

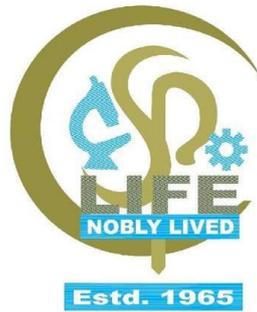
A Socio-Cultural Analysis of the Movie *Lagaan*

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N. Afrad

Register Number: 170021017781

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Department of English

St. Paul's College

Kalamassery

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Declaration

I do hereby declare that the project **A Socio-Cultural Analysis of the Movie *Lagaan*** is the record of genuine research work done by me under the guidance of Dr. Salia Rex, Assistant Professor and the Head of the Department of English, St. Paul's College, Kalamassery.

N. Afrad

Certificate

This is to certify that the project work **A Socio-Cultural Analysis of the Movie *Lagaan*** is a record of the original work carried out by N. Afrad under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Salia Rex, Assistant Professor and the Head of the Department of English, St. Paul's College, Kalamassery.

Dr. Salia Rex
Head of the Department
Department of English
St. Paul's College
Kalamassery

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A SOCIO-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE MOVIE *LAGAAN*

Introduction

Over the past few years, Indian culture has crossed over into the mainstream with Bollywood films playing an important role and enjoying considerable success internationally and especially in the UK. This is partly due to the shared culture developed between India and UK as part of colonization. *Lagaan* is a movie that depicts India's colonial past and signals some trends like cricket that have become part of our postcolonial present. My project explores the role of cricket and its introduction to the Indian culture by the British during the colonial period and the surprising integration of the sport into the everyday lives of Indians in the twenty-first century as represented in the film *Laagan*.

Lagaan is a 2001 Indian historical epic sports drama film, directed by AshutoshGowariker. The film is set in the Victorian period of India's colonial British Raj. This film, in a way depicts the birth of cricket in India ,which has ever since grown leaps and bounds to be part of our culture in the present scenario. India is now a cricket loving nation and it is the most valued sport in the country. The game of cricket has a big influence on people. This movie shows the importance of a sport that decides the fate of the villagers of Champaner. It also deals with the interrogation of cricket which was considered one of the key civilizing devices of the British Empire.

Cricket which is known as a gentleman's game is a daily routine for the Britishers. It has a lot of importance in their society. A cultural study of cricket and its impact in the Indian culture is portrayed through this project. It is the development of a sport over these years which have earned a name in the Indian culture. India is a country that has difference in culture from place to place and the game of Cricket which is part of the Indian culture has no variations within the country. It has a unified spirit where the citizens have it in them. India is

a country of 1.33 billion people and cricket is a most popular game in India. Board of Control for Cricket India (BCCI) generates revenue twice that of all other cricket playing countries, this is an official proof that India has a huge number of cricket loving fans.

The first chapter deals with the theory, which mainly deals with cultural studies and the sub-discipline, Sports Sociology. The second chapter is a re-reading of the film *Lagaan* through the cultural theory which depicts the transformation of cricket from a colonialist device to a nationalistic game. The last chapter is entitled as Indo – western culture in *Lagaan*.

The film in a way depicts the beginning of Cricket as a national obsession that has been passed on across the post-colonial generations. This is not just a film but the history of cricket. The project aims to discover the growth of cricket in all aspects in the Indian cultural background. The project intends to analyze the sport with the theory of cultural studies.

Chapter 1

Cultural Studies and Sports Sociology

Culture encompasses the ideas, customs and norms of a social group. It plays an important role in human life by transforming individual experiences, daily lives, social relations and power. Cultural study is an innovative interdisciplinary field of research and teaching that investigates the ways in which culture is created and the role it plays in everyday life. Cultural studies involves the analysis of theoretical, political, and empirical cultures associated with the political epidemiology of modern culture, historical grounds, characterization, conflicts, and contingencies.

In the nineteenth century, 'culture' was used by some people to designate various types of human activity. In the 20th century, anthropologists developed the theory of culture as a subject of scientific analysis. According to many theories widely accepted among anthropologists, culture shows how people interpret biology and the environment. According to this view, culture is an integral part of human existence, the human environment. Most cultural changes can be attributed to the human adaptation of historical events. The goal of cultural studies is to understand all complex cultural forms and analyze the social and political context in which culture is revealed. It is committed to ethical judgment and radical political action in the modern society.

