

Rupkatha Journal

On Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities

ISSN 0975-2935

www.rupkatha.com

Volume VIII, Number 1, 2016

General Issue

Indexing and abstracting

Rupkatha Journal is an international journal recognized by a number of organizations and institutions. It is archived permanently by www.archive-it.org and indexed by EBSCO, Elsevier, MLA International Directory, Ulrichs Web, DOAJ, Google Scholar and other organizations and included in many university libraries.

SNIP, IPP and SJR Factors

Nr.	Source ID	Title	SNIP 2012	IPP 2012	SJR 2012	SNIP 2013	IPP 2013	SJR 2013	SNIP 2014	IPP 2014	SJR 2014
1	21100201709	Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities	0.313	0.034	0.1	0.271	0.038	0.116	0.061	0.007	0.101

Additional services and information can be found at:

About Us: www.rupkatha.com/about.php

Editorial Board: www.rupkatha.com/editorialboard.php

Archive: www.rupkatha.com/archive.php

Submission Guidelines: www.rupkatha.com/submissionguidelines.php

Call for Papers: www.rupkatha.com/callforpapers.php

This Open Access article is distributed freely online under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>). This allows an individual user non-commercial re-use, distribution, sharing and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited with links. For commercial re-use, please contact editor@rupkatha.com.

© AesthetixMS: Aesthetics Media Services



The Semiotics of Sports in *The Mahābhārata*

Rajni Singh & Seema K. Ladsaria
Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad, India

Abstract

The article examines the sporting activities in the Indian epic, *The Mahābhārata*. A sport is an anthropomorphic manifestation that deduces the logico-deductive praxeological system of the elements of spectacle. It is a cultivated movement that emerges from the specific social and cultural sub-system. Sport as a process of the permeation conjoins the existential phenomena with paralinguistic structural pattern in the macro system of behaviourism suggested in the society. To define the term sports, the paper concentrates on the theory of action in *The Mahābhārata* delineating the underlying “actantial structure” (Herbert) of sports played in the ancient period. The study primarily focuses on the sporting activity in *The Mahābhārata*, which involves physical action while the episodes of war and games, such as ‘Game of Dice’ remains excluded. The paper examines the non-verbal codes of sports during ‘The Tournament’ organized for one hundred and five Princes of the Bhārata clan and the microcosm between the inter-related structures. Through theatricality and the performativity of the sport, one draws the parallelism between the institution of sports handled by the Kṣatriya, the semantic field that translates exigencies of the sociological survival and the continuum of experience into multiple referents. Hence, the paper attempts to highlight the sport-nuanced phenomena that is operationalized in the Indian society and is still relevant in the post-modern phenomena.

Keywords: Semiotics, Sports, *Mahābhārata*, performativity, India

Sport is a social institution that anticipates the emotional complexes such as, attraction, competence, and morality. The epistemological discussions of sport signify typologies of the sport function as a social experience. It attributes “the desire for the collective expression, shared revelry, public demonstration, cathartic pleasure and the existential experience” (Jirasek and Kohe, 2015). Sport is confronted within the different forms of the physical activities such as play, games, contest and athletics. Play as “being spontaneous, extraordinary, non-material, and non-productive” (Huizinga, 1980) “is an activity which proceeds within the certain limits of time-space, in a visible order, according to rules freely accepted and outside the sphere of necessity or material utility” (Huizinga, 1980). Paul Weiss (1986) defines play as a “subject to rules” but only a well-played and rules governed play can be defined as a game. On the other hand, a sport is a game initiated with the set of rules. The distinguishing feature of the semiotics of sport is that it adds to the physical activity and the free will to obey the rules. The semiotic operations of sport contributes in framing the identity and evolving the analogical devices, such as, non-verbal codes, the strings of signs of social, economic and political inequalities.

Sports in *The Mahābhārata* is a public outlet for articulating social and the cultural values, the corporeal possibilities which has its genesis from the ancient Indian cultural text. A sport in ancient India was based on the principle of ‘Dhārma’, “*Dharanad dharmamityaahuh*” (Web). The erudite scholarship of sports as political and moral philosophy explores Dharmaśāstra and The Arthaśāstra concerned with the duties of state and statesman. Both Daṇḍanīⁱ and Arthaśāstraⁱⁱ are subjected to determine the policy of the enforcement of law and creating the administrative

machinery by choosing warriors and kings through sport's competition. Sports in ancient India was formulated on perennial ideologies, such as, on guidelines instructed by Patanjali Yoga-Sūtraⁱⁱⁱ, Kāya-sādhna^{iv}, dehvada^v, and Hathayoga^{vi}, which define ethical ways of playing sports. Indian sports^{vii} mentioned in the Vedic and religious scriptures, such as, the Vedic literature, *The Mahābhārata*, *The Rāmāyaṇam*, *The Purāṇa*, the literary works of Kauṭilya, Kālidāsa, Pāṇini and Daṇḍin, the Buddhist and the Jainist Literature, emphasizes on the rules of game taught through the Acarya-Kula^{viii} tradition in the antiquated time.

