

## **Development and Modernization - A Socio-Cultural Perspective of Sport**

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Development, modernization and sport are a unique socio-cultural value-based triumvirate operative in society. At par with, if not higher, commerce, industry, science and technology, sport, over the centuries and especially in the modern times, has empirically proved to be an effective instrument of change and progress, contributing substantially to shaping up world's social, cultural and economic scenario. It has spurred man, more than anything else, to take ever-changing life situations sportingly and to make an all-out concerted effort to achieve better standards of health, fitness and wellbeing without which neither productivity nor progress can possibly be ensured .

### **Development**

In bio-psychological nuance, development means 'advancement, more unfoldment, and progressive change' in the human organism' (Kamlesh, 2011); in socio-cultural parlance, it encompasses the need and the means by which to provide better lives for people - especially the down-trodden i.e. those who are mired neck-deep in social, economic, and educational backwardness. Economic growth, as a sign of development, no doubt, is crucial for them as most life activities straight away depend on it. But, this, indeed, is not enough because the concept of development, apart from economic uplift, essentially covers health, fitness, nutrition, wellbeing, education, a clean environment, recreation, and opportunity to catch up with the fleet-footed change. Unfortunately, most benefits of development in most fields have been harvested by the elite, not by the underprivileged teeming millions, who continue to reel under poverty, want and neglect. For these *scum of the earth* creatures even the basic necessities of life - food, shelter, and clothing - are a distant dream. They simply keep existing with the fond hope of seeing the bright dawn of development.

### **Modernization**

Modernization is "adapting" to the requirements of the current times (Oxford English Dictionary). It is a transformational process of moving from traditional (conservative, agrarian, male-dominated, autocratic or oligarchic, metaphysically driven) society to the one that is highly literate, physically educated, culturally awakened, economically vibrant, merit-based (not ascriptive), participatory (non-parochial), and functionally (not functionally diffusive) specialized. Modernization is an unstoppable continuous process, having its genesis in the Age of Enlightenment when advancement of society was sought through advancement of knowledge, science and technology. The moving hands of the clock shaped the modernization idea into a grand theory in the belief that modern societies are based upon development and the expectation of development. Indeed the cohesion of modernizing societies requires more or less continuous development. However, categorizing societies into traditional and modern ones seems somewhat crude, and of limited usefulness. At present most societies are at least partially modernized; many are on way to be modernized, trying to be in step with its onward movement. But no society is 'completely' modernized and the rate of modernization is variable among societies, and among systems in a society. Since modernization is dynamic, it is more useful to consider modernization as a process than as a state. It can be seen as the general mechanism by which the social transformation from agricultural dominance to domination by trade and industry takes place, and the permanent continuation of this process. The difference between modernizing and

traditional societies is profound - being the difference between simple static structure and complex dynamic process. Modernization has become a *buzz word* across the globe, and as a theory, it is gorgeous in its designs and objectives of advancement, development and progress. It encompasses many different disciplines and seeks to explain how society progresses, what variables affect that progress, and how societies can react to that progress.

### **Sport**

Man is sportive by nature, so the term sport is very much familiar to each one of us; it is a household word. Formally sport is defined in myriad ways but a universal, and easily understood authentic definition of it come from the *United Nations Inter-agency Taskforce on Sport for Development and Peace*: "Incorporated into the definition of 'sport' are all forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction. These include: play; recreation; organized, casual or competitive sport; and indigenous sports or games." However, sports scientists tend to restrict the term to highly-structured, well-organized goal-directed physical activities governed by rules or customs and often engaged in competitively. Sport as recreation is a universal social-cultural activity, which all humans without any age, gender, colour and creed distinction, plays in some form and enjoys, but sport as a competitive endeavour is the purview of a few genetically endowed, highly skilled, scientifically trained, and mentally well-prepared. By all stretch of imagination, sport as competition has overshadowed sport as recreation. Verily, tough competitive athletic arenas require tough competitors to compete and win the much sought-after *Olympic Gold* and glory their nations.

