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Constructing National Identity in Sachin Tendulkar's *Playing It My Way*

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By

Thamas Dhakal

Symbol No. 621

T.U Reg. No: 9-2-658-79-2010

Central Department of English

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Abstract

*Cricket is one of the most popular games in India that brings people together in multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi cultural India. Cricket, which emerged due to British colonialism, has become an important element in the lives of people living in India. An over increasing popularity of cricket has connected India to the rest of the world. This has become a way of life of people ranging from the developing countries like Bangladesh to the developed countries like Australia. This has become a popular cultural not only in England, where the game originated, but also in the South Asian countries such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The popularity of sports has led to the emergence of famous players like Sachin Tendulkar who is known for his extra-ordinary performance in cricket. Sachin Tendulkar's autobiography *Playing It My Way* unfolds the role of cricket for building national consciousness and unity in India. This research paper explores how cricket has become instrumental to national integration in the multi-cultural India. The development in mass media and glamour in modern time valorized cricket so much that it is a common belief system for all Indians. It is a significant tool to explore Indian national and international identity across the globe. This research takes the ideas of Ray B. Browne's concept of popular culture, Marshall W. Fishwick's 'heroes' and 'icons' as two pillars of popular culture among seven pillars and Richard Dyer's idea of how star is constructed and functions in the society are used as a theoretical tool to analyze Sachin Tendulkar's autobiography. Thus this autobiography highlights celebration of cricket as a popular culture in India which enhances the nations' identity.*

Keywords: identity, cricket, popular culture, national integration, cultural

consciousness.

A representative sportsman of an Indian middle class society, Sachin Tendulkar helps to create his nationalistic identity through cricket. Cricket is known as way of life of Indian public. It enhances identity of the individual if he performs well during his career. In India cricket is established as popular culture which binds the different group of Indians across the globe. Tendulkar himself is a brand of nationalistic identity throughout the world. Everybody knows about him as celebrity icon achieves the 'peak of successes' in his career. His record breaking performances from his early age shapes himself as an idol of cricket.

While playing cricket in global community he is not just constructing his personal identity rather he is representative figure of his country and people. To represent one's country, sport is a significant medium to expose the country's social, economic and cultural aspects. Here, Indian cricket is also able to illustrate the diversity of Indian society. Due to collaboration of all these diverse factors Indian cricket represents glory and pride of their country to global community. There are several experiences of a person in his life. In the same way, he has also a lot of bitter and sweet experiences in the journey of cricketing life. From such experiences, common people can also be inspired due to his continuous effort to enhance cricket and also his laborious struggle which has helped to represent him and his country. Being a middle class person he devoted himself for the nation and sport. He gives much priority to play for the people and his nation. Despite the adversity of certain circumstances, he continued as a national figure for the sake of nations pride and glory. Due to these unforgettable contributions every person in India as well as around the globe gets inspired through his continuous labour, achievement and dedication in cricket.

In India, cricket is a game of mutual co-operation and understanding. Despite, the conflict between India and Pakistan cricket helps to pacify the conflict. When the game is organized in Pakistan, Indian fans and officials celebrate it. In a similar manner, Pakistani fans and officials enjoy the game. In major cases, cricket has been a significant medium to heal the wound given by the partition between these two countries. Even the players and fans emphasize cricket as a representative tool of mutual understanding and co-operation. As Tendulkar explore his experience as, “In the hotel we were received warmly . . . There were huge fans waiting outside with Indian and Pakistani flags. They were eager to watch us play” (244-45). From this we can infer that cricket has help to pacify hatred sentiment and enmity between these two countries. Fans do not consider the boundary and limits of certain walls created by the countries. They are united by the passion, joy and honor that lies in sports and popular culture.

Tendulkar’s official autobiography *Playing it My Way* was published in 2014. This book reveals his memoir particularly of his long cricketing career. From his early days, he has tried to talk about a number of things which he has not addressed in a public figure. He has shown his interest towards cricket from the very early age. In his fourth birthday, his sister gifted him a cricket bat which shows Indian family’s passion towards cricket. From his school life he had played lots of matches. Every moment of his life is occupied with cricket. He got international debut as a test player at the age of sixteen which proves outstanding talent in cricket. His twenty-four years of cricketing career from debut shows the myriads of ups and downs, criticism and struggles of his life. Finally, he becomes fortunate popular sports man in India who got the highest civilian honor ‘Bharat Ratna’ for highlighting and recognizing nation’s identity.

