

# COLONISATION, CRICKET AND IDENTITY OF SRI LANKA : A FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

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## Introduction

"The British settled their empire with the Bible in one hand and a ball and bat in the other – be that in Africa, Australasia, India or those outposts of imperial rule in Asia, Singapore and Hong Kong" (Magurie, 2015).

- Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) became a crown colony of Britain in 1815. When British officials were settling in Sri Lanka, they introduced notable sports such as cricket, golf and rugby.
- Even though volleyball is the national sport, cricket, which is a bat and ball game is the most popular sport. There are cricket matches all year round; being cricket a significant social event in the country all the schools have cricket teams and locals play cricket even on streets and parks.
- Functionalism suggests that the notion that social event can be best explained in terms of the functions they perform (Giddens, 2008) and one of the five major functions in sport is the political function (Delaney, 2018).
- Political function in sport has a role in producing national identity/ generating national pride.

Using a qualitative approach, this ongoing study intends to interpret how cricket became a function of Sri Lanka in promoting its social identity through social media-based content analysis.

## Interpretations for Selected Contents



Figure 1: Sri Lankan cricket fans cheering at a one-day international cricket tournament Source: Google Images, 2020

**Figure 1 depicts how enthusiastic the Sri Lankans were to show their pride being Sri Lanka's during an international cricket event by showing the national flag and wearing tops with the country name.**

*"Every time you're in a foreign land and you mention that you're from Sri Lanka, conversation immediately heads down the cricketing field as they list all our cricketers they know"*

Figure 2: Sri Lankan cricket fan's feeling Source: Quoted from a blog, 2020

**Figure 2 is evidence to imply that Sri Lankans would use cricket as a symbol to introduce and show their national identity.**



Figure 3: Sri Lankan cricket with international cricket community Source: Google Images, 2020



Figure 4: Former cricket player Muralitharan with local fans (left); Sri Lankan cricket team members receiving religious blessings (right) Source: Google Images, 2020

**Figure 3 and 4 are exhibit to how extent Sri Lanka cricket supported locals to maintain harmonious relationships with the international community. National cricket players represent different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Yet they have a huge fan base from all kind of ethnic groups, and they are humble examples of religious coexistence.**

## Take-home Message

Regardless of how a sport is introduced to society, it acts as an agent and a social phenomenon to promote positive functions of sport such as harmony, social stability and friendship by boosting the identity or pride of a particular society.

## References

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