The pluralistic conception of sports suggested in *The Mahābhārata* is a political testament of ethics for survival of human being. From the beginning itself, the story of *The Mahābhārata* introduces the logical model of sports within the subject of both the cognitive and pragmatic performances. One finds sporting pursuits to be defined on the basis of politics and economy. The paper dwells on 'The Tournament episode'^{ix} (Satyamurti, Dharwarkar and Doniger, 2015) of *The Mahābhārata*. 'The Tournament' organized for freshly trained Princes was supposed to bring together athletes, heads of the state, and other national representatives to decide suitable heir for the state. Although 'The Tournament Episode' was instrumental sporting event cited in the epic, *The Mahābhārata*, one finds several other traces of sporting events such as "Eklavya's"^x (Satyamurti et al., 2015) sporting practices, which denotes the referential meaning of sports, as an agency of self-display, ceasing the intellectual property (knowledge of sports) and confining sports facilities to the Kṣatriya.

The paper primarily focuses on 'The Tournament' Episode of *The Mahābhārata* which significantly formulates the ground for the larger political upheaval. Nevertheless, the chief characteristic of the sporting activities, especially, in 'The Tournament' episode was that, there was no blood-shed^{xi}. The domain of sporting was based on the competition between the powerful sports competitors like Yudhiṣṭhira, Duryodhana, Bhima and Arjuna who were also the probable contestants for the crown of Hāstinapuram.

Players in *The Mahābhārata*

Sports activities are based on different sporting variables such as, income, time, and human capital. Walvin (1984) rightly noted "sporting activity is largely socially and historically determined". Boria Majumdar (2002) argues that "the evolution of the sporting heritage of the Indian nation is a deeper appreciation of the seemingly unrelated political processes such as nationalism, (and) colonial culture". Ramachandra Guha (2002) suggests two prominent approaches towards the sporting activities. To quote:

The first has focused narrowly on its practice, the background of its patrons and players, the evolution of its associations and tournaments, and on how it pays or does not pay for itself. The second approach views sport as a *relational idiom*, a sphere of activity that expresses, in concentrated form, the values, prejudices, divisions and unifying symbols of a society'.

The reconciliation of sports in *The Mahābhārata* asserts sociology and the politics of vernacular activities in the ancient India. The Kūru Dynasty^{xii} witnessed competent players and warriors who strengthened the spirit of integrity and demonstrated moral character to the broader community. Kings of the Bhārata Clan were often found to be indulged in sports (hunting expeditions) for fun, leisure and pastime. King Shāntanu^{xiii} was known for his "hunting prowess" (Satyamurti et al., 2015) and chiseled skills of using weapons while Bhishma, was in-born archer, "well-versed in Vedas, trained in arts of war" (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). King Pāṇḍu^{xiv} was also known for his

hunting expeditions (killed a mating deer). In the successive generations, the Pandavas and the Kauravas were exposed to the more diverse forms of sporting such as archery and wrestling.

A sport, despite being leisure was an act of moral commitment as the metaphysical insight of sporting is subjected to ethical ways of living. Pāṇḍu's hunting expedition was considered to be unethical as it did not maintain the rules of competition with the opponent (deer). "Courage, knowledge and beauty, these are what man opposes to the strength of the animal" (Barthes, 2007). The epilogue to the death of the mating deer is that the king seemed to defy his consciousness and therefore, abandon the path of virtues, such as fairness, integrity, responsibility and respect, as he targeted the mating deer in his alienated consciousness. Thus in a broader sense, sport is a "legislative enactments" (Weiss, 1969) that encapsulates the significant swath of social experience. The normative percept that constructs the individual conduct is based on the principle of dharma. It prescribes proper behaviour especially in terms of *varṇa* (social class) and the *vṛiti* (occupations or forms of livelihood). Therefore, the skill of sporting also varied according to the individual capabilities. Nevertheless, the dynamics of sporting considers dharma as the main principle that generated order and lawfulness in the society.

Physical Education in *The Mahābhārata*

Sport's education lays the epochal shifts of new-liberal scales of the economic and political functions of the state power. It integrates the deep ambivalences between pluralist theory of the state and the society-centered approaches, as Yuri Lotman (2000) defines, "the structure of elements and rules for combining them that is in a state of fixed analogy to entire sphere of an object of knowledge, insight and regulation". Physical education in ancient India was circulated through knowledge of *Sastras*^{xv} either to Brahmans or to the disciples (Kṣtriyas). It was often dictated for the social and the religious needs of the people. For imparting the physical education, several programs were developed such as *Yoga-āsanas*^{xvi} and *Suryanamaskarm*^{xvii}. However, those born in The Royal Gotrā^{xviii} and the Brahman Gotrā were the only legitimate receivers of the knowledge of sporting and had the privilege of learning military skills. Chāndogyopaniṣad IV (1998) supervises, *tām etaṃ nāputrāya vānantevāsine vā brūyat*. (Let's not teach one who is not the son or the disciple). Apart from Brahmans, knowledge was confined to the elite class (Kṣtriya) as they were being taught by "the best and wisest teachers to ensure that the boys would be well-trained in Vedic lore, all the skills and arts essential to a royal kshatriya" (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). In this context, Ronjoy Sen (2015) clearly states:

In the stratified Indian Society, the martial arts were restricted to the Kshatriyas, or warrior caste, second in the pecking order behind the Brahmins and above the Vaishayas (Traders), the Sudras (the lower caste) and the Avarna ("Dalit or the Scheduled caste, formally called untouchables") who fell outside the pale of the caste system.

