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## **A Historical Preview of cricket**

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### **Abstract**

*The game of cricket has had a long and complicated history in the West Indies. Originally imported to the West Indies as an agent of control and reaffirmation, the game steadily evolved into a cultural institution radically opposed to the original intentions of those who conspired for its import. Cricket operated according to a Victorian model in which cultivated style and carefully defined notions of grace under pressure worked to keep most people out of the sport. Terms such as sportsmanship, dash, courage and temperament were important to cricket's Victorian ethos. Cricket was through and through a "gentleman's" game, and all others were excluded by their inability to demonstrate an understanding of cricket's image of the ideal Englishman.*

*England used its military forces to export the game to the West Indies . Newspaper accounts written during the early nineteenth-century reveal how matches were staged between English military personnel. Needless to say, West Indian planters, fearful of changing social structures in the islands, welcomed cricket in the West Indies and by 1840 many were staging cricket matches on their plantations*

### **Historical Preview**

The game of cricket has had a long and complicated history in the West Indies. Originally imported to the West Indies as an agent of control and reaffirmation, the game steadily evolved into a cultural institution radically opposed to the original intentions of those who conspired for its import. The exact role cricket has played in terms of resistance to the postcolonial hegemonic order in the West Indies is widely debated. Much of this debate has to do with the variety of ways in which cricket culture has been allowed to progress according to specific histories of individual locales. Because of the diverse national histories in the region, styles of cricket vary a great deal from one island to the next, as does the cultural work each style performs. One must therefore question the usefulness in talking in-depth about West Indian cricket in ways that suggest the game developed throughout the region in a singular fashion. Having set forth this advisory, here I will attempt to point up some of the larger issues belonging to cricket culture in the West Indies which may or may not be specific to any single locale. Discussion of these larger issues is merely meant to stimulate conversation on the topic of cricket and its relatedness to postcolonial discourse. The game of cricket was exported from England to all of its colonies, including those in Asia and Africa, during the nineteenth century as a way to reinforce a hegemonic cultural order in the face of the emancipation of England's

slave population. A brief history of the state of affairs in the West Indies upon cricket's arrival will help explain why a re-commitment to England's Victorian ideals became necessary.

English slaves in the West Indies were emancipated in the year 1838. Emancipation brought to an end an institution that had helped England bring one quarter of the world's land mass under British rule. In the West Indies during this time, the two largest groups were the newly-freed Africans, who made up the labouring class, and the white plantation owners who formed the islands' aristocracies. The African population prior to slavery not only performed the role of wealth-makers for the white, land-owning plantocracy, but also provided a metaphorical blackness onto which the plantocracy could project their whiteness. The resulting juxtaposition went a long way in alleviating the anxiety of the white land-owners who were constantly reminded of their location at the farthest reaches of the English empire, of civilization. For the planter class, wealth was not enough. There was the constant need to be reminded that they were a distinct race separate from the Africans in their midsts. Through the use of stereotypes and other forms of hegemonic control, the plantocracy learned to survive life at the edge of civilization. White was much whiter when juxtaposed against the black population.

Once the slaves were emancipated, cricket became the new cultural institution by which England sought to socialize the populations and reinforce hierarchies in its colonies. Cricket was imported to all of England's colonies, not only the West Indies. In The Tao of Cricket, Ashis Nandy explains the cultural evolution of cricket in India:

The age was more an affirmation of the superiority of controlled self-indulgence and controlled flair or style, combined with reaffirmation of a moral universe. The nineteenth century was also the period when the various post-Utilitarian theories of progress began to be applied to the new colonies of Britain. The emerging culture of cricket came in handy to those using these theories to hierarchize the cultures, faiths and societies which were, one by one, coming under colonial domination .

Cricket operated according to a Victorian model in which cultivated style and carefully defined notions of grace under pressure worked to keep most people out of the sport. Terms such as sportsmanship, dash, courage and temperament were important to cricket's Victorian ethos. Cricket was through and through a "gentleman's" game, and all others were excluded by their inability to demonstrate an understanding of cricket's image of the ideal Englishman.

