

(Article: 8)

# SPOT FIXING IN IPL: EXPLORING THE ARCHEOLOGY OF SPOT

**Abir Chattopadhyay**

Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication & Journalism  
S.A. Jaipuria College, University of Calcutta  
abmo2020@yahoo.co.in ; abir.communication@gmail.com; abirchattopadhyay.blogspot.in

## 1. Prologue :

The Indian Premier League for T20 Cricket or popularly known as IPL in its 6<sup>th</sup> edition had utterly been mugged into the Spot Fixing scandal or simply say, a 'spot betting racket' that caused a massive uproar in the country. The manifestation of the uproar is quite noteworthy on many aspects<sup>N1</sup>. Some cricketers found guilty were detained and interrogated by the Delhi Police as they claimed to have unearthed some more names from Mumbai film industry, IPL franchise owners and finally its underworld connection too. Popular media spent enough footage to cover the aftermaths and plausible interpretations of what actually happened. Within a couple of weeks all detainees got released on bail. The highest Court has already given BCCI the charge of investigating the whole fiasco and it has happily punished guilty cricketers by banning them according to their wish. Albeit the voices from rest of the country were raised primarily against BCCI and its premier players the Indian democratic system has clearly pronounced it as a simple cricketing issue thus keeping the BCCI's hyper-commercial project of transcending cricket unhampered. Everything has however limped back to the normalcy like many other unresolved issues except the spot-fixing 'drama' or 'scandal' or above all the 'shame'.

Meanwhile, on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2015, the investigating Justice R.M. Lodha Committee, appointed by BCCI, earlier recommended and empowered by the Justice Mukul Mudgal Committee Report, has come out with its verdict pronouncing certain exemplary decisions like suspending CSK and Rajasthan Royals for two years from IPL and banning Gurusath Meiyappan and Raj Kundra for life from IPL Cricket. The allegation is as simple as anything: They both were betting regularly. However instead of moving into the detail of the report the paper prefers to delve into the dialectic of "spot" and fixing of it in exchange of huge money. The dialectic of spot reveals a new political economic layer not just over the political economy of cricket but the gross political economic structure of the country.

The Lodha Committee verdict on spot fixing scandal are nowadays the front page hit in both national and regional dailies. But the whole incident however stunned the country and the cricketing world for many other reasons that need to be excavated by new archeological means.

- (a) Firstly, cricketers are being used to create imaginary spots; others are betting on these for a hefty exchange value;
- (b) Secondly, it has roots in Mumbai Film industry and the underworld also;
- (c) Thirdly, close associates of the BCCI authority are found involved;
- (d) Fourthly, franchise owners and industrial icons are also involved in spot fixing;
- (e) The main investigator 'Delhi Police' albeit claimed to disclose some more names involved in it, but did such nothing. So investigation and judicial proceedings continue with the names so far disclosed by the police.
- (f) Corporate pressures mounting to consider spot-fixing or betting legal in India. '*FICCI urges government to legalize betting as it can generate substantial income for the state exchequer*'.<sup>1</sup>
- (g) Nothing such happened finally. As said, BCCI has been attributed to have the full responsibility to probe into the issue despite its credibility was at stake for many such related issues. Law could not take its own course because Delhi Police was restrained to move forward with the case and the judiciary has given BCCI to resolve it within its purview. Finally Delhi Police failed to frame Chargesheet against all 42 primary suspects who got release from a lower court on 24th of July, 2015.

The spot-fixing case and its magnitude had therefore caused a massive hue and cry in the whole country. Political connection with the case has not been established although political icons involved in BCCI have not expressed any radical opposition or protest so far, except putting mass resignation only from BCCI portfolios and chose to attend the meeting through videoconferencing<sup>N2</sup>. The Board President N. Srinivasan was albeit forced to step down for just three months for having his son-in-law involved in it but journalists were of common opinion that Srinivasan hasn't lost its control over BCCI. Albeit with the time the country's democratic functioning has gradually limited its space to think further on this issue, the archeological or enunciative view rediscovers the whole fiasco from a parallaxic angle.

This is however such a darker side of an institution, here cricketing institution, where the country has witnessed no bloodshed, nor clash between sects or identities, political ideologies, even local mafias.

Prologue :

The uproar has actually seemed something like spreading of a concept that haunts everybody, hits few, and influences none. It largely appears that the fiasco is a mythic signified as common practice as well that the large population should be aware of to prepare for their current affairs knowledge about how it was perpetrated, draining out billions of money through various financial routes pauperizing country's economic stability.

2. Financial Scams: the gift of political economic transformation

People of India have however experienced number of scams in the last couple of years, as a compulsive contribution of the political economy of Indian Capitalism<sup>N3</sup>, where loads of money have been siphoned out either from common exchequers or in terms of the value of opportunities or through aborted and fake endeavors that might have cost of billions. The list is quite long and the amount of money involved in spot-fixing so far calculated or estimated is also huge as well. Having even such a financial profligacy in every sense of the term, Indian people have somehow expressed its optimum resilience or better say tolerance in case of IPL spot fixing scam beyond any specific inferiority of class inequality, sudden outburst of any anti-incumbent social consciousness and most importantly beyond upper hand of the ruling ideologies of political economy and finally beyond the state power. Many philosophers are of common opinion that when power structures or groups declare conquest or domination over people and natural growth of society the inevitable outcome is such a fiasco where the system is defined by series of crises to ultimately corrupt itself completely.

Particularly, the Spot-Fixing context remains ever pertinent when the 'list' of involved people overflows the periphery of the cricketing sport and reveals the names of team owners, political and sporting personalities to finally have knocked the door of the Indian Cricket Authority, BCCI<sup>N4</sup>. Noted Sports Journalist Vijay Lokapally comments,

*The tentacles of corruption spread in all directions and reached the doors of the BCCI. The Board came under fire from all quarters but unsurprisingly, the artful cricket officials managed to thwart the aggression mounted by the media.*<sup>2</sup>

This not only reveals the sudden collapse of political economy of cricketing sport as being quite inadequate to legitimize the massive dimension of the scam but demands for a new critique toward a radical alternative to understand the discourse of the fiasco as an oeuvre.

