

Sports in Indian Cinema: More than An Entertainment

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Abstract

Sports in Indian Cinema: More than an entertainment is an attempt to show the seriousness of sports present in cinema and also to cite many Indian cinemas that has in its own way covered the journey of sports and many hazards and excitement related with it.

Keywords: Entertainment, Sports, Indian Cinema, History.

Introduction

A sport is defined in Oxford Dictionary as 'an athletic activity', 'any game or pastime'.¹ In general we understand sports to be an entertainment. Greek Olympics, horse race and the contemporary games like Cricket tells a lot about the journey of sports. In the present world it has also been a source of inspiration to many and its contribution cannot be ignored. Be it playing all-time favourite cricket or soccer or any minor games like playing marbles or catapulting gives immense joy not only to the players but also to its viewers. Entertainment in any form has provided pleasure, be it T.V. advertisements or movies. In movies also we can find a history of sports. Main focus here would be to highlight the influence of sports to common people as represented in some of the Hindi movies and an attempt is made to understand the word 'sport' at a psychological imaginative level.

Journey of sports

The term 'sports' carries more intense meaning than simply a game. It reflects one of the important parts of a particular region and its culture. It helps to develop one's inborn skill and to polish acquired skills. History of sports has a great story to tell about its existence since pre-historic times. The development of a certain type of sports in a particular time period also helps us to see the change in society and its manners. Be it fishing or wrestling, sports have helped men and women to use their skills, energy, and technique in a useful way resulting in a better life style.

Here are some facts that tell us the long existence of sports. Cave-paintings found in Lascaux Caves in France depict the wrestling game and people surrounding the players. This painting dates some 17,300 years back. Similarly, cave paintings in Bayankhongor Province of Mongolia depict wrestling match dating some 7000BC. It can be understood from these ancient paintings that society has never been without sports. Paintings of wrestling match also clarify the interest of the then people. Another

¹ JB Skyes (ed.), *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary*, Sixth Edition, Oxford University Press, 1980.

example to cite would be Pharaoh's monuments at Ben Hasan dating to around 2000 BC revealing that a number of sports were played then; sports like wrestling, swimming, rowing, shooting, fishing and various kind of ball games. Games were well developed in ancient Egypt.²

European Colonialism helped to evolve and spread some team games like cricket. Historian, Bernard Lewis, says that team sports are an invention of western culture. Great historical events like industrial revolution not only brought urbanization but they are also the ones to bring leisure in human society which made people to utilize their leisure time by playing games and in a similar way also brought spectators for the games. One thing was clear that women playing games were not accepted positively then. They received a frown whenever they landed on the ground. It was only with the passage of time and the movements for the women development and equality that women could play games and started to be accepted at par with men and today we have many names like Sania Mirza, P.T. Usha, Serena Williams and many more. Gradually, mass media also added professionalism in sports. Thus the notion associated with sports was 'entertainment'. But it was treated seriously when bidding for the players started in every game. In a similar way we can have a look at the history of Indian cinema which is also popular for offering entertainment to the common people.

Short History of Indian Cinema

Indian cinema includes movies of all parts of India. Looking back at its history we find one figure who started motion pictures in India in the great personality of Dadasaheb Phalke. He produced the first full-length motion picture 'Raja Harishchandra' - a silent film. Here he brought the elements of Sanskrit epic. In his honour we have Dadasaheb Phalke award in Bollywood. In the colonial period, in 1933, East India Film Company produced 'Sati Savithri' directed by C. Pullaiah. It received an honorary diploma at Venice Film Festival. Like in sports women were not allowed to act in movies also as in dramas; men would take up the part of a woman. Even in 'Raja Harishchandra' the role of his wife Taramati was played by a man. It was later in the span of twenty years that women started to act in movies with the arrival of women like Devika Rani in 'Karma', Nargis in 'Mother India' and many more. Whether it is sports or movies, to emerge as participants women had to wait for great movements.

The Indian movies which we understand today as 'Masala Films'³ came up basically following the World War II. The term 'Masala' is a slang used for commercial films and it is full of songs, dance, romance etc. In these type of films we find comedy, tragedy, drama, romance and melodrama. The content remains mostly 'love' but there are some such movies bearing the content like 'sports'. Let us focus now to those few selected in

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_sport

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinema_of_India

films where we find a mingling of masala and serious subjects like sports. Nevertheless they function apparently in providing entertainment to the viewers.

Sports in Indian Cinema

Few Indian movies are cited below which engage sports in a cinematically different way.

Let us begin with *Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar* (1992) directed by Mansoor Khan. This is a famous early romantic Indian movie with sport imbedded in it. It shows the different schools of education for the rich and the poor ones. We find a tussle between the rich Deepak Tijori and the poor Aamir Khan which reaches its climax with a cycling race. To win this race is a must for Mr. Khan to bring a change in the concept of class-society and also to fulfill the revenge for his brother's accident planned by Deepak Tijori and his gang. Young Aamir as he begins to race with full strength and determination to win, the audience support him equally praying to god for his victory. Again we get the glimpses of general taste for poetic justice.