Many critics have analyzed the role of cricket in the global phenomena. However only few have analyzed the impact of cricket and Tendulkar in South Asian context regards to popular culture. It will bring the reviewed ideas of Boria Majumdar and Kausik Bandopadhyay, Emily Crick, Prashant Kidambi, and Abilash Nalapat and Andrew Parker.

Majumdar and Bandopadhyay in “Cricket as Everyday Life” argue: Cricket in 21st century India provides a space where all differences are overcome. The assertion of Indian identity, expression of cultural nationalism or feelings of emotional commonality - these are no longer confined to the stadium or post-match activities. Rather, they have become synonymous with a new games ethic eloquently exemplified through the redefined everyday culture of cricket hardly discernible in European nations. (1450)

According to their argument cricket in India has transgressed the boundary of class, religion, gender and politics. Thus created a new space of citizenship beyond any limitations and it has made whole country unite despite their difference in regional and cultural values. This all occurs only because cricket in India functions as a holistic factor to represent India in international level.

Kidambi in “Hero, Celebrity and Icon: Sachin Tendulkar and Indian Public Culture” mainly focuses on Tendulkar’s iconic personality. He asserts:

Tendulkar has reigned supreme as a sporting idol, his popularity cutting across the boundaries of caste, class, gender, religion and region. Curiously, however, there has been relatively little scholarly scrutiny of the Tendulkar phenomenon and what it might tells us about the changing nature of Indian public culture.

(187)

Tendulkar is presented as a hero who displays superlative skills and performs spectacular feats. The popular sporting figure of Tendulkar elevates him as superhero that bounds the mutual unity of different ethnic people separated by region, religion, caste and historicity but bound by cricket. The growing passion and craze in cricket of Indian public is changing the perception to break the walls of narrow concept constructed by society's norms and values.

Tendulkar embodies the aspirations of millions of Indians. Emily Crick in her article "Cricket and Indian National Consciousness" claims:

Sport can reflect and shape national consciousness just as national consciousness can reflect sporting characters. Sporting nationalism peaks when a nation feels insecure or threatened. Competitive sports can reflect or maintain a collective psychology; the mythic structures with sport can help to give rise to collective identity. (1)

Whether the nation undergoes in progressive or in adverse situation sports unite the nation in one voice. Even when the tension occurs in Indian borders the fans and players are strongly supporting their country to resist against such anti-nationalistic activities through sports. This shows that there is strong link between cricket and Indian national consciousness.

The history of cricket in India shows that it has fostered both nationalism and communalism. Tendulkar is a role model in a newly developed national consciousness because he represented India in the international stage through cricket. Thus, cricket has become a way of expressing national pride and consciousness. Cricket is tied to identity politics in India- to be Indian is to like cricket (5). Cricket has been used in different polities to consolidate a shared Indian identity and also as a way of expressing honor and dignity.

Furthermore, Nalapat and Parker argues that Tendulkar has influenced popular culture in Indian society both as an international sporting figure and as an ambassador for certain political and ‘national’ values that draw sustenance from religion and culture (434). Sports performers become famous by their continuous efforts to enhance their physical and cognitive abilities. By such situation they perform well to give charismatic output. Tendulkar’s emergence as a cricketer meshed perfectly with a wider cultural revolution in India: the information technology boom of the early 1990s, the growth and development of satellite television, consumerism, and the expansion of cricket literacy.

India’s extremely diverse society has held together for over sixty years. Popular culture, especially cricket has had a number of positive roles that would appear to have contributed to social cohesion. Cricket provides a central social activity that created shared experiences and memories. By such aspects cricket has helped to represent and mend many ethno-religious sub cultures into one broader Indian nation as a single identity State. Tendulkar’s autobiography depicts the significance of cricket as a tool of national entity. His autobiography reveals how the cricket is treated in India and its significance for both the common as well as well to do people.

The inning must rank as one of the best I have played because of the immense pressure it was played under. Each boundary brought me an ovation from the raucous crowd wearing tri-color on my helmet on sports biggest stage against the nation’s premier opposition while being watched by close to a billion fans.

I just had to bat Pakistan out of the game. (231)

It reflects the significance of the game. It is not just a game rather it is a devotion and matter of nation’s identity. It is beyond any race, caste and creed. Not only this,

cricket served as tool for international diplomacy and as one of India's greatest expression of national prestige. India's national identity and unity is tied through cricket which promotes Indian Nationalism. In this autobiography also, Sachin Tendulkar emphasizes the role of cricket which has helped to enhance his national identity to the outer world during his career of playing cricket. In this growing modernization India is facing several challenges of its unity. The factors affecting such national unity are overpopulation, poverty, lack of unifying language, competing visions of national character, communal violence, regional conflicts and domestic insurgencies. Despite all these factors cricket has emerged as a significant popular culture which has helped to tie the national identity through game. This game has represented as a strong bond to reflect nations dignity to the outer world.