## Financial Scams: ....

The gradual investigation of Police and detective agencies reveals direct involvement of not just players, but team officials, franchise owners, Mumbai film stars, relations of Board Officials, and many others from the money making layer of Indian population. This is quite interesting to note the very known but complicated trivia that the exclusively televisual structure IPL shows active participation of Bollywood stars, and other tycoons of entertainment industries and other socio-political attachments and the investigative aspects of the scam on the other hand reveals the 'sub-structural' connection of that same Indian entertainment and political control over the IPL show. This structural duality has completed the cycle of the IPL structure.

## 3. Evolution of either shades of Cricket in India: beyond Production

The 'darker' or sub-structural side of the history of Indian cricket has an evolutionary root since the elite stardom and elite scandals in the "developing within the state" phase from 1930s to 1980s to the 'Match Fixing' era of 1990s and finally the 'Spot Fixing' in recent days, which is no less than a noteworthy development of the sport. And the 'game' of cricket, on the field, also has a similar but reductionist and slower evolution from the 'Royal' imagery of Test Cricket to the 'commoners' ODIs and finally the 'post-commercial' T20 cricket. One may however argue against the above categorization but the alternative critique must also have the right to critically analyze these two parallel growths the cricketing political economy. I remember here the famous lines of Walter Benjamin, *'the transformation of superstructure, which takes place far more slowly than that of substructure, has taken more than half a century to manifest in all areas of culture the change in the [present]conditions of production'*<sup>3</sup>.

The game of cricket also has had similar assumptions toward its contemporary hyper-commercial phase. The face of cricket, the superstructure of cricket, the manifestation or appearance of cricket, the symptoms of cricket, are being controlled by non-playing authorities leaving out the real authenticity of the use value of the cricket that produce real excellence of the game and exuberance of millions of spectators. But the authority has always been very busy in sublimating the excellence by creating 'imaginarities' of exchange value with loads of prize money, massive auction bid value i.e. an imaginary exchange between player's use value and Franchise's brand value as a bid for a player<sup>N5</sup> with loads of capital.

This is also to note that classical critique has never experienced such an exchange value as the sports were chiefly controlled by the bourgeois celebrities under colonial and then state format.

Evolution of either shades of Cricket in India: beyond Production

So the exchange value has always been controlled by the authority's own formulation and intention on the one hand and here there is no alternative of betterment as it follows a very unique technique of substitution [capital substitute oeuvre] that amounts the power of modernity. Finally, it is being substituted by the amount of pleasure by media's formulation about the game or the Show. Mediation starts transcending from actuality through its image production technique.

The post-commercial global media convergence has thus been representing the sub-structural conditions of cricketing production on which the imaginary exchange value becomes the rule of the game far beyond of cricketing excellence where a player of any rank does not have to perform a big inning to secure his future. Noted Journalist P. Sainath writes,

*'...in the IPL you might earn two million dollars throwing your bat around for 30s and an occasional flaky 50. Or for bowling four overs a few times in a 90-day season. It's hard to strive for your best when there is so much incentive to do your worst'<sup>4</sup>.*

There is thus no confusion about the evolution of the sub-structural aspects of the game from match-fixing to spot-fixing because these two sub-structural forms earn the *imaginary* of exchange value from the hegemonic or authoritative code of the cricketing authority. The evolution of the cricketing format from its 5-day Test to a reductionist T20 format i.e. from 'Royal space' to the contemporary 'spot' therefore manifests a structural duality that basically ruled the politics of the game-show and its increasing routes of commerciality. The 'looking simple' history of this transformation would reveal many shades of the same text.

4. Production-utility metaphor and Image Production in IPL

If the evolution of cricketing sport from the colonial past has had its origin in the 'production' metaphor and the utility chiefly in the national market,<sup>N6</sup> the cricketing spirit and image also has a definite production evolution with the growth of postindustrial mediation in 1990s toward grand convergence of mediation in 2000s up to the contemporary cricketing apps. In this way we have a distinct evolution of cricketing virtuality specially manifested in IPL compared to any other form of cricket. Surrounding the game the imaging or virtuality starts mounting in multi-layered real categories like,

#### 4. Production-utility metaphor and Image Production in IPL :

- i) Micro spaces are used for projecting Advertisement structures both within and outside of the arena ranging from stumps to every pillar of the stadium; from helmet-sides to the vests of cheerleaders for telecasting to the larger audience;
- ii) Studio-space including ground anchoring including expert commentary becomes a distinct arena for not just 'Live telecast' but a production engine of all-round commerciality;
- iii) Separate Ground Entertainment Bloc for further production of extension of the Show; Chief Sponsor almost does the monopoly here;
- iv) Ball-by-ball description on INTERNET sites; These Sites run a different mode of consumption of information generating a separate mode of business;
- v) Live Video and Photograph updates including commentary;
- vi) NET updates in mobiles specially made for smart phones;
- vii) IPL smart phone games;
- viii) IPL Mobile Apps.
- ix) Finally, unlimited audience posts on Social Networking Sites including embedding all live videos and updates;

Thus the growth of virtual has overtly extended the cricketing sport toward infinite images or signs. Consequently in this way the cricketing package in India has surpassed its production utility context toward an endless virtuality in recent IPL years. The extension mechanism is being controlled chiefly by the production authority BCCI or the IPL Committee and its corporate allies. So quite naturally the authority's job now rests to somehow legitimize all hyper-commercial factors that produce 'images and imaginaries' to establish the discourse of IPL. From *Manoranjan Ka Baap* to *India Ka Tewhar*, the metanarratives are not just popular in common sense, but have a new utility value to cover and legitimize all commercial factors. In this course the cultural extension of cricketing extravaganza brutally suppresses the so called 'social value' of cricket which was earlier a symbolic as Gentleman's Game or Aristocrat Sport. So in between the earlier aristocratic rights of the sport and today's extravaganza of the same sport common people as audience and the integral part of the professional sport remain eternal followers either of the state-sponsored power or of the post commercial power. The social of the Cricketing Sport is now really passing through the crisis of oblivion. Don Bradman's inexplicable 99.96 strike rate in 1940s, Ravi Shastri and Gary Sobers' six sixers in an over in first class cricket in 1960s, or Kapil Dev's 175 knock against Zimbabwe in 1983 World Cup<sup>5</sup>, Sandip Patil's six boundaries in an over against Australia, Sunil Gavaskar's first ever 10,000 runs mark in Ahmedabad etc. are all in crisis of deliberate oblivion.

