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Testing the Boundaries of Provincialism: IPL's Transnational Spectacles and Pure Play

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Abstract

The Indian Premier League (IPL) has been characterized by its detractors as nothing more than a tamasha. Any defense of the tournament should start with an outright refutation of this appellation. This paper contends that the IPL must wear the nomenclature as a badge of honor. It argues that tamasha is and should be the soul of the IPL; and to expect it to be otherwise is to impose on it the usual trammels of nationalism and other political and cultural ideologies. As a truly transnational spectacle, the IPL mimics and mocks capitalism, thereby exhibiting its subversive agency; as a carnival both cultural and political, the IPL crosses the limits of provincialism to champion the politics of cosmopolitanism; and as a tamasha, it approximates the status of art – pure play.

Keywords

IPL, spectacle, cosmopolitanism, pure play

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India's veteran cricket historian Ramchandra Guha calls the Indian Premier League (IPL) "the Serpent in the Garden." Candidly disclosing his distaste for all things serpentine, Guha begins his condemnation of the IPL with an intriguing anecdote. At a dinner once at Oxford University, London, Guha was "forced" to wear a tie. To register his resistance, Don Guha goes to the dinner donning not a Magdalene on a suffuse, but an unexpected insignia – a tie signaling his membership to a relatively "obscure institution" called the Friends Union Cricket Club in Bangalore (FUCC) (Guha, "Serpent in the Garden"). Guha provides three major reasons for his radical choice: he joined the club when he was only five (his loyalty to FUCC dates back to his early childhood); his uncle, N Duraiswamy, played for the club (his affiliation is familial); M. Chinnaswamy, who was at the helm of cricket in Karnataka, and later on at the national level in India, and who built the Karnataka State Cricket Association Stadium, was Duraiswamy's hero (Chinnaswamy symbolizes for Guha what cricket used to be before the serpent entered the garden). Guha clarifies that his primary cricketing loyalty is claimed first by FUCC, then by Karnataka, and only then by the Indian national team.

A new club called the Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) came to town in order to monkeywrench Guha's primordial relationship to "local" cricket. The emergence of the IPL and its clubs usurping local names forced Guha to ask: "should I now add a fresh allegiance, to the Royal Challengers Bangalore" (Guha, "Serpent in the Garden")? However, Guha quickly decides to continue his support for the real local club, the FUCC, rather than the spurious local club called the RCB. He declares that the RCB will not be his team because its then owner, Vijaya Mallya, is "the Other of Duraiswamy." As Mallya possesses no knowledge of the game, rather he wants to "buy his way into Indian cricket," he embodies the serpent in the garden of Guha's local garth of cricket (Guha, "Serpent in the Garden").

Guha's objection to the IPL does not confine to Mallya, or to the RCB or to Lalit Modi, the ousted and controversial commissioner of the IPL. He goes on to stipulate that Mallya and the company represent the snake, and the IPL has threatened to convert the whole garden into Rappaccini's poisonous enclave from which Guha attempts to save his Beatrice, cricket. Guha concludes that "the IPL was corrupt from top to bottom . . . it was deeply divisive in a sociological sense. It was a *tamasha* for the rich and upwardly mobile living in the cities of southern and western India. Rural and small town India were largely left out" (Guha, "Serpent in the Garden").

Guha has penned inspiring, insightful and enlightening books and essays on Indian cricket. Intrigued by the mesmerizing beauty of his narratives, the bewildering richness of his research and the acuminous line of his arguments in books such as *A Corner of a Foreign Field*, many readers are drawn to his writing, and esteem him for his authoritative and singular voice on this topic. Many characteristics of the signature Guha are present in his short piece on the IPL – but with a few key differences which are bound to perplex his fans and readers. While his denunciation of IPL's avaricious capitalism, cronyism and corruption is as astute as can be, his assessment of the League as a whole is riddled with a few crucial logical rifts and fissures.