It also combines a wide variety of politically engaged critical approaches drawn including semiotics, marxism, feminist theory, ethnography, critical race theory, post-structuralism, postcolonialism, social theory, political theory, history, philosophy, literary theory, media theory, film/video studies, communication studies, political economy,

translation studies, museum studies and art history/criticism to study cultural phenomena in various societies and historical periods. The concept of cultural studies was originally developed by British scientists between the late 1950s and 1970s, It was then adopted and modified by scientists from different fields around the world.

During the rise of neo-liberalism in Britain and the US, cultural studies both became a global movement, and attracted the attention of many conservative opponents both within and beyond universities for a variety of reasons. Cultural studies are engaged in daily mediation and approach this study from the point of view of radical situationism. An important characteristic of culture is that the basic assumptions, beliefs and values are inherited historically, and the traditional worldview persists for generations. The purpose of cultural research is to study the relationship between cultural practices and power. Culture is the ideal way of life for a group. It includes many aspects of human activity such as religious beliefs, laws, artistic expression, recreation, etc. Cultural changes and differences have been important sources of social richness but also of complex problems and conflicts.

A key concern for cultural studies practitioners is the examination of the forces within and through which socially organized people conduct and participate in the construction of their everyday lives. This relates to sociology which is the scientific study of society, patterns of social relationships, social interaction, and culture of everyday life. We specifically look at Sports Sociology which is a sub-discipline of sociology that focuses on sports as a social phenomenon. It examines the influence of culture and values on sports, as well as the influence of sports on culture and values. Sports is viewed through many perspectives. It has a significant aspect in the society. In a hierarchical model of culture, sports may be regarded as its antithesis: a bodily practice, of little cultural consequence, gazed on by passive spectators for the enrichment of the leisure and media industries.

The emergence of sports sociology dates back to the end of the 19th century, when the first socio-psychological experiments were conducted on the effects of competition. One of the first efforts to think about sports in a general manner was Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* or Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*. *Homo Ludens* discussed the importance of games in culture and society. Huizinga suggests that a play, specifically a sport, is primary to and a necessary condition of the generation of culture. These articles contributed to the emergence of sports sociological research. German scholar Heinz Risse published the concept *Sports Sociology* in 1921, it was not until 1966 that an international group of sociologists formed a committee and founded a journal to study the place of sports in society. In 1970, sports sociology received much attention as a systematic and legitimate area of research. North American sports sociology was founded in 1978 to study this area. Its research center, the *Journal of Sports Sociology*, was founded in 1984.

“Sports serve society by providing vivid examples of excellence” this quote by George Will (*JalvisQuote*) summarises how sports can act as a cultural reference point for excellence that society can be inspired by. Sports culture is influential in society and the influence is not limited to the playing arena. One example of this influence is the partnership of brands like Nike with the Indian Cricket Team as well as IPL teams to provide official merchandise such as caps, team jerseys, etc. This is a macro trend that is realized mentally, and its influence is less noticeable in many aesthetic decisions that we make as consumers.

Sport forms part of a nation's culture. It is a global event, able to delight billions and attract their attention to periodic Olympic, world, international or paralympic games. As far as India is concerned, it has a very old and rich culture of traditional sports. There is a mention of traditional sports in ancient scriptures. Traditional sports or local sports like Kabaddi, Kushti, Gillidanda to name a few are being played in most parts of our country.

India has a rich cultural diversity. There are different cultural sports which suit the environment of a particular culture and are promoted informally in that culture through generation to generation. In the pre-independence period, sports culture in our country could not thrive although concept of some sports like cricket was borrowed from outside.

Sport is a universal element in all cultures. So we chose this as the theme of the compass. Sport is popular particularly with young people; statistics show that 61% of young people aged between 15 and 24 participate regularly in sporting activities. Another reason for including sports is that sports enable young people to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for full participation in civil society, providing opportunities for social interaction. Culture and sport are both human rights and related to various other human rights.

In the realm of sports, Cricket has captured the imagination of both the masses and the elite. Even though Cricket is not the official national sport, it has managed to upend Hockey, to be the most popular sport in the country ever since the first World Cup victory in 1983. Despite not being considered a 'global' sport, cricket is growing considerably in stature on the world stage in recent times, with over a 100 countries being members of the ICC.