The problem is not with the corporatization as the game of cricket has long been drawn a corporate outcome since the initial of ODIs in 1970s. The real problem is therefore with the new liberalization of Cricketing Sport in such newer formats where the authorities like BCCI get a new taste of liberalization and the post-commercial extension. The philosophy of BCCI looks like, 'Owning the Indian Cricket forms not to optimize the game but to maximize the Profit'.

**5. New World Order: Cricketing Liberalization toward a Political Code :**

The New World Order was proclaimed in 1991 with the emergence of unipolar world in terms of political power and the first match-fixing case was revealed in 1999-2000 in South Africa's tour in India. The ruling institutional authorities or governments of many ex-colonized nations however felt three basic internal social sectors 'needed' to be globalized to become at par to the Global in popular western sense of the term. These three major sectors were Industry, Education and Sports. It now appears that ex-colonial nations expected globalization to provide with three major aspects of investments. These were new industries, new universities, and new capital to finance the sporting infrastructure to make it global.

As a colonial power England precisely the British Empire has been hosting players around the world in its County Cricket or internal cricket league for many years. Cricketers across playing nations used to consider a call from a county team as an important aspect of their career development. The larger purpose of being proud to be playing for an English County was otherwise earning money. Indian internal cricket format for exactly the opposite but same dimensional reason never stood up on that position. The cricketing modernity was duly ruled by England in its dominions and commonwealth states. So these others, being commonwealth nations with England, were albeit great performers but was never rulers. Even after winning the World Cup in 1983 the internal situation witnessed no radical change at all. Sunil Gavaskar (1971-1987) and Kapil Dev (1977-1994) epochs witnessed traditionally deficient infrastructure where performance was the last word or solitary means to earn subsistence. The biggest irony is that the Indian Internal Cricketing Form finally has taken the Global Stride in IPL because this is nothing but an Internal Cricket League.

So, it was a rise of monetary globalization or financial liberalization or the liberation of International Finance Capital guided by the global media liberalization that changed the whole scenario. Loads of money started infiltrating from global corporate brands<sup>N7</sup>

**New World Order: Cricketing Liberalization toward a Political Code :**

Beyond so called colonial ruse of production and repression of utility metaphors over common people the whole situation started getting a revival in terms of consumption of the IPL code. So it was just a necessity to form a supreme code as a 'show' and not just sport. Even it was not just '*Manoranjan*'; it was *Manoranjan Ka Baap*.

IPL was therefore an aberrant and a politically planned code. The BCCI while exploiting the situation to its fullest extent started finding new avenues to sell the cricketing values for bigger 'signs' of prestige, control, convergence, consistency, profit, power and political space. The IPL is the finality beyond the colonial definition of cricketing category that promotes all sign values grow through unlimited mechanical reproduction in the all genres of popular media. The being of Hockey as national sport of India, and other popular sports like football trailed far behind not the cricket but cricketing extravaganza to become a global code. The liberalized money has had chosen India and specially Indian cricket as a newer destination of global investment.<sup>N8</sup> BCCI has not had therefore faced any difficulty to get the influx of global investment. It just continued rediscovering new spaces from real to virtual domain of communication to sell them in exchange of billions.

**6. The Match Fixing: Still Not Fixing the Imaginaries :**

Earlier, the first ever Match fixing case came out in 1999-2000 where Indian Captain Md. Azharuddin, Legend South African Captain Hansie Cronje, Pakistani cricketing icons Salim Malik, Aatur Rehman, Ajoy Sharma and some other Indian and South African Cricketers were found guilty and they also committed their involvement in match fixing before their respective authorities<sup>N9</sup>. They committed to lose a match against huge amount of money. In 2007 the unusual death of Bob Woolmer had shaken the cricketing world. Everyone associated with the game or the 'show' anyhow apprehended the dark cloud of malicious investment. Before that in 2004 Kenyan Captain Maurice Odumbe was found guilty in Match fixing. These incidents of match fixing faded out very soon from the scene. Many Cricket columnists have started writing that the match fixing has been replaced by spot fixing, which is neither theoretically feasible nor was the actual sequel. There is no cause and effect relation between these two types of scams; they are the non-identical twins of the same mother. 'Spot' should however be analyzed in a different manner.



7. Extension of Cricket commodity: Expansion-Reduction ambivalence :

So the sub-structural relationship between investment of capital and the IPL oeuvre, as said earlier, produces innumerable signs that become the ruling inter-subjective exchange in the public sphere. This exchange is not just arbitrary but in some cases highly regimented too, i.e. the authoritative code becomes the prime aspect of public sphere discussion or the Life world. The production of IPL or other Reality shows are meant for such a huge consumption that resolves the pluralist note of productions but is destined to a general consumption.