The first of these fissures is his notion (embedded in and implied by the title of his piece on the IPL) that cricket in India resembled the Garden of Eden before the entry of the mythical serpent called the IPL, which ruined the Garden and caused the fall of its inhabitants: the cricketers, their fans, the managers and administrators of the sport. Guha's analogy flies in the face of everything we know about cricket, Indian cricket and sports in general. He even contradicts his own assessment of the sport in *A Corner of a Foreign Field*, where he unequivocally denies the existence of a golden age of cricket:

> The commercialization of modern cricket and the corruptions that have come in its wake have led some commentators to speak wistfully of a time when this was a 'gentleman's game.' In truth, there was no golden age, no uncontaminated past in which the playground was free of social pressure and social influence. Cricket has always been a microcosm of the fissures and tensions within Indian society: fissures that it has reflected and played upon, mitigated as well as intensified. (xv)

Guha is right that despite our wish to keep the sport uncontaminated, it cannot be separated from the society of which it is an integral part. To imagine a golden age that was subsequently disrupted by the entry of a serpent is tantamount to proposing no less than a theology of sports. Sports theology is a belief that "athletic ability is a gift" given by God; and "anything [e.g. pride, fear, and control] that distracts us from God and his plan for our lives" is sin (Smith 33). Robert Ellis notes that the relationship between sports and religion, especially Christianity, has taken three distinct historical turns. In ancient times, sport functioned as "a vehicle for communion with the divine" (Ellis 5); this changes with the advent of Christianity, which "sees sport as a dangerous diversion, frivolous exercise, a distraction from the serious business of living" (5). Within the last two hundred years the attitude has changed again and sport has been "seen as a means of

character-building and moral improvement" (Ellis 6). Guha's eulogy for club and national cricket in the Garden of Eden invokes the theology of cricket according to which anything beyond its conventional boundaries represents cricket's infralapsarian degradation.

The second fissure in his argument is the charge that *only* IPL is corrupt. A quick glance at the 2001 "Report on Corruption in International Cricket" would reveal that cricket has always been corrupt. Sir Paul Condon, director of the Anti-Corruption Unit, International Cricket Council (ICC) notes that "[T]he most disturbing aspect of the tolerance of corruption is the fear that some people have expressed to me about their own personal safety or the safety of their families. I have spoken to people who have been threatened and others who have alleged a murder and a kidnapping linked to cricket corruption" (Condon). The examples of the IPL corruption pale in comparison to these instances of corruption in cricket in general. In his Ph.D. dissertation, Michael Gross compares corruption in cricket to the sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church and calls both institutions "Organizations of Corrupt Individuals" (OCIs). His study covers the period between 1975 to 2002 in cricket, and claims that unlike Corrupt Organizations (COs) in which the members at the top initiate corrupt behavior, which spreads to large number of members, OCIs such as cricket and the Catholic church have corruption "initiated by members positioned toward the bottom or the periphery of an organization" (14). These studies and institutional investigations illustrate the fact that the IPL perpetuates rather than initiates the tradition of corruption in cricket.

The third lacuna in Guha's argument is that the IPL must be decried because of its ties to capitalism. About 7 years before the advent of the IPL, India's *Outlook* magazine in its November 2001 issue ran a feature titled "Cricket, Capitalism and Clout" by A. James. James examines the clash between the then English Cricket Board (ECB) chairman, Lord Ian MacLaurin, and the then president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Jagmohan Dalmiya, by wryly pointing out that their attitude to cricket and its players did not originate in the sport itself (of which they had next to no knowledge); rather their relationship to the sport and to each other was informed by MacLurin's chieftainship at Tesco, "Britain's premier food retailer with a £1000 million annual profit" and Dalmiya's business acumen as "a construction empire tycoon" (Cricket). In their contribution to *Cricketing Cultures in Conflict*, a monograph on the 2003 cricket World Cup, Soumitra Bose and Sujay Gupta note that cricket is so shamelessly tamed by money that it resembles horseracing and "Indian players are either

good horses or bad horses in terms of money they generate" (168). These assessments amply demonstrate that cricket is already intertwined with and tainted by capitalism.

What informs, then, Guha's quasi-theology of sport grounded on his puritanical reprobation of the IPL? The answer seems to lie somewhere in the provincialist lens with which people approach cricket in general and the IPL in particular, thereby failing to roister in the transnational spirit of the game. David Fraser warns against the totalizing view that cricket is a hopelessly commercialization sport, and nothing else. He adds that when a ball crashes to the boundary it does not just generate texts of advertising, cricket and commercialism; it is also "a story about race, class, gender, religion, ethics etc. The only end to the story is the end we impose on it" (315). Refusing to end the story of the IPL where Guha wants us to stop means to let the ball challenge the limits of provincialism and to let it unfurl as a pageant of transnationalism.