The Mahābhārata offers ample examples where the Prince mastered all the prominent methods of sporting and used occult weapons as they "mastered the basic skills of archery, of fighting with sword and javelin, with the spear, dagger, mace and the small hand thrown dart. They learned to fight on horseback and on foot, and how to steer a chariot; they learnt earthly weapon" (Satyamurti, et al., 2015).

The knowledge, in general, in the ancient India was based on the Vedic rules and Yogasutras. The aim of pursuing such learning was to attain the *Chitta-vritti Nirodha*^{xix}, which is an act of "silencing of the modifications of mind". Duryodhana failed to attain *Chitta-vritti Nirodha* as he could not learn the art of balancing his *chitta* and *vritti*. The expressions that have

been used to describe Duryodhana, “white-hot rage” suggest his lack of self-control. His aggression was the result of his less engagement in the *Kriya-Yoga*^{xx}. He was a master in the wrestling and lacked exercises that controlled thoughts. Nevertheless, “Drona arranged frequent competitions so each knew exactly how he ranked on the scale of skill, for every weapon” (Satyamurti, et al.2015). In spite of checking the skills of weaponry, it seems that majority of the young warriors such as, Arjuna, Bhima, Duryodhana failed in gaining the knowledge of Vedas adequately. Arjuna’s interrogation to Drona “did you not promise, not long ago, that I would be world’s greatest archer? How, then, can you be teaching, secretly, that lowborn boy-an archer so accomplished he makes me look like a mere beginner!” (Satyamurti et al., 2015) reflects Arjuna too suffered from unbalanced emotions (tapas). Thus, the foundational principle of Vedic learning, such as clarity in thought process, calm and composed self, self-control and purity were not acquired by the Princes. Moreover, one finds illustration of Eklavya who was “a dark-skinned youth” (Satyamurti et al., 2015), son of Nishada, to be a better archer than Arjuna. Eklavya seemed to have balanced all the Yogasutras but the overwhelming desire of revenge in Drona compelled to demand the fee, “Give me your right thumb” (Satyamurti et al., 2015) as Eklavya said “I owe my skill to the great Drona, my master” (Satyamurti et al., 2015). Similarly Karna, too, was an extraordinary youth but he was not taught properly at any weaponry school because he was brought up by *suta* parents. Karna’s craving for learning the art of using the occult weapons takes him to Rama, but it results in a curse “your selfish craving is at the root of this. One day, when your life depends on it, and you try to invoke the Brahma weapon, your memory will fail you” (Satyamurti et al., 2015) as he had adopted unfair means for learning: “my passionate desire to learn the Brahma weapon tempted me to lie about my birth” (Satyamurti et al., 2015).

It seems that the education of sports in ancient India brings to the fore two major dimensions of sports. Primarily it gives way to the political economy which weighs cultural Marxist dimension serving the legitimacy of the alienated consciousness and the colonized desire of playing sports enveloped in the will of ruling the state. Sports was only for the Kshtriyas as they were expected to “give gifts perform sacrifices, protect people and show courage in the battle” (Sen 2015) whereas the other sections of the society were expected to obey the rest of the higher classes. The discreet structure that operates in shaping the power structure of sports is diffused and embodied via “sovereign” (Singer and Wier 2006) acts of domination and coercion. The dramatics of the valour performed by the Princes demonstrates the axiology of sport as an overt symbolism to everyday life and the insatiable craving resonating idiosyncratic characteristics of possession, human experience and interaction. Hence a sport is a kind of “metapower” that pervades in the society under the constant flux and negotiation.

The spectatorship of the sports in ‘The Tournament’

Spectatorship offers the unique visual experience as for its voyeurism and cinematic appeal. Sports spectatorship involves conflicting emotions and responses of the spectator’s-fear, anger, disgust and pleasure. The spectatorship of sports includes the epistemic elements such as “one should have fewer distractions, a clear view of the action, and the knowledge of the details of the game’s rules in order to make sense of what is happening” (Aikin, 195). Roland Barthes defines spectatorship as “the primary virtue to abolish all the motives and all consequences: what matters is not what it thinks but what it sees” (Barthes 1957). The ethical element of the spectatorship of the sport is the spirit with which one watches the game. The extent to which the spectator’s interest is occasioned in watching sports also depends on the spectator’s interest in playing the sport.

