so-called open IFA Shield tournament, Bengali teams other than Sovabazar had a very restricted entry. The Maharaja of Coochbehar, Raja Rajendranarayan Bhup Bahadur, aggrieved over the issue of disallowance of Indian teams in its first edition, he organized an open football tournament called the Coochbehar Cup. Besides a few open tournaments, apartheid was planned through institution of separate tournaments. For the college students, the British introduced two tournaments - the Cadet Cup for European and Anglo-Indian students and the Elliot Shield for Indian students.

It was Mohun Bagan who reacted to this sporting imperialism in great style. The injured self-esteem of Bengali club-officials, players and spectators found ready expression in preserving and determined fight of Mohun Bagan against British sides on the football field. History was created in 1911, when Mohun Bagan led by Sibdas Bhaduri overhauled East Yorks Regiment in the final 2-1 to lift the IFA Shield as the first Indian team. Even this very Mohun Bagan's entry into the IFA Shield was unbelievably hard-earned. The real punch of European discrimination against Bengali teams started after this shock-victory of Mohun Bagan. In the 1912 competition, the white referee of Mohun Bagan's first round match against Calcutta Football Club (CFC) disqualified two genuine goals it scored on the plea of off-side. The photograph of the match snapped by a Persian company clearly showed the intentional harsh mistake, rather 'wrong' the referee impinged on Mohun Bagan who were defeated in the end by CFC 1-2. Hiren Mukherjee, the renowned historian, records an unhappy memory about Mohun Bagan missing the IFA Shield in 1923 confronting CFC in impossible monsoon conditions and losing three goals to nil. "Just out of school, we had waited for victory which normally should have come but for over two days it rained – not cats and dogs but 'lions and tigers' – and while all expected postponement of the fixture, the powers that be (mainly British) decided, on the report, expectedly, of the referee R.R.Clayton, enormously competent but unashamedly partisan, that the slushy, still inundated ground, was fit for football."<sup>30</sup> The Bengalis firmly believed that the biased referees were to blame for their defeat. Bengali sentiments about the injustices of colonial age football in the 1920s and 1930s are made explicit in Achintya Kumar Sengupta's autobiographical *Kallol Yug*: "In those days, it was a monopoly of the British to be referees and obdurate referees repeatedly caused trouble for Mohun Bagan. An indisputable goal by Mohun Bagan – and the whistle blows for an off-side. The CFC is guilty of a foul – it is ignored or blamed on Mohun Bagan. When there is no other way to undermine Mohun Bagan, like a bolt from the blue, without a warning, comes a penalty charge."<sup>31</sup> The words belong to a writer who was a die-hard fan of Mohun Bagan, but even the lay person liked to labour under these illusions.

As regards participation, a concession was made to Bengali teams in 1914 allowing participation in the Second Division League to two teams, Mohun Bagan and Aryan. It was, however, also ruled that even if promotion was earned, not more than two native sides would be accommodated in the First Division League. Mohun Bagan earned a berth in 1915 and Aryan next year. But when Kumartuli qualified in the next three occasions, in 1919 as the first Indian team to win a League championship, the First Division gates were barred to them every time. The flush of Kumartuli's enthusiasm continued till next year when they qualified for the IFA Shield final and then evaporated so that a team which, but for the colour bar, would have become a big team in Calcutta soccer, remained for ever a junior team – a victim of colour bar in Calcutta soccer.

30 Hiren Mukherjee, 'Playing for Freedom' in *The Statesman*, 09.08.1997.

31 Achintya Kumar Sengupta, *Kallol Yug*, Calcutta, 1357 B.S., pp. 66-67.

### *Nineteen Eleven*

*Thanks my friends of football renown,  
For bringing the British teams down  
A victory grand to behold  
Serene and noble – bright and bold*

*The Mohan-bagans. ('The Bengalee', 30.7.1911)*

In the face of such discrimination, Bengali youth came to look upon football 'as an avenue through which they would be able to retrieve their sinking political prestige and establish their superiority over the semblance of power the Raj represented'.<sup>32</sup> The fact of the puny barefooted Bengali players matching the heavily-built better-equipped and booted Europeans took on the form of a cultural battle against foreign rulers. Football, therefore, no doubt came to represent a unique cultural nationalism in late colonial Bengal. It was in this context that Mohun Bagan's epochal victory over East Yorks in 1911 IFA Shield final was hailed as a blow struck not only for Indian football but for Indian nationalism.