The thrust of Guha's criticism of the IPL lies in his "nationalist" appraisal of the tournament that it is anti-local, and it does not represent India. Cheering for an exclusively local club cricket, as does Guha, is tantamount to wishing away enumerable turns that human history has taken together with the globalization of sports, technology, economy and politics. Provincialist cricket scholars forget that Indian cricket has never been completely local – from its inception to its contemporary manifestation. The most nationalist moments of Indian cricket are also its most global. When "Ranjitsinghji played for Cambridge and then Sussex, it was a moment of Indian nationalism as well as globalization" (Khondker168).*The Economic Times* cites data from BARC India to demonstrate that the IPL matches in 2016 were watched on TV more widely across India than the T20 matches between India and Pakistan. While "the India-Pakistan game in the T20 World Cup got 23.613 million impressions on Star Sports1 and 30.173 million impressions on Star Sports3," the IPL in the first three weeks (25 matches) achieved a cumulative reach of 297 million viewers on TV" (Bhatia and Sharma). This data shows that perhaps the taste for cricket in India has taken a more cosmopolitan turn and even the matches against India's arch-rival Pakistan do not draw as much viewers as does the IPL.

This fact also speaks to two other accusations regarding the putative subjects of the IPL that the sport is filled with people who do not know cricket, and that it does not create heroes as has always been done by or expected in national or regional cricket which has produced legends such as Duraiswamy and Baloo. The localist, nationalist and regionalist spectator-base of cricket has given way to a more diverse and less "politically" motivated crowd of people who either do not understand or like cricket. This shift from a

nationalist spectatorship to a more amateur, irreverent and cosmopolitan audience testifies not just to the cultural changes in cricket, which "has run the gamut from colonial symbol with arcane, and for many, unteachable rules to a spectacle aimed at lay audiences and market" (Axford and Huggins 1328), but also to the fact that cricket is undergoing a radical ontological change in which not some but all heroes and the very necessity for heroes have become redundant.

It is not only the heroes that are deflated and dethroned by the IPL, the stable concepts of region, locale or nation themselves also disappear. While a provincialist stand against Empire demands the territoriality of location, the de-territorialized cartography of the transnational operates through "genetic miniaturization that is the dimension of the simulation" (Baudrillard 2). The transnational simulation of the IPL therefore is visible in the proliferation of the tournament across the globe including the PSL (Pakistan Super League), BBL (Australian Big Bash League), BPL (Bangladesh Premier League), CPL (Caribbean Premier League), and SPL (Sri Lanka Premier League. So much so that these matrices of simulation have reached areas not on the same maps as Empire and its colonies. Examples of such simulations include Afghanistan's Shpageeza Cricket League, and Nepal's Dhangadi Premier League and Everest Premier League. The element of spectacle in these last three leagues reaches the zenith of caricature and simulation when we take into account the fact that the two host countries organize the contests in rudimentary or make-shift stadia not only without the cushion of capitalist extravaganza but also without an urgent need to be anti-colonial, and without an immediate recourse to ultra-nationalism.

Probably the most intriguing as well revealing of Guha's indictment of the IPL is that it is pure tamasha, not real cricket. This is the most damning assessment not of the IPL as such (because it thrives as a tamasha) but of Guha as a cricket scholar, for two reasons: first, in calling the IPL pure tamasha Guha resembles those Western cricket historians who have passionately used this term "tamasha" to characterize everything Indian including Indian cricket; second, by loosely using this term, Guha turns a blind eye to the aesthetic and political uses of tamasha. Guha's indictment of the IPL interestingly resembles James Astill's assessment of Indian cricket and Indian politics in his book *The Great Tamasha: Cricket, Corruption and the Turbulent Rise of Modern India.* The title, which echoes Rudyard Kipling's "the great game" in *Kim,* equates both Indian cricket and politics to tamasha. "Cricket" notes Astill, "is India's national theatre – it's great *tamasha*;" and "[n]o English crowd is like the churning, hallooing throngs that fill Indian

stadiums" (vi-vii). Talking about one of the first matches between Indians and Englishmen played at Mumbai's Maidan on the 1st of December, 1926, Astill remarks that Indians celebrated CK Naidu's heroics as if "[i]t was a great tamasha" (4). Even after India's independence, cricket remained "one of India's most popular entertainments" and a big cricket match "was a dramatic event," which is not "something learned from the British;" the "theatricality of Indian cricket crowds expressed a striking feature of Indian society – Indian's love of a show" (38).

