

Chuck de Yadain!

Call it professional sports, but it is organized gambling and slave trading

[Shekhar Deshpande](#)

Sometimes history has such a sweet touch of irony, it is hard not to chuckle.

The headlines buzzed recently: "India Lose to Britain in Olympic Hockey Qualifier."

The lord taketh what the lord giveth! Or at least some of it.

We used to wonder why our fathers liked British habits so much. The tea, the clothes, the language, and yes, the sports. For years, we grew up with an aura of champions of hockey (we are talking field hockey for the uninitiated). We ruled the world in that sport. It was our only saving grace in the Olympic Games, always the gold; occasionally, when we slipped, the silver or at least the bronze. It was our sport and we had the oomph to win the world! We had what it took, the team spirit, the graceful dexterity and the skills to cut down opponents in thriller after thriller. Hockey wins helped erased the drubbing by China in the war of 1962, the miserable wheat shortage and the slow pace of the socialist revolution.

We were world champions!

Alas, Shah Rukh Khan's Chak de India could not move things in the real world. My, how the world has changed. It is now cricket that rules India. We are the unofficial, and occasionally the official, world champions in cricket, from ODIs to plain old style test matches.



We have mimicked another one of our colonial heritages and mastered it beyond the masters. Now we trade players like slaves, and give the process lofty names. Call it professional sports, but it is organized gambling and slave trading. Long gone is the spirit of Lagaan. We strive for the money first, the national glory is an afterthought. India is beloved by the cricket world, because it generates more revenue than any country thanks to the massive crowds, a burgeoning middle class, a booming economy, etc.. etc.

Hockey does not have that luster. It never did. The medals were the result of great

fitness, remarkable agility and team discipline. That is all gone.

So is the bag of memories it brought us.

We cannot go home again, not if you want to capture what you left behind. It is a changed world. It is damning that we had to lose to Britain to bring this chapter to a close. Funny thing is, the BBC sports page did not even list the trauma on its front page.

Editorial April 2008

<http://www.littleindia.com/news/152/ARTICLE/2603/2008-04-12.html>