The advanced popularity of Cricket in India as compared to most other countries is because of our connection to the game through our colonial past. This dates back to the early British influence in the eighteenth century, when the army helped to popularize the sport. The first recorded match dates back to 1721. Since the mid 1970s India has been regarded as one of the major cricketing nations in the world. From that time, the growth of cricket in India has gone from strength to strength. It is now an integral part of our culture. Also, despite the huge diversity in other cultural norms across the country, the game of cricket, remains a strong

unifying factor across regions. The love of cricket in India is a crucial part in understanding the country's culture.

In the Indian context, apart from cricket, film is another important part of culture as it is a presentation of equivocal ideologies. The culture of India refers collectively to the thousands of distinct and unique cultures of all religions and regions across the country. This diversity in culture is well represented by Indian films, be it the different languages, religions, architecture, food, customs, etc. As an ideal fusion of cultural studies and sports sociology, we analyze the Indian film 'Lagaan' in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Cultural Analysis of *Lagaan*

Lagaan is a 2001 Indian historical epic sports drama film, directed by Ashutosh Gowariker, produced by Aamir Khan and written by Gowariker. Aamir Khan stars along with debutant Gracy Singh, with British actors Rachel Shelley and Paul Blackthorne playing supporting roles. *Lagaan* received critical acclaim and awards at international film festivals, as well as many Indian film awards. It became the third Indian film to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film after *Mother India* (1957) and *Salaam Bombay* (1988).

The film is set in the Victorian period of India's colonial British Raj. This is not just a film but the Indian cricket history and an exquisite blend of the only two truly pan-Indian phenomenon, films and cricket. *Lagaan* goes deep into the psyche of the Indian masses. This is a collage of Indian pop culture, the most powerful, colorful and patriotic story about the glory of Indian cricket, told through the medium of Hindi cinema. Hindi films and cricket are the two pillars that form the basis of Indian mass culture. The film is a tale of a team of village men playing cricket against an oppressive colonial regime in the village of Champaner in Kutch to save their lives, families and land.

“*Lagaan*” is perfectly positioned to be the first crossover Bollywood hit: like “*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*” the first martial arts movie to make into the mainstream American theatres, it’s a smooth, technically impeccable, somewhat denatured version of a culturally specific entertainment. India is now a cricket loving nation and it is the most valued sport in the country. The game of cricket has a big influence on people. This movie shows the importance of a sport that decides the fate of the villagers of Champaner. An analysis of the use of the cricket metaphor in Ashutosh Gowariker's film *Lagaan* indicates how cricket, the

once proud cultural form of colonial Britain, is subverted in such a way that it becomes a tool for decolonization. Relating the conception of decolonization to cricket, Appadurai argues, “Nowhere are the complexities and ambiguities of this dialogue more evident than in the vicissitudes of cricket in those countries that were once part of the British Empire” (Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization p.74) Lagaan’s treatment of cricket, which is largely reflective of the South Asian treatment of cricket over the past century, could be seen as a celebration of Appadurai’s conception of decolonization. This treatment of cricket, which is more of an appropriation of a reality that is fundamentally colonial in character than of a rejection of the reality, provides important insights into the tension between colonizers and the natives.

In the film, the appropriation of cricket primarily takes the form of an indigenization of the sport. Since cricket is a highly structured sport, it is said to be very hard to culturally appropriate. But at the same time cricket has successfully become indigenized in India.

Lagaan is set in 1893 in a village called Champaner in colonial Awadh, a princely state in what is now central India. The East India Company looks after the defence of the state in lieu of taxes (or lagaan) paid by the peasants. Raja Puran Singh, the local ruler, is a nominal head, although responsible for the welfare of his subjects. Captain Russell, the British official of East India Company in charge of the region, demands double the usual amount of tax from the people. They are unable to pay due to losses caused by a prolonged drought. The main character in this film is Bhuvan who is played by Aamir Khan. Under Bhuvan’s leadership, villagers visit Raja Puran Singh for help. Near the palace they experience a cricket game. He mocks the game and argues with a British officer who insulted him. Taking an instant dislike to Bhuvan, Russell offers to cancel the taxes of the whole province for three years if the villagers can defeat his men in a game of cricket. Otherwise they had to pay triple tax. Bhuvan, the hero of the film, explains to his fellow spectators that

the British are playing a game similar to 'gilli-danda', which all the village children play. He finds cricket as another version of the rural game of gilli-danda.