In the context of cultural diversity of India, cricket becomes a viable means to reconcile differences among people. Under such disparities popular culture is serving as the pillar to unify national polity, which has helped to construct the national identity of a common Indian person. In supporting this idea Raymond Boyle and Richard Haynes argue:

Any sports media culture is rooted in a particular society whose attitudes, fears, prejudice, hopes and expectation are articulated through the language of sports. In this context what happens on the field of play is of course only part of the story and representation of sports fan can become important boundary marker in various forms of individual and collective identity formation. (152)

Cricket is also linked to Indian society. The cricketers can identify themselves with the common people through their performance in cricket. Cricket becomes not only a medium of national identity but also as a medium of international identity. In this context, Tendulkar is able to represent himself as well as his country to the outer

world through cricket. He is able to build his as well as his country's distinct identity by means of cricket. This game is supporting to promote India's larger population in one passage. While playing the game it is not only the competition but it's a matter of emotions and faith of the common people.

India and Pakistan's partition is one of the modern world's largest mass-migration in South-East Asia's humanity. It caused brutal violence on both sides that ripped the political boundaries between these two separated states. But cricket has somehow played a co-operative role in order to minimize such conflict between these two states. It has often helped to mitigate the disparities and conflict as this game is played between two mutually teams under the codes and conduct of sports, which two teams must follow. In such situation cricket has reflected as significant tool to represent country's prestige and dignity. Despite their disparity, teams and players have to play in harmony and spread the message of peace and brotherhood. Due to such provision sport is able to reflect the nation by showing its values and norms of peace and co-operation to the outer world.

Likewise, language policies and politics have always provided challenges for proponents of Indian nationalism. India is built on great linguistic diversity, in order to maintain its diversity and delicate balance of respecting numerous linguistic communities cricket has played decisive role to maintain such linguistic disparity because in every province and society cricket is considered as the game of national identity. Cricket serves as the tool to unite peoples both linguistic and cultural disparity because it does not confine in one domain of class, language region and even. This thesis suggests an element of India's popular culture, especially its sporting culture of cricket. Cricket focuses that it should be added to mainstream factors for

understanding its greater role for promoting country's national identity in international level.

While supporting the idea of sports and popular culture Ray B. Browne and Pat Browne opines the idea in following way:

Popular culture is a system of attitudes, behavior patterns, beliefs, customs and tastes that define the people of any society. It is the entertainment, diversions, icons, rituals, and actions that shape society's everyday world. It is what we do while we are awake, what we think about and how we approach the thought, and what we dream about while we are sleep. It is the way of life we inherit, practice, change and the pass on our descendants. (3)

From the above statement we can easily analyze that cricket is nothing more than the way of life of people in Indian society. As we can see in India from grass root level to upper level people there is fever of cricket. No one deny the fact that cricket can't be separated from India. The positive effect, strong dedication and enthusiasm in cricket are the part of popular culture. It is celebrating everywhere in common people to global media of India such as radio, television, newspaper, magazines and social networking sites. It is like a grand festival for Indians whether it is played as a domestic tournament or as an International tournament. Indian society and their multiple identities are simultaneously attached with cricket. So, in India, Popular culture has nothing to do with popularity with regards to the member engaged in cricket. That kind of popularity has to do only with how widely something is used. It also has nothing to do with quality, though at times we might wish it did. "Popular culture is the lifestyle and lifeblood of groups- large or small- of people" (7). Similar is the case with the popularity of cricket played in India where it is associated with the lifestyle which can be seen in the autobiography of Sachin Tendulkar. He opines that

cricket has become an integral part of his life and his identity is associated with the popularity in a cricket promoting nation. We can find this from his description of one of his fan named Sudhir Gautam who used to fast before every match that Tendulkar played. After winning the World Cup, 2011 Sachin Tendulkar calls Gautam in the dressing room and he describes the expression of Gautam as “he was happy to be with me. He has travelled with us all the way through the World Cup and it was our way of showing him the rest of our fans that we cared. I only wish I could have let every supporters at Wankhede pose with trophy” (370). It is just a one example given by the autobiographer, but there are several such cases where people think cricket and its player an idol of themselves and the nation. Cricket fans like Gautam are there in large number in India. It has helped to establish cricket as a life style and life blood in India.