Mohun Bagan's glorious road to 1911 victory began in 1904 when the club emerged champions in the Coochbehar Cup. The following year too they retained the Cup and also won the Gladstone Cup. From 1906 to 1908 the club won the prestigious Trades Cup thrice in a row. Equally sensational were its triumphs of the Minto-Fete Tournament (1906), Coochbehar Cup and Gladstone Cup (1908), Lakshmibilas Cup (1909-10) and Nabab Ashanullah Challenge Shield (1910). People all over Bengal began to appreciate these victories in the new light of anti-British national resentment and rally behind the club that became an emblem of nationalist pride. And when Mohun Bagan actually entered the final of the IFA Shield, signs of a great mass awakening in Bengal were quite visible. People became allured at the dream to beat the ruling British at its own game. Nothing could be greater than the fact that the racially proud Whites would be defeated by the so-called inferior natives in direct physical/masculine confrontation. The European residents too became conscious of this psychological head-on collision. The dream came to reality as Mohun Bagan defeated the East Yorks 2-1 in the final on the historic day of 29 July, 1911. The highest distinction of football in the country was won by an Indian club against heavy odds. *The Empire* noted: "All honours to Mohun Bagan! Those eleven players are not only a glory to themselves and to their club but the great nation that they belong."

The gathering of a massive Bengali crowd<sup>33</sup> went mad when the unthinkable event happened. Bengali spectators irrespective of their caste, class or communal affiliations,

32 Soumen Mitra, *op. cit.* p. 46.

33 The Singapore Free Press correspondent reported the crowd to be near about 100000; while The Manchester Guardian noted that the Indian crowd amounted to at least 80000.

were in a beggar's description, 'tearing of their shirts and waving them'.<sup>34</sup> When the victory-lap of the team and supporters was on their way to Thanthania Kali Temple of Calcutta, the Muslims rushed to Dharmatala with band party to join the procession. In fact they were allowed to lead the rally with their beating drums and bands. "The members of the Muslim Sporting Cub", wrote *The Mussalman*, "were almost mad and rolling on the ground with joyous excitement on the victory of their Hindu brethren." The victory thus reflected the image of the united Bengali society surging in anger against the racist colonial rule. *The Englishman's* comment on Mohun Bagan's win was more revealing: "Mohun-bagan have succeeded in what the Congress and the Swadeshiwallas have failed to do so far to explode the myth that the Britishers are unbeatable in any sphere of life." The Mohun Bagan success thus indirectly pointed to the political failures of the Indian Association and the Congress: "There are no players today in the playroom of the Indian Association. The Congress playroom has been blown off by one blast like a house of cards. Revered leaders like Surendranath have not been able to unite their adherents by the tie of unity. In a country where union takes place only to dissolve, where repulsion is more powerful than attraction, you have been able to knit together so many hearts."<sup>35</sup>

While Bengali emotion surged high at Bengalis repressed, cornered and branded as inferiors in all spheres of life, defeating the topmost European civil and military teams in the British game of soccer, Mohun Bagan rose like a colossal nationalist Himalaya on the sporting horizon. The Indians were mentally prepared to see the British Raj humiliated, cornered and brought to their knees. Unexpectedly, that is what Mohun Bagan achieved in the football field. For a brief while, the nebulous desire in the subconscious of the Indian people to come out winner in the struggle for independence was made a tangible reality by Mohun Bagan. The status of Mohun Bagan as the national soccer team made them our major fighting division in India's battle against the Europeans, even though it was on the football field, so much so that the name Mohun Bagan had become almost synonymous with the national battle-cry of *Vande Mataram*.<sup>36</sup> Their matches against European teams were perceived as campaigns to dislodge the Raj and the match between Mohun Bagan and CFC, regarded as the annual classic, came to be increasingly seen in that light.

The historic final also led to what was then a novel kind of journalistic enterprise in Calcutta.<sup>37</sup> The sports-page of newspapers became clearly divided on nationalist and imperialist lines.<sup>38</sup> A rich crop of Bengali sporting literature has cropped up

34 Reuter News Agency's cablegram to England on Mohun Bagan's success on 30.07.1911, quoted in Mohun Bagan Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, *op. cit.*

35 *The Basumati*, 05.08.1911.