While Guha's characterization of the IPL as tamasha ironically brings him close to Kipling's or Astill's colonial and Euro-centric views on India, sadly, it also takes him farther away from thinkers (such as Mikhail Bakhtin)who identified in spectacles political qualities of subversion. "[C]laiming that it is just a big show," says John MacAloon in a different context, is not only "morally, intellectually and politically suspicious," it is akin to an "imperialist" method of theorizing (16). We must therefore not only parse out different connotations of the term "tamasha" but also set two of its aspects- subversive aspect against its colonial lampooning in order to critique the latter's elitist, regionalist and nationalist rhetoric and to foreground the former's ability to test, sabotage, and eventually overcome all things provincial. We must move from a disdainful dismissal of the IPL to its diligent deconstruction. The IPL should wear the term "tamasha" as a badge of honor rather than a mark of shame.

Tamasha as Spectacle and Carnival

Tamasha generally refers to a show or performance intended for no other purpose than mere entertainment. This conventional meaning of the term changes as soon as we take into consideration its two other connotative significations: "carnival" and "spectacle. "As a spectacle or carnival, tamasha ceases to be just an uncritical and "imperialist" concept signifying "a big show," and invites us to dwell on its aesthetic, cultural and political significance. In its climactic avatar in Guy Debord's works, the theory of the spectacle becomes a theory of everything, a politically and morally suspect, universalist and imperialist method of theorizing. Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* opens with this thesis: "The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation" (12). Debord's universalist assertion that the whole of modern world is a big show nevertheless acknowledges that critical theory must speak "the language of contradiction" (143), which "embodies its own critique"

(144). Debord's name for this critique of a totalitarian spectacle is "détournement" or diversion, "the necessity for distance to be maintained toward whatever has been turned into an official verity" (145). The IPL as a tournament embodies this notion of détournement.

The IPL is a diversion, distraction and distortion of cricket as we know it. It distorts the "official" version of cricket formally, historically, economically, and politically. Not just that the IPL experiments with and adopts the new T20 format, the tournament's structure betrays its symbiotic interface with the media. Its three hour long matches closely approximate in glitz, glamor, music and spectator mania Bollywood's fortissimo consisting of three hours of melodramatic plotline, gaudy music and gyrating bodies in dance sequences. In-stadia audience or TV audiences at home see and expect to see the same familiar faces as they usually see in films and print media. The IPL's highly choreographed matches include band music, cheer leaders, TV judges, umpires and players wearing cameras and responding to TV commentators while in action on the field. The field side couches for the team owners and IPL officials, and the VIP boxes for a select fans further generate the aura of a drawing room with a giant TV screen, thereby conflating the distinction between the real and the representation.

It is often "the most distant detourned element which contributes most sharply to the overall impression, and not the elements that directly determine the nature of this impression" (Debord and Wolman). More distant, therefore, more important than the immediate, formal detournement is the IPL's historical distortion of cricket. Cricket's origin as a colonial game in which postcolonial nations could only be underdogs aspiring to dethrone the masters at their own game gets distorted in the IPL by signaling a shift from the conventional agony between the colonizer and the colonized or between two postcolonial and tribalist siblings against each other. The IPL's release of cricket from its historical bondage to colonialism however proves a ruse only as the tournament "detourns" to money and capitalism. Minted by the BCCI solely for revenue generating purposes (BCCI tautes the IPL as "cricketainment" and Sport and Business), the IPL commodifies both cricket and cricket players. Each edition of the tournament is dutifully accretionary to IPL's inherently opprobrious pit of controversies and corruption. And yet as more scandals have a chance to get exposed than not in the age of cyber surveillance and hypervisibility, the IPL stages another detournement by unmasking and eventually ousting corrupt players and franchise owners. By unraveling its bondage to money, the IPL ironically actualizes Karl Marx's premonition that capitalism contains within itself "a

self-dissolving contradiction" or "the abolition of the capitalist mode of production within the capitalist mode of production itself" (Marx).

The IPL causes perhaps the most efficient instance of detournement in the domain of politics. Teams "hosted" by Indian cities rather than the state allows IPL to evoke an ancient divarication between city and state inherent in the term "polis." Though some argue that IPL is at best India's global empire, with its teams composed of multinational players, coaches, management and owners with international affiliations, "what IPL represents is *translatiocosmopolitania*" and not the *translatioimperii* (Nayar 155). The IPL "has contributed to improving international player relations" (Tendulkar); and the "environment around international cricket has become friendlier since the inception of the IPL" (Clarke). IPL's cosmopolitan spectacle reenacts what Mikhail Bakhtin would call the "carnivalisticmesalliances" in which all tribal, regionalist or nationalist restrictions disappear in order to give way to a "new mode of interrelationship between individuals" (251).