England used its military forces to export the game to the West Indies . Newspaper accounts written during the early nineteenth-century reveal how matches were staged between English military personnel. Needless to say, West Indian planters, fearful of changing social structures in the islands, welcomed cricket in the West Indies and by 1840 many were staging cricket matches on their plantations . Cricket allowed the plantocracy to pledge its support for British cultural values, concepts of social progress, moral codes, behavioral standards and attitudes towards social rankings . Blacks who were exposed to cricket on plantations where they made up the indentured labor pool also began to--either in whole or in part--espouse these views.



Despite the actions of the plantocracy, by the end of the nineteenth-century, a mercantile class had begun to dominate West Indian economic and cultural institutions. This new middle-class began forming cricket clubs which were aimed at countering the new image of social unity that cricket was beginning to suggest through its widespread popularity. Cricket clubs were formed throughout the West Indies. Each club drew its membership based on specific racial characteristics, and potential members knew to which club they would be invited to join without being told. There were separate clubs for aristocratic whites, merchant-class whites, coloreds (mulattos), and blacks. Racial integration for the most part during this time was not allowed.

Much of the recent scholarship surrounding West Indian cricket, writes Beckles, addresses the question of cricket's "cultural imperatives". The question Beckles and others attempt to answer is whether or not cricket served the needs of the colonial empire England by re-inscribing its Victorian ethos on the newly-freed black West Indians, and if so, to what extent. Those who view cricket as revolutionary prefer the idea of cricket as "an ideological weapon of subversive, anti-colonial, creole nationalism". Cultural critics C. L. R. James, AshisNandy and Brian Stoddart illustrate three different opinions about the role of colonial cricket.

### **I. C. L. R. James**

C. L. R. James, in his seminal work Beyond a Boundary, focuses on aesthetics and takes the position that the style of play of black West Indians is itself a form of "social resistance against British colonialism" (Graves). In Boundary, James writes about the "cutting" ("a batting stroke in which the ball is hit toward the off-side in an arc between cover and third man, with the bat held at an angle closer to horizontal than perpendicular") style of West Indian cricketers.

By that time I had seen many fine cutters, one of them, W. St. Hill, never to this day surpassed. . . . Phidias, Michelangelo, Burke. Greek history has already introduced me to Phidias and the Parthenon; from engravings and reproductions I had already begun a life-long worship of Michelangelo; and Burke, begun as a school chore, had rapidly become for me the most exciting master of prose in English ... I knew already long passages of him by heart. There in the very center of this was William Beldham and his cut (6).

James equates the cultural value of cricket to great works of Western art, and the omnipotence of style of a great cutter he likens to the artistic style of Michelangelo and Burke. "The stylistic specificity of 'cutting,'" writes Benjamin Graves, "is of some relevance here; . . . the point is that the shot is very difficult ... ; a gesture of mastery that serves little if any practical purpose. To James, the 'cut' signifies a belligerent affront to the exigencies of colonial rule ... a stylization of emancipatory ambitions."

### **II. AshisNandy**

Nandy, like James, recognizes cricket's revolutionary potential, but he identifies this potential in the "schizophrenic" nature of the game. According to Nandy, it was the "moral

posture of the superiority and self-control of the gentleman cricketer" that created the spaces for those outside the hegemony to critique the English for not living up to their own standards of morality (7).

[Cricket] allowed the Indians to assess their colonial rulers by western values reflected in the official philosophy of cricket, and to find the rulers wanting. . . . The assessment thus anticipated the nationalist and particularly Gandhian critiques of the British which judged the everyday Christianity of the British in India with reference to philosophical Christianity (7).

The heroic ideal imputed to cricketers by Victorians in England combined with the pagan desire to win at all costs to create in cricket culture a kind of schizophrenia. The marginalized people in England's colonies recognized the split caused by this psychotic condition inherent in cricket culture and used it as the point of attack for its critique of colonial England.

### **III. Brian Stoddart**

Stoddart, like Nandy, recognizes the significance in cricket's contradictory ideals. While Nandy identifies this contradiction as the site of cultural resistance, Stoddart focuses on an alternative view that points up the power of cricket as a tool deployed by the hegemonic order. Writing about two members of the Spartan club (a club composed of upwardly-mobile coloreds), Graham Trent Cumberbatch and H. M. Cummins, Stoddard points out a more complex reaction to racial discrimination:

On the one hand, men like Cumberbatch and Cummins became ardent enthusiasts of the cricket ideology, attempting to share the cultural values of the whites with whom they competed both in cricket and in society. On the other hand, they developed a strong desire to win, to beat the representatives of those who displayed prejudice. The essential paradox in this dual position is clear. While trying to emulate the ruling cricket and social values, Spartan members had also to deal with the inequalities contained in those ruling values. On the whole, Spartan men resolved to accept the inequalities, an excellent demonstration of Gramsci's theory of hegemony.

