‘Sports Diplomacy as Solution for What Ails Asia’

Author: Dr. Benu Gupta, Associate Professor, KMC University of Delhi, India
Email ID drbenugupta@yahoo.co.in

Abstract: Diplomacy can provide an underpinning contribution to that communication task; resting as it does on a troika of three fundamentals viz communication, representation and negotiation. Olympic movement contributes as a soft power in diplomacy. Sports have a power to change the world. Sports Diplomacy is worth thinking about because sports brings people together, it’s dynamic and dramatic and provides insight into our understanding of diplomacy and therefore life. It works beyond discrimination impress upon one species human and earth as a family under the common umbrella. The current paper presents the review of not that it resonates across all aspects of a 21st Century global and glocal society. The study reveals and discuss about how sports diplomacy can be a tool to resolve diplomatic issues. Especially in context of the Asian countries which has its own rich moral traditional heritage; where there is a strong common ethical value based culture still having socio-political and other issues. The study discusses how sports diplomacy can be a solution for what ails Asian region and sports can play a soft power.

Key Words: Sports Diplomacy, Solution for Ails

INTRODUCTION

Diplomacy is the means by which States throughout the world conduct their affairs in ways to ensure peaceful relations. The main task of individual diplomatic services is to safeguard the interests of their respective countries abroad. This concerns as much the promotion of political, economic, cultural or scientific relations as it does international commitment to defend human rights or the peaceful settlement of disputes. Sports diplomacy falls under public diplomacy, which is used to improve intermediate and long-term relations between states by influencing the public abroad to accomplish foreign policy goals (Gilboa, 2008). Public Diplomacy is communication and representation to a nation’s public rather than to its government. Sports Diplomacy is the nexus in global affairs of sporting and
diplomatic realms, where overlapping practices and approaches allow for multi-directional dimensions of social, political, and economic networks between and amongst a full range of polities (individuals, organisations, and nation-states et al.) (Rofe 2016). The interplay between sport, international relations and diplomacy is a long, complex and fascinating one. Like cultural ethos music or art, sport is a universal language that can transcend acrimonious diplomatic relationships, offer high profile pathways for dialogue beyond the negotiating table and, idealistically, unite disparate nations and their publics through a mutual affection for sports competition and games.

The domains of sport and diplomacy have had a long, often fraught, and generally under-appreciated relationship, at least since the emergence of the modern Olympic movement in the late 19th century. Given the unparalleled visibility, popularity, and mobilizing potential of modern sport, accompanied by intense manifestations of identity (national, regional, local, sectarian, ethnic, etc. etc.). It is hardly surprising that sports teams, events, and venues have been viewed as compelling vehicles for the political and diplomatic ambitions of both governments and the range of people engaged in 'network diplomacy. Yet particularly in the various societies a full engagement with the politico-diplomatic possibilities of sport was long inhibited by what Lincoln Allison has termed 'the myth of autonomy'. This is the idea 'that sport was somehow separate from society, that it transcended or had "nothing to do with" politics and social conflict. Underpinned by the paradoxical convictions that it was both: "above" or "below" the political dimensions of social life. This myth has proven highly durable, despite much contradictory evidence. The result was that for many governments, there was a deep reluctance to explicitly engage the 'world of sport' as a focus of diplomatic analysis and practice.

Authoritarian regimes of all stripes-fascist, communist, military, etc. have on the whole been considerably less reticent about embracing sport as a tool of international diplomacy. However would-be 'users' have encountered another challenges the limited and erratic interchange-ability of sport as a diplomatic currency. In short investments in sport do not reliably generate the anticipated benefits and in some cases. It can positively recoil on their users in unanticipated ways. A particularly striking example is the 1988 Seoul Olympics, which rebounded on the country's authoritarian military rulers in ways that decisively, advanced the process of liberal democratization. In this respect, there is some real substance to the idea that sport and the
organizations that govern it, has a relatively high degree of autonomy that makes it difficult to control and manipulate with durable political effects.