The dynamics of the social spectatorship of sports in *The Mahābhārata* is a microcosm of the inter-related structure between ‘The Tournament’ and the semantic structure, which drives its significance from the social situations and the ideology of sports in the ancient Indian society. The performance by “Bull of Bharatas” (Hegarty, 2012) in ‘The Tournament’ took place in an “enormous amphitheater” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015), which was “far bigger than anything seen, even in dreams: oval shaped, and lined with ranks of seats steeply banked, rising tier on tier and shaded from the sun by colored awings” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). The stage set for the mass participation broadly concerns that sports should be organized in the public sphere where the participants and spectators are consumers as well as producers of sport’s codes and communication. The enthusiasm of the spectatorship of ‘The Tournament’ is described thus:

Excited crowds had gathered from small towns, from villages, from fishing settlements; even ascetics in their forest ashrams had heard the news and come for the spectacle. People camped outside the city walls on land that gently sloped down to the river, and near the forest’s edge, where they could gather brushwood for cooking. Even before the first light, fragrant woodsmoke from thousand fires was already rising, flames leaping as if impatient, like the jostling people anxious for the great day to begin. A crowd formed, pressing toward the gate which opened when the sun began to rise above the pinnacles of the king’s palace. (Satyamurti, et al., 2015)

The joy of participation as a spectator can be seen as “People waited drummers and trumpeters made joyful, stirring music, Crafty tinkers touted their wares-bangles, and lamps, ornaments, gaudy trinkets that children pestered for-and the snack seller worked the narrow aisles” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). The spectatorship of ‘The Tournament’ corresponds to communication of sports on six parameters. The six sporting function includes ‘referential’ (orientation towards the sporting event), ‘emotive’ (expressing the attitude towards the sport’s event), ‘conative’ (influencing the sports person through vocative and imperative case), ‘phatic’, (establishing and maintaining communication through sports), ‘metalingual’ (conveying information about sporting code) and ‘poetic’ (focusing on the message) (Lotman, 2000). The referential code of sports shared by mass participation suggests that sporting enjoyment during the ancient time infused tremendous feeling of the spectators. Such scheme of spectatorship where the sporting event becomes a vehicle for communication and center for semiotic activity also suggests the way sports leads to the ways of entertainment and motivates the fundamental dialectic of internalization and objectivity of self and society.

The entry of the sports participants described as “One hundred and five princes brandish weapons and seem to slaughter one another so savage are their shouts, so fierce they look, their swords and daggers flashing as they thrust, feint, dance around each other”. (Satyamurti, et al., 2015) not only illustrates the strength of the participants but also highlights the vastness and the magical spell of the event which contained the potential of captivating its spectators. The performance started with “amazing feats of archery, taking aim at a revolving target hung in the center, shooting, galloping faster and faster, while not a single arrow misses its goal” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). The “grand demonstration of skills” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015) displayed by the competitors such as “skills and dexterity in the use of bows and arrows” (*Sambhava Parva*, CXXXVI) also set target for winning the crown. The transmission of power of knowledge through the representation of art of weaponry by Princes, acts as both sender and recipient of the sporting code that is structured by the physical channels of sporting activity and the psychological connection between the spectators and the participants. One finds that people of the ancient India were psychologically connected to sport event. Here sports become the intentional

reference which is the reflection of consciousness of self through sports. The exquisite demonstration of the races: “The best Charioteers among the princes line up to compete-which of them will drive his gleaming vehicle fastest round ten laps of the arena” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015) showcase the strength of Princes as they “one by one, ... weave a complex course round obstacles, cutting through twists and bends hugging them close, hauling their horses round without the wheels grazing” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). ‘The Tournament’ begins with Drona announcement for a “mock fight” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015), which was supposed to be held between the royal Princes.

The first show of ‘The Tournament’ was held between Bhima, who appeared like “Colossal boulder” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015) and Duryodhana, the “strong and nimble” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). The two fought with “maces” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015) like “rutting elephants” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015) and swung their “clubs with the huge momentum of their powerful arms” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). The metalingual code of visual presented in ‘The Tournament’ was an opiate of the masses which spectator frequently concedes the problem of existence. After the ferocious fight between Bhima and Duryodhana, “The crowds scream support, some for one, some for the other, starting to trade blows between themselves” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). The sporting event in *The Mahābhārata*, focuses on the behavioural norms of the sporting considering the evolution of separate roles of the spectators and players. Soon the fight between Bhima and Duryodhana turned into a sort of rehearsal for a deadly war in future. Before it could agitate the witnessing crowd the violent dual was cut short. With the “Conches blare, drums beat... joyful musical explosion” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015) Arjuna comes in the arena to exhibit his archery skills. When Arjuna sends “effortless streams of arrow into the mouth of wooden boar” (Satyamurti, et al., and 2015) the crowd roars in enthusiasm. Arjuna’s shooting skills was seen on the ground as well as in the sky. When Arjuna finished his final round, the mesmerized crowd “erupts delighted and relived” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). However, the fight between Karna and Arjuna did not take place. The tournament ended with Karna being honored as the king of Anga and with a challenge to the Pandavas. Finally with the nightfall, the crowd drifted away talking of Karna and the unprecedented happenings.