Though sport has existed in the human society since man's nomadic life, just twenty five millennia ago, the educationally awakened Greeks institutionalized it as a phenomenon of tremendous socio-cultural value; they placed athletics (sports) at par with ethics, aesthetics and mathematics as a major component of *complete* education and an effective instrument of human development. The Greeks were truly modern in their outlook on life. Interestingly, the education of a Grecian child began in the gymnasium, creating health minds through healthy bodies. Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum were schools housed in gymnasia. Ever since those happy Hellenic times, sport has provided man opportunities unbounded to develop in body, mind and spirit and the society to adopt sportsmanship as the watchword in the process of modernization.

### **Sport and Development**

People in every nation love sport. Its values - fitness, fair play, teamwork, and the pursuit of excellence - are universal. At its best, it brings people together, no matter what race, religion, language and country they come from. Sport and development refers to the use of sport as a tool for development and peace. In this area 'sport' is generally understood to include physical activities that go beyond competitive sports. Homo actors in sport, academia, private sector, non-profit and non-governmental organisations, government agencies, United Nation agencies and international organisations, the media (both electronic and print), the general public as well as young people are increasingly interested in the potential of sport as a tool to reach personal, community, national and international development objectives. They are also interested in how sport can be used as a tool for addressing some of the challenges that arise from humanitarian crises and in conflict and post-conflict settings.

As sport becomes increasingly part of humanitarian and development work, as well as a part of the corporate social responsibility practices of some private sector actors, interested parties are anxious to explore the potential, as well as the limitations, of sport in their work. "The power of sports is to empower," said Bruce Kidd, "and now, more than ever, sports should be utilized for development and peace, as it plays an instrumental role in highlighting "universal education, gender equality, child and maternal health, combating HIV AIDS and ensuring global partnership".

The UN's perspective on sport and development is clear, bright and brilliant with a variety of significant initiatives and programmes that aim to bring more and more people into sport fold. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations came out with the following statement:

Sport is increasingly recognized as an important tool in helping the United Nations achieve its objectives, in particular the Millennium Development Goals. By including sport in development and peace programmes in a more systematic way, the United Nations can make full use of this cost-efficient tool to help us create a better world.

Notwithstanding what other development-oriented agencies like schools, colleges, universities, sports organizations, do to make sport an effective instrument of social uplift by providing healthy recreation and opportunities to express their talent to the masses, the United Nations has been using sport as a tool in development cooperation and humanitarian aid efforts for decades. Annually, since 2003, the UN General Assembly has adopted a resolution on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace.

In recent years, UN programmes, funds and specialized agencies have increasingly recognized and harnessed the power of sport to achieve their objectives, particularly the eight *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs) adopted in 2000. Wilfried Lemke, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace vehemently argued for support to sport as an instrument of social development: "Sport has a crucial role to play in the efforts of the United Nations to improve the lives of people around the world. Sport builds bridges between individuals and across communities, providing a fertile ground for sowing the seeds of development and peace."

The UN system draws on the unique convening power of sport as a tool for fundraising, advocacy and raising public awareness about the activities and objectives of the UN. Over 75 famous athletes have been appointed as 'Ambassadors' or 'Spokespersons' for the UN. In 2005, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2005 as the *International Year of Sport and Physical Education* (IYSPE 2005), in the framework of which the 'Group of Friends on Sport for Development and Peace' was created. This Group is an informal intergovernmental platform among Permanent Representatives to the UN in New York aiming to encourage UN Member States and the UN system to integrate sport actively into their policies and strategies.

In the UN initiative of *Reaching out to Governments*, in 2009, the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group (SDP IWG), originally launched in 2004, was made an integral part of UNOSDP. It operates with a mandate to promote and support the adoption of policies and programmes by national governments to harness the potential of sport to contribute to the achievement of development objectives, specifically the MDGs, and peace.

### **Sport and Modernization**

In almost all fields of activity, knowledge and interaction, comparison and contrast are often drawn between what is traditional and what is modern; in some cases, the two viewpoints are found at logger heads, for example, in music, dance, art, literature, philosophy, or fashion. Sport has also come under the sway of traditional-modern conflict. Notwithstanding the kind of impact this logic makes on the ongoing development of a particular activity or subject, the foregone conclusion is that the modern ultimately triumphs and takes precedence over the traditional and receives a preferential treatment at the hands of the so-called progressive thinkers and actors as a consequence of which not only the value of the traditional gets eclipsed by the dazzle of the modern but also its spatial dimension gets shrunk.