36 Achintya Kumar Sengupta, *op. cit.* p. 66.

37 Mohun Bagan, *Platinum Jubilee Souvenir*, *op. cit.* p. 35.

38 *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Bengalee*, *Bandemataram*, *Manasi*, *Prabasi* and *Hitavada* reflected nationalist ethos of the sports-page. Gajen Mallick, the renowned sports-journalist of *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* was the most fervent protagonist of this nationalist spirit. British-owned newspapers like *The Englishman*, *The Empire*, *The Statesman*,

around Mohun Bagan's historic victory of 1911 and its socio-cultural and nationalist significance. From these secondary sources, it is known that Mohun Bagan's unique feat opened the floodgates of football enthusiasm in Bengal. It provided momentum for the emergence of many new clubs and consequently contributed to the rapid spread of the game and a notable rise in the socio-moral respectability of the Bengali.

### **Footballing Nationalism: Patterns and Character**

It has perhaps become clear by now that football in late colonial Calcutta came to be looked upon as an apolitical avenue for expressing native-self against colonialism. It exceeded its sporting boundaries to become a cultural weapon to fight the British. Playing and watching the game cut across the affiliations of caste, class or community in Bengali society and provided a bond of social unity to the nationalist-minded Bengalis. Thus, parallel to the political movement against the colonial authority, there began a social struggle of national liberation over a specific cultural attribute. The subconscious trick in the mind of Bengali footballers playing for an Indian team against a European team representative of the colonial rule led to a sort of nationalisation of Bengali mind. In that context, Calcutta maidan as a cultural space began to reflect Bengali nationalist ethos that found heroic expression in Bengali footballing identity.

The political background of this effusion of sporting nationalism deserves careful notice. Indian national emotion was at its first flush of exuberance following the partition of Bengal and culminating in the death of Kshudiram Bose on the gallows. Football as a cultural weapon to fight and defeat the British added a new dimension to anti-British national consciousness of the Bengalis in that particular context. Even during the high pitch of Swadeshi Movement the Bengali cultural nationalists did not force their fellowmen to boycott football, a British cultural import. Rather, 'barefooted' style of Bengali football represented an attempt to Indianize the foreign game, which may be taken as a silent but curious protest of Bengali psyche against the Western construction of 'effeminate Bengali'.

Later there were even literary attempts to prove football's Indian lineage by referring to the Mahabharata.<sup>39</sup>

Football as an outlet for aggression gradually came to reflect the 'pent-up nationalism' of Bengali working men and students. Commonplace Bengalis had

*Nayak* and *Basumati* on the other hand represented the imperial line of sports-reporting. A few papers like *Bharatbarsha* and *Balok*, however, tried to maintain a more 'sporting' approach and emphasized the importance of 'sportsmanship' in all sporting encounters. All the important newspaper reports and articles on this historic final are available in the Report on Native Newspapers in Bengal for the weeks ending 5th and 12th August, 1911.

39 Most notable contributions in this regard are: Paresh Nandy, *Mohunbagan 1911*, Calcutta, 1383 B.S.; Sibrum Kumar (ed.), *Mohunbagan Omnibus*, Calcutta, 1390 B.S.; Santipriya Bandyopadhyay, *Cluber Naam Mohunbagan*, Calcutta, 1979; Jayanta Dutta, *Victorious Mohunbagan*, Calcutta, 1386 B.S.; Karuna Sankar Bhattacharyya, *Videshe Mohunbagan*, Calcutta, 1964; Rupak Saha (ed.), *Mohunbagan: Pratham Eksho Bachhar*, in *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, Nov. 24 & 28, 1990.

become used to bear the brunt of daily British discrimination, condescension and physical assault at all walks of life. From tramcars to offices the British, till the end of their rule, practised a form of racial apartheid in India.<sup>40</sup> The native imagination always awaited opportunities to return the compliment by any means, be that trivial. Calcutta football *Maidan* provided exactly such an apolitical space to hit back against the British.<sup>41</sup> In those days on the football field it was considered to be an act of great courage to shove an elbow or a fist into the face of a Sahib or a military player, or even kick him under the guise of tackling. The ones who could get away with it were respected as great players. Footballers like Gostho Paul, Abhilash Ghosh and Balai Chatterjee earned glamour and fame in Bengali society for their reputation to perfectly execute this 'reverse hit'. In sporting encounters, it is also said, some Bengali spectators would deliberately pick quarrels with the fair-skinned Britishers. Sometimes these encounters would turn violent and afford the Bengalis the opportunity of giving the *gora sahibs* a 'sound beating'.