**METHODOLOGY**

This paper involves desk review of secondary literature material on Sports Diplomacy and what AilsAsia. Google scholar was used to find relevant studies for the paper. The paper discusses a rapid review of sports as a soft power in diplomacy. Information pertaining to sports diplomacy and sports is looked up at Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) website, an Asian body of International Olympic Committee (IOC). IOC is a nodal body in world of sports dealing with issues related to sports and also deals with global issues through sports.

**SPORTS DIPLOMACY**

While sports may temporarily transcend divisions in society, events like Olympics rarely serve to advance countries diplomatic aims. The 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea could create a positive vibe on the Korean peninsula, but the event was unlikely to yield lasting diplomatic gains, says Jonathan Grix, professor of sports policy at Manchester Metropolitan University. While the impact of sports on diplomacy may be limited, events like the Olympics continue to attract countries for their value in public diplomacy. There have clearly been instances where participating countries boosted their reputations, he says. Sometimes, however, the effect is ephemeral, or nationalism becomes a vehicle for “interstate rivalry played out on the sporting pitch,” Grix said in an interview by Eleanor Albert in February 2018.

On the occasion of the one-year anniversary of the opening of the Winter Olympic Games PyeongChang, on the 7th February 2018 the IOC President Dr. Thomas Bach stated during his warm message “The Olympic Winter Games PyeonChang 2018 were a success story in so many respects. From the sporting achievements and the athletes experience to the excellent organisation, these Games opened up new horizons in more ways than anyone could have imagined. The best expression of the joint march of the athletes of the National
Olympic Committee of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea at the opening ceremony. They entered the stadium as one team, united behind one flag, The Korean Unification Flag. With these powerful symbols of PyeongChang, we saw how the Olympic Games can open the way to dialogue, how the Olympic Values can open the way to a more peaceful future on the Korean Peninsula will remain open. Sports must continue to build bridges and show what it can do to bring people together.”

As Mahatma Gandhi M.K.said and reiterated by Nelson Mandela (2000),sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. Sport can awaken hope where there was previously only despair. Sport speaks to people in a language they can understand.

Through a review of different foreign policy objectives that are common in multilateral diplomacy, we discuss the effectiveness of sports as a platform for diplomacy. The most common strategic objectives are

1. providing an unofficial reason and location for international leaders to meet and begin a dialogue;
2. providing insights into the host country and educating others about it;
3. bridging cultural and linguistic differences among nations and seeking common ground through sports;
4. creating a platform for new trade agreements or legislation;
5. creating awareness for the international relationship through sport ambassadors;
6. creating a legacy for the host country, improving its image in the world; and
7. using sport to provide legitimacy for a new nation.

The politico-diplomatic nature of international sport is, in part, the result of the formative role of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Olympic movement it spearheads, and its social mission-Olympism—in world politics. Though international and transnational sporting engagements were not uncommon prior to the IOC’s founding in 1894, Pierre de Coubertin (the reviver of the Olympic Games in the modern era) imbued this resolutely non-governmental organization with the overtly diplomatic aim of promoting a prominent sort of cultural
'internationalism' or ‘vasudhaiv kutumbakam’ world as one family.