Discussing cricket in relation to carnival is at least as old as the masterpiece *Beyond a Boundary* in which C. L. R. James reminds the West Indian cricket administrators that they must learn from people's devotion to Carnival in the Caribbean. James hypothesizes that the people of Trinidad and Tobago "would be better employed studying Shakespeare, listening to classical music. . . They don't. They play Carnival, spend time and money on it. That is what they want to do" (242). Expanding on James' insights into the relationship between West Indian cricket and Carnival, Richard Burton argues that Carnival embodies "in a particularly memorable form the intricate patterns of West Indian street culture, so that cricket, carnival and the street corner become overlapping expressions of a single underlying social, cultural and psychological complex" (90). Characterizing West Indian cricket as an "interplay of players, spectacle and crowd," Burton pairs the sport with "African-derived passion cults" such as "voodoo, pocomania and shango" in which "celebrants and congregation merge" (91). For James and Burton, cricket as carnival serves as a creolized ideological zone between the colonial (British) and the autochthonous (African). This creolization of cricket represents a process in which the autochthonous element with music and masquerade "suddenly" and "magically revive and revitalize men and women" from slavery (Burton 92).

The IPL is carnival that emulates folk and street culture of India but not in order to produce something autochthonous. In fact, the IPL is the opposite of autochthony – its Carnival aims at bringing together the master and the slave, for a Carnival true to its name

must, to cite Bakhtin "unifies, weds and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid" (251). It's not emancipatory or redemptive that's why it's not postcolonial or tribal or nationalist that's why its playful pure play – carnival interested not just in rehumanizing men or slaves but in mock crowning and subsequent dethroning of the carnival king (Bakhtin 252).

Carnival occupies a significant place in the strategies of resistance both in ancient and modern times. In the Middle Ages in Europe, Carnival "was a period of unrestricted freedom and fun," which "enabled people to let off some steam," thereby causing "a specific, short-term social revolution" (Cudny 26). As "festive misrule" it aimed at "subversion, transgression and popular resistance to authority" (Humphrey ix). During the so-called Arab Spring, activists from Egypt, Tunisia and other Arab nations staged a series of protests resembling carnivals. These "protest-carnivals" involved "public displays of sit-ins, street prayers, street-like choirs, open-air dancing and singing. The people were at once performers and spectators, and combined in the creation of multi-vocal critical mass followed by tipping-point potency" (Sadiki). While the carnival of IPL clearly demonstrates the spirit of revolution, as a language of contradiction, it also calls into question any regionalist or nationalist discourses of Revolutions. It is often in the name of and for the sake of these Revolutions (whether postcolonial or global) that decriers have critiqued the IPL. For the provincialists, the IPL is mere tamasha without any potential for political subversion. For the nationalists who also see an imperial future for India, the IPL symbolizes no less than "a global sporting revolution" (Gupta 210). The IPL as carnival deconstructs this binary by the "mock-crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king" (Bakhtin 252).

The tournament exposes the repetitive nature of all revolutions and calls for a new form of resistance with a difference; a revolution which, as Derrida in *Specters of Marx* would say, does not borrow from or repeat the past, instead evokes the "the future revolution that, without mourning, wins out over the past revolution: it will finally be the event, the advent of the event, the coming of the future-to-come" (144). As tamasha, the IPL is neither the cricket of the past nor a revolution of the present intending to instate India as a global hegemon. The IPL's spectacularity derives from its being the future-to-come of cricket or cricket's spectral presence across multiple cultural phenomena. Those who believe that the IPL is killing cricket fail to see the sport's recalcitrant phantom in the tamasha in which cricket emerges as pure appearance or play.