A large section of the Bengali community were affluent, educated, sensible and upright, but were hesitant to actively take part in the freedom struggle and considered the football field an ideal place to beat the British at their own game. The political events of the first decade of the twentieth century had a stirring effect on the Bengali youth. Yet many of them were reluctant to participate in politics of direct confrontation. Hence football came to be a potent nationalist tool and beating the British in a match typified a sort of immense emotional satisfaction for them. On the other hand, the city/suburban middle class Bengalis who used to serve the British as officials, clerks or professionals and who could not show their anti-British resentment in public, and the working class people who were not mobilized into the fold of nationalist politics until late 1920s, could express their nationalist sentiment freely at *maidan*. The 'pent-up' nationalism of Bengali workingmen thus found prolific expression through emotional outbursts during playing or expecting a match where a Bengali team got the better of a British side. Thus, what the nationalist politicians and native representatives in British Indian administration could not do, the footballers were expected to do. They were expected to be ideal cultural nationalists/freedom fighters who would get the success that eluded others in more crucial spheres of national life, i.e. politics and economy. Football heroes like the Bhaduris, Abhilash Ghosh, Gostho Paul, Kumar or Samad became, for the increasingly uprooted, humiliated, decultured Bengalis, the ultimate remedy for all the failures - moral, economic and political - of the country. If India, according to these sporting Bengalis, was constantly losing to its over-arching British imperial rulers in the political and economic game, the footballers should correct the nation's feelings of inefficacy and emasculation.

40 See, Nagendra Prasad Sarvadhikari, 'Football' in *Desh Patrika*, No. 34, July 14, 1934.

41 As fervent an admirer of British Empire and culture as Nirad C. Chaudhuri even acknowledges this fact in his autobiographical *Thy hand, Great Anarch! India: 1921-1952* (London, 1987). Even as late as 1928, noted Chaudhuri, he was told off for walking on the wrong side of the Eden gardens, the side reserved for Europeans. Subhas Chandra Bose, too, depicts a neat picture of this daily British racial discrimination against the Indians in his unfinished autobiography *An Indian Pilgrim: An Unfinished Autobiography and Collected Letters, 1897-1921*, London, 1965, pp. 22-23, 64-66.



The relation between football and nationalist politics in late colonial Bengal, however, requires more serious attention of scholars. Only future research into the organization, control and social composition of the clubs as a whole can throw light on this very tricky question. It may be safely stated on the basis of available primary sources that Bengali footballing community always remained responsive to the call of nationalist movement. During the intense political awakening of 1920-21, 1929-31 and 1942 football maidan could not remain indifferent. Direct expressions of nationalism became discernable in Calcutta maidan when the football league had to be abandoned on the boycott of lady picketers in 1930.<sup>42</sup> The Mohun Bagan team led by Gostho Paul waged a unique 'satyagraha' on the field by calling off the game, 'throwing untypical tantrums and inviting goals' during the course of a league match in 1935 to protest against the deliberate partiality of the White referee.<sup>43</sup>

Until 1934, the year that marked the beginning of Mohammadan Sporting Club's glorious League victories five in a row, Calcutta football remained more or less free from any communal overtones. "Till then", writes Achintya Kumar Sengupta, "communalism had not entered the sports-field. Mohun-bagan then belonged to both the Hindu and the Muslim. The green galleries that burnt in the football stadium of the Calcutta that day, carried the mark of both Hindu and Muslim hands. One brought the petrol and the other the matches."<sup>44</sup> It was, however, quite unfortunate that Bengali's anti-British footballing identity came to be fragmented from mid-1930s on communal and regional lines. After independence, Bengali footballing identity could not cope with the requirements of a post-colonial nation-state and football's changing role in post-colonial society posed a dichotomous equation between nation, region and club, resulting in football's intensive massification and declining standard at the same time.