Lagaan contains several scenes that point to a mythicization of cricket. The first instance of mythicization comes in the scene where Bhuvan tries to convince his fellow villagers that cricket is doable and the match winnable, especially at a time when the villagers including Bhuvan have no clue what cricket is. Bhuvan takes a bat that he himself has made and asks Tipu, his young companion, to bowl so that he could demonstrate to the others how to bat. Bhuvan misses the first two balls, but he becomes successful in his third attempt. He strikes so hard that the ball goes flying and hits the bell of the Hindu temple located at the top of a nearby hill. The ringing of the bell caused by Bhuvan's strike comes across as an auspicious beginning not just for Bhuvan's project, but also for the future of cricket in the Indian subcontinent. This scene conveys the idea that Indian cricket is not just a sport but a sport that has the blessings of the protecting gods. The scene featuring the performance of religious rituals primarily by the senior members of the village community with the aim of invoking blessings on the village team just before they enter the ground on the first day of the match could be seen as another instance of the mythicization of cricket in the film. This performance of religious rituals in the wake of the match points to the underlying assumption that there is an extra-temporal dimension to the sport in the Indian context and emphasizes the presence of some sort of a divine intervention in the match.

The scene that involves Bhuvan and Deva worshiping the ground by touching the ground in the way they would touch the floor of a temple further emphasizes the extra-temporal dimension that the sport has acquired in the Indian context. This act of worshiping the ground before stepping into it transforms the cricket field into a sacred site, and this transformation also emphasizes the idea that Indian cricket is a reality of religious and spiritual importance. In the context of Lagaan, the indigenization of the sport could be seen

taking place within the structure of the sport itself. The organized cricket depicted in the film is a special response to rural colonial communities. Cricket nationalism is depicted as temporary and provisional and thus different from nationalist politics, which sees itself as linear and evolutionary. Lagaan's representation of peasant participation and competence in an elite sport allows the colonized peasants of Champaner to go beyond being mere voyeurs of cricket matches and inert victims of colonial policy. Thus, cricket became a forum for strengthening the forces of the region against the colonial countries. Their fair dexterity helps them emphasise that their 'Indian' individuality is in no mode poorer to the whites. The native mastery of a grand sport as a consequence becomes the leveller between the immigrant and the colonized.

Bhuvan begins to prepare the villagers for the match. He initially finds only five people willing to join the team. He is aided in his efforts by Russell's sister Elizabeth, who feels that her brother mistreated the villagers. She teaches them the rules of the game. For the villagers this cricket match was not a time pass game like it is for the Britishers. They realize that winning is equal to freedom and one by one, the villagers join the team. It was their only way for survival. Bhuvan finds the skill of a spinner in Kachra who is an untouchable and invites him to the team. The villagers refused to play along with a Dalit but Bhuvan convinces them to accept him. Cricket is a game where there is no caste or race and everyone is united to achieve their goal which is winning. For the villagers it was not just about winning a match but winning their livelihood. On the first day, Russell wins the toss and elects to bat, giving the British officers a strong start. It is for the first time the game of cricket is played by the Indian citizens. The ground is filled with the villagers who came to support their team. The match shows how the game of cricket becomes an emotion to the villagers. The match is the foundation for the game of cricket in India which is part of the culture now. The non-violent resistance dimension of the struggle depicted in Lagaan

indicates how cricket becomes a platform for the creation of a national identity for India. An analysis of the composition of the village cricket team would show that the team is much more than a mere cricket team. The introduction of cricket into a film as a sport for white people, seen by an Indian prince, is similar to what happened in India in the late 19th century. It is a basement meant for the introduction of sports culture and its practice which evolved as a cultural background of India. Lagaan is an important film because it interrupts the linearity of the commonsensical knowledge of cricket historiography.

The slightly unorthodox batting and bowling styles developed and adopted by the members of the village lineup is a sign of a radical indigenization of the sport. At one point in the match, being unable to understand and pick the bowling style of one of the members of the local team, Captain Russell and the batsman facing the bowler lodge a complaint with the umpire saying it is improper bowling. When the umpire is not sure what to say Elizabeth intervenes and argues for the local team. She makes the point that, since there are no written rules governing the bowling style in cricket, there should not be any objections to Goli's bowling style. Accepting Elizabeth's argument, the umpire overruled the objection. The umpire's decision to overrule Russell's objection and permit Goli to continue with his bowling style indicates an instance where cricket, which the British rulers intended to use as a weapon against the indigenous community, leaving their control and becoming indigenized. The conceptualization of cricket in expressions of 'gilli-danda' indicates a radical redefinition of the organization of the sport.