In this situation, however, where players and central governing authorities of IPL play a double standard by extending the cricketing commodity toward a new 'hyper-commercial' viability on the one hand and in this way become a new ideological apparatus too. For both preemptive conditions they produce sign values of both the 'cricketing commodity' and the cricketing ideological' as a state or political apparatus'. The nexus between political personalities and Spot-fixing or IPL perpetrators justifies the actuality of the ruling power structure. They, while selling the commodity of cricket [money invested + game], basically exercise the 'signifier' of the commodity and while captivating people they exercise ideological apparatus with state power's active assistance and participation as it was evident in the celebration processes where the state power arbitrated the whole planning as an apparatus to control its own people or as evident the political nexus. But the most interesting part of the analysis is that the 'sign' value produced in both 'selling' and 'captivating' aspects is the same and unique too. Now in the guise of the externality of the 'sign', the sale of the use-value of cricketing commodity as a signifier formulates an arbitrary exchange value as per the authority demands or plans to earn can be safely done without having any form of protest or social unrest. The authorities of cricketing commodity thus place their control over the imaginary code of exchange value from the beginning. Indian cricket authority has taken a leading position to control this prime signifier of cricketing commodity. Journalist Priyalina Basu writes interestingly the story of BCCI's road to commercializing Indian cricket,

*If we take the example of the BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India), the richest cricket board of the world, the role of corporate involvement is clear. According to an inter alia report of the CBI that dealt with match fixing complaints way back in 2000, the BCCI remained cash-strapped until 1987. But from the time it hosted the Reliance Cup, in the same year, its fund started to climb. In a single year, 1987-1988, the profit of the BCCI went up from Rs. 5.06 lakh to Rs.8.37crore...The BCCI was indicted by the CBI for starting a process of commercialization of cricket without any vision.*

*It also criticized the BCCI for thoughtless increase in the number of One-Day Internationals...Many veteran cricketers feel that the seeds were sown in the time of Kerry Packer who initiated the limited-over cricket format and was hugely criticized for commercialization of the game. They feel, from that time, the cricketers started to enjoy stardom like that of the film stars and pursued a kind of lifestyle that they were never accustomed to. With more and more corporatization of cricket and the buying of TV rights came more money. The high point of commercialization of cricket was the IPL where the players were auctioned off in exchange of hefty amount spent by the franchisees and corporate sponsors.<sup>6</sup>*

And for this reason the ever expanding or transcending value-adding process of cricketing 'sign' in contrast to the random reduction of the cricketing 'format' becomes the primary Neoliberal goal to transform the game into a compact supreme 'code'. The self-opposing process started during seventies when the notion of cricketing commerciality was under Later-capitalist scanner. The primary 'Reduction' to limited over cricket was therefore perpetrated during World Cup in 1975 and 1979 that caused a reduction from 'days' to 'over' formats.

Since liberalization in early 1990s, the reduction process of the cricketing sport was enhanced to a massive trimming in its physicality and the signified too was transformed to generate new spaces for commercial revival like in 'wide' and 'no-ball' etc. up to today's Decision Review System (DRS) technique. The leg side of the batsman has almost been sacrificed to the 'wide' zone. The side boundaries of the popping crease are only being used to mark the off-side for both left and right hand batsmen. Introduction of 'powerplay' and 'strategic time-out' concepts have further reduced the real cricketing contents and, in turn, expanding spaces for more commercial contents. The more the match gets halted or shrunken the more time and spaces are generated for the extension of Cricketing commodity.

Are all these aspects the plausible routes of transformation of a sport from royal game to commoners' one or the new political economic condition altogether extending a commodity? The making of the supreme code beyond the cricketing commodity is the new ruling of the hour. The IPL code was therefore the new destination or the finality of the cricketing commercialization in India. This finality is proved to be so powerful that even the Investigating Commissions could not afford to be critical to the constructional politics of IPL and its bidding policy and remained limited within probing into just spot-fixing networks.

So the general critique of the political economy of both IPL and general evolution of cricketing sport and the larger 'political economy' as system determines certain stages of development:

- (a) Cricket as a commodity remains always a 'means' of earning for both players and officials. Production and utility-pleasure metaphors are quite active in authority's claims. IPL too is a BCCI's unique production claim in terms of not the gaming options but its extendibility and expendability of the code.
- (b) Secondly, all fetishistic and transcendental aspects of the IPL commodity immediately produce sign value and invite new and huge exchange value. This is evident in players' auction bidding, gallery (stadium) booking, pricing of ticket, ticket auctioning, gallery show items from music to cheerleader, sexy anchors etc.
- (c) The cricketing commodity therefore naturally turns into a 'Sign' value through exclusive television ready to be communicated in the mass sphere infinitely.
- (d) The BCCI authority meanwhile has started producing unlimited sign-spots for official booking ranging from gallery points to the remote space of cheerleaders and players too e.g. Helmet sides, Shirt-arms.
- (e) Interestingly, illegal bookings of other parallel 'spots' also have started, where, as per Lodha Committee verdict, Franchise owners and their allies including many players and officials were betting regularly.
- (f) So 'Spot Selling' by the Board or 'Spot Fixing' by the bookies have become 'produced' or manifested of the same political economic transformation toward absolute consumption that both develop sign forms for unimaginable and arbitrary exchange value.
- (g) As signs originate from the same political economy of IPL, intersection between "illegal money on IPL spots" and "authority's direct participation in spot fixing" becomes plausible.
- (h) The production of spot-signs for spot-fixing has therefore a definite root in the political economy that in turn produces the IPL code. The production of signs becomes equally authoritative in both legal and illegal faces of the game. The system on the one hand is confronted with the betting racket but the top associates of the Board and top brass of the nation are found involved also on the other in other various ways in leading role in the fixing.

## Extension of Cricket...

- (i) The system thus first takes benefit of owning mediated signs but alienates itself from other prearranged signs being cropped up from the very identical system.
- (j) The system therefore not only promotes the crisis but corrupts the larger political economy itself.
- (k) The system or the establishment i.e. BCCI basically controls the condition of production of such 'signs' of dismay.
- (l) The system has already corrupted the political economy by producing imaginary signs much before the outburst (symptoms) would corrupt the society (superstructure).