Sports can and often does, serve as both a tool and reflection of the national identity. Taiwan’s national identity is baseball. In a same way cricket is a game of national pride and glory for Indians. Cricket in India serves as a cultural signifier of national identity because of its ability to attract a lot of spectators and it has raised public interest in it. Cricket’s ability to attract spectators and public enthusiasm in India is undeniable. Cricket contribute expressing India’s emerging spirit and the degree of unity within India, but it also has contributed to increase the degree of unity within cross-cultural roads into its cricket playing neighbors, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Cricket served as a catalyst, reflection and expression of India’s identity to the outside world.

As India is a country of diverse minority group and several cultures. Cricket is promoting to tie the national bond to create nationalistic identity of Indians. Even the minority communities’ embraced Indian cricket boards well for the nations continued

survival and maintaining the country's unification through the sports culture like cricket. Cricket is not just a game rather it is all about fair, honor co-operation and bond of humanity. In order to support this idea David Underdown postulates "Cricket is an opportunity to engage in friendly, 'manly' sports with friends and neighbors; to provide leadership and a model of uncomplaining integrity that lesser men might follow and to offer generous hospitality to players and spectators alike" (25). It is the factor to create harmony between different entities in society like friends, family and two different communities.

Cricket is a game, with very old history in England with rural origins. It was seen as a means to cut across class lines. It inspires to the lesser men to reach upward or to include in the higher strata of society. Tendulkar is also the person from the lower middle class. By embracing the cricket as a sport he is able to make his identity as reputed and dignified person in national as well as in international level. For him the sport has played as a means supporting to build his identity. Even in Indian history also cricket has played significant role to depict India's national identity. In order to highlight the concept of Indian cricket history Mihir Bose argues, "If everything about India were to be destroyed, a history of Indian cricket would serve as an outline of the history of the nation and give important clues to national character"(31). This clearly reflects the relation of cricket with the Indian history and its significance in Indian society.

The elements of nation's common culture strengthen its societal bonds. Multi-ethnic nations like India borrow some aspect of their common culture in order to promote more civic character. As Bartein and Cooley argues, "there is agreement in nationalism and identity scholarship that sports constitutes a major ritual of popular culture. Scholars from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds agree that sports has

social, cultural and political significance in reproducing collective identities on a local, national, regional and global level” (12). It includes aspect of state level, as well as national play, which represent significant investment in development of cricket which promotes to unify the whole nation into one single entity. It merely benefit from the broader national which contribute to solidify the nation. Cricket currently stands alone as supreme of Indian sports and solely represents the sporting aspirations of the nation in an unprecedented manner. India’s nation of over a billion people hangs their entire sporting hopes on their cricket team. India expect Tendulkar to single handedly make up for the United Nations assessment that India is the 146th most developed nation in the world. Not only this, the intensely magnified expectation of his countrymen is high in order to depict his country’s identity when he goes with the bat in the pitch.

Tendulkar has represented supreme as a sporting idol. He represents acting as an iconic figure in the field of cricket. Being a national icon Tendulkar embodies the aspirations of millions of Indians. The symbolic meanings they have invested in his persona derive their charge from the interplay between cricket, nationalism and the middle class in contemporary India. From the 1930s, however, cricket began gradually to outstrip other sporting activities in popularity. He announced himself with a series of significant feats that are now an essential part of the folklore of contemporary India. In February 1988, when he compiled a world record of batting partnership of 664 runs with his schoolmate Vinod Kambali in the Harris Memorial Challenge Shield, Bombay’s oldest inter-schools cricket tournament. In November 1989, aged sixteen he made his international debut at Karachi against Pakistan, becoming in the process the youngest Indian to play test cricket. Even in small age he represented the nation in which he was capable to indentify his country with pride and

glory. This is only possible because of cricket even in such a small age. He is a unique national icon who has dominated Indian public life in a way that none of the great cricketers of the past ever did. He came to symbolize such situation because of the cultural self-assertion of the rapidly expanding Indian middle classes. In India cricket has begun to engender nationalist sentiments and to bring together Indians of different communities from the early twentieth century. The most ominous trend of all cricket team rapidly came to be equated with the nation's identity. When India won the cricket field, the victory was celebrated as a national triumph; when it lost, the defeat was treated as nothing less than a national calamity.

His assertive style of play resonated well with those who were keen to contest their own marginal status in the world. He is seen as an icon of unity in a nation stretched by divisive political conflicts and different opposing thoughts in society. He became a representative figure for India's new middle classes in the era of economic liberalization and globalization. For one, his life powerfully encapsulated the emergent middle-class aspirations of upward social mobility: a boy from an ordinary family background who succeeded in gaining victory, through his talent and hard work into a world of money, power and fame.