Chamatkar (1992)⁴

Directed by :	Rajiv Mehra
Produced by :	Parvesh C. Mehra
Story:	Shankat Baig, Liliput, Raju Mehra
Starring:	Sharukh Khan, Urmila Matondkar, Naseeruddin Shah, Shammi Kapoor
Music:	Anu Malik

Here, Shahrukh Khan is helped by the spirit of Naseeruddin Shah to win the cricket match that will keep the dignity and property of the college safe. The movie is a comedy, its humour added by Johnny Lever as a commentator.

Lagaan (2001)⁵

Directed by:	Ashutosh Gowariker
Produced by:	Aamir Khan, Mansoor Khan
Screenplay:	Ashutosh Gowariker, Abbas Tyrewala, Sanjay Daima
Story:	Ashutosh Gowariker
Narraed by:	Amitabh Bachchan
Starring:	Aamir Khan, Gracy Singh, Rachel Shelley, Paul Blackthorne
Music:	A.R. Rahman
Cinematography:	Anil Mehta

⁴ www.imdb.com, (accessed on 15.6.13).

⁵ *Ibid.*

In this movie the main sport played is cricket. Interesting to look at is the reason why the game is shown in the movie played. To free the villagers from debt they must play cricket against the rulers who are expert in this field. It is a matter of life and death. Without proper cricket stuff they practice everyday and each day they learn some new rules and techniques of this game. The final match between the ruled and the rulers symbolizes the struggle for freedom in its microcosmic level. The situation created is that of 'Do or Die'. When the villagers ultimately win it is not only winning the match but also the possibility of bringing freedom for the future ones that interests the audience or viewers the most. Pratiyogita Darpan (2011)⁶ has regarded 'Lagaan' the best Indian Sports Movie.

*Chak De India (2007)*⁷

Directed by:	Shimit Amin
Produced by:	Aditya Chopra, Yash Chopra
Story:	Jaydeep Sahni
Starring:	Shahrukh Khan
Music:	Salim-Sulaiman
Cinematography:	Sudeep Chatterjee

Shahrukh Khan gives a hockey coaching in this movie to the Indian women hockey team. The difficulty of making a team, understanding one another and overcoming one's loopholes in a match are all well presented. Above all the coach revives hockey-the national game. We hardly watch hockey match in sports channels. But 'Chak De India' made Indians not only watch Shahrukh Khan and the new women stars but also the match. Details of this sport in a dramatic way have been shown to the viewers. To win the match as presented in the movie is to bring back the lost glory of both the coach and also of the national game in a broader sense.

*Dhan Dhana Dhan Goal (2007)*⁸

Directed by:	Vivek Agnihotri
Produced by:	Ronnie Screwala
Story:	Anurag Kashyap, Rohit Malhotra, Vikramaditya Motwane
Starring:	John Abraham, Bipasa Basu, Arshad Warsi, Shehnaz Patel, Boman Irani
Music:	Pritam
Cinematography:	Attar Singh Saimi

It is a contemporary fictional story of the South Asian Community in the U.K. Southall United Football Club suffers from no football players, no coach and no

⁶ Pratiyogita Darpan, Daryaganj, New Delhi, 2011.

⁷ www.yashrajfilms.com, (accessed on 15.6.13).

⁸ www.imdb.com, (accessed on 15.6.13).

sponsors. When club fails on the lease payments they are ordered to vacate the ground for a commercial complex. Boman Irani becomes the coach of the team and with their hard work they prepare themselves for the match. John also joins the team after he gets rejected in the English football team. Together they stand up for the rights of the South Asians in the U.K. and protecting the stadium from demolition.

*Apne (2007)*⁹

Directed by:	Anil Sharma
Produced by:	Dharmendra
Starring:	Dharmendra, Sunny Deol, Bobby Deol, Shilpa Shetty, Katrina Kaif, Kirron Kher
Music:	Himesh Reshammiya
Screenplay:	Neeraj Pathak
Cinematography:	Kabir Lal

Three Deols in one movie is good to watch. The movie becomes more interesting when a shamed boxer in order to overcome his disgrace and defame makes his son a boxer. Other than beautiful mustard fields we get to see lively boxing rings where Sunny Deol fights all in sweat and blood finally becoming a winner not only for himself but for his family especially for his father. It would not be wrong to say that women with few exceptions hardly watch boxing match even if they watch wrestling match. But 'Apne' makes one to watch at Bollywood He-Man and his real life sons fighting in the ring. Their victory is celebrated by the audience as it shows poetic justice being brought about at the end.

