

## **Editorial:**

### **Sports, Games and Holistic Education**

**George Thadathil** is the Principal of Salesian College Sonada and Siliguri. He is the author of *Vision from the Margin* (2007) and has edited and co-edited number of books besides contributing to a number of journals and edited volumes on Philosophy, Literature and Social Science. He is the founder Director of Salesian Publications, Salesian Research Institute and Salesian Translation Centre.

The iconization of Sports legends, be it Maradona in Argentina, Pele in Brazil or Tendulkar in India is a phenomenon that reflects what sports does to the sports person, sports fan and the population at large. While a herculean effort makes a player reach the level of 'greatness', deserving emulation and admiration in the sport of his or her choice, the impact such individuals have on their fans and a nation at large is equivalent to such a person becoming an 'icon'. One could see some similarity with the phenomenon of religious devotion in the way in which they are revered or iconized as representative of aspirations fulfilled vicariously. Someone becomes an 'icon' because he or she achieves what oneself desired to be or become. While they receive admiration and adulation, they in turn, provide cohesiveness and a larger meaning to those who decide to find affinity with the person - as of the same ethnicity, region, religion, language, and nation.

Physical fitness and/or wellbeing are a pre-condition to much of the talk related to human happiness approached from whether psychological, sociological, and political or economic perspectives. The collective and /or individual values of human search for wellbeing is developed upon the premise that such a population is materially suited to expend life in its environment successfully engaging with the surroundings. This understanding of human wellbeing has brought us to the consideration of environment as a key factor in determining the quality of life. Preservation of environment in its purity becomes a necessity for preservation of wellbeing and resultantly happiness promotion.

Sports objectivise the body as much as or more than what the artistic activities like dance or acting does. The performance capability of the body one owns is measured in terms of self fulfilment as well as viewer/other satisfaction it provides. The exercise of the body begins from the earliest survival strategies of feeding, breathing and bodily discharges and continues in cumulative complexity to skill training for maximisation of efficiency in the body in its performance - be it in the arts, physical wellness or in games and sports. Any creative engagement with the body implies its otherization as an exercisable, controllable and performable appendage. The muscle building or body works, or even cosmetic beautification, around which an industry itself flourishes, conjures up the image of a body preserved in its health. Deficiency in any degree calls for medication and interventions to streamline healthy performance whereas an able and healthy body remains as the norm for any kind of imaginative flourish.

On the one hand, though sports have always provided entertainment, the manner in which it is featured on TV screen and is undergoing its own evolution even in providing new identities to universities and colleges through spectator sports is a recent phenomenon. On the other hand, what was once regarded as an activity mostly for bringing honour and laurels to the home country has become a means for easy money by way of betting, competition, match fixing, doping, and other underhand deals. In short, ethics seems thrown to the winds as the commercialised competitive sport has come on scene. Could this be one reason why though there have been eminent visionaries of education at the start of the independent India and thereabout in the persons of Gandhi, Aurobindo, Tagore, Vivekananda, Maulana Azad and others, yet the way we have proceeded give the feeling to many that we haven't tapped fully the soul of India when it comes to bonding the modern education with the traditional heritage. It would at least seem we are yet to realise our full potential in terms of conceiving and actualising an education suited to the character and clime, heritage and diversity.

The weight of tradition and its vision of ideal human existence being in opposition to the vision and progress of modernity have partly created this predicament. The critique to modernity and the kind of situation that prevails made by the Marxists, feminists and post-colonialists add to the need for an original reconfiguring yet to be achieved. Therefore amidst these varied imaginings of the possible educational journey the country could take a streamlining of them all into one mould would not suffice.

Sport as adding to the wholeness of the education experience is a thesis well defended and almost available as common sense wisdom. However, its mode of actualization in different educational systems and its application in a pragmatic amalgamation with academics is yet to be satisfactorily deployed. It is in this endeavour to trigger a discourse on the way in which educational value can be enhanced as to make it holistic that the various papers of this volume come up with proposals and alternatives and affordable and executable solutions either as an evaluation of a prevailing scheme or as an attempt at innovation.

Why do institutions promote sports beside the obvious? It is in order to create an image in society to draw greater attachment of alumni to the institution in terms of funds or educational contributions. Sports performance raises the visibility of an institution in the city locally and if it wins in the leagues or intercollegiate and university levels adds to its stature.<sup>1</sup> Donations and applications are the two intended goals of promoting sports, especially in television, bringing into its fold and proximity a generation that has a strong affinity to the institution. Studies have shown that 'those students who are fans are more integrated into the university and had more positive perceptions'

<sup>1</sup> Eric Anctil, "Institution Advancement and Spectator Sports: The Importance of Television" in J Douglas Toma & Dennis A Kramer II (eds), *New Direction for Higher Education: The Uses of Inter Collegiate Athletics: Opportunities and Challenges for the University*, 148(Winter 2009), 35-44.

and others also claim 'increased academic success'.<sup>2</sup> Education and Sports/ Athletics/ Games revolve around this broad spectrum of institutions enticing students for reasons other than academics to, students choosing institutions going by their reputation which is built around something more than academics. The ability of individual student as well as the community of educators, educationists and educational administrators to collectively acknowledge the educative task as comprising of a process that is integral and something that ought to take the physical training and sports capability more seriously is what brings about desired 'wholeness' in education.