## 8. IPL: Authority owns the code to extend infinitely

Indian Premier (Cricket) League, as a new supreme code, endorses the political economy of code of all real and virtual authenticities to create a series of new signs toward an unbelievably extended televised game. The semiotic of IPL has however a definite history of inception controversy when Indian Cricket League or ICL was planned and organized by the Essel Corporation owned by media tycoon Subhas Chandra and chiefly mentored by Indian Cricketing legend Kapil Dev. The tournament did everything from hiring players with a big 'bid [exchange] value' to organize the game shows to establish the new cricketing format with a bang. We would have made critique of this version of the show if BCCI had not frowned upon ICL by banning it outright. The BCCI banished ICL in its every possible aspect. The Indian Central Government however did not initiate any positive step to end the controversy. BCCI, the cricketing system of India finally had a natural win. ICL was halted in the same fixing controversy; participating players were however still facing wrath of BCCI. The ICL story therefore ended in smoke. In this way BCCI has had earned all

- i) Nationalist code of the Cricketing game;
- ii) 'Right to autonomy' code as a Chief Cricket Controlling Body;
- iii) Right to formulate even a Private game show; as this is a private body, free from any public control;
- iv) Right to banish any parallel growth in Indian Territory; it is not in constitutional provision otherwise ICL could not have ever launched;
- v) A natural public or social consent to accept BCCI as the central leading body to control Cricketing show in India.

The BCCI was eventually then about to start its own new grandeur of cricketing bash “New Father of Cricketing Entertainment” from ‘Manoranjan Ka Baap’ and something more than ICL. The ceremonial inception of IPL had thus exceeded that of ICL signified albeit in the same political economic condition. The remaining truth of ICL was that it had shown the plausibility of an independent route of organizing an event code other than BCCI and which was constitutionally not outlawed. But BCCI by banning ICL and its players not only tried to snatch the code but did everything possible to win it. It is therefore impossible to believe that the ‘father of entertainment’ would continue producing a continuum of cricketing game what people witnessed from Don Bradman to today's Sachin-Saurav-Dravid-Laxman combination. Former cricketers are being arbitrarily used as quite common sign forms according to their availability or any other unknown factor having only differential value among them.

The IPL signifier thus produces the game show and the use value of the show is expanded beyond profit in terms of its commutation rather submission against the hefty exchange value. *‘The sign no longer designates anything at all. It approaches in its truth its structural limit which is to refer back only to other signs’* (Baudrillard: The Mirror of Production, 1975). Readers, please note the transformation from ICL to IPL also in this context. The BCCI has sold all such generated ‘spot’ to the giant brands and corporations through either auction-bidding or preferred selection method, therefore allowed or approved the real ruse of capital empowered to be invested beyond any political economic control. A typical monopoly capital syndrome was then all set to rule the code.

According to Jean Baudrillard *‘there can be no internal contradiction endangering the system of monopoly capital because, as long as it controls the code, consumption can be infinitely extended. There is no referent against which to define a finitude of needs because the code is its own referent and there is end to the consumption of code. As long as the code is dismantled, there will be no difficulty for the system in getting its workers to produce’*<sup>12</sup>. Here anyone can notice that BCCI with its monopoly capital strength has established its control over not just cricketing production but over the cricketing code. It can therefore be extended infinitely and in its all consecutive editions the Indian population has noticed the immeasurable extension of the code, or better say hegemonic code through generating infinite sign spots.

## 9. Sign of cricket widens difference from the game of cricket: one signifier overrules another

What then the T20 game is up to in a 'reduced' discourse? T20 format itself is a reduced version of the game conceptualized by the authority as a new syntax or signified of the time compared to the earlier ODI format i.e. One Day International matches. The new syntax commonly follows the same 'production-means-commodity-sign' axis. IPL product turns into commodity in the global market that extends itself by producing sign-values to establish the meaning conditions. All signs produced further from the IPL commodity legitimize the supreme code. These signs are the revival of all cricketing infrastructure for IPL code: IPL Gallery including the audience; IPL studio; IPL app; extensions of players' outfit in popular brand outlets; Franchises' brand extension in popular reality shows; extension of Bollywood in IPL i.e. Film promotions on IPL ground; producing newer spots for official selling etc. The same IPL authority now establishes its ruling/control over the signifier of the commodity to extend its ruling by extending the market limit in the vast audience psyche also. In this way the authority rules over the signified, the whole IPL code or concept or the commodity immediately turns into the signifier with huge production potential to extend IPL show. But the very signifiers of IPL code suppress the display or the signifier of the game of excellence. The latter has no option but to be associated somehow with the new power superstructure on authority's credit.

Journalist Harish Khare has written a feature in *The Hindu* on the truth about T20 quoting a recently made ad-commercial. The report says:

*In the build-up to the Championship Trophy T20 cricket series early this year, the sponsor, a soft drinks company, unveiled an interesting advertisement campaign, which showed an ill-mannered Bollywood actor making a virtue of being rude and impertinently ad-libbing the catchline: "Boss, ye T20 cricket hai; na tameez se khela jata hai, na tameez se dheka jata hai (This is T20 cricket; it is neither played nor watched with decorum)." This charming invitation to forget our manners and etiquette is an extraordinary in-your-face celebration of the new cultural mood of loudmouthedness, a deliberate disdain towards obligations of dignity and decency. (The Hindu, Harish Khare).<sup>7</sup>*

The report clearly demonstrates the being of T20 format as a central code, or a central authoritative code formulated to rule or monopoly over not only the cricketing game but all sign forms beyond the game. The Indian cricket authority, BCCI has however established full control over both signifiers beyond the game in a new political economy of sign beyond common understanding of the issue. BCCI has thus started spotting new sign forms to fix it for sale in billions. Journalist P. Sainath interestingly recoded BCCI as '*Billionaires Control Cricket in India*'<sup>8</sup>. The whole IPL has turned into 'Spots' over Cricketing Excellence.

