

Role of Sports and Sportsperson of North East India in Combating Xenophobia, Racism and Related Intolerances

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Abstract

To the people of a nation suffering from xenophobia, racial discrimination, ethnic conflict and related intolerances sport could be seen as the ideal solution to provide a focus of national integration. Sport and sport person is a viable means in bringing peace, unity and development to a society fragmented by both ethnicity and regionalism. In this context, the sport and sport persons along with the cooperation of the Government, stake holders, local sports clubs, educational institutions, mass media and other related authorities can play a major role in combating xenophobia, racism and related intolerances. The article briefly explains how sports and sportspersons of northeast have contributed in bringing socially inclusive cities and communities, national integration, and the value of mutual respect and understanding among the ethnically, geographically and economically divided societies.

Keywords: Xenophobia, Racial Discrimination, Social Inclusion, National Integration.

Introduction

The Magical and the unexplored region of India, the North Eastern states, is embroidered with beautiful picturesque valleys and abounding variety of flora along with its wildlife population. In addition to the bountiful breath taking sceneries and landscapes, the north east can also be rightly called the "hub of Sports activities in India". Obvious reasons are the numerous talented sportspersons the region has produced in different fields of sport, who have brought laurels to the country. Yet the increased racial distinction based on physical characteristics, such as skin coloration, facial features and body type have made Indian societies more heterogeneous.

Migration from North East to the mega cities (Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Banglore) is at its peak now. The number has increased 12 times in the last five years. The year 2005 saw 34,000 migrants and the number increased to 414,850 in 2010. If the current trend continues, 5,000,000 are expected to migrate in next five years. With such increasing numbers, the challenges of racial discrimination and sexual violence faced by North east communities will also increase. Thus to combat such problems Sport could be a fundamental pillar for the society. It is often characterized by its universal accessibility and ability to unify individuals from diverse backgrounds. Millions of people throughout the country are engaged in this activity, both as spectators and participants, at youth, amateur and professional levels. Given

its significance and broad appeal, sport and sport persons have the potentiality for promoting social integration, cohesion, mutual understanding and tolerances, both within and across national borders. Sportsperson and sports can serve as a mechanism to build confidence and mutual understanding and promote tolerance and respect among different communities.¹

Sport is defined in oxford dictionary as an athletic activity, any game or pastime. In general we understand sport to be an entertainment. In fact today's sports are considered as international discipline, for the promotion and development of national and international understanding and universal brotherhood. In the present politically conflicting times sports are also considered as one of the major forces for promoting and developing peace and unity. Sport is one of the consolidating factors for national integration and for developing national character, which are the most urgent needs of the present day Indian society.

Sportsperson in this present paper means any athlete or player who plays any sport or game professionally and has proved himself as an icon of a particular game or sport whom the whole society considers as a role model. In other words, sport persons are the product of a culture promoted by a particular society in a particular era of the history.

Xenophobia is the perception that people and communities identified as other are foreign to a given community or society, that they lack the capacity for integration, and that they can bring harm to the authentic identity of the majority. Xenophobia means a people's fear and hatred of things and practices that are foreign to their own society's way of life.²

Xenophobia, in some explanations has been closely tied to racism and persists in newer characterizations of racism. Described as new racism, 'differential racism,' or 'cultural racism,' cultural rather than racial differences become the basis of exclusion in newer forms.³ It is discrimination against and hatred of strangers, outsiders or more often those who are in effect part of one's own society but are perceived as incommensurably different from the majority population. Xenophobia often is said to be related to the innate characteristics of a given culture. Xenophobia, racism and related intolerance are social problems and for these, sport could be seen as an ideal solution.

¹ DC Bhattacharya, *Sociology*, 7th edition, N Enterprise, Bijoya Publishing House, Kolkata, 2006, p. 135.

² Electronic version, North East Support Center & help line, retrieved from www.nehelpline.net.

³ Delanty, Gerard and Peter Millward, "Post-liberal anxieties and discourse of people hood in Europe: nationalism, xenophobia and racism" in Mole, CM Richard (ed.) *Discursive Constructions of Identity in European Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndsmill, 2007, pp. 137-48.