The suggested round in ‘The Tournament’ calls to ponder on the Marxist inference of Sports played in *The Mahābhārata*. The sports participants were found to be privileged with best sporting equipments, which such as “the best charioteers” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015), “well-fitting breastplates glittering and dazzling” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015), “four glossy horses” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015), which suggest the capital invested in the tournament. The demand and supply of sports equipments and the sport opportunities were only given to the warriors class (Kshtriyas), who attracted the direct sponsorship from the court. Besides this, they also invited the broadcasting rights and the free spectatorship for the mass participation. The transmission of the sporting cultures is subjected through the characteristics of the Royal spectatorship and the performative qualities of the cultural and the social life.

The internal organization of Hāstinapuram was restricted to manifest the elite sport and competition. However, the state of egoism was sufficiently controlled by the estate to provide audience lived experience of the grandeur of knowledge and valour possessed by the *Kstriya*. The empirical domain of the Kinaesthetic pleasure was to witness the political and economic contentment of the state. Sukthankar (2003) sees such behavioural pattern on the “transcendental level” (Woods, 21). He argues, “This is the perennial struggle between our higher and the lower natures, a struggle that can only be resolved in our minds” (Woods, 2014). Thus, sport as the

deductive model was governed by the variables of aggression and revenge. The common mass had access only to the “spectacle of excess” (Barthes, 3) in the form of festivaesque gathering.

Karna and Arjuna=Knowledge-Inheritance →Prejudiced spectatorship

Spectatorship in sports is one of the ubiquitous activities. It takes into account seven prominent functions, such as, instinct, developmental cognitive mastery, social integration, socialization, social control and the personal expressiveness. The spectatorship in *The Mahābhārata* demonstrates the biased treatment of news coverage and financial expenditure.

Karna was not introduced in the game with exotic gaming equipment like golden shield, rather he was presented as “A shining gold cuirass encased his body and in his ears, there sparkled golden earrings, like two drops of sunlight. He looked “forbidding –serious, remote, stern even, as if his life had been hard. Anyone could tell from his bearing, the authority with which he walked into the arena holding his bow as though it were a scepter, that this man was a great warrior” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). However, “he was an extraordinary youth, the strong young eagle” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015) but he was out casted for not being a Kstriya. Karna was the misfit in his own social group, as “the shining gold cuirass he was born with, the luminescent earrings, seemed incongruous for a driver’s son.” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). He seems to be an exception to the “Rankian cross-cultural heroic paradigm” (Adarkar, 2001). Further, the challenge against the authorship of the excellence on top-notch sports suggests the deviance and malfunctioning of the sociological thought. The cohesive and structured social groups were stunned to witness the entry of Karna in the sports arena. Karna received the knowledge weaponry not as a Gotra *samskara* rather it was in his genes. However, to hold the highest excellence, one has to be taught by the appropriate teacher otherwise the failure is destined.

Rte gurum ahita hi sukham Vedas tvaya pura (The vedas has to be learned via guru)

Anena tu gurum dukhat tosayitva svakarama (otherwise it leads to the pain and disaster)

Kalena mahata klesad brahmadhigatam uttamam (the knowledge without guru leads to chaos and disaster) (Sacred Text, The Mahabharata 139)

Nevertheless, syntax of learning sports shook the formal structure of the signification of sports learning. Karna challenges order, classification and the transformation by hijacking the power and knowledge of the elite. The expressions such “Drona is shocked” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015) “Arjuna looked tensed and angry” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015) are symbolic of generative trajectory that opposes the discursive structures. Karna classifies knowledge on the basis of competence as: “This place is open to all. Strength is what matters here” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). However, he was interrogated about his origin before he contested for the knowledge. Karna was outside the lineal structure of the Kinship.

The example of sport cited in the text, suggests that only Princes of the court had the legitimate right for learning the skills of weaponry. Arjuna was represented as the most powerful and skilled archer. During ‘The Tournament’, he was introduced to the audience by Dronacharya thus: “I now present to you prince Arjuna, Son of Indra, greatest of all archers”. (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). The methodologically exhaustive narration of Arjuna in the sports arena and his sporting skills is pedantically instructive treatment that Arjuna was the most powerful archer in the Bhārata Clan. The expressions on Arjuna’s performance as “And then miracle begins” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015) and “effortless stream of arrows” (Satyamurti, et al. 2015) “chanting mantra” shows that knowledge and courage were real theatre of the ancient sport. Meanwhile, the

unwanted entry of the Karna offers distorted spectatorship subjecting aggression, desire and power. His entry is not as grand as Arjuna's but "beside the gate" (Satyamurti, et al., 2015). Someone said, "that sound is a challenge, some hero is slapping his arms boastfully" (Satyamurti, et al., 2015) "The crowd was hushed, looking toward the gate" (Satyamurti, et al., 2015).

The phenomenology of spectatorship seems to seek the mental dispositions of the audience. It is a conscious activity that demonstrates the perceptual and the conceptual development of the three-dimensional world. Thus spectatorship in sports encapsulates the cognitive modules of the aesthetic experiences.