Tomy Kallarakal looks at Sports and Games as a key dimension of integrated development if we are to have holistic education. He focuses drawing on extensive studies done in other countries on the external and internal factors that prevent a satisfactory combination or integration of the academic and sport/athletics related concerns of the student. He suggests and calls attention to Indian educators and educational administrators to address this concern urgently to reclaim the heritage of holistic education the country has. This need to conscientize educators and educational administrators on issues regarding the coping requirements of academics and athletics/sports on campus is further delved into from the point of view of the multiple intelligences at work by Peter Lepcha and Priya Topno. They suggest a possible mapping of the capabilities of students using standardised tests in order to help them better integrate the concerns at play. The possibility of doing better justice to the bodily kinaesthetic intelligence gifted students in the summative and formative evaluation process is taken up and some solutions hinted.

Surya Narayan Ray dwells on the role of Sports in economic development with special focus on football, and unveils the history of sports as billions worth industry in Europe and America and how it could make a start in India as well if carefully nurtured and viably invested getting the collaboration of experts who seem to be presently on a disincentive mode except in Goa. He highlights the employment generation and the benefits it would bring about for the country. This idea of Sports as employment provider is carried forward in further detail by Sudha Rai in her article on 'sports as a career option in India'.

Indrajeet Chatterjee makes his case for entrepreneurship development by observing from grass roots, the sports training market potential and analysing the emergent features as to indicate the probable direction of outsourcing sports to specialized entrepreneurs by more and more educational institutions across the country. Shubro Michael Gomes, based in Bhutan, looks at the SAARC countries and their performance in the field of sports and games being nurtured in educational institutions both for holistic education goals as well as for bringing about new sources of management input which is socially conscious and culturally rooted as to explore the road ahead for greater collaboration.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr Aaron Clopton, "Students as Spectators: Their Academic and Social Integration" in *Ibid.*, 83-90.

Kishan Harijan provides a close up of the Darjeeling region as a socio cultural space in which sports flourished and had a legacy which today is in doldrums. His analysis and proposals therefore could offer some scope for a future revival given the marketability of sport in the region. Pawan Prasad makes a study of government and non-governmental organizations in promoting sports among youth drawing heavily on studies undertaken by UN organization, studies done in South Africa and with an overall assessment of Indian situation with an in depth awareness of the local scenario of North Bengal and suggests that non-governmental organizations be tapped in a bigger way for the integral inclusion of sports in education.

Jeewan Pradhan attempts an innovative solution for a practical problem encountered in the field during tournaments especially of one-day cricket games stopped, delayed or postponed due to rain and the prevailing system of calculation of run rate and overs and proposes a way to overcome its deficiency through a new Janessa Method designed by him. The two ensuing articles by Laden Lepcha and group and by Jyan Chandra Gurung coming from educational training background make a case for the differences between the hill and plain female students in their physiognomy due to environmental and other factors. These differences have to be noted in their education, training, selection of careers especially in sports and games and the related physical training. The self knowledge about these factors helps individuals and the knowledge of their physical constitution made available to teachers enables them to better accompany them in the task of personality grooming.

Awasesh Subba, a sports person, reflects on his personal history and brings it to bear on the theme of integration and xenophobia-free community building. He especially focuses on the bias against North East in general and how in sports through famous sportspersons from North East the elements of bias and prejudice have been reversed. This brings home the theme of periphery being the centre in the case of sports status of North East claiming their due rights in and from the nation. Biju Mathew takes another related issue of racism in the wider world of international sports and proposes how an anti-racist humanism alone can be the goal for everyone whether engaged in sports or not. He too draws attention to the contribution sports has played in bringing peoples together as to live with obvious differences.

Anup Shekhar Chakraborty takes a critical look at the process that the Mizo people have undergone in the past 200 years from the loss they experienced of the traditional leisure activity of sports due to the arrival of new value system and activities for leisure with the Christian belief system having hold over the people. He recounts, on the one hand, a number of traditional games and the hierarchy role it maintained. On the other hand, what he attempts to show is how despite modernising trends of education, religion and politics the traditional value system has retained itself and the entrenched patriarchy has been reinforced. Padam Nepal makes a detour into Marxian philosophy in order to reinstate the value of leisure as a free time activity as

against labour which is induced and dreaded under the capitalist system. His study of labour, leisure and sports in Marxian perspective is an eye opener to creative action as that which spontaneously surfaces from the free mind of a free person unencumbered ideologically and physically. The route to holistic education is being thus explored in the actual life situations of Mizo people on the hand and the theoretical underpinnings of Marxian analysis of labour on the other.

Bedika Rai attempts a reading into the sport based cinematic creations of Bollywood(Mumbai based film industry). The linkage between real world concerns, aspirations and interest in sports when depicted in reel life, it throws up a new lease of energy which in turn can be cathartic on the one hand and nationalistic on the other showing sports in cinema, she claims, to be more than entertainment. Kasturi Ghosh brings in a new focus onto the possibilities in cinematic studies relying on the extensive online literature on the topic to highlight how individuals are portrayed in fiction. Beginning from a fictionalised encounter she goes on to real life characters fictionalised and depicted on screen in order to show the 'coming of age' phenomenon as the crucial feature and in each case engagement with sports becomes significant for the protagonist of each of the movies referred to in being 'someone' showcasing their unique character in pursuing life choices.

The concern, one way or the other, in all of the articles of this volume is how sport can help make education holistic and in turn, education to management of sports can help open up better avenues for various segments of sports lovers and aspirants to a career in sports. The aim is to make society more vibrant by engaging the vital force of human energy in and through diverse modes of creative investment in sports and games.