Promotion of Physical Education

Physical education programmes are structured in such a way that they teach the essential unity in the diversities and differences of national life, and games and sports try to inculcate in them the essential qualities of communal harmony and fellow feeling. Youth festivals of sports and similar competitions organized throughout the country will go a long way in harmonizing their thought and efforts. In fact, play grounds are the laboratories of the society where socially useful actions can be moulded, refined and human approach to life can be practiced.⁴

The educational institutions have a major role to play in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, in particular in promoting the principles of tolerance and respect to ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, thereby preventing the proliferation of extremist, racist and xenophobic movements and propaganda, among the youth through well organized co-curricular activities. For a system of education to be considered wholesome it is imperative that games and sport should occupy prominent place in the school curriculum both as an academic discipline and as a recreational activity. The need of sports in schools, colleges and universities can be made more imperative from the following description of the National Integration Camp with the theme 'Unity in Diversity', organized by the Bharat Scout and Guide held in Aizwal, Mizoram from 18th to 24th January 2012, in which twenty-four states had participated.⁵ In an interview, Lilly Singh, a district organizing commissioner, said,

I never saw or heard and experienced any kind of racial remarks, abuse and related intolerances among the students representing their states, rather they made many friends and exchanged cultural activities. Many activities like the festival, folk dance competition, integration game, food plaza competition, cultural dress exchange event in which the students exchanged their traditional attires and integration dance in which all the participant groups performed their own folk dance in one common patriotic song are the most important and worth seeing activities for promoting national integration, friendship, leadership and group cohesion.

In the above sense one can judge the relative importance of physical education in the educational institutions of India. Hence, state and the central government should encourage implementing physical education as compulsory subject at various levels and sectors not only to prevent and combat racism, xenophobia and related intolerances but also to achieve the holistic development of the students. As students are the future custodian of our society, so, they must be embedded with good moral values through training education.

⁴ Ajmer Singh and et al, Essentials of physical education, New Delhi, Kalyani publication, 2007, p. 44, (Hereafter Ajmer Singh).

⁵ Electronic version retrieved from www.unesco.org/new/en/...against.../youthvoices-against-racism.

In India people are ethnically fragmented and students who come to schools, colleges, universities have different cultural background. It therefore becomes difficult to get adjusted with each other, so the chances of developing xenophobic behavior amongst students becomes prominent within and outside school, college and university premises. In such situation it is the responsibility of the institutions to inculcate the right moral values to the students through well organized co-curricular activities that develop the value of mutual respect and understanding.

Three different Functions of Sports and Sportspersons being dealt with are:

- (i) Construction of Inclusive Cities and Communities,
- (ii) Extermination of Xenophobia and
- (iii) Promotion of National Integration.

Building of Inclusive Cities and Communities through Sports

Social exclusion emerged as a hazard in Europe in the 1980s in response to the growing social divides that resulted from inadequacy of existing social welfare provisions to meet the changing needs of more diverse populations, and India is no exception. "Social inclusion is not, however, just a response to exclusion. It extends beyond bringing the 'outsiders' in, or notions of the periphery versus the centre. It is about closing physical, social and economic distances separating people, rather than only about eliminating boundaries or barriers between us and them".⁶ The Indian mega cities are becoming increasingly important in search of better livelihood for the northeast people. Therefore, the well-being and the quality of their neighborhoods in cities, where people interact and share experiences need to atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding in order to make xenophobia-free communities.

A socially inclusive society is designed as one where all people feel valued, their differences respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity. In this sense, Sport and sport persons can contribute in fostering social inclusion. For example, Sunil Chettri was considered as Delhi boy⁷ by all the news papers and TV channels when he was adjudged Player of the Year (2011) by the All India Football Federation (AIFF). It also sensed that the people of Delhi in particular and India in general considered him as the member of their own community despite having different culture and ethnicity. Hence, Participating in games and sports enables the youngsters to develop a habit of independent thinking. The varied situations that they have to face during practice and competition provide them opportunities to think, analyze and act rationally, and not to develop prejudice against any caste, creed or culture. The following description about my own 15 years of experience as a professional football player tries to explicitate how sports can bring the social change and integration among the ethnically divided societies:

⁶ Electronic version retrieved from www.laidlawfdn.org.

⁷ Ajmer Singh, *Op.Cit.*, p. 45.