Another scene containing the mythicization of cricket is on the night before the final day of the match, at a time when victory appears to be a rather unrealistic goal for the village team. The villagers are seen pleading with the gods in the village temple requesting to help them win the match. This pleading, which takes the form of a request for a direct divine intervention in the match, conveys the implication that the village team are in an alliance with

their protecting gods for the introduction of sports culture and its practice which evolved as a cultural background of India. Lagaan is an important film because it interrupts the linearity of the commonsensical knowledge of cricket historiography.

Chapter – 3

Indo – western cultural elements in *Lagaan*

The movie, “Lagaan: Once Upon a Time in India”, also known as “Lagaan”, took place during the age of the enlightenment. Indians began to feel a sense of nationalism during the time period and rebelled against oppressive British control. During the movie, Indian villagers under the leadership of Bhuvan, the main character, oppose Britain’s taxation system. Throughout “Lagaan”, Bhuvan finds himself caught between two lovers: an Indian village girl named Gauri and a helpful British girl named Elizabeth. Although the women come from very distinct cultures, they both rebel against powerful men to support Bhuvan in his journey against British tax imposers, eventually falling in love with him in the process.

Gauri and Elizabeth come from very distinct cultures and reflect their differences in the way they handle similar situations. While Gauri wears colorful, tight saris and jewelry, Elizabeth wears pale-colored, poofy dresses and a sunhat. While Gauri dances with energy and personality, Elizabeth dances stiffly and professionally. While Gauri celebrates in the rain, Elizabeth hides herself away. English culture is much more impersonal and monotonous than Indian culture in the late 1800s. White supremacist British leaders try to showcase their superiority to their subjects and create clear cultural distinctions to keep order. Captain Russell expresses his distaste for Indians countless times when he condescends them. The British organize everything from dancing to clothing, to cricket. Indian cultural organization is similar but expressed in a different manner. During the late 1800s, Indians follow a strict caste system, but “Lagaan” portrays the caste system as much more lenient and meaningless than it truly is; Bhuvan invites an untouchable to join his cricket team. Other parts of Indian culture differ from the British. Because parts of India can be dry and receive little to no rainfall, Indian people adore the rain. While British people hide away from rain, seeing it as

wet and uncomfortable, Indians celebrate. Indians also dance and dress in vibrant, colorful, and spontaneous ways, while the British are often pale, professional, and stiff. Gauri and Elizabeth reflect their respective cultural backgrounds through their mannerisms and character.

Although Gauri and Elizabeth come from very different cultures, they share traits women slowly adopted during the period of enlightenment. Both women deliberately deny their male leaders' wishes in order to support Bhuvan as he opposes increasing tax in his village. While women may not be as blatantly rebellious during the late 1800s as "Lagaan" portrays them, women begin to increasingly feel that their opinions are valid and important. The movie expresses women's growing independence when Gauri supports Bhuvan despite her father's wishes, and when Elizabeth risks her brother's anger and fortune by helping the villagers learn cricket. Although the women are both still supporting a man throughout the movie, they do so because they choose to, not because someone forces them to. This is major for women in the enlightenment period. Gauri and Elizabeth may come from different cultures, but both women expressed independent, enlightenment-inspired traits throughout the movie.

As Gauri and Elizabeth support Bhuvan as he challenges the British tax on his village, they both eventually fall in love with him. Throughout the movie, Bhuvan appreciates Elizabeth's help in learning cricket, but Elizabeth mistakenly translates his appreciation into affection. Bhuvan was never attracted to her, partially because, in historic practicality, their relationship would never work. Bhuvan and Elizabeth live in two different cultures, speak two different languages, and reside in opposite sides of Eurasia. Gauri, on the other hand, while nagging and often unhelpful, eventually became the object of Bhuvan's affection and then wife. While this relationship would be much more practical in the late 1800s, affection usually would not have played a huge part in marriages during that time period. Most

marriages would be arranged for family bonds and economic purposes. Therefore, Bhuvan would not make the decision when it came to his life partner, his parents would. Elizabeth and Gauri both fell in love with Bhuvan in “Lagaan”.

Gauri is the energetic, melodramatic girl in Bhuvan’s story while Elizabeth is simple but helpful. Culturally, the women could not be more different, but their attraction toward Bhuvan and independent mindsets make them similar.