Sports and Aggression in *The Mahābhārata*

Aggression plays a vital role in sports. Aggression can be defined as a "drive towards change, even against the will of the others" (Galtung 1964). Aggression drifts from both positive and the negative sources. Positive aggression motivates and channelizes energy whereas negative aggression leads to multiple crimes in its extreme form of the phenomena including the genocide, between the groups and nations. Both positive and negative forms of aggression are at work in 'The Tournament' episode. Aggression was reflected in Arjuna, Bhima, Duryodhana, Dushashna and even in Karna, but in some of them aggression turns into negative and problematic aggressive behaviour. The five prominent characters combat aggressively with a desire to conquer and emerge triumphantly. However, drive to conquer in Pandavas was served with motivational source of energy combined with passion of situating better life situations and resources; on the other hand Kaurvas' aggression was stimulated by the agencies of frustration. Such characters, despite being highly skilled warriors and enriched with knowledge were given to immoral ways of sporting. Thus, the negative form of aggression mostly harms others and the ego of the self becomes too assertive.

Another external condition precipitating anger is the high emotive content. Karna was dissatisfied as he was the adopted son of Radhey and a low caste warrior. He was not allowed to showcase the skills of archery. Being a low caste, aggression in Karna generated frustration and instilled in him inferiority complex and immense rage for Pandavas. To quote: "Aggression is most likely to arise in social positions in rank-disequilibrium. In a system of individuals it may take the form of crime, in a system of groups the form of revolutions, and in a system of nations the form of war" (Galtung 1964). Karna's aggression found its way through frustration, revenge and rebel.

Another epitome of aggression in *The Mahābhārata* is Duryodhana. It is only through sports that intellectual power is converted into the territorial expansion. Duryodhana not only fights ferociously with his opponent Bhima but simmers with intense rage for the Pandavas. His actions are enveloped with hatred and aggression for the Pandavas which is largely due to the knowledge that the legacy cannot be passed on to him. His biggest hurdle in the way of power is Yudhishthira who is deemed as the most eligible heir for the crown. Also, there are certain indirect incidents that add to Duryodhana's aggression. He lived with an idea that the Pandavas were more privileged students of Drona as compared to the other disciples. Since Duryodhana headed the Kaurava group it was quite natural that his aggressive traits disseminated in his folk.

The behavioral patterns of the Kaurvas and the Pandavs also depended on their initial training. Duryodhana under the supervision of Shakuni got instilled with the outrageous behavioural patterns to conquer the crown. War and sports align with the behavioural patterns and value systems that overlap with supportive instances. In *The Mahābhārata* the probability of

war was intense as one finds the incidence of the combative sports more frequent than other behaviours. Sigmund Freud viewed such instinct to be genetically programmed chemico- physical status that result in tension stored and accumulated and often released in devious and destructive ways at a later time.

The failure of ‘sportification’ in *The Mahābhārata*

The prime philosophy that holds all the debate in *The Mahābhārata* is *brahmodaya*^{xxi}: Sports is played for the self-display and for personal authority or power. The meta-theory of sports applicable here is the high-degree of integration and the communication which affects the present state of the sports. Karna was one of the competitive and deserving candidates of ‘The Tournament’ but he lost the favorable chances of winning it corresponding to his low-origin. Despite approaching Dronacharya in a legitimized way, he was not entertained as a disciple due to his low-origin. On the other hand, Arjuna too, was considered to be the strongest contender for the seat, but he was gripped with an innate desire to win the highest rank in archery. This why he took the wrong path to outway his less-privileged competitors- Karna, and Eklavya. He conspired against them in order to win the support and attention of his teacher, Dronacharya. Similarly, Duryodhana also plotted with Shakuni and brought Yudhishthira and Arjuna face to face as opponents believing that Arjuna would not raise his weapons and challenge his elder brother for a combat rather he would remain as a passive agent and allow him to win; but Arjuna accepts the challenge and wins over Yudhishthira. This gives a blow to Duroyodhana intentions. Moreover, Bhima too defies rules of ‘The Tournament’ that results in bloodshed. This disqualifies him from the other rounds of ‘The Tournament’. Since, none of the Princes emerge triumphant in exhibiting true sportsmanship, which is admix of *Yama*, *Niyama* and *Chitta*, *Vritti* and *Niroodha*, the idea of sportification fails in *The Mahābhārata*. In fact, ‘The Tournament’ becomes a premise on which the great war of Mahābhārata takes place. Thus, ‘The Tournament’ in *The Mahābhārata* presents the ‘reification of the desire’ that supersedes knowledge and the power of training of sports.

Notes

ⁱ Daṇḍanīti is the judicial system proposed by Kautilya which is known as the “the science of law enforcement”. It encapsulates laws related to the loans, deposits, pledges and mortgages, sale and purchase of the property, inheritance and the partition of ancestral property, labor contacts, partnership, defamation and assault, theft and violent robbery and sexual offences. (Sihag, 359)

ⁱⁱ The Arthashastra harks on the political thoughts of the Kautilya. It suggests guidelines for the successful run of the government, such as law, prisons, taxation, irrigation and agriculture.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Patanjali Yoga Sutra says that the sport needs to be exercised with ‘Yama’, ‘Niyama’, ‘Asana’, ‘Pranayama’, ‘Pratyahara’, ‘Dhvana’, ‘Dhayana’ and ‘Samadhi’.

