“What do they know of cricket who only cricket know”

The quotation was made by C.L.R James, the legendary Trinidad born writer who is hailed as ‘cricket’s philosopher king’.

Talking about cricket, often we hear an apparently ‘non-political’ motto of ‘never mix cricket with politics’. Well, those simple, saint like words are like hiding a sharp dagger under the cloak of a monk which will assassin you. This saying is possibly the most highly politicized quote.

None of the sports are beyond politics, they are no longer ‘children game’ and international games are not played for fun, but for national pride, money, politics, so on and so forth.

For Greeks sports used to be the most sacred ritual, Sports were so sacred that they used to count their year by saying ‘at the time of this or that Olympiad’. To be victorious at Olympia, situated at the sanctuary of father of Gods, Zeus was the greatest honour in a man’s life. The prize was no more than a simple garland made from springs of wild olive, but what fame for the winners: the greatest poets sang their praises; the greatest sculptors carved their statues to stand for ever in Olympia. They were shown in their chariots, throwing the discus, or rubbing oil into their bodies before the fight. Victory statues like these can still be seen today.

Things have just changed its forms in 2500 years but like many other things the mindset that Greek people possessed still is the base of our modern mindset and culture. However, like other aspects of modern life many aspects have been added about sports.

Talking about cricket, it is an imperialistic game borne in England. The game bore all the features of Victorian fragrance, Played with white, clean dresses. Unquestionable power to the authority, the feature that makes it a ‘royal game’ and the people who play are termed as ‘gentlemen’ as they never question the king’s (umpire) verdict.

Another important thing of this game is that this is a collective game consisted of individual performances. Just like the modern state nation, where individualism is promoted but at the end of the day every personal achievement s praised only when they belong to the collective’s cause.

English imperialists used as a fantastic tool, initially to distinguish themselves with natives and later carry the fragrance of British flavour and inoculate that in the colonial mind, the hangover did not only persist but it took a new dimension during post-colonial era.

In India, the Maharajas and the zamindars, who were the aides of English, grabbed the opportunity with both hands in order to be acquainted with their colonial lords and deconstruct their identities that distinguished with ‘natives’.

Many Indian Maharajas did not only endowed themselves with British education but they were mostly satisfied to be a part of that society and when Ranjitsingji played for English national side, they were jubilant although the English aristocracy treated him as a mere ‘black man’ and Lord Harris, a distinguish man of MCC showed by saying ‘a nigger showing us how to play the game of cricket’.

Things were different in Caribbean; the black people who were imported from Africa took the game as the apparatus or revolution. Use the cricket ground to manifest anti-apartheid movement. As if they took the leaf out of the book of a Roman Gladiator. Every time they floored their opponents that would announce their pride as human being and agony of being enslaved simultaneously.

Remarkably, the inherent feature of cricket helped them to channelise their wrath into a proper revolution. Discipline, perseverance, aggression and innovativeness all must be mélange to form a recipe of cricketing success. A young black man of Caribbean matured all these qualities which not only made them successful in cricket ground but also lifted the spirit of their freedom and prestige. The slef pride and aura of victory transcended through to their social and political life as well. The phenomena can be compared only with the great cultural leap of China.

It was amazing to see a young black man bouncing with fearsome pace to crash the ball into the batsman or an unplayable Yorker to uproot the stumps, making the batman to virtually kneel down and out in both the occasions and by doing that claiming an unprecedented supremacy.

That sensation ignited the crowd, the black people with all the oppression and inequality could feel their supremacy, could pride themselves with tremendous joy and fervor.

During the 70’s we have seen the English cricket ground were filled with black people, enchanting, rejoicing and dancing in the grand stands. They were oppressed in other grounds of life but were king in cricket field.

In the Caribbean they flourished themselves with newly found zeal, nourished their culture. Calypso song became another part of their identity and all one a sudden they realized that they do not belong to this world just to be enslaved but they may rule in certain avenues with skill and passion.

Things however, did not remain that much romantic; the capitalistic forces have some other ideas. The burning passion of cricket could be turned into a jingoist one rather than a romantic or revolutionary one. By doing so not only the revolutionary spirit and flavour will be tormented but also it can create chaos among nations and commodification of cricket would also earn a massive amount of revenues.

The formula was already successful with football. According to famous Latin American writer, political thinker and football lover Eduardo Galeano football became an industry. Although he firmly believed the words of legendary Scottish coach Bill Shankly, that ‘football is not life, it is more important than that’ and he believes nothing is more charming than the game in a human life.

The same believe however is being possessed by many subcontinent people about the game of cricket and like football the capitalism used this situation and commodify cricket.

In India, the scenario is interesting and different than Caribbean. Passion, the agony of oppression is the same but the expression is rather different. The game does not have the romance and eccentricity like that of Caribbean people but rigid nationalism and identity crisis took the centre stage. Basketball and athletics encroached the West Indies people but the men in east could not have competed in those games for many reasons, lack of ability and geopolitics are chief reasons. At the same time football also could not put them into a respectable position even in the Asian arena let alone globally. Interestingly cricket, which was sown by colonial masters could provide them exactly that.

The post-colonial struggle of nation and identity build up took the chance of using the game as ladder to augment the nation’s international status.

Capitalists sniff the opportunities and poured money and everything for profit. Cricket is established as the symbol of nationalism.

Again in the era of globalization when diaspora issue is getting a critical shape, a formidable tussle between the cultures and pride of host country and origin land is omnipresent, cricket gave a strong tool to construct a nouvelle diaspora.

The same thing applies for Pakistan, Sri Lanka and also for Bangladesh. People who live in the Europe, like those Caribbean do not always enjoy the priority in those countries but Cricketing success uplift them just like the Caribbean in 70’s.

The problem is cricket could not compete with other sports especially with football to attain the global status, so the pride of cricketing successes unfortunately does not count in the countries other than the commonwealth ones.

This now is a real dilemma for the sub-continent people. Caribbean people only had to prove against their colonial lords but in this globalization era that would not be good enough for a nation to keep up the pride.

There is a situation, disseminate the game and make it a global one, however the inherent character (too lengthy for fast paced modern life) may make it difficult but at the same time the more and more global participation could annihilate the hegemony of Sub continent in the game.

As a result the jingoistic mood of nationalists may not be sustained and cricket will lose its compatibility as a commodity.

Cricket being the second game to English (after football) and losing the colour to Aussies and South Africans the status of being a global game is already in stake. Only Sub continent nations are feeding the game and India is the major stake holder.

Unfortunately with that much of hegemony the authority is losing its command. Money mongers ar grabbing the game and all sorts of corruptions are inoculated.

So even the credibility of the game is questioned and it is losing its appeal as well. To continue that success in global stage could be only remedy, but again if the illegal means are taken to do so, the game will lose efficacy and charm, globally and locally.

So, cricket is in real jeopardy, the presence of money and profit is inevitable but for doing that if the spirit is killed it will be like the story of that goose which used to lay golden eggs.

However, the passion and elegance of the cricket could still rejuvenate itself, a girl from a remote, poor village of Bangladesh stays starve for the whole day when Bangladesh National team takes part. For her, cricket is the only charm in the life which is otherwise a boring one. Indeed cricket is a game, part of politics but let that be revolutionary, let that girl smile after a whole day of fast rather than find herself being cheated.