I was told that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh wanted to speak to me and after couple of moments the PM came on the line. He congratulated on my career and thanked me for serving Indian cricket for 24 years. Then he told me that in recognition of my contribution to Indian sports I had been awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honor. (440)

He is only able to represent a distinct identity of himself and country only because of sports which is a significant aspect of popular culture. Making a phone call to a single player for his contribution by a prime minister of such a huge nation highlights the

importance of cricket given both by state and people.

Cricket in India is connected to identity politics. It has become a way of expressing national pride and consciousness. Varun Sahani argues, “Cricket and Indian national consciousness are inextricably linked. [Cricket is] tied to identity politics- to be Indian is to like cricket” (36). Men, women and children who have no interest in the game earlier have now become ardent fans because of its power to represent the nation as a whole. India went on to win the match and there is a wide-scale celebration throughout the country. In such occasion even the Muslims and different tribal people joined this celebration. He experiences the celebration of different people in his own colony. As he mentions the situation, “it was a spontaneous gathering of all my friends at our neighbor’s apartment to celebrate the hundred and it was really touching to know that people in the colony were so thrilled at the accomplishment” (61). He is awarded as the player of the match in the early age in Newzealand. His magnificent innings including century established him to recognize as a sporting idol all over the country. After returning from overseas he got tremendous appreciation from the local crowds at Mumbai. The outstanding celebration from his fans around his house shows the love, passion and craze towards cricket and his performance.

Different groups of people with varying cultures and religions are tied in the period of celebration. The sense of awe is clearly portrayed in the victory of nation. Being the part of Indian cricket team, Tendulkar flourishes the holistic identity through the sport. Indian cricket is sustaining a variety of mutual understanding and nationalistic identification. He is a national hero a ‘sporting god’. While defining the concept of hero of Marshall W. Fishwick in his book;

Heros means superior man, embodiment of composite ideas, savior of the

people. By the process of apotheosis heroes was made into a god since he defied death, danger, and destruction. History finds its essential meaning in heroes and popular culture its unending task in discovering new ones. No pillar deserves more careful scrutiny than heroes. (59)

Defining Tendulkar as hero, he is regarded as superior man because of his extraordinary performance. He saves his nation's dignity in the pitch through his ability. People from India worship him as a living god. No one can deny the fact that in every social media there is the popularity of his career. As above concept of the hero Tendulkar in India is considered as a modern age hero. He is regarded so because he is showing heroic quality through sports. Despite his failure and quest to reclaim a lost domain are also integral elements of the heroic ideal. In final phase of his long career, Tendulkar also fulfills this requirement in larger measures.

In modern time the matter of identity plays significant roles to form the nation. Here, Tendulkar is able to unite the whole nation in single identity as India. This deed of him is the outcome of Indian identity to outer world. As Tendulkar expresses his nationalistic identity while playing cricket. Prashant Kidambi asserts this idea as;

Tendulkar's larger-than-life image was carefully nurtured and ceaselessly celebrated by these new sports channels. The sense of visual intimacy engendered in viewers by the new technologies and the models of presentation that they deployed, consolidated his star status. His presence thus attracted vast audiences to the one day games that quickly became the staple fare of these channels; in turn, the televised coverage of his exploits made him India's greatest sporting celebrity. (194)

Sports channels of India have crucial role to flourish his stardom and image. Cricketing fans from the different parts of the world attracted through the sports channels. His celebrity status is shaped through the mass media and technology. “In classic times, heroes were good-men; in the middle God’s men; in the Renaissance, universal man; in the eighteenth century; gentlemen; in the nineteenth, self-made men. Our century has seen the common man and the outsider become heroic.

In different times heroes is categorized in different perspective. While coming up to twenty-first century hero is categorized as a common man whose significance is determined by the media, televisions and different modes of communication. Sachin Tendulkar is a unique national icon who has dominated Indian public life in a way that none of the great cricketer of the past ever did. His journey in Indian cricket is classic example of the heroic adventure myth as formulated by Joseph Campbell. According to Campbell “there are so many stories of the heroes in mythology because “in popular novels, the main character is a hero or heroine who has found or done something beyond the normal range of achievement and experience” (123). He has also done the great achievement in the field of sports which has contributed to enhance the nationalistic identity to the outer world. Through his physical and strategic effort of playing cricket has formed a concept that every human wants to be alike.

He came to symbolize the globalizing ambitions and cultural self assertion of the rapidly expanding Indian middle classes. “Icons mean image, picture, or representations that are external expressions of internal convictions. Icons objectify deep mythic structures of reality, expressing the eternal in terms of the temporary-everyday things that make every day meaningful. This pillar can be described, in

simplest terms, as ‘tangible mythology’ (131). In the similar manner the everyday activities of him are attached with the concern of common people. His way of playing, any public speaking and even the playing tools becomes the matter of the national identity. In a minute level his iconic image is spreading a significance of national identity.