Stoddart views early cricket not as a revolutionary force, but as a white cultural re-inscription of black West Indian culture. While there were isolated instances of black cultural resistance, writes Stoddart, "for the most part, the colonial elites carried on this process [of colonization] unhindered, controlling those agencies . . . central in the creation of hegemonic cultural values".

Cricket in today's global environment has been altered a great deal by new technologies, capitalism and revised geo-political landscapes. Because of the intrinsic value of cricket as a repository of culture, postcolonial scholars and fans have looked to this new form of global cricket in an attempt to understand its full implications. Several sites on the World Wide Web such as CricInfo offer weekly and/or daily information and news items about various national cricket teams. The central role England has maintained in global cricket for well over a hundred years is now being relinquished as her former colonies enter the international and



technological marketplace. In the past, England was the primary provider of international competition for many of these countries. As England's Victorian ideal withers under the heat of international play, so too do the theories of nationhood that are tied to, or somehow dependent upon, cricket's age-old Victorian ideal. James's is one such theory, as Kenneth Surin explains:

The claim that cricket is "a means of national expression" is just untenable, especially in the last two decades or so, when capitalism has moved into a globally integrated phase. Cricket, as a commercial sport, has had to respond to this transformation as a condition of its financial survival. This shift is especially evident in the way in which the modern (one might as well say "post-modern") West Indian professional cricketer now earns a living, namely, by playing several "seasons" in the course of a single year: the domestic West Indian season, and English summer of county cricket, a winter tour abroad, and if this can be squeezed in, maybe a spell playing for a state team during the Australian summer.

Once professional cricketers become professional athletes who tour the world in pursuit of ever-increasing financial rewards, their faces become more recognizable in the various countries where they play and -- most importantly -- their style of play becomes less distinctive. This latter point is the result of international players who routinely play against one another and who have more opportunity than in previous ages to imitate the best aspects of one another's style. Adds Surin, "Cricketing styles become homogenized in consequence of this 'internationalization' of the game, and even the 'subjectives' of cricketers becomes fungible" .

Nandy, like Surin, also bemoans what has become of cricket in the modern world. As is usually the case with Nandy, he focuses on the role of cricket as harbinger of a cultural ideal. Once cricketers resort to bodylining ("fast leg-theory bowling, especially as used by the England fast bowlers during the 1932-3 Test series in Australia"; bowling close to the batsman's body) and other immoral acts in order to win, the real victory is already lost (Rundell 20). The value of cricket for Nandy is the cricketer's constant search for an ideal behavior. When cricketers scoff at seemingly trite notions of good sportsmanship, the space between the ideal and the actual identified by Nandy never materializes and the opportunity for cultural empowerment is closed off. "When Australian wicket-keeper Rodney Marsh," writes Nandy, "openly says that Australia should try to beat the stronger West Indian side by reverting, if necessary, to being 'ugly Australians,' he is being true to the anti-culture of consumable sport" (117).

Despite the variance of opinion about the past and future role of cricket, the game remains a favorite pastime in former English colonies and does battle with soccer, another British import, as the most popular sport in the world.

[Cricket](#) is the most popular sport in India, it is played by many people in open spaces throughout the country though it is not the nation's official national sport (a distinction held by [field hockey](#)). The [India national cricket team](#) won the [1983 Cricket World Cup](#), the [2007 ICC World Twenty20](#), and the [2011 Cricket World Cup](#) , and shared the [2002 ICC Champions Trophy](#) with [Sri Lanka](#). Domestic competitions include the [Ranji Trophy](#), the [Duleep Trophy](#), the

[Deodhar Trophy](#), the [Irani Trophy](#) and the [Challenger Series](#). In addition, BCCI conducts the [Indian Premier League](#), a [Twenty20](#) competition.