Bhuvan is an enigmatic young farmer with courage born of conviction – and a dream in his heart. He shows great compassion to people (especially to lower caste classification) and animals (dubbed by Captain Russell as their protector because he distracts them when Captain Russell poaches). His character has been very consistent all throughout, his values and principles intact. He despises the actions of the British and was one of those desirous for justice. When he knows that they can, he will not stop trying (even though the scales are tipped to their disadvantage). He used to be hated by the villagers, even the headmen of Tantpura and Bhand (another Indian village) after his decision to play in the cricket match with the British, however the clever reasonings he delivered accompanied by the brave trainings of cricket has drove the hearts of the villagers towards supporting him whole. When asked by the villager’s elders why he acquiesced to the British condition, he replied “The Brits did not leave us a choice. No one was even that strong to pay lagaan, how much more double lagaan...The people don’t have grains to fill coffers, even hungry stomachs. This should not be perceived as a calamity but an opportunity to turn hope into reality.” He is a brave and able man, even being a British captain will not be a license for his submission. He commented hard on the disparaging outlook of the villagers to untouchables, even went far as reprimanding the village doctor and their village chief.

Captain Andrew Russell is an arrogant, sadistic and capricious man who wielded the power of life and death over the villages under his jurisdiction. He heads the British cantonment near Champaner and is quite reckless with the political decisions he make. Russell is fond of dares and wagers, always with the object of humiliating Indians and forcing them to adopt British habits. He loves to poach animals (which greatly angered Bhuvan) and picks on Indians when he sets in pissed moods, even went far as killing them. He is the stereotypical evil villain who looks down on people's capacities, ultimately bringing him into embarrassment. He does political blackmail to maintain that iron fist the cantonment keeps. He highly despises Bhuvan, which started when Bhuvan drove his poached animals to distractions, and intensified when Bhuvan made a matter-of-fact commentary on the British engagement in absurdities such as playing cricket. Because of his decision to cancel lagaan for 3 if the Indians win in the cricket match that will be staged in 3 months, the British Provincial Center expressed their resentment to his political incapacity and "preposterous idea". They challenged him to pay all the taxes of Champaner and the whole province using the money from his own pocket and pack off to Africa. Rajah Puran Singhji is the governing Rajah of Champaner, the faithful village voice of the Indians to the British, albeit not that powerful to influence Captain Russell's final decisions. The people of Champaner showed great respect for this authority. Their family has protected Champaner for a couple of years now, and even now that the British commanded their authority in the area. He was the one responsible for the canceling of lagaan in 1892, even begged to Captain Russell to cancel double lagaan payment in 1893. Even though he was the Rajah, he wields not the final decisions for Champaner and submits most of the time to the British wants. Easily swayed by political blackmails, in fairness to him - leaves him no choice. He did not forsake his religion even to the point that it will return something of his requests. The eyes of Rajah Puran Singhji longs for freedom and justice for his constituents in Champaner, but he had a weak heart and

could not galvanize this desire. He did not extend beyond his comfort zone to create witty rationales that will finally outsmart Captain Russell. When he learned that the double lagan could be cancelled, one can see through his judgement that he wants the people to emerge victorious, as he is also pained by the circumstances they are in.

Elizabeth Russell is the good natured sister of Captain Andrew Russell, a complete contradiction of his malevolence. Her attachment to the Indians started when she saw Bhuvan, Ghuran, and the others peering behind a bush to witness a cricket game. She was amused by this “never-give-up” spirit and went that far in helping them, despite her caretaker’s warnings that once the captain knows, trouble is inevitable. Every morning, he arrives at the designated practice site of the Indians and taught them all about cricket from the dimensions of the playing field, the 3 principles in cricket which are wielding the ball, bowling the ball, and guarding the field, to practicing them the correct cricket moves. When asked by the Bhuvan on her motives to help them given that she is British, she replied “What happened to you was unfair and I wanted to give you a fair chance”. She takes fancy in Bhuvan’s bravado and took enough courage to express her love for him later in the film albeit in English (so Bhuvan can’t understand). Soon enough, her actions were discovered by the captain, but amidst this adversity, she did not give up the Indians.

Gauri The young and perky village girl, who dreams of marrying Bhuvan, the man she loves the most. She dreams of living in a home with a Neem tree in the courtyard, a big field in the side of it with 2 cows, 1 pair of oxen, and 3 goats. She is jealous of Elizabeth and Bhuvan’s closeness and gets emotional when she is being overlooked by Bhuvan. She was the first to express his support for Bhuvan and has not faltered since in supporting Bhuvan’s desire after that night (most seen by her cooking for food during the team’s practices at a barren hill near Champaner). She loves fortune telling, even believed what Ghuran said about putting henna on her hands and wedding bangles for this year.