I, was a trainee in Sport Authority of India, Lebung, Darjeeling (2000-2004). I describe an observation and experience during the Inter SAI Football Tournament held in Delhi. After the completion of the match, all the boys were heading towards their nearby hostel when a gentleman aged 30-35years outside the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium said! 'Bhaichung ka bhai!! Hum Ko eghara (11) Bhaichung chahiye tabhi ham log world cup khel payengay" (Bhaichung's brothers! we need eleven Bhaichungs, then only we can take part in World cup). From this very fact we can firmly say that sport and sportperson has helped in developing social inclusion and recognition. Had Bhaichung not played football for the country and had he not become the football icon of India then the gentleman would probably have failed to recognize us or may have considered us as players from China or Nepal because of our distinct Mongolian features. But, thanks to sports especially Bhaichung Bhutia and many other sports persons of Northeast who are now seen as a National heroes not only by the youth but also by the main stream Indian communities. Therefore, whenever we promote and encourage sports and sportspersons, we not only promote a particular sportsperson but the whole region and their culture where he or she belongs.

There are many cases of disappointment in recognizing the northeast people whenever their faces are seen in the main land Indian crowd. Once, the chief minister of Mizoram Pu Lalthanhawla had shown his concern on Identity crisis, when he had gone to south India, he was faced by many uncomfortable questions like-Are you from Nepal or China? Is Guwahati in Darjeeling? What language do you speak? However, such problems have been diminishing because in a nation where very few people can name hardly two members of our national sports teams except cricket, Bhaichung Bhutia, Sunil Chettri, Mary Kom, Shiva Thapa, Bharat Chettri, Jeje Lalpekhlua and many other eminent sportsperson of north east India have become not just household names, but also faces that are now recognized by people on the street wherever they go. Further, it is also clear from the news given in the statesman, dated 17 august 2012 with the headline "Kolkata 'safest' city for students of North-east", that Kolkata is a xenophobia free city. The obvious reason is the peoples' love for sports and sports culture in Kolkata. People in Kolkata are fascinated by the games and sports not only to participate in sports but they love to witness different games and sports mainly by their favorite players and athletes as well. Kolkata has a great love and respect for both sports and sportsperson irrespective of race, religion, color and region, football being the most favorite game. They often consider a football match between East Bengal and Mohan Bagan as "High Voltage Match". Kolkata has huge fan followers of northeast football players, and, the supporters come to witness the game of their particular club expecting to find northeast players in the playing field. The obvious reason is that the north east players have become their role model, who can change the situation in the game and can bring the glory to the club. This is, perhaps, due to the legacies left by the northeast players especially the benchmark for scoring a goal by the players like Shyam Thapa, Bhaichung Bhutia and others, in the heart and mind of the people of Kolkata. The following very short story of football fans of Kolkata gives clear picture about the sports culture in Kolkata:

One day, that east Bengal fan was late in coming for the game, a rare event. When he arrived at the ground, other fans asked him why he was late. His answer! His son had passed away; he was late for the match because he was completing the last rites; Uma Kanta Paladhi committed suicide after seeing his beloved Mohun Bagan slump to a 5-0 loss in an infamous derby in 1975. In his suicide note, the young man wrote that he wanted to be reborn as a Mohun Bagan player, so that he could exact revenge for the loss.⁸

A fundamental aspect of supporting a national team or player is the feeling of common identity with similar supporters, as it provides a means by which members of the diverse groups can celebrate victories together. Many statements have been made indicating that sport has served to integrate blacks and whites in United States. African, American runner, Jesse Owens has expressed his belief that sport is an area which has been long free of prejudices and it opens the avenue that bridges the gap of understanding. It is also apparent that sport is one of the factors that bring people together in a meaningful way. It is hoped that this building of friendship in the field of sport will help people of different culture to learn to respect each other.⁹

In United State of America where, racism and related intolerance were seen at large scale until 1900s, blacks were not allowed to participate in the Olympic but today acceptance, tolerance, mutual respect and understanding between Blacks and the Whites have developed. The obvious reason for this is the crucial role played by the sports. Blacks have played a leading role in nation building through sport in America. Today African-Americans are in the front rows in promoting national identity. As the Blacks' domination in sport started to win the heart of the White people, the political scenario in America also changed. Today, they have their president from African-American community, which is a first in the history of America. Obviously, in Chicago, basketball helped him connect with the South Siders he worked with as a community organizer and with the circle of professionals who would help launch his political career. He had represented school national in Basketball during his school days. The game provided space in which the young Obama explored his identity as an African-American. He won a reputation as a consensus builder while playing recreationally in college and law school. In nutshell, sports at large have contributed in making United States of America a socially inclusive nation. Therefore, Social exclusion should emerge as an important policy concept to foster socially inclusive communities throughout the globe.

Role of Sport in breaking Xenophobia

The term Xenophobia is derived from the Greek words *xenos* and *phobos* which correspondingly mean 'strange or foreign' and 'phobia.' In the Concise Oxford

⁸ *90 Minutes*, 1, (April 2012), p. 29.