Tamasha as Pure Play

This essay started with a critique of Guha's claim that cricket has turned into a tamasha after the entry of the IPL as a serpent into the garden of this sport. We planned our counterclaims in three steps by extending the implications of tamasha from being airy nothing to spectacle, carnival and pure play. Tamasha as a spectacle detourning the tournament closely resembles Guha's depiction of the IPL as an external element which interrupts cricket proper. Tamasha as carnival shifts focus back to the internal dynamics of subversion in cricket in which instead of being an external element of distraction, the IPL is thought to be an agent of cricket's implosion from within. Contrary to the assessment that the garden of cricket is being ruined by something external to it, we identified in or portrayed the IPL as a reverse flight towards the revolution of the sport's future-to-come.

This movement is intrinsic to cricket in which a batsman releases a ball from the center of the field and sends it darting away to the periphery and ideally beyond the boundary. This centrifugal movement distinguishes cricket from other sports such as volleyball or tennis governed primarily by their centripetal rhythm in which the ball is hit towards the center of the field. Even baseball, football, hockey and soccer, which in principle mirror cricket's efferential play, do not fully defy the center and destroy the boundary. A hitter in baseball might score a homerun, yet the basemen end up reconstructing or reconsolidating rather than crossing the boundary. Similarly, the centrifugal play in a football or hockey game results not in the release of the ball from the center towards the boundary but in the ball's recapture in the net or the hole at a designated spot on the boundary. Almost exclusively cricket is the only game in which the center (in the form of the wicket) is constantly challenged or is circumvented to generate the flight of the deflected ball towards the edges or margins of the field. This singularity that defines cricket is pure play insofar as it is unburdened by the constraints or demands of a putative center, be it man, presence, nation, or god.

International Test or One Day cricket might still partake in the logos be it region or nation. Contrary to these, the IPL is completely unencumbered by the expectations or obligations of nationalism. The players in this tournament are not under any ideological or political pressure to perform against a team from a rival or "enemy" nation; as a result it is only fair to expect a spike in their performance. This refusal to identify an "enemy" converts the IPL into what Maurice Blanchot has called "the community of lovers" where "everything is accepted" and the very impossibility of "recognizing an enemy or of taking

into account a particular adversity" leads to the "event" to take place (Blanchot 31). When an IPL team consisting of multinational players walk into the field, they not only fulfil the literal meaning of tamasha – which derives from Arabic or Persian *masha* meaning "to walk together," they also form a phantasmatic collectivity untainted by artificial political, ethnic and racial boundaries. Whereas contests such as the Olympics that claim to promote world peace and unity still remain mired in agons between competing nations, the IPL's tamasha foreshadows a cosmopolitan community of lovers who champion pure play against playing as proxy war.

The politically unencumbered self of an IPL player, however, does not culminate in his unbridled individualism or heroism. Only nationalism needs a Baloo. No doubt a particular player outstands from the moment he gets bought at the auction through each match, innings, over and ball. One over or ball can make a player or unmake him. And yet, despite the prospect of rising to one's glory in the IPL, the tournament subjects each player to the law of irreverent substitutability. The tags of national heroes and indispensable players give way to micro-strategies which change from one match or venue to another. A batsman who has scored a ton or a bowler who has hauled a fifer may still prove utterly incapable of repeating the feat in a match next day against a different opponent. The argument here is not that "a very important part of the game [of cricket] will always remain with your luck" (Nandy) - characterizing cricket as a game of destiny is another form of provincialism which either seeks to Indianize or Brahminize the game - rather the IPL discounts heroes because it is an asubjective game in the sense Hans-Georg Gadamer evokes the concept in *Truth and Method.* Gadamer believes that "[p]lay fulfils its purpose only if the player loses himself in play. The mode of being of play does not allow the player to behave toward play as if toward an object" (107). The IPL makes its players lose themselves in cricket, thereby letting an asubjective pure play emerge in the game.

Loosing oneself in play exposes a player to his frailties and limits, and makes him aware of his potential demise. This aspect of a sport leads Toby Miller to make a Foucauldian argument that the awareness of failure must accompany a careful modulation of desires, a "sign of the ability to govern" oneself (185). Unlike the longer format cricket, T20 in general and the IPL in particular do not allow governmentality or technologies of self to dominate; instead they exhort the players to engage in a Dionysian excess, thereby making them the most crucial component of the tamasha. The IPL is pure play in which the players, reciprocated in kind and effect by the spectators, owners and

administrators, make a tamasha of themselves, breaking down, as Johan Huizinga would remark in a different context, “the absolute determinism of the cosmos” including the fact that such a tamasha would not “limit [itself] to mankind” (3). The IPL tests the boundaries not just of provincialism but also of humanism and cosmopolitanism.

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