Ram Singh is the Indian personal assistant of Elizabeth. He is a practical man who never forgets his duties for her and his Indian roots. He was also secretly happy about Elizabeth's helping of his fellow brothers, but warned her anyway about Captain Russell's wrath if this is found out. Because Elizabeth could not understand comprehensive Indian language, he does the favor of serving as her interpreter as she conducts cricket game lessons to Bhuvan and his team. She also teaches Elizabeth how to speak basic Indian so that she can be competent herself in dealing with the villagers. She accompanies Elizabeth's journey to the practice hill, and even to the temple where the village celebrated Vishnu's birthday feast.

Lakha likes Gauri but Gauri has no feelings for him. A scruffed ruggedly looking man who chops wood for a living, one look at him can foretell something is entirely fishy with his motives. He spilled the beans when he told Captain Russell personally that Elizabeth is helping the Indians in cricket. Captain Russell suggested he better join Bhuvan's team. When he joined, everyone in Bhuvan's team doubted his malicious intentions because he is known to be a cheater. He expressed his desire to improve in running. Bhuvan accepted him because he has chopped for so long actually gaining strength in the way he holds an axe. Bhuvan also, being mindful of Lakha's unpredictability said "For the whiteys, it may only be a game, but for us it is our life".

Isar Kaka is the father of Gauri, who is also the village brahman physician. He was one of those angered by Bhuvan's decision to play cricket against the British but was won over when Bhuvan coaxed the whole village with a song in the night. He turned out to be one of those faithful members who protects the integrity of Bhuvan's character and the team in general. Although already in his middle adulthood, he expressed lack of sound judgment when he sided with the castes system rule of not intermingling with the untouchable but was

hit by Bhuvan's wisdom that his medical books did not license him to exclude the socially excluded from treatment. Isar Kaka admires Bhuvan's courageous stand in life.

Deva Singh Sudhi was once a soldier for the British cantonment, but he left after he was maltreated and saw the disparaging actions of the British against the Indians. He joined Bhuvan's cricket team after watching them practice. When asked by Bhuvan what his motives for joining are, he said "I wanted to fight the British maybe not through swords or guns but through bat and ball".

Bagha was one of Bhuvan's cricket team players, and is principally the village temple's mute drum roller. His first appearance marked an expectant character who drums for nimbus cloud formation (but disappointed when the clouds only passed Champaner). He is physically built but quite childish in his dealings. He is loyal to Bhuvan's dreams and never gives up in practicing polishing his part in the cricket team.

Kachra is an arm-paralyzed untouchable who lived at the outskirts of Champaner near the practice site of the cricket team. One day, an outbound ball landed at his space after Bhuvan's attempt to catch it. When Bhuvan requested him to throw the ball back at him, he amazingly did so actually spinning it. Bhuvan decided that he will be the 11th and the last player of the team. This was opposed by the conservative village. But Bhuvan defended his right and reverted the village thwarted views on the caste system as a means to disenfranchise people towards social acceptance. His rhetoric later on won the village's chief decisions to include the untouchable. Kachra was immensely happy; even shed tears after Bhuvan's statements and his touching of him amidst culture restriction. Although physically handicapped, his limp hand turned into one of the team's secret weapons (he invents spin bowling). The scene of his acceptance into the team, championed by Bhuvan against the

initial opposition of everyone else, is both moving and anachronistic, prefiguring by decades Gandhi's efforts.

Mai is the widowed mother of Bhuvan and is always supportive of him in all his endeavors. Bhuvan highly respects his mother and promised her to take a bride her mother loves. She shows deep concern for the village and was one with them in praying for the monsoon to bring rain at last to their parched lands.