⁹ Husan Ara Jafri, "Impact of sports on Indian society with especial reference to Madhya Pradesh", a PhD. dissertation, submitted in Jivaji University, Gwalior, March 1995, p. 25.

Dictionary, xenophobia is defined as a morbid dislike of foreigners.' Scholars have conceptualized xenophobia in a number of ways. Berezin defines xenophobia as the fear of difference embodied in persons or groups. For Nyamnjoh, xenophobia is the intense dislike, hatred or fear of Others.¹⁰ Xenophobia can be viewed as 'attitudes, prejudices, and behaviour that reject, exclude and often vilify persons based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity'.¹¹

In the capital, Delhi, northeast people are sometimes recognized as chinky eye people, free culture people and even as dog eaters. Despite that Sunil chettri who is originally from Darjeeling, son of a retired army person and being a chinky among the non chinkies became a face in the crowd and permanently settled in Delhi. Having his own distinct and different culture he cemented himself with the values and culture of the people of the national capital by engaging himself in sport which helped him in developing interpersonal relationship and communication with the whole community. When Sunil Chettri was representing 59th Santosh trophy from Delhi, I myself had participated in the tournament representing State of Sikkim under the captaincy of Bhaichung Bhutia. It was my own observation that the people who were cheering for the Delhi team were mix spectators both northeast and the mainland people, both were supporting for the Delhi team together especially Sunil Chettri. Similarly, Bhaichung Bhutia who played the Santosh trophy from West Bengal developed his huge fans followers from the state sporting events and involvements, thus have succeeded in creating a non-xenophobic society.

Sports have been an essential aspect of culture throughout the human society. Blacks in United States started showing their racial and cultural domination over the Whites through sports only after 1904 St. Louis Game. Till 1900 Paris Olympics black athletes were not allowed to participate in United States. In order to protest against the state of blacks in their country, US athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their fist in black salute from victory stand of 1968 Olympic in Mexico city.¹²

In a project (launched by UNESCO), on November 6, 2008 a group of young individuals presented to the European Parliament, "Youth Voices against Racism" Football Club Barcelona and European Coalition of Cities against Racism (ECCAR), in partnership with the European Parliament. The youths set up meetings with young people in schools, sports clubs and youth councils, as well as via local media and online forums, to elicit their ideas for ways to promote tolerance, mutual respect and solidarity through sport. It is implemented Successfully by ECCAR and comprises 82 cities in 17 countries. Emine Bozkurt, the Dutch member of the European Parliament

¹⁰ Francis Nyamnjoh, "Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa", London and New York, CODESRIA and Zed Books, Dakar, 2006, p. 5.

¹¹ Stolcke Verena, "New rhetorics of exclusion in Europe" in *International Social Science Journal*, 51, 1999, p. 28.

¹² Cfr *Outlook*, (28th April 2008), p. 41.

had then said "Sport is a mirror of society, with all of its shortcomings. But let us not forget that, above all, sport offers great possibilities for social inclusion". Therefore, for building up a new generation of men and women committed to the process of national integration, a routinely organized co-curricular activity in educational institutions not only develop leadership qualities but also trains the students to adopt an adjusted personality for the sustainability of racial integration.

Similarly, Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq and Afghanistan are often considered as those countries which have strong religious and social beliefs concerning the role of women in society. Today due to the influence of sport activities, the rigid social beliefs of the Islamic community has received new life. The Arab newspaper based in London, Al-Hayat, reported that the Saudi Crown Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz has approved the participation of female athletes in London as long as their sports "meet the standards of women's decency and don't contradict Islamic laws." Qatar and Brunei have also signaled an interest and sent female athletes to London. Wilcke the lead author of Human Rights Watch detailed the struggles faced by the female athletes in Saudi Arabia. According to him, Saudi officials systematically discriminated against women, providing no physical education for girls in state schools, closing gyms for women in 2009 and 2010 and forcing them to play in underground leagues.¹³ Therefore, sports is like a common language which acts as a vehicle to connect oneself with others as well as with the whole communities of the world and like the grammar of a language, rules and regulations of sports makes individuals to express each other in most respectful manners which in turn develops fellow feeling and mutual understanding. Besides, in addition, my long stay in Kolkata for six years both as a player of Peerless Football Club (2003-2004) and as a student of Kalyani University (2006-2009) I never experienced such kind of discrimination. I firmly believe in the role of sports and sportpersons in promoting and fostering social cohesion and the value of mutual respect and understanding.

