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## Jagmohan Dalmiya: The Prometheus of Modern Cricket?

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### Introduction

To mark its 25th anniversary in 2005, the *International Journal of the History of Sport*, published by Taylor & Francis, announced three awards for excellence in sport administration. 250 internationally acclaimed scholars of sport studies were asked to nominate the ‘foremost statesmen of modern sport in the last quarter century’.<sup>1</sup> Among the three winners were the most recognisable sport patriarchs of the late twentieth century—the FIFA president Sepp Blatter and the former IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch. The third person, Jagmohan Dalmiya, was relatively unknown as the elite level of the sport he

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<sup>1</sup>Press release of History of Sport Achievement Awards, [http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/press/FHSP\\_pr.pdf](http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/press/FHSP_pr.pdf), accessed on 7 July 2016.

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governed—cricket—was represented by a small number of countries. Dalmiya, an official of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), was the first non-white person to become the president of the International Cricket Council (ICC), and also the first Asian to occupy such an important position in global sport. While presenting him the award at a ceremony in Kolkata, J.A. Mangan, the journal's Executive Editor, acknowledged Dalmiya's 'substantial role in ensuring the shift of power, prestige and prominence of the sport to South Asia from where it was before'.<sup>2</sup> The rationale of selecting Dalmiya ahead of many other famous sport administrators was given as follows:

An adroit politician and entrepreneur, he engineered the commercialisation of cricket in India and made the BCCI the richest cricketing body in the world. As chairman of the ICC from 1997 to 2000 he masterminded the globalisation of cricket. The vast revenue he generated from sponsorship and broadcasting rights prompted *The Wall Street Journal* to describe him as 'The man who converted cricket into a multimillion dollar industry'. He has also mounted peace initiatives through cricket, such as his campaign to have South Africa re-admitted to international competition in 1991.<sup>3</sup>

Dalmiya was born into a Marwari family of the *baniya* (trader) caste, in the Sikar district in Rajasthan on 30 May 1940. His family moved to Kolkata soon after his birth. While studying in Scottish Church College, he played for Jorabagan and Rajasthan club as a wicketkeeper-batsman in Kolkata's cricket league. His father's untimely death put an end to his playing ambitions as he had to run the family's building construction firm, M.L. Dalmiya and Co. He stayed in contact with the Rajasthan club's officials while prospering in business, preparing to return to cricket as an administrator. Starting at this small club as a member of its working committee in 1977, he soon moved up the hierarchy of cricket administration and became the treasurer of the Cricket

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<sup>2</sup>'Dalmiya receives IJHS award', <http://www.espnricinfo.com/india/content/story/213643.html>, accessed on 7 July 2016.

<sup>3</sup>Jonathan Manley, 'The International Journal of the History of Sport Announces its History of Sport Achievement Award Winners', *Editors' Bulletin* 1, no. 2 (2005): p. 39.

Association of Bengal (CAB) later in the same year. Although very few cricketers from the state ever made the national team, cricket was highly popular in the state and the CAB the richest sport association in India, profiting from the sold out Test matches held in Kolkata. The CAB secretary and BCCI official Biswanath Dutt appointed Dalmiya the deputy treasurer of the BCCI in 1979. Thus began a career that saw him scale the pinnacle of cricket administration, then expelled from his national cricket association on charges of corruption, and finally acquitted by court and reinstated into office months before his death. In his 40-year career as a cricket administrator, Dalmiya played a pivotal role in uplifting the Indian cricket board's stake in world cricket and making the ICC financially solvent for the first time since its establishment in 1909. He married a Bengali woman from a landowning household, and had a son and a daughter.