When Bhuvan accepted the challenge, his dream was three years of no tax for the villagers. For the common man, it seemed too unrealistic & arduous a task, to learn an alien game and playing it for a result that would change the village's destiny. But isn't that what dreams are. Dreaming is about imagining a distant future that does not exist today. Look around and you will see that to achieve anything of significance, takes a good team. A good leader hence chooses his team with care – with people having complementary skills. Let's see what Bhuvan did. One team member (*Kachra, the sweeper*) was crippled. Bhuvan's observation helped him identify the talent in a disabled untouchable. While the entire village was hostile to this decision, Bhuvan saw in him someone who could spin the ball magically. Another team member (*Bhura, the murgiwala*) had spent a sizeable portion of his life in hounding behind the hens and catching them with perfection. He saw his quick reflexes when this person caught the ball, which nobody even thought of it. The movie highlights several other examples of how Bhuvan shaped his team with keen observation and went from one to eleven. For a leader, it's always about 'us' - not 'me'. Building a team is always easier said than done. It calls for selecting the right members, channelizing their energies in a positive way, highlighting everyone's contributions, taking everyone along and finally giving words of assurance and comfort to everyone in the team that, "We will succeed". After accepting the challenge, Bhuvan soon realized that he would have to achieve their goal with very limited

resources. The tools for the game were all made by the village folk and were made out of the best that they could lay their hands on. The resources were limited but they made the best use of them. As leaders one must be innovative. The focus should be on getting the work done and not on the availability of all the possible resources. As a leader, one needs to always ask “How can we achieve our goals with what we have in hand?” With one ball to go in the match and 5 runs to win, Bhuvan finds himself at the non-striker’s end, with the partly handicapped Kachra facing the ball. It looks like a lost cause. But Bhuvan does not give up. When Kachra touches the ball, he runs and takes a single. As it turned out, the delivery was a “no-ball”. That single created the opening for Bhuvan. If he had not taken that run assuming that they could not have won, the extra ball would not have made a difference. Leaders don’t ever give up. As Prakash Iyer, in his book [Secrets of Leadership](#), explains very succinctly – “There are familiar ingredients in the stories of [successful leaders](#) – big dreams, adversity, hard work, persistence, passion, failure, perseverance, more hard work and finally, success. While the proportions may vary, the common thread holding them all together is hope. It’s the Hope that leader instills in his team when shoulders start to droop and spirits threaten to flag.”

Conclusion

The observation made in this project is that cricket is part of the culture in India. The significance of cricket in society and its impact has been huge. Indian Culture and traditions are something which has now become renowned all across the world. We all refer to India and its culture as something very diverse and unique. The movie Lagaan portrays the cultural study of cricket and its development which has earned a name in the Indian culture. The development of cricket in India has sidelined other sports including hockey which is the national sport. The commercialization of Cricket has made the BCCI the richest and the most powerful board in the world. This has brought about a lot of pros and cons. On one hand, the influx of resources has helped develop cricket at the grassroots level in India. And it has also made the game a viable profession even at the state level. On the other hand, the cons include changes in the rules and preparation of pitches to the advantage of batsmen so as to artificially satisfy the consumer demand for boundaries. The commercial aspects of the gentleman's game now indirectly propagates the use of cheerleading squads and has also increased the rate of unethical practices such as illegal betting and spot fixing.

The role of cricket in the society has evolved with the emergence of the superstars like Sachin Tendulkar, KapilDev, Sunil Gavaskar, M.S. Dhoni, and so on. The 1983 World Cup victory led by KapilDev, transformed Indian cricket. It is the most significant event in the Indian cricket. An entire generation was thrilled to see India win in England in the summer of 1983. People started looking at cricket as a career option. Today's generation, ViratKohli, Rohit Sharma and others were inspired to take up the game when they watched Sachin Tendulkar lift the entire team on his shoulders during the 1990's. India won two World Cup titles later – World T20 2007 and World Cup 2011 – the twin wins have inspired the next generation to emerge through the ranks and do something similar. The process will go on for the years to come and all of it started in 1983.

This project was an effort to link cultural studies & sports sociology through cricket and cinema, both of which are important elements of Indian culture. We address the role of sports in general and its importance to culture and then attempts to find the ways in which India's cricketing culture was created and the how it has evolved to play a role in everyday life. In recent years, cricket has taken a huge step forward which has led to many developments and changes in the attitude of the people's perception towards the game. The socio-historical interrogation of cricket in *Lagaan*, with its appeal to the masses, itself becomes an act of critical intervention. *Lagaan* has succeeded in gaining mainstream popularity because the spectators are entertained through the acting, choreography and beautiful landscape images, but primarily because of the cricket spectacle. The cricket match in the film entertains because it reflects the spectators' wishes that the Champaner village team, and by extension their Indian team, will be victorious against other foreign teams. To conclude, *Lagaan* provides an anachronistic view of our colonial past and the introduction of Cricket to Indians by the British at the time. It also touches upon how this foreign game got integrated into our culture and the current development and glorification of cricket in India.

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