It would be interesting to assess sport on the anvil of a few important parameters of Modernization Theory. The modernization theory, to begin with, focuses specifically on the type of modernization thought that originated way back in 17th century, which brought social mores and technological achievements in a new epoch. The impact of this new line-of-thought on sport was not immediate. It

another two centuries for it to truly make inroads in sport. The benchmark was Resurrection of the Olympic Games in 1896 pioneered by a French Baron - Pierre de Coubertin. This sporting extravaganza dramatically changed sport-as-recreation concept to sport as a fair competition of tremendous educational, social, cultural and economic value. The moving wheel of technological development across the globe gave sport a new look, and new avenues for development and achievement. Interestingly, not only has sport modernized itself in several operational aspects, but also it has revolutionized the human thought about harnessing youth energy for constructive purposes through vigorous play and physical activity.

The Modernization Theory encompasses the world of globalization, where cultural mores and ideas are easily spread throughout the world, leading to a sort of universal culture that serves as a baseline for all cultures. Starting from the fact that the promotion of globalization has the purpose of sharing economic and social benefits among countries and their populations, by acting in this sense, the sports and Olympic movement are the biggest votaries, supporters and practitioners of globalization, not by precept but by concrete example. In 1993, sociologists Elias and Dunning empirically studied long term processes of change in sport, highlighting globalization internationally. Bernstein (2009) stated unequivocally: "The spread of modern sports is one of the arenas where the process of globalization is visible." Modern sport is connected to a global network of interdependent relations. In the context of globalization, the five associated dimensions of this domain include (a) people's international mobility (athletes, trainers, officials, organizers, etc.); (b) technological optimization and efficiency increase (equipment, infrastructure, facilities); (c) economic problems (prizes in money, approvals, marketing); (d) mass-media contribution (promoting trans-national sports personalities); and (e) ideological dimension (ideas transcending the national, regional or international ideologies, such as Olympism). The word "Olympism" evokes images of the Olympic Games (both ancient and modern) and their philosophy, strongly influenced by an under-current of the British School sports-related traditions in education, concerns directly not just the elite athletes, but everybody, and not just for a short while, but for their whole life, not just for competition and winning, but also for the values of participation and cooperation, not just for the sport as an activity, but also in order to influence the training and development of the individual personality in agreement to the demands of the social life. So, this will accentuate the role of sports in: world development, peaceful coexistence, moral and civic education, promotion of justice, respect for people, understanding and reason, autonomy and perfection - all basically, the main values of the liberal humanism.

As per Modernization Theory, the societies that modernize tend to move towards more free and open systems of government, greater equality between genders, religions, and races, and more invested populaces. There perhaps exists no better way of achieving this lofty objective than through creation of sports or physical culture that is free of any kind of social, ethnic, lingual or gender bias. de Coubertin - the father of the Modern Olympics - thought that elite sport would inspire sport for all i.e. creation of a universal sport culture in which every individual would be free to pursue his or her life goals in situations that are physically educating, mentally stimulating and socially invigorating. He dreamt of a sport environment that allowed every person adequate opportunity to enjoy the solace of physical activity in its beautiful diversity and offer fertile ground for developing and exhibiting the sporting talent in every man and woman. His optimism at its zenith when he said:

In order for a hundred people to take part in physical culture, it is necessary for fifty to take part in sport; in order for fifty to take part in sport, twenty must specialize, in order for twenty to specialize five must be capable of astonishing feats of prowess.

This strategy was based on the simple observational learning procedure i.e. you do what you see others doing. When you see great athletes running gracefully, you too feel like running and emulating them. Abebe Bikiela, winner of the marathon in two successive games, 1960 and 1964, inspired hundreds to run. In recent years, not thousands but hundreds of thousands have run

marathon races in many countries. The achievements in women's gymnastics of the Czech, Caslavka and the Russians, Turischeva and Korbut caused long queues to form outside the doors of gymnastics clubs. All this could be cited as an index of sport globalization.

Modernization theory, takes no stance on whether modernization is a good or bad thing. Instead, it represents a broad framework within which to look at the pros and cons of globalization. As sport becomes increasingly part of humanitarian and development work, as well as a part of the corporate social responsibility practices of some private sector actors, interested parties are anxious to explore the potential, as well as the limitations, of sport in their work.

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