<p>Sign of cricket widens difference from the game of cricket: one signifier overrules another</p>	<p>The new signifiers therefore evolve only from the ‘encroached spots’. From Bat to wicket, helmets, pitch, bowler’s run-up point, boundary rope and fence, gallery wall, cheerleaders’ mini outfits, commentary box, commentators’ uniforms, exclusive television channel, presentation studio and screen spaces are booked by the BCCI. Now from the exclusive television channel an infinite possibility of imaginary sign forms is being framed up and primate[d] up to wherever the camera penetrates its lens. Technology specially communication technology, as a means or chief condition of production, is being used in so much monolithic manner that leaves a very limited space for alternative, or alternative use of the means. The situation reminds Marshall McLuhan’s immortal code ‘medium is a message’. So the IPL syntax becomes itself a medium and a supreme hegemonic code to communicate a huge mass audience largely considered insipid or passively proactive to mediated sign forms.</p>
<p>10. IPL-Spot: A New Political Economy :</p>	<p>Spot Fixing on the other hand is being perpetrated with those differentiable ‘signs’ which the authority albeit does not disown officially but also not pronounced for official sale, so hardly takes any action or launch a cricketing movement against it as it exploits the same political economic [value] system of the IPL code. Making it thus a mere crime by law is also a deliberate effort of the authority to alienate itself when the scam hits the game.</p> <p>BCCI has thus established its control over all sign forms of the cricketing commodity. They bid for auctions, they sell everything from space to players, they abandon any player and any space for they think non-performing or non-returning, they create new space, new franchises, new apparatuses i.e. from T-Shirts to wrist bands to cheerleaders' outfits except performances which is a least preferred area in IPL. P. Sainath rightly argues that,</p> <p><i>Scoring 30s and 40s (even 20s) at a quick clip is pretty okay in the Indian Premier League. That's what our guys in Australia are still doing. Consider that in the IPL you might earn two million dollars throwing your bat around for 30s and an occasional flaky 50. Or for bowling four overs a few times in a 90-day season. It's hard to strive for your best when there is so much incentive to do your worst. The same body, the BCCI, presides over both private (IPL) and national cricket. It enables huge moneys to be made by one. And strangles the golden goose that is the other. The problem is not that our 'boys' have been playing too much cricket. It's that they haven't been playing cricket. They've been playing IPL T20, where focus, concentration, technique and staying power count for little. And it's showing.<sup>9</sup></i></p>

BCCI also owns its own spots and mediational spaces by giving exclusive right to a particular media channel. The channel is doing everything under BCCI jurisdiction specially projecting and selling every second of transmission, wherever the space can be generated sometimes even beyond all traditional senses of availability. And most interestingly all underworld bookies are using the same exclusive Televisual spaces and contents adding some extra value category infiltrating into the gaming system. P.Sainath argues here,

*In India, some of the greatest of our greats have not just refrained from criticism but vociferously defended IPL on countless television programmes. The co-opting power of the BCCI-IPL money machine is wondrous. Now and then, a little conflict-of-interest blip appears. Like commentators being paid crores by the BCCI — who are then unlikely to criticize its golden child. It is equally unlikely that media fed with crores of ad revenue will speak up either. Any other institution seeing half the scams and conflict of interest that the BCCI-IPL has, would long ago have drawn sharp media scrutiny. But whatever emerges does so when the IT or ED departments get active, not the media. There are also too many journalists co-opted into the IPL network, unable to look at it critically.*<sup>10</sup>

They generate screen spaces while mediating skeletal screening of the actual cricketing action for earning billions of dollars. They even use the spaces from field to screen for leading sponsors. They create a new signification system over the existing system of controlling the whole T20 package to outcast the cricketing value. Quoting Priyalina Basu may substantiate the above analysis,

*Many veteran cricketers feel that the seeds were sown in the time of Kerry Packer who initiated the limited-over cricket format and was hugely criticized for commercialization of the game. They feel that that from that time, the cricketers started to enjoy stardom like that of the film stars and pursued a kind of lifestyle that they were never accustomed to. With more and more corporatization of cricket and the buying of TV rights came more money. The high point of commercialization of cricket was the IPL where the players were auctioned off in exchange of hefty amount spent by the franchisees and corporate sponsors.*<sup>11</sup>

Besides that, the IPL authority, through its exclusive media channel, incessantly organizes open audience poll on various sloppy and speculative questions to earn more revenues. These are like: 'Which team won the previous match?' 'Who will be winning the match today?' 'Which team will be the IPL champion this time?' 'Who is the better bowler today?' and the list is endless. In this process the whole IPL code becomes a real package where all signifiers are simulated beyond natural or common understanding. There is at this moment no such spot is remained vacant, unlooked, unnoticed, unsponsored, unadvertised or unbranded.



	<p>There is at this moment no such spot is remained vacant, unlooked, unnoticed, unsponsored, unadvertised or unbranded. These are all 'signs' that have an assorted code value which further attract more and more finance to be invested with a high exchange value.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>11. Spots are all structured symptoms: toward a new political economy of signification :</b></p>	<p>Finally, amid such unbelievable extension of the hegemonic authoritative codification of IPL, the particular sixth edition of IPL witnessed a spot fixing scandal, as an outburst that had shaken the superstructure. The investigation categorically revealed that spot fixing was perpetrated in its earlier editions also. For, the spot fixing activity does not affect the whole game it is to be considered separately from any gross consideration like the earlier match fixing efforts. A particular 'over' or a specific delivery or an individual's special performativity or prefixed shot can be placed as spot for betting. The act thus immediately turns into a 'sign' structure to be communicated as its signifier has earlier planned to produce such a dramatic signified. Zee News defines 'spot' as the same signified of the earlier consent or agreement 'signifier',</p> <p><i>Spot-fixing involves a player agreeing to perform to order by pre-arrangement. For example, a bowler might deliberately bowl consecutive wides in his second over or a batsman could make sure he does not reach double figures. Twenty20 cricket is particularly susceptible because so much happens so quickly that individual performances can soon be forgotten or dismissed as inconsequencia.</i><sup>12</sup></p> <p>Now the same analysis can however be done for an official spot set by BCCI for auctioning and telecasting because both desperately use the same capital invested in IPL from outside the system. The argument for these spots being official or approved by the authority can hardly establish anything to oppose the idea that these are the same imaginaries having genealogy in the same political economy and equally unknown to public<sup>N10</sup>. The temporality of these spots being exchanged to any company by a huge value is formulated by the authority quite subjectively. It is something like telling about atheist contents in quite religious forms. The former cricketer Arun Lal laments saying,</p> <p><i>Spot fixing is widespread in Indian cricket at large. Now that someone like Sreesanth has been accused of this menace, it is clear that it is no longer a peripheral issue... Everyone knows someone who bets in cricket - that's all fun and games. But fixing a match, compromising an over with "approved" codes - this is a new low. There are many who believe that betting should be legalized. But that is not the solution given the vast black money economy.</i><sup>13</sup></p>