The entire history of cricket in India and the sub-continent as a whole is based on the existence and development of the British Raj via the [East India Company](#). In 1721, the first definite reference to cricket being played anywhere in the sub-continent is a report of English sailors of the East India Company playing a game at Cambay, near Baroda. The Calcutta Cricket and Football Club is known to be in existence by 1792, but was possibly founded more than a decade earlier. In 1799, another club was formed at Seringapatam in south India after the successful British siege and the defeat of [Tipu Sultan](#). In 1864, a [Madras v. Calcutta](#) match was arguably the start of first-class cricket in India. The most important fixture in the 19th century was the Bombay Presidency Match which evolved, first, into the Bombay Triangular and then into the [Bombay Quadrangular](#). The match was first played in 1877 and then intermittently for several seasons until finally being given first-class status in 1892-93.

An English team led by **George Vernon in 1889-90** was the first foreign team to tour India but none of the matches that it played are considered first-class. First-class cricket definitely began in the 1892-93 season with two Europeans v Parsees matches at Bombay (match drawn) and Poona (Parsees won by 3 wickets). In the same season, Lord Hawke captained an English team that played four first-class matches including a game against "All India" on 26–28 January 1893.

The **Ranji Trophy** was launched as India's national championship following a meeting of the [Board of Control for Cricket in India](#) (BCCI) in July 1934 and the competition began in the 1934-35 season. The trophy was donated by the Maharajah of Patiala but named after [KS Ranjitsinhji](#) ("Ranji"), even though he barely played any of his cricket in the country. Ranji had died on 2 April 1933. The first winner was Bombay.

The major and defining event in the history of Indian cricket during this period was the Partition of India following full independence from the British Raj in 1947.

An early casualty of change was the Bombay Quadrangular tournament which had been a focal point of Indian cricket for over 50 years. The new India had no place for teams based on ethnic origin. As a result, the Ranji Trophy came into its own as the national championship. The last-ever Bombay Pentangular, as it had become, was won by the Hindus in 1945-46.

One team totally dominated Indian cricket in the 1960s. As part of 15 consecutive victories in the Ranji Trophy from 1958-59 to 1972-73, Bombay won the title in all ten seasons of the period under review. Among its players were Farokh Engineer, Dilip Sardesai, Bapu Nadkarni, Ramakant Desai, Baloo Gupte, Ashok Mankad and Ajit Wadekar. In the 1961-62 season, the Duleep Trophy was inaugurated as a zonal competition. It was named after Ranji's nephew, Kumar Shri Duleepsinhji (1905–59). With Bombay in its catchment, it is not surprising that the West Zone won six of the first nine titles. Bombay continued its dominance of Indian domestic cricket with only Karnataka and Delhi and some other teams which were able to mount any kind of challenge during this period.



India enjoyed two international highlights. In 1971, they won a Test series in England for the first time ever, surprisingly defeating Ray Illingworth's Ashes winners. In 1983, again in England, India were surprise winners of the [1983 Cricket World Cup](#).

The BCCI tinkered with the Duleep Trophy in the 2002-03 season. The original zonal teams were replaced by five new teams called Elite A, Elite B, Elite C, Plate A and Plate B. These teams were constructed from the new Elite Group and Plate Group divisions which had been introduced into the Ranji Trophy that season. However, this format lasted for only one season as it was felt that the new teams lacked a sense of identity. From the 2003-04 season, the five original zonal teams competed along with a sixth guest team which was a touring foreign team. The first guest team was England A in 2003-04.

Mumbai (formerly Bombay) has continued its dominance of the domestic scene into the 21st century by winning the Ranji Trophy five times in the first decade.

India won the inaugural ICC World T20 in 2007. India was the first Sub-continental team to win a Test match at the WACA in January 2008 against Australia.

India won the [Cricket World Cup](#) in 2011, the first time since 1983 - they beat [Sri Lanka](#) in the final held in [Mumbai](#).

International cricket in India generally does not follow a fixed pattern. For example, the English schedule under which the nation tours other countries during winter and plays at home during the summer. Generally, there has recently been a tendency to play more [one-day matches](#) than [Test matches](#). Cricket in India is managed by the [Board of Control for Cricket in India](#) (BCCI), the richest cricket board in the cricket world. Indian International Cricketing Squad has also provided some of the greatest players to the world. Indian cricket has a rich history. The Indian national team is currently ranked the no. 2 team in test cricket as well as the no.1 team in one day international cricket.

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