^{iv} Kayasadhna is the Sanskrit term for the spiritual development of the body. It is known as “body-perfection”

^v Dehvada is defined as “way of the body”. It is the act of the self-realization, it concentrates on the strength, stamina, control over the body’s key function.

^{vi} Hathayoga is the yogic act that comprises of specific physical exercises such as it considers eight limbs for attaining samādhi. In the scheme, asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharna, Dhyana, and Samadhi plays a prominent role.

^{vii} Common sports played in the ancient India are *Chaturang*, *Ashtapada*, *Kalaripayate*, *bharashram*, *Mall – Stambha*, and water-sport mentioned in *Asavaghosa* played on the Sarayu where Indra sports with the nymph in the Celestial Ganga.

^{viii} Acharyakulam is an ancient Indian education system that primarily focuses on the knowledge based on the individual, psychological, intellectual and the moral development. It believed on the mind-body development culture, as quoted, “Sariramadyam khalu Dhrama sadhanam”.

^{ix} ‘The Tournament’ episode was organized on the “lunar day when the star ascendant was auspicious” (*Sambhava Parva CXXXVI*). The place chosen for ‘The Tournament’ was a “piece of land that was void of trees and thickets and furnished with well and springs” (*Sambhava Parva CXXXVI*). Moreover, the stage for ‘The Tournament’(Rangbhoomi) was built on rules laid in the religious scriptures. It was furnished with all weapons and the necessary equipments such as, conch and musical instruments. Besides this, there were two separate halls for both male and female spectators, while there were different platforms created for the wealthy spectators who grabbed the spacious and high tents all around. It is suggested that The Palace was “filled with millions of them(spectators), all crowding to see the feats of the Princes who had been trained by the greatest of archers, Drona”(The Tournament, Episode 4)

^x Eklavya was the son of Hiranyadhanus, The king of the Nishadas. He approached Drona to learn archery but Drona did not consider him as his pupil with a fear that he might excel to his high-born pupil. Eklavya motivating himself crafted a clay-image of Drona and learned the art of archery. Later, when Drona was informed about his (Eklavya) excellence, he visited Eklavya but did not allow him to come closer, “he beheld Eklavya with body besmeared with filth, matted locks, rags, bearing bow in the hand”(Sambhava Parva CXXXIV) and asked him “I should like then to have the right thumb of thy right hand”. (*Sambhava Parva CXXXIV*)

^{xi} Although it was clearly instructed during the sporting episode that if the candidate’s sports activity cause any blood-shed then the candidate will be disqualified from the competition of future kinship as it was a “mock fight” but the sport competition between the Duryodhana and the Bhima ended in a slight blood-shed. Pertaining to this, Bhima was disqualified from the competition.

^{xii} Kuru was the name of a Vedic Aryan tribal union in norther Iron Age India. It became the dominant political and cultural center of the middle Vedic Period during the reigns of Parikshit and Janamejaya, but it declined in importance during the Late Vedic period (ca.850-500 BCE), and had become "something of a backwater" by the Mahajanapada period in the 5th century BCE. However, traditions and legends about the Kurus continued into the post-Vedic period, providing the basis for the Mahabharata epic. (Wikipedia)

^{xiii} Shantanu went for hunting in a forest and married Satyawati, who distinctly smelled like fish. “One day, riding near the riverbank/ stalking buffalo and antelope, he saw a woman” (Satyamurti, et al., 51)

^{xiv} Pandu went for hunting in a forest and killed a mating deer. The errors to pleasure-seeking and killing the innocent animal ended in curse by a sage, “you will share my fate-your life will end when you give way to passionate desire” (Satyamurti, et al., 2015).

^{xv} Sashtra is a Sanskrit word for the manual or the treatise. It is a specialized knowledge in defined area of practice

^{xvi} Vyasa in the Patanjali’s ‘Sthira Sukham Asanam’ suggests different postures of Yogasanas: “tadyatha padmasanam bhadrasanam virasanam dandasanam sopashrayam paryankam kraunchani Shadanam, hastinishadanam, ushra nishadanam, samasamsthanam sthirasukham yathasukham cha ityevamAdIni”, that is different Asanas such as Padmasana or the Bhadrasana, Virasana, Dandasana, and the postures like paryankaand Samasana provides the state of stability of mind and body.

^{xvii} Suryanamaskaram was considered to be *Nitty Vidhi* (Daily Exercises) practiced for good health and prosperity. It is Ashtang Yoga (Eight folds of physical exercises) with specific Sun Salutation’s Mantra.

^{xviii} In Hindu society, the term Gotrā means clan. It broadly refers to people who are descendants in an unbroken male line from a common male ancestor or patriline.