The statement justifies the contribution of political economy that creates both legal and illegal spot signs having differential relationship either<sup>N11</sup>. It may be easy to legitimize the monopoly of the underworld bookies in spot fixing but it is also easy to understand that the Indian cricketing authority is monopolizing the code of cricketing signs that can be extended to unlimited imaginary of sign forms. Wikipedia gives an interesting definition of Spot Fixing:

*'Spot-fixing' refers to illegal activity in a sport where a specific part of a game is fixed. Examples include something as minor as timing a no ball or wide delivery in cricket. Spot-fixing attempts to defraud bookmakers illegally by means of a player agreeing to perform to order by pre-arrangement. As such spot-fixing differs from match fixing, where a whole match is fixed, or point shaving, a specific type of match fixing in which corrupt players (or officials) attempt to limit the margin of victory of the favoured team. Spot-fixing is more difficult to detect than match fixing or point shaving.*<sup>14</sup>

Spots are therefore imaginaries 'formulated only to be fixed' [i.e. produced to be consumed] by an imaginary exchange value. Through the same auction where only the signifiers approach, called, bids instead of bets, i.e. the same symptoms or appearances in the superstructure both of which are never authentic except the concerned authority's claim. So both 'legal' bids and 'illegal' bets are the products of the same system of the political economy. Players are primarily treated as commodity and then appear in sign forms in further commercial productions. And the signifiers become self-referent where the auction, bidding and buying processes remain in darkness making public or mass completely insipid. P. Sainath continues arguing-

*Your top cricketing icons are reduced to assets in the balance sheets of corporates. The "bring-us-their-heads" humiliation that is in store for the team will actually hijack the debate from why things went wrong. The rants will be all about the players and their appalling performance. Maybe even a few yowls at the selectors. But little about how IPL has savaged Indian cricket and harmed the game around the world.*<sup>15</sup>

Moreover the auction of players considers only the focused performance of players specially in T20 format not like what an Internal Cricket League is supposed to be the grooming platform for young cricketers. Both legal and illegal arrangements have the same genealogical womb which the production and utility metaphors and all authority's grand statements are deliberately trying to suppress. Quoting Richard Smith in this context-

**Spots are all structured symptoms: toward a new political economy of signification :**

*All...metanarratives, ' depth models' , Grand Theories, ' hermeneutics of suspicion' , specular watchtowers, and ways of reading the world that claim to be able to dig-out the truth: essence behind appearance; latent (unconscious desire) behind manifest (symptom); authentic behind inauthentic; production beneath superstructure; relations of force or power beneath the ideological or normative shell; signified behind signifier—in short, all ' realities' laid bare by an interpretative hermeneutic—have a certain perimeter.<sup>16</sup>*

The spot fixing and IPL need therefore such interpretative hermeneutic to decode the actual critique of the political economy. And the critique would further reveal an absolute fetishism toward symptoms thus grows along with these new sign spots. Noted Philosopher Slavoj Zizek argues while interpreting commodity and dreams that -

*-the secret to be unveiled through analysis is not the content hidden by the form (the form of commodities and the form of dreams) but, on the contrary, the secret of the form itself...the real problem is not to penetrate to the 'hidden kernel' of the commodity - the determination of its value by the quantity of the work consumed in its production – but to explain why work assumed the form of value of a commodity, why it can affirm its social character only in the commodity form of its product.<sup>17</sup>*

So to unveil the value form of a commodity is quite similar to unveil the sign form of commodity and the secret procedure of the affirmation i.e. signifier or the social character of the commodity. And the secret of the form or structure or the signifier of the commodity is formulated by the power what Richard Smith argued above about that very signifier that suppresses the signified. For generating new spots both by the authority and by the illegal bookies a pervasive power that assumes the form of value i.e. signifier of the value and also gives its social character. So basically the critique of the political economy is completed and a new political economy is to be drawn.

**12. Epilogue: New Radical Space needed to save cricket**

The 'spot fixing' therefore is considered as a criminal act what the authority spells so that it can initiate proceedings even after its close associates are found actively involved in earning loads of money. After Lodha Committee report people are now demanding CBI probe on not just Spot Fixing case but the whole IPL scam. So the authority in spite of being under suspicion largely in all related symptomatic acts now is to decide the punitive measure against perpetrators. Popular news channels are of opinion that there would be a difference of opinion between Governing Council of IPL and BCCI on the further proceeding in this issue.

Epilogue: New Radical Space needed to save cricket :

Any possibility of broader reaction however becomes implausible when it comes to the point of mass action and mass response as the political economy of the system authority has already taken its stance to control the social action. Indian Governments too are not going to disturb the cricket control system as per neoliberal agenda. So the political economic structures become unaffected and the cricketing extravaganza will continue to generate revenues from the auction capital, public capital, invested capital, and commuters' money.

Nevertheless 'spot fixing' corrupts the cricketing sport both from within and outside the BCCI system so far as the investigations reveal the scandal. Anyone therefore can be involved in such a corruption of spot fixing. The situation therefore comes like what BCCI does not approve or recognize is punishable by law and that is the rule of the whole game despite it faces huge criticisms from all over the country. Both BCCI and spot bookies share the same systemic space to generate infinite spots to either sell or fix.

Opinions are fragmented on whether IPL should be banned. We therefore desperately need a radical space in the political economy to raise the voice against such a huge money laundering or the draining of capital and have to ensure that here the public action would not be hijacked again by the billionaires. But that space at this moment seems to be a chimera to attain. P. Sainath albeit prescribes the alternative by reviving the domestic cricket but the IPL code affects both domestic cricket, as it projects itself as a domestic cricketing form, and also international cricket as international cricketers now prefer to play in IPL than to represent their national team. So a new critique of the political economy needs to be drawn to establish a radically alternative space otherwise the authority would continue generating newer spaces to sell out the cricket and bookies would continue fixing newer spots using the same space in the political economy. Journalist Suresh Menon also however urges for a new political economy saying that '*there are many areas to clean up, therefore. The BCCI, The IPL Cricket itself. The possibility of corruption having seeped down to the Ranji and lower levels is high. Each requires a new approach, a different emphasis*'<sup>18</sup>. The new critique of the political economy of the sign-space must oppose such an extension of the Cricketing Commodity.