North East Sports and National Integration

The rise and fall of a nation depends upon the extent of the development of a feeling of nationalism in its citizens. This feeling needs to be nurtured, cultivated and strengthened by all possible ways and means. Ours is a big country, the inhabitants belonging to various communities and ethnic groups. The cultural patterns of all these communities and group are different. It is but natural to have different ideals, values, customs, traditions, ways of living, eating and dressing in different communities and groups. There was no time when one language was spoken throughout the country. Never was a time when all the Indians followed any one religion. These diversities often lead to mutual tension and then, unfortunately, towards national disintegration. The strength of the nation depends on the degree of homogeneity in thought of its

¹³ Jeer Longman and Mary Pilon, "Saudi Arabia May Include Women on Its Olympic Team", (March 20, 2012), retrieved from www.nytimes.com.

people which again depends upon the acceptance of common standards and values. Therefore, the need and importance of national integration cannot be over emphasized.¹⁴

The North eastern region occupies only 7% of the landmass and 2% of the Indian population yet it is obvious that in sports North eastern youths have performed incredibly well representing India in international meets. In the last couple of National Games the region has displayed its sports prowess by winning a record number of medals and Manipur emerging as the best team. Her Excellency the President of India Pratiba Patel acknowledged to the people of North East for playing crucial role in nation building through sport.

In a study conducted by North East Support Centre & Helpline, it was found that 86% of North East Indian communities living in National capital for period of two years and more face racial discrimination. The study was conducted by selecting samples of north easterners living in North Delhi, South Delhi and Gurgaon wherein, only 14% did not face racial discrimination and they felt people calling them chinkies, free culture and strangers, could not considered racial discrimination. Half of those who said that they did not face racial discrimination were less than two years. In Delhi 78.75% of those who faced racial discrimination were treated like chinkies, strangers in own land, free culture and 22.5% faced physical attacks, 3.75% sexual assault, 35% vulgar remarks and 38.75% no comments.¹⁵

Sports and games demand a strict obedience of rules governing them and adherence to code of conduct. For the players, obedience of law becomes a habit which in turn assists the process of national integration. Mary Kom, a mother of two and a five times World Boxing Champion was in China for the Asia Cup when her second son Khupneivar was diagnosed with a small hole in the heart. Bearing the pain of her son's ill health she controlled her emotion and made herself strong enough to fight for the glory of our country. Hence, her contribution in nation building is beyond comparison. Similarly, the king of World Body Building, Arnold Schwarzenegger had to overcome a great sorrow and emotional pain while he was in competition for the Mr. Olympia in 1975. His father had died just two months before the beginning of the competition. For the name and glory of his country he sacrificed the funeral of his father and carried on to fight for the country. Truly, an individual who can overcome the 'pain period' in struggling phase of his or her life can achieve anything. Sports persons have made great sacrifices made towards nation building.

The psychological satisfaction that people of different regions gain from victories of our nation in International sports competitions builds emotionally integrated citizens with refined sense of nationalism. Shiva Thapa of Assam became the youngest Indian boxer to make the cut for the Olympics. Sunil Chettri second Indian player ever to play

¹⁴ Ajmer Singh *Op.Cit.*, p. 45.

¹⁵ Electronic version, North East Support center & help line, retrieved from www.nehelpline.net.

against Manchester United after Bhaichung Bhutia. He is the first Indian footballer ever to play for MLS side "Kansas City Wizard" in U.S.A. Mahadev Deka, a body builder from Assam brought laurels to the nation by winning the Mr. Universe 2009 held in the United States. Lynza Fenny Syiem of Meghalaya represented India thrice and won Gold Medals in World Karate Championship. With a smaller population as compared to rest of India, the North Eastern sports have fared well with minimum government assistance. Moreover, Bhaichung Bhutia is the only Indian football player who is very popular in International arena of football. Under his captaincy, India has lifted many trophies in International competitions. Similarly many other sport persons like Bharat Chettri, Bango Singh, Tarundip Rai and many others from the north east have been contributing in nation building and promoting social and national identity.

Further, it is also apparent from the examples of the international sports scenario such as 'in the unification of North and South Yemen into the people's democratic republic of Yemen' that football players and their team had played an important role. France's 1998 world cup winning side helped in the promotion of racial tolerance and integration in a multiethnic composition of nation in which the right wing influence of Jean-Marie Le Pen remained strong. There are number of teams and players that operate as anchor of meaning via their role as vehicles through which individuals and groups can strengthen their attachment and identification with particular community. Sports teams comprise players professing to different religion, belonging to different regions and ethnicity but while representing the nation they do or die together for the nation. This promotes a feeling of patriotism, and strengthens the process of national integration. Therefore, sports are often considered as the "Melting Pot".