^{xix} *Chitta-vritti Nirodha* is a state in Yoga where the mind-body unity can be attained through the physical exercises and meditations.

^{xx} *Kriya-yoga* is liberation of the soul that can be attained through Prayanama, mantra and mudra. It is based on the techniques of the spiritual development.

^{xxi} Brahmodaya: Thomson argues that there is a close connection between the brahmodaya and the satyakriya: A brahmodaya “is a means of self-display, on the one hand, of one’s’ mastery of the estoric lexicon and on the other hand of one’s personal authority or power. It therefore provides an area also for the performance of the Satyakriya. (Black, 191)

Works cited

- Aikin, Scott F (2013). ‘Responsible sports Spectatorship and the problem Fantasy leagues’. *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, vol. no.27 (2), 195-206.
<https://www.academia.edu/5813376/Responsible_Sports_Spectatorship_and_the_Problem_of_Fantasy_Leagues>
- Barthes, Roland (1993). *Mythologies*. Trans. Annette Lavers US: Vintage Publication. (Original Work published in 1957), 3.
- (2007). *What is Sport?*. London: Yale University Press.
- Brook, Peter (1987). *The Mahabharata*. USA: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publishing Data
- Buitenen, J.A.B. van (1975). *The Mahabharata: The Book of Assembly Hall, The Book of Forest*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press.
- Burley, Mikel (2000). *Haṭha-Yoga: Its Context, Theory, and Practice*. Varanasi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Burnett, Cora (2001). ‘Whose Game Is It Anyway? Power, Play and Sport: Agenda’, *Culture: Transgressing Boundaries*, No. 49, 71-78
- ‘Chāndogya-upaniṣad’ in *The Early Upaniṣad*, ed. and trans. P. Olivelle, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Deshpande, S.H (1992). *Physical Education in Ancient India*. Delhi: Bhartiya Vidya Prakashan.
- Galtung, Johan (1964). A Structural Theory of Aggression. *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 1(2), 95-119.
- Guha, Ramchandra (2002). *The Indian History of a British Sport*. Delhi. Picador.
- Hegarty, James (2012). *Religion, Narrative and Public Imagination in South Asia: Post and Places in the Sanskrit Mahabharata*. Harvard: Routledge.
- Hiltebeitel, Alf (2001). *Rethinking the Mahabharata: A Reader’s Guide to the Education of the Dharma King*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press.
- Hughes, Marilyn (2005). *The Voices of the Prophets: Wisdom of the Ages, Hinduism: An Encyclopedia of Ancient Sacred Texts*. Series 1, North Carolina: Lulu.com.
- Huizinga, J. (1980). *Homo Ludens*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Jirasek, Ivo and Geoffery Zain Kohe, (2015). ‘Readjusting our sporting Sites/Sight: Sportification and the Theatricality of Social Life’, *Sports, Ethics and Philosophy* Vol. 9(3), 257-260.
- Kautilya, (1992). *Arthashastra*. New Delhi. Penguin India.
- Lotman, Yuri (2000). *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. London and New York: I.B Tauris & Co. Ltd. 387
- Majumdar, Bora (2002). ‘The Vernacular in Sports History’. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XXXVII, 29

- Satyamurti, Carole, Vinay Dharwadker and Wendy Doniger (2015). *Mahabharata: A Modern Retelling*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.
- Sen, Ronjoy (2015). *Nation at Play-A History of Sport in India*. New York: Columbia University Press, 12
- Shephard, Roy J (2014). *An Illustrated History of Health and Fitness, from Pre-History to our Post-Modern World*. Switzerland: Springer.
- Sihag, Balbir S. (2007). 'Kautilya on Administration of Justice during the Fourth Century B.C'. *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, Vol.29 (3), 359-377.
- Walvin, James (1984). 'Sport, Social History and the Historian'. *British Journal of Sports History*, Vol. 1(1), 5-13.
- Weiss, P. (1969). *Sport: A Philosophic Inquiry*. Southern Illinois University Press, 142.

Web links

The Mahabharata: Sacred Text.

<<http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/mo1/mo1137.htm>>

'The Tournament: Episode 4'.

<<http://iws.punahou.edu/user/cshigemitsu/worldlit/countries/india/mahabharataepisodes/episode4.htm>>

Tiwari, Sarvesh K. 'Yoga Asana, the Ancient Hindu Legacy'.

Bhartendu. <<http://bharatendu.com/2011/01/02/yoga-asana-the-hindu-legacy/>>

Herbert, Louis. 'The Actantial Model'. *Signo*.

<<http://www.signosemio.com/greimas/actantial-model.asp>>

Veda: Vedic Knowledge Online.

<<http://veda.wikidot.com/dharma>>

Kuru Kingdom.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuru_Kingdom>

Sports and Games in Ancient India.

< <http://www.crystalinks.com/indiasports.html>>

Dr. Rajni Singh is Associate Professor of English, Deptt. of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad, India.

Seema K. Ladsaria is a PhD research scholar, Deptt. of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad, India.