Notes :

**N<sup>1</sup>:** Three cricketers of Rajasthan Royals were found guilty in spot-fixing. They were S. Sreeshanth, Ankit Chavan and Ajit Chandila. The Delhi police while interrogating these three cricketers found many other people involved in this racket. Subsequently Delhi police arrested film star Bindu Dara Singh, Chennai Super Kings Owner G. Meiyappan a.k.a. the son-in-law of BCCI President N. Srinivasan and also called Rajasthan Royals owner Raj Kundra for interrogation.

**N<sup>2</sup>:** Political icons like Arun Jaitley, Anurag Thakur and Rajeev Shukla resigned from their respective portfolios but remained in BCCI as they chose to attend BCCI meeting through videoconferencing to keep themselves away. Political oppositions however expressed their apprehension for such steps terming it a charade (*Vijay Lokapally: Indian Cricket in Deep Crisis, Frontline, 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2013*).

**N<sup>3</sup>:** Indian Political Economy has had witnessed number of financial scams for last two decades of economic and financial liberalization that have siphoned out billions of money from public exchequer. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Telgi-scam-worth-just-Rs-171-cr/articleshow/2162794.cms> shows the list of hundreds of scams pushed Indian economy back to a despair.

**N<sup>4</sup>:** The spot fixing scandal has spread its roots in BCCI associates also. From Mumbai film stars to franchise owners are so far found involved in betting. Justice Lodha Committee in its verdict has recommended banning from all cricketing action against them.

**N<sup>5</sup>:** Players are being auctioned in an open format organized by BCCI to get imaginary bid from franchises. One can follow the link <http://www.espncricinfo.com/indian-premier-league-2013/content/story/603194.html>

**N<sup>6</sup>:** BCCI not even being a public organization controls Indian cricket on behalf of the nation. It builds national squad and earns loads of money from the cricketing sport. As the controller of all cricketing aspects BCCI has become the supreme producer of Indian cricket. <http://www.bcci.tv/bcci/bccity/index/history>. The BCCI history shows how it controlled the whole Indian cricketing code by bagging the history of even pre-colonial India when British sailors were playing cricket for diversion and entertainment since 1721.

**N<sup>7</sup>:** Mostly big US Brands started investing in Indian soil. The new corporate incumbents preferred new codes to invest rather than investing in traditional infrastructure. They were never interested in investing Indian internal cricketing spaces. So they wanted a new political economy altogether to safeguard their money.

**N<sup>8</sup>:** Quoting Corporate Strategist Kenichi Ohmae, 'Investment is no longer geographically constrained (in liberalization era). Now wherever you sit in the world, if the opportunity is attractive, the money will come in. And it will be, for the most part, private money. Again, ten years ago, the flow of cross border funds was primarily from government to government or from multilateral lending agency to government...because most of the money now moving across borders is private, governments do not have to be involved at either end. All that matters is the quality of the investment opportunity. The money will go where the good opportunities are...the western firms now moving, say, into parts of China and India are there because that is where future lies, not because the host government has suddenly dangled a carrot in front of their nose'. *Kenichi Ohmae: The End of The Nation States, Harper Collins, 1996*.

**N<sup>9</sup>:** The first ever Match-Fixing scandal hit cricketing sport where Indian Captain Md. Azharuddin, South African Cricket legend Hansie Cronje and some others were found guilty in fixing the match. Manoj Madhavan of [www.livemint.com](http://www.livemint.com) in his report has stated the match fixing scandal in detail.

**N<sup>10</sup>:** BCCI is not at all a constitutional body nor does it come under RTI act. "In a note dated 14/12/2011 submitted by the Union Ministry of Sports before the Central Information Commission, the government wanted BCCI to be a public authority and come under the RTI Act. Given the sheer mockery of the Board meeting in Chennai, it is high time the Union government, through an ordinance, took over BCCI affairs and safeguards the money that is unsafe in the hands of a few selfish individuals..." (*Kirti Azad, MP and former Cricketer, in Vijay Lokapally, Indian Cricket in Deep Crisis, Frontline, 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2013*).

**References :**

- (1) V. Venkatesan: Corporate push to make betting legal; Frontline, 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2013;
- (2) Vijay Lokapally: Indian Cricket in deep crisis, Frontline, Cover Story, 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2013;
- (3) Walter Benjamin: The Work of Art in the age of Mechanical Reproduction, 1935;
- (4) P. Sainath: BCCI: Billionaires Control Cricket in India; The Hindu, 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2012;
- (5) Shayan Acharya: Thirty years on, Kapil's 175 remains 'not out', Times of India, 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2013;
- (6) Priyalina Basu: Cricket: Greed overcomes sport, Business Economics;
- (7) Harish Khare: T20 politics has run its course, The Hindu, 12<sup>th</sup> December, 2012;
- (8) P. Sainath: BCCI: Billionaires Control Cricket in India; The Hindu, 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2012;
- (9) Ibid.
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) Priyalina Basu: Cricket: Greed overcomes sport, Business Economics;
- (12) Zeenews.com: What is Spot-fixing; 31<sup>st</sup> august, 2010;
- (13) Priyanka Sharma: Spot fixing is widespread in Indian cricket: Arun Lal; Business standard, 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2013;
- (14) Wikipedia: Spot fixing;
- (15) P. Sainath: BCCI: Billionaires Control Cricket in India; The Hindu, 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2012;
- (16) Richard Smith: Exploring Post-Marxist Theory: A Reading of Jean Baudrillard; Department of Geography, University of Leicester;
- (17) Slavoj Zizek: How did Marx invent the symptom? In, The Sublime Object of Ideology; Verso, London, New York, 1989.
- (18) Suresh Menon: The games they play; Frontline, 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2013.