Over time, a plethora of diverse actors have come to occupy the diplomatic space of international sports. As with the broader trend towards non-governmental influence in diplomatic networks, the world of international sport has seen the rise of many NGOs that pursue issue-specific or country-specific mandates. A vibrant and much-discussed community of actors who apply sporting practices to the task of 'international development' has arisen in recent decades; a perusal of the database of organizations maintained by the International Platform on Sport and Development reveals NGOs addressing everything from HIV/AIDS to post-conflict peace-building and reconciliation. Many of these NGOs are financed or sponsored by governments, national sporting bodies or leagues (e.g. National Sports Organisations), or private firms (e.g. major sports wear MNCs), thus further complicating the layers of diplomacy and the interests in play. For example, Right to Play—perhaps the most prominent 'sport for development' NGO—receives significant funding from (inter)governmental agencies (e.g. the United Nations Children's Fund), multinationals, other NGOs (e.g. Save the Children) and sports organizations (e.g. the ISOs, NSOs, SAI etc.). The question of diplomatic space becomes dramatically complicated by the fact that ‘Right to Play’ is, at once, perceived to represent human values as well as the interests of the stakeholders. Within this growing panoply of players, the leading ISOs have adapted and indeed thrived, notwithstanding periodic scandal. They, in turn, have elicited new interest and roles on the part of other non-governmental as well as government actors. Though the IOC was not the first ISO to commercialize its product or to allow professionals into its historically amateur ranks, these decisions had monumental effects upon the entire universe of ISOs. When Juan Antonio Samaranch—a controversial former Palange politician in Franco’s Spain and later Spanish ambassador to the USSR—became the IOC president in 1980, the organization was nearly bankrupt. His decision to invite commercial sponsors to bid for the right to associate themselves with the Olympic movement and to raise the stakes significantly for aspiring television broadcasters made the IOC one of the richest NGOs on the planet. It also incorporated MNCs and their interests firmly within the international sporting scene. Many other ISOs and NOCs followed the IOC’s example (though few as profitably), and even those who retained amateur features or attracted little commercial interest
have benefitted financially because of the distribution of IOC resources throughout the Olympic system. As a consequence, MNCs have become integral to the Olympic movement, notably through exclusive and lucrative sponsorship arrangements that give these privileged corporate 'partners' a major stake in the preservation and propagation of the internationalist image and ideology of Olympism. They have also often influenced or made demands upon Olympic actors, as manifested in the National Broadcasting Corporation's insistence that certain high-profile events be scheduled for primetime viewing in the United States or critics suspicions that host city selections are at least partially determined by the presence of attractive markets for Olympic sponsors. Corporate sponsors, in turn, have enabled the IOC to attain unprecedented reach and power from its already privileged position. In many ways then, as noted a moment ago, the IOC's decision to market its 'brand' has transformed it into a virtual MNC in its own right. The CSR and Sports through market in events like Olympic Games, Asian Games, Common Wealth Games and World Championships target to clinch the social ails.

In traditional international diplomacy and the current trend of sports diplomacy is recognised as one of the most effective way of the expanding scope of the practice, the increasing specialization necessary, and the new formats for engagement all make a more networked approach the only feasible way forward.

Diplomacy is an asset to every nation, developed or developing. It also acts as a soft knife to get work done in conditions of tensions, and cold wars between countries. Different tools of diplomacy are used for different occasions by different countries in their respective manners. Tools such as round table conferences, meetings of senior officials, positive statements, offering help, showing empathy on the event of a tragedy etc. are used by the countries. Now –a –days, sports diplomacy is a major tool used by all the countries to make cordial relations with their colleagues. This can be understood by the example of India where sports are an important tool of diplomacy, for example, cricket match with the neighborhood countries. Indo-Pak relations always have the cricket and music as a chain reaction to melt the ice during cold war. In current scenario both countries are not even ready for unconditional dialogue playing sports at international arena like Olympic qualifiers etc is breaking the ice at some point. So as is with other country’s example.
The countries target the nations to improve the relation. The cultural exchange program or the sport dignitaries delegation directly affects the relationship between the two’s. This diplomacy technique is very economic ie low costing and yield higher results. The place where all conversations are stopped and no needs of communication are open between two countries, sports acts as a mediator. Whether to have the matches between the countries on invitation or to be the part of any international events like Olympics, World Cup etc. which can be bypassed or overlooked and the delegation in charge express his / her views about the country to startup the channel of talk. This sports diplomacy can help in managing the various issues.