As we have seen, the production and marketing of image as a celebrity played a crucial part in this regard. In order to reflect the treatment of cricket in India Ram Chandra Guha opines, “The Bombay batsman Sachin Tendulkar’s perhaps the best non-Indian as well as one of the richest. There are pamphlets and books about him in his native Marathi, in Hindi and Tamil too. When Tendulkar is bating against the Pakistan swing- bowler Wasim Akram the television audience exceeds the entire population of Europe” (5). This situation reflects the growing popularity of cricket in India as a prominent factor to celebrate the entire happiness in a single moment. It has become a common belief and way of people’s life in Indian society.

But to understand the Phenomenon of sports it is necessary to explore the popular reception of his image and the ways in which this has been shaped by the changing politics of nationalism and class in contemporary India. On the final tests at Mumbai we can find how Tendulkar’s image has been portrayed in a very different way. He has not imagined that sorts of popularity in that grand hotel after he won the match. He finds himself as a person from the distinct space because his image is considered as brand of nation. As Tendulkar asserts that:

When we eventually got to the Taj Mahal Palace hotel, I couldn’t believe the lengths they had gone to. My pictures were in all the lifts and on the nineteenth floor, where the team was staying, there were photographs on every wall. In my own room every little thing you could think of was personalized.

From the pillow covers, everything had my name on it. (427)

Indian sports highlights and honors a single person involved in it only because he is the representative figure of national icon. By individualizing the goods of hotel and hanging the pictures in the wall is the craze towards the sports culture. All these factors reflect that the cricket is not only the game but it is a devotion, love and identity towards nationalistic figure which is made possible through game. He is presented before the world as an ideal role model to today's Indian youth who possess humanitarian values such as morality and virtue. His identity is portrayed as a hallmarks of ideal Indian which every youth desires to be.

In field of sports, film and music the individual is not a single entity rather he represents a mass of people both in national and international level. Their every moment is somehow attached with the people and country. In the same Richard Dyer in his book *Stars* asserts how the characters are constructed in the field of popular culture. He argues, "A character's personality in a film is seldom something given in a single shot. Rather it has been built up, by film-makers and audience alike, across the whole film. A character is a construct from the very many different signs deployed by a film" (106). As in the film the characters are representing the several aspect of the society. They are not just the character of film but as representative figure of society which conveys some significance to the society. In the same way cricket in India is not just a game that is played in the ground, but it is beyond that and it portrays significance for the nation's pride. Tendulkar is also like a film star who is not only playing the game but he is building the nations identity. His fan following and craze towards the cricket represent societies several factor of unification. Similarly he asserts "A star is an image not a real person that is constructed (as any other aspect of fiction is) out of range of materials (eg. Advertising, magazines, sports, music, etc).

Stars are commodities produced and consumed on their meanings” (112). From this we can infer that media plays a pivotal role in shaping the identity of stars. Sachin Tendulkar association with cricket has helped him to reshape his identity not only as a cricketer but also as a icon who represents Indian national identity.

Tendulkar’s emergence as a cricketer meshed perfectly with a wider cultural revolution in India. He is able to unite the diversity of culture through cricket. His iconic image is the symbol to unite the nation. As Holt T. and Craig J.T. in the article “Man of Action Heros” opines, “cultural icons are old as civilization, but their mode of production has changed dramatically since the mid- nineteenth century” (2). With the modern mass communication, we increasingly dwell in a world in which the circulation of cultural icons and often rely on these symbols on everyday life. Icon serves as society’s fundamental compass points. More generally cultural icons are representative symbol that people accept as shorthand to signify important ideas.

All other sports or any brands can become a representative icon for the nation. But in particular here this research is concerned with Tendulkar’s popular cultural influence in Indian society as a national and international sporting figure. He is an ambassador for certain political and a national value that draw sustenance from religion and culture which ultimately shapes the brand icon. Indian government also has appointed him as the Member of Parliament in order to promote sports and to show the importance of cricket. As he expresses his experience as, “I had already been appointed to Rajya Sabha, the upper house of Indian Parliament, in 2012, and now to be given the highest civilian honor by the Government of Indian meant a lot to me” (440). This step of government of India reflects how Indian pride and prestige is bound in sports culture. Even a player is decorated with prestigious honor. Being appointed in a member of parliament reflects as a political ambassador who would

serve and unite the Indian Polity. Under such circumstances Tendulkar's identity is connected with country people in Indian society who celebrate his performance.