### **Forms of Nationalist Sporting Culture**

Football as a novel means of Bengali cultural self-expression created its autonomous domain of culture completely free from colonial/Western overtones in colonial Bengal. Spectator cultures or fan sub-cultures in colonial Calcutta football were moulded and given a unique dimension by nationalist sentiments. Emotional commonalities among Bengali footballers were very high given the rising socio-political tension of that time. It was an age neither of great stadia nor of audio or televised sport. Hence 'being in the maidan' was the soul of spectatorship. Nationalist dimensions of Bengali football culture were most discernable in maidan-spectatorship. Spontaneous effusion of nationalist sentiments found prolific expression in specific forms of cultural

42 Subhas Chandra Bose succinctly sums up the essence of this 'reverse hit': "In conflicts of an inter-racial character the law was of no avail to Indians. The result was that after some time Indians, failing to secure any other remedy, began to hit back. On the streets, in the tram-cars, in the railway trains, Indians would no longer take things lying down. The effect was instantaneous. Everywhere the Indian began to be treated with consideration. Then the word went around that the Englishmen understands and respects physical force and nothing else." S.C. Bose, *op cit.* pp. 65-66

43 *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 25.05.1930.

44 *The Statesman*, 11.05.1935.

behaviours: field language, gossips/chit-chats, jokes and doggerels, erratic outbursts, peculiar gestures, brick-batting into the ground, skying umbrellas, scrapping shirts, throwing sandals, lighting up papers and clothes and spectator-violence. In this process of nationalisation of football culture the 'subconscious' played a very important trick. The social significance of the 'rogue', 'slang' or 'rustic' sub-cultures, in such unique situations, may be authenticated and justified even with their essentially amoral and asocial implications.

Bengali cultural ethos about Calcutta football in the 1920s and 1930s are brilliantly delineated in Achintya Kumar Sengupta's autobiographical *Kallol Yug*,<sup>45</sup> the vivid language of which will refresh even the most lay readers. Translated excerpts of his writings will suffice here to clarify the most commonplace forms of nationalist spectator culture in late colonial Calcutta:

No age-bar prevailed in those youthful days. Mohun-bagan's match proved a great leveller for Bengalis from young to old, father to son-in-laws, all heads being shaved by the same razor. An enthusiastic pat on a frontman's back in the gallery, the gentleman turning backward proved to be a respectable professor. No way! All sailed in the same boat, becoming singers in one gallery, equal partners in joy and pathos... If Mohun-bagan scored a goal by dint of spectators' incarnated good work, that very professor would become so much elated shouting with eccentric gestures as to hug his student to be drawn into the sea of joy. All then, of course, became water of the same river.

## Conclusion

In the modern world sports in its social, cultural, economic, religious and even political implications is no less significant than sport as an integral part of our health culture or leisure-space. Colonial Bengal was no exception to this rule. In the early twentieth century there was much nationalism to which politics was irrelevant or only marginally important.<sup>46</sup> In that context, football became the rallying point of Bengali anti-colonial consciousness and an instrument to establish indigenous superiority over the imperial West. Thus, Bengali cultural battle against the British on the *maidan* over the cultural phenomenon of football went hand in hand with political nationalist movement against colonial government. Each victory of a Bengali team over a European military team was celebrated as a triumph of the holy spirit of nationalism over the evil of colonialism.<sup>47</sup> Such football victories and their psycho-nationalistic effects played a vital role in infusing confidence into the 'lifeless and cheerless' Bengali hearts and

45 Achintya Kumar Sengupta, *op cit.* p. 66.

46 *Ibid.*, pp. 67-72.

47 This point vice-versa was made much earlier by J.H. Broomfield in one of his much-known articles: "... in the early twentieth century there was much politics to which nationalism was irrelevant or only marginally important." J.H. Broomfield, 'The Social and Institutional Bases of Politics in Bengal, 1906-1947' in Rachel van Baumer (ed.), *Aspects of Bengali History and Society*, Hawaii, 1976, p. 135.

pitchforking the invincibility of the Raj. As a result, football's socio-moral significance transcended the limits of daily livelihood and entertainment culture of Bengali life in colonial Calcutta and footballing society centred on Calcutta Maidan proved to be a mirror image of Bengali psychology in its politico-socio-cultural experience.