

Cricket first, always

-Mahesh Balasubramanian.

The gentlemen's' game has come to assume such larger than life image that to be ignorant of it means being looked down upon as an outcast. Talking of cricket' has now become a key to build & maintain relations. Go to any region, whether you know the local dialect or not; it does not matter as cricket is one universal language, cutting across regions & religions. People speak about it for almost a whole year. It is omnipresent –at tea stalls, government offices, at stoppages on traffic islands – literally everywhere.

Like when they beamed *Ramayan* and *mahabharata* devout people used to light *agarbattis*' in deep reverence, similar is the case with cricket. *Chai- nashta* do regular rounds and people arrange their quota of *kharras*' and what not in advance, waiting for the great show to unfold before them. Lusterless empty offices are suggestive of any restricted national holiday. So don't be surprised if, in near future some section of workforce demands holidays while the matches at the national level are going on. After all, it's a matter of national pride! People burst crackers more during India's victory than during diwali, thanks to cricket.

But unlike others, often I felt tongue- tied during heavy discussions involving cricket. Though I enjoy playing, when it comes to watching it, the slow pace of the game is boring at times and so, I turn a blind eye to the running commentaries. And hence, I always stand ignorant of *whodunits*' and current scores put up by the players.

Yet, of late, I have begun to like watching it mainly because of the heavily- funny commercials that are flashed in between. The spectators armed with lots of banners & captivating slogans (as well as missiles) also contribute to the

overall show, providing respite from the monotony. Lastly the sense of humor displayed by the commentators has its' own share in making you glued to the idiot box. All in all, it is full *time pass*. So, I no longer remain tongue-tied and that is a by-product of my new- found addiction.

A joke on cricket goes like this. A candidate went for appearing in an interview.

Interviewer: Tell me about yourself.

Candidate: (After introducing himself, he went on to tell about his academics.) Due to cricket world cup I scored badly in 12th. My father then got me a paid seat in that xyz college.

Interviewer: ok, ok. It seems you have taken 6 years to complete your engineering.

Candidate: Actually I tried my best to finish it in 4 years. But you know, these cricket matches; it is difficult to concentrate. So I flunked in 2nd and 3rd year. These cricket matches really affect exams a lot. I think they should ban it.

Interviewer: Good to know that you want cricket matches to be banned.

Candidate: No, not at all! I am talking about Exams!!

Interviewer: Okay. Now about the job profile! It involves extensive touring. Are you prepared for that?

Candidate: I prefer going to US, Australia and Europe. But considering the fact that there is a world cup in South Africa in Feb 2003, I don't mind going there in that period.