After winning the cricket world cup of 1983, it became the favorite sport of the country. In recent times cricket coupled with media and bollywood as swelled as religion among the Indian audience. Gradually, India becomes the world leader in cricket. The birth of Indian Premier League (IPL) resulted in flow of nation's identity and recognition because it assimilates the diverse culture if India. In his book *power play sport, the Media and Popular Culture* Boyle further argues "With its showbusiness style auction, wealthy franchise owners and media and sponsorship financial underwriters, the IPL demonstrates how a sport such as Indian cricket has become deeply embedded – and indeed dependent on- a complex relationship between commerce and the media" (51). The creation of Indian Premier league and its impacts upon media and its consumers deeply promoting Indian cricket culture. Tendulkar, who became the most highly insured cricketer in the fourth edition of the IPL who got insurance of fourty four crore. It shows that media promotes cricket and cricket promotes cricketer.

It not reflects Indian diversity but tries to bind that diversity in unity through cricket. Every player is representing a grand nation with specific significance. Indian has produced players who are acclaimed around the world for their performance in sports. Again, after winning 2011 world cup, ICC champion's trophy in 2012 for past four years, India is among the top in ICC test and one day rankings. All these facts, reflects the identification of India in a distinct way which enhances the nations dignity and popularity to the outer world. In this regard there is a significant contribution of Tendulkar to reflect and promote Indian national sentiments through his efforts of playing cricket.

There are several negative and bitter perceptions towards certain country and its people by any other developed nation. In this regard players from Australia has also negative perception towards Indians. But after the organization of IPL such perception is dismantled and a new relation is formed basing on Indians diverse identity. As Tendulkar expresses his experience about the role played by IPL to reflect his country's identity. He mentions, "The IPL has contributed to improving international player relations. The best example is the case of Andrew Symons and Harbajan Singh. In the fourth session of the IPL in 2011, Symonds and Bhajji played together for the Mumbai Indians. The collaboration impacted so much that they were showing great respect towards each other" (310). Cricket has become a means to unite people not only nationally but also globally. IPL has contributed to establish friendly relation between the players. The players who were rivals in the past play for the same franchise and become intimate friends. So, this has helped to accumulate people culturally from different part of cricketing nations.

As per above mentioned facts the cricket has promoted Indian diversity. Different tournaments like IPL and other national and international champions trophy brings the players of diverse world. These players join hand together for mutual cooperation, understanding and cultural diversification. By acknowledging all these factors the players from foreign also ranks India a country of distinct identity. Despite the illiteracy and economic shortage in Indian People cricket is celebrated so much that it shapes countries unique identity. Such situation helps to emphasize fan culture and attracts foreign interests to explore India's diversities.

India is a symbol of plurality, where so many cultures flourish; language finds their saga of origin and zenith. People are diverse in their rituals, religion and taste, a thing that binds this emotionally fervent country is cricket. Nothing comes faster in

the sports pages of Indian newspapers, than a cricket win, lose or controversy.

Cricketers are more than role models to be worshipped by many across age groups.

The influence of cricket in India can understandable from the fact that, so far, only a cricketer could be conferred with the country's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna. Cricket had outperformed other sports in terms of viewership and revenue generation. Presenting a unique and involving account of the Indian cricket phenomenon in his book *The Magic of Indian Cricket* Mihir Bose claims:

Indian cricket has been a major driving force in the world game. It developed into a national passion and now wielding global power. Indian cricket has almost become indispensable to modern India's identity, culture and society. He discussed the game in terms of race, caste, politics, national consciousness and ambition, money, celebrity and the media, evoking all the unpredictability, frustration and glory, which mark the magic of Indian cricket. (9)

Above concept of Bose explains how the cricket is shaping modern India's diverse factor including its economic and cultural entity. This game has been attached so much with the national consciousness that is helping to shape the nations identity.

Due to popularity of cricket it is also enhancing the domain in media and film which is emphasizing the cricket's popularity and relating to the economical activities. As Tendulkar also expresses his experience in advertisement and the role played by him in media. He asserts,

“Shah Rukh and I were shooting for Pepsi at lords on the eve of the 1999 World Cup and plan was for Shah Rukh to pose as me and open the refrigerator in the dressing room to take out a chilled Pepsi. That's when I was supposed to confront him for impersonating me. I ended up adding my own ideas to the commercial and said we should not stop there, but I should take

the Pepsi bottle from him and force him to go out and bat in my place as well.

The director loved the idea and changed the script on the day of the shoot.