Society is a small niche which we create or are forced to create around ourselves for a harmonious and peaceful life. However, it is the very same society, which marks the downfall of human kind and does not resonate with its true functioning. Which cause ails like Environment (Pollution, Desertification, Deforestation, Overconsumption), Climate Change (Global Warming), Ocean (Marine Pollution and Ocean Governance), Poverty, Food Insecurity (Malnutrition, Food Safety and Food Riots, Hunger), Water (Scarcity, Water Conflict, Water Privatization), Health Issues, Children (Child Poverty, Child Labor, Child Abuse, Child Morality), Education, Humanitarian Crises (Migration, Refugees, Displacement), Population (Over Population, Ageing Population), Human Rights Violations, Human Settlement (Slums, Urbanization, Sanitation), Development (Social and Economic), Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Labor Exploitation, Peace, Conflict and Security, Governance (Lack of Equity, Participation, Populism, Transparency, Accountable, Corruption and Rule of Law), Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, Religious and Ethnic Tolerance, Rising Income Inequality, Disaster Management, Social Issues (Racism on the basis of caste color etc., Communalism, Regionalism, Language Conflicts, Sectarian, Discrimination and Injustice), Terrorism (Including Cyber-terrorism), Waste Management (Including Nuclear Waste), Gender Issues (Gender Inequality, Women Rights, Offences Against Women, Discrimination, Rape etc.), Artificial Intelligence Arms Race and also cause future threat of Bio Terrorism (Intentional Release of Biological Agents Like Bacteria, Virus, Fungi or Toxins) and so on so forth.

Over the years, rather centuries, people have always kept society on the highest pedestal and it is
this very same entity which has often turned its back, discriminated, and reduced people to mere objects, instead of supporting them; such a plight can be seen when we talk about women. Quoting Simone De Beauvoir, women have been treated as “the second sex”, wherein, they are often restricted to mere sexual objects, domestic helps and a procreation machine. Since time immemorial, they have been put into cages, restricted and their existence has been that of a dependent person.

A woman is often associated with the man of the family and her identity and role is influenced by the relation she has with the man; viz. a daughter, a sister, a wife, and a mother.

It is true that the times are changing and this gender biasness and disparity is ending, but we must acknowledge the fact that this change is slow and subjective or just looks like but not actually.

An urban setting may witness or accept the concept of a “modern, working woman”, but the same acceptance can be a little difficult in rural setting, especially in the case of Asia which is primarily constituted by its rural heritage.

We cannot help but wonder the various factors and reasons as to why such discrimination exists in our social environment, what ails Asia. It works as termite to the growth of the entire Asian continent. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the root of social ails is discrimination and inequality. If we truly consider one species as human first with no discrimination and with equality in all spheres that moment will be an inception or seeding of society without ails.

**CONCLUSION**

Sports Diplomacy works beyond discrimination one species human and earth as a family under the umbrella of Olympic Games. Arch-rival countries and people become competitors to channelize their contention into competition. Deprived and maltreated gets recognition with dignity. Asia has its own rich moral traditional heritage of ‘Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam’.

उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानात्मानमवसादयेत्]
आत्मैवह्यात्मनोबन्धुरात्मैवररऩुरात्मनः|| 6.5||

‘UdhredatmnatmaanamNatmanamavsadyet|
AatmaivHyatmanoBandhuranmaivRipuratmane’ -||6.4||
मनुष्यको चाहिए कंपनीको सहायतासे अपनाठ्ठादारकरे और अपनेको लाईचेन गर्नेदै।

यह मनुष्यको चाहिए उनले अपने आत्महत्याका नक्सली और अभाव भी जीवन मार्ग भी गाई भी।

All human beings want to improve upon themselves through their hard work and determination. One of the hurdles that may arise in achieving this is the conflict between the brain and the heart. If the heart is convinced, then that becomes your strongest tool while if it is not convinced then it becomes your biggest liability. It is up to us we want the evil to overcome angle or angel to overcome evil in us. Sports helps to maneuverer the evil thought into angel by exploding into physical workout and competitions. So as sports diplomacy works as solution what ails the mother earth to achieve ‘वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्’ ‘Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam’ ‘Global Family’.

REFERENCES:

- https://ioa.org.gr/
- https://www.olympic.org/the-ioc