North East Sports and Mass media

Of all the mass media television is the most widely used and its programmes or types of programmes have a powerful influence on the attitudes of children and adults. Mass communication in India touches mostly every aspect of an individual's life. It has become an integral aspect of daily life. Television as one of the socializing agents carries greater responsibility in promoting sports and sports persons.

The psychological satisfaction that people gain from the victories of their teams and players at the international games like Olympic, world championship, Asia qualifying etc through media coverage, develops social integration and national solidarity. Supporting a particular team or player representing one's nation facilitates a feeling of patriotism, togetherness, fellow feeling and brotherhood/sisterhood.

It is worth mentioning here that by inviting sports persons on TV channels, we can bring into close contact the people we would otherwise have little known of the theme. A popular TV show like 'Jhalak Dikhlaja' made Bhaicung Bhutia more popular than before. This, perhaps, developed a social identity and recognition of the people who are far away from the lens of mass media.

However, the consecutive Gold Medal winner Renubala Chanu, who won gold medal in weight lifting in Commonwealth Games in 2006 in Melbourne as well as in 2011 in New Delhi, decided to return her medals to sports ministry after she was ignored for prestigious Arjuna Award. There has been periodic news about discrimination faced by sportsperson from North East India. Various online forums are full of news discuss how champions from North East India who wins gold medal at international events are ignored by mainland media but highlight even smaller achievements by sports person from Delhi or Mumbai.

Had Renubala Chanu been an athlete from Delhi, she would have been given Arjuna Award long back. People would have by now known the name of the pet dog of Champion pugilist Mary Kom, had she been from Mumbai or Hyderabad, such would have been the media coverage.¹⁶

Besides, there are activities helpful for harnessing possible awards and rewards opportunities. When Sunil Chettri played against the Manchester united, Abishek Bachan had congratulated him by saying "how nice to see Sunil chettri on championship league panel". Because of having huge fan follower, whenever a celebrity shows such kind of gestures towards any sports person, then probably it develops sense of brotherhood or fellow feeling among fans of different parts of the country. On the contrary, same thing may happen negatively, if a celebrity makes a satire of any ethnic community on screen or off screen which in turned develop phobia or a hatred among the culturally divided people. For example, the scene in *Chak De*, when the two women hockey players - Molly Zimik Chon Chon Zimik from Manipur and Mary (Lahlming Kimi from Nagaland) from northeast are referred to as "Guest of the country" and they retort "Will you be happy being a guest in your own country? It, precisely, sums up the feeling of discrimination among the people of North-East. Similarly, Pradip Gurung was called as "Chowmin ka Dukan" in *Dance India Dance 2012*. Though chowmin is the traditional food of Chinese, many people of north east India sell momos and chowmin in the streets of Indian mega cities for their survival. Probably, it would not be appropriate to satire any ethnic group on the grounds related to their folklore, mores, values and traditions, as such gesture may develop xenophobia within the already ethnically divided societies.

Conclusion

It is evident from the description highlighted throughout this paper that the sports and sportspersons can act as a vehicle in developing socially inclusive, xenophobia free cities and communities. However, for society as a whole, the social exclusion of individuals, groups and communities can become a major threat to social cohesion and national integration. Therefore, social inclusion should emerge as an important policy concept in India and within her states.

¹⁶ Ajmer Singh *et al*, *Op.Cit.*, p. 45.

Present article also highlighted the extent that the societies suffering from the xenophobia, racial discrimination and other related intolerances are now diminishing as people are sharing common sentiments gained from the victories of Indian teams and players at the national and international level of sports competitions. In addition, sports and sportspersons act not only as an agent of giving the recreation and the entertainment to the people but also as a latent force that brings social change as both represent the combination of number of specific social, political and religious attributes.

Further, Sport brings together millions of people, regardless of their sex, color, gender, age, place, region, nationality or religion, and has the potentiality to play an important role in creating an inclusive society. Sports and games provide a common platform where sportspersons from different regions, professing different religions and faiths, speaking different languages, having different customs and traditions interact with each other in a harmonious and congenial atmosphere where they are compelled to transcend their differences and emerge as a homogenous group. It provides thinking, insight and mental approach which can play a positive role in national integration.