*Iqbal (2005)*¹⁰

Directed by:	Nages Kukunoor
Produced by:	Subhas GHai
Story:	Vipul K. Rawal
Starring:	Naseeruddin Shah, Shreyas Talpde, Girish Karnad, Yatin Karyekar, Prateeksha Lonkar
Music:	Himesh Reshammiya, Salim-Sulaiman
Cinematography:	Kapil Dev

Cricket has a different charm in India. It is everything and to reach stordom people have undergone many hardships. Physical weakness cannot stop Iqbal from making his passion come true. Rather it becomes of great use in the field to defeat the other team and it inspires thousands to follow their dreams and proves the saying: "Where there is a will, there's a way".

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

*Patiala House (2011)*¹¹

Directed by:	Nikhil Advani
Produced by:	Bhushan Kumar, Mukesh Taliya, Krishan Kumar, Twinkle Khanna, Zoeb Springwala
Music:	Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy
Cinematography:	Santosh Thundiyil

This movie presents Akshay Kumar who loves soccer and goes against his father's wish to play soccer for his team. He goes not only through mental pressure in choosing his passion but more into an emotional pressure due to his father's prominent denial to this wish of his. Playing soccer for him is not disrespecting his father and family's pride but is more of gaining respect for himself and his family. Rishi Kapoor is made to realize the importance of soccer in his son's life by other family members and at last he too joins them in the happiness of his son. It is of great pleasure to see him in the football stadium. Father's presence gives more confidence to his son to win the match. A simple football match is mixed with all family drama and obstacles which ends at the end and brings freedom of choice at home for all the family members. Therefore, this movie is built around Akshay Kumar playing football full of passion and interest.

*Ta Ra Rum Pum (2007)*¹²

Directed by:	Siddharth Anand
Produced by:	Aditya Chpra
Screenplay:	Habib Faisal
Story:	Siddharth Anand
Starring:	Saif Ali Khan, Rani Mukherjee, Ali Haji, Angelina Idrani, Javed Jaffrey
Music:	Vishal-Shekhar
Cinematography:	Binod Pradhan

This movie is a movie of romance between Saif Ali Khan and Rani Mukherjee. Saif participates in car races and is on the top of the list but later when he loses his touch with the race he finds a difference in his life as of then and earlier. He becomes determined to come back on the track with same strength, popularity and dignity. Car race becomes the interest of the viewers along with the romance. Generally few others than the race fans hardly watch such race on television but the movie created interest in a wider audience.

The above cited movies are masala movies; some are blockbuster and some average. The content of those movies are not only sports, though also remains an indispensable part.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

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We cannot deny the fact that we are not wholly to depend on these movies for any sports. Nonetheless we cannot even deny the fact that such movies, because they are light to the mind, appeals to the mind of the masses and in a way forays the ground or background of the sports. There may be a huge chasm between sports and movies but there also lies many similarities between the two. Both are means of entertainment. We watch both in our leisure time whenever our interests hold. As a child we play games like marbles or ludo in order to pass the time, as an adult we play games like racket or football with the same reason in addition with the better understanding of such games and the added competitive edge and the power it wields. In a similar way watching movies in our childhood days generally does not make sense to our mind, we watch either because we like the characters or some songs or dance. As we grow our understanding develops and the reason of watching a movie also varies. It can be for a certain dialogue, settings, scenes, theme, action, message it carries and many things.

A cricket match between India and Pakistan draws more people automatically due to its historical interest. More than an entertainment this match becomes a matter of 'do or die' exactly as shown in 'Lagaan'. In the movies cited above more than sports the reason for playing the games is remarkable. It is most of the time not for time-pass or recreation but it signifies at certain point of time life, thus the idea of winning the match is closely associated with one or the other real life power games. Indian cinema has also covered a variety of sports in its movies. Though cricket is regarded the king of all sports, other sports also gain ground and are made common to its viewers. Title songs are all full of enthusiasm with a determination to win the match. Without giving or getting into the depths of sports one can relax and watch sports in such movies. For those who bother less about the rules and regulations of sports such entertainment and offer both entertainment and knowledge. The mingling of romance, passion, sports, victory, tactics all appeals greatly to the Indian popular imagination directly than the sports news or journals. At the same time they inspire common man to do great things and bring about a different new meaning of the term 'sports'. A sport in Indian cinema is no doubt an entertainment but is also more than an entertainment if viewed minutely.

Conclusion

This article is simply an attempt to trace the inclusion of sports in Indian cinema and the way it is projected. There are many such Hollywood movies as well as Bollywood movies which try to trace the journey and its influence on the common man. A sports veteran is not to depend fully on such movies because movies are just reflections of the real and many times are hyperbolic statements. They do not show the rules and regulations of sports in detail or in a realistic way, thereby dissuading especially young minds from the true manner of playing games. Nevertheless, such movies can also

inspire young minds and hearts to go an extra mile to fulfill their dreams in the line of sports. It also interests masses not restricting one to the hardcore sport, meaning that one can easily enjoy the game played in movies. It would be wrong to say that sports in cinema is all in all; but it would also be wrong not to take them into consideration as they touch equally common lives and interests.