(331)

Indian players interest in involving commercial media and publicity reflects the greater dimension of cricket in India. Cricket is now not only considered as sports but it has also attachment with mass media and electronic advertisement. In the world of cricket, he is a unique individual and a celebrity, soon to be film star and a hero. Now he is tagged by the consumer society as a brand in different products.

The best players enjoy the iconic status reserved for Hindu gods and film stars. Their faces peep out of highway billboards; on television they commend all kinds of consumer products. The cricketer Sachin Tendulkar is perhaps the best-known Indian, as well as one of the richest. When Tendulkar is batting against the Pakistani swing-bowler Wasim Akram, the television audience exceeds the entire population of Europe. This emergence of cricket as India's dominant national symbol has to assert that cricket is truly an Indian sport discovered in England, a contention that becomes more prescient year by year.

Tendulkar as a cricket star embodies a certain meaning and identity of India. He is the iconicity of Indian cricket captain and a nationalist figure. Though he is cricket player he is representing much than cricketer himself. In this respect the function and significance of stars is in larger horizon. In this respect John Izod in his book *Myth, Mind and the Screen: Understanding the heroes of our time* opines, "stars function as signs, no matter in which medium they flourish, that have been more or less deliberately constructed to carry certain meanings" (79). In this sense the unity, identity, source of inspiration and national pride are the several factors that he carries. The Indian population is still divided into several conflicts of society like

religion, caste and class. But in the cricket team all these factors are dismantled to spread the message of nation's cultural, economic, and social unification.

Tendulkar who is identified as a proved patriot and as a role model for Indian's youth becomes the captain of Indian cricket team. He is seen as almost like the Gandhian figure who seems to unify the Indian population both through his examples on the field and his perception towards integrity and moral stature. During the terrorist attack of November, 2008 on Taj Mahal palace hotel he declared his tribute of hard-fought century for the victims of the attack. As a nationalistic figure he is representing Indian to unite in such adverse circumstances and appeal to dedicate for the nation. In his autobiography also he expresses the appeal and dedication in the name of India. As he express:

I don't think India winning and me scoring a hundred will help those who lost their lives, but if we can help by contributing some small way then we will do whatever we can do that. It is a terrible loss and our hearts are with them.

From my point of view I see it as an attack on India, not just Mumbai, and I would like to dedicate this hundred to all those who have gone through such terrible things. (322)

In this way it is possible to see that Tendulkar is reflecting the role of not merely as a sportsman but he is advocating the 'voice' of India. He is trying to heal the wound given by terrorism during the deadly attack in Mumbai. It is only possible because of his iconic image of national figure which the other individual cannot do. His spreading of such consolation and appeal to unite the people reflects the role of cricket and its uniting factor to tie people even in the adverse circumstances.

Watching a match is often a collective and participatory exercise where people with diverse backgrounds come together before radio or television sets, forgetting

their differences, and identifying with each other. In contrast to the inclusive sentiment that embraces diversity cricket provides a space for expressing national sentiments, especially as reflected in matches. Today India is considered as the new cricketing country in a new dimension.

We live in a world where we desire, seek, constant inspiration and satisfaction which pursue vicarious fulfillment through celebrity icon. In this modern world icon provides a sense of identity, a shared language and a means of accomplishment of our aspirations. Tendulkar's combination of inspirational and iconic figure has built a unique identity that is accepted and admired around the world.

Tendulkar's popularity is an outcome of the popularity of cricket, which is the most famous sports in India. Without cricket he wouldn't have gained wide recognition and viewership across the country. His 'celebrity icon' does not only resemble his personal identity but is a representative image that helps to identify the importance of cricket to promote Indian nationalism and global identity. Media has also played pivotal role to present him as a national hero who is inflicted with nationalism, humanism and tolerance among the common Indian people. Today's youth take him as a role model for their career advancement and wish to be like him. This image has not been created all of a sudden but is an outcome of consistent labour, dedication and passion to represent his country. His pride in playing for the nation has not only benefitted him but has led cricket to act as a bridge to unite people in geographically, religiously and culturally diverse nation. His autobiography informs us about the importance of sports for nation building. Even the people from lower social strata can become a celebrity icon and resemble his country through the medium of popular culture.

His various representative image such as “Sachin as God of Cricket” “Sachin as Everyday Way of Life” and “Sachin as a Role Model” is the output of the wide popularity of Cricket in India. This clearly suggests the role of popular culture in shaping individual and nationalistic identity. The craze and popularity of cricket in south Asian world get its widespread recognition after the world-class performances by Tendulkar in his career. Cricket has become an integral part of Indian culture which we seen through the autobiography of Tendulkar.

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