It is difficult to use official documents such as committee reports and minutes of meetings held during Dalmiya's tenure, or oral testimony, for writing his biography. Most of the relevant reports are classified due to their immediacy, and not made available to general scholars. In addition, both Dalmiya's associates and opponents are reluctant to discuss his policies, many of which are still in place, and to criticise the recently deceased. Hence, apart from a few reminiscences, his representation in the press remains all that communicates the traces of his leadership. A clear idea of the nature of sources for biographical research is an important aspect of history-writing. The historian John Bale discusses this in his study of the kinesiologist and physical educator Ernst Jokl, identifying several layers of truth in the representation of the subject.<sup>4</sup> Bale refers to the contradictory information about Jokl's athletic career and the divided opinion about the latter's academic merit as constitutive of the ambiguity that defines the materials used to write scholarly biographies. Uncertain information raise more doubts than answers, and hence

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<sup>4</sup>John Bale, 'The Mysterious Professor Jokl', in *Writing Lives in Sport: Biographies, Life-Histories and Methods*, edited by John Bale, Mette Krogh Christensen and Gertrud Pfister (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2004), pp. 25–40.

the historian's task, Bale says, should be to explore ambivalence instead of fixating on accuracy. The press built up a very contentious account of Dalmiya as he straddled a number of intersecting, and conflicting, social and cultural worlds. Reconstruction of his *modus operandi* from press reports must recognise how journalists from different countries responded to his ambition, ethnicity and occupational background. While a comprehensive treatment is too ambitious for the scope of this chapter, it refers to certain events from Dalmiya's life and explores their ramification in the context of sport administration.

## The Beginning

Dalmiya proved his mettle in administration soon after joining the CAB when he partnered the secretary Biswanath Dutt in restructuring the distribution of tickets among affiliated clubs and other districts. Previously, influential clubs such as East Bengal, Mohun Bagan, and Sporting Union received more tickets than the smaller clubs. The new committee annulled this privilege, and began distributing an even number of tickets to every club in the same division. They allocated 327 tickets to Kolkata's first division clubs and 227 tickets to second division clubs. Dalmiya justified giving equal number of tickets to districts irrespective of their area and population, arguing that territorial units in a democratic country deserved the right of equal participation in a national event. He claimed to have taken proper steps to reduce black marketing of tickets during the India–Pakistan Test match in 1980, saying that no more than 7000 tickets were illegally sold and most of the tickets went to middle class patrons. The new ticket distribution system proved to be a masterstroke as Dutt and Dalmiya garnered mass support from the clubs, which helped them to a landslide win in the next CAB election. Former CAB administrators such as Amarendranath Ghosh and Bechu Datta Ray sought to control a handful of the larger clubs and expected the smaller clubs to capitulate for crumbs of benefit. The new committee outmanoeuvred them by forming a cluster of smaller clubs which conveniently outvoted the old

guard.<sup>5</sup> Understandably, the rhetoric of democratic right and equitable distribution shrouded a keen political acumen that became visible soon enough on the election platform. This incident signalled a pattern in Dalmiya's method of operation. The same strategy later won him the ICC's presidential election.

Dalmiya showed excellent managerial skills from the very beginning. During the 1980 Test match in Kolkata, the Pakistani cricketer Sadiq Mohammad brought a female guest to the ground. As the guards refused to admit her without a ticket, he threatened to pull out of the match. Dalmiya salvaged the situation by offering the cricketer a guest pass from his personal quota.<sup>6</sup> Another Pakistani cricketer, Javed Miandad, held him in high esteem as an ever helpful friend. These gestures, along with his policy of staying away from politics, greatly endeared Dalmiya to the Pakistan Cricket Board, paving the path for a number of cricket series between India and Pakistan when diplomatic relationship between the two was strained. Admittedly in recognition of Dalmiya's ability and judgment of character, which was probably bred by years of managing business, Dutt made him the BCCI's deputy treasurer. Dalmiya pointed out as many as 54 errors in the annual audit for 1980–1981, leading to the discovery of inconsistent sums of unapproved expenditures. The BCCI president S.K. Wankhede, afraid of the scandal hurting his prospect of reappointment in the upcoming election in 1981, appointed the Minister of State for Information, N.K.P. Salve, to rectify the accounts. Instead of bending to the gratuity, Salve, supported by Dalmiya and Inderjit Singh Bindra, president of the Punjab Cricket Association, led a group of office-bearers to end Wankhede's tenure. Wankhede was asked to step down in return for special invitation to all BCCI meetings in the future, which he accepted.<sup>7</sup> Salve became the president and Dalmiya, then the CAB secretary, the new treasurer. As a Congress politician, Salve was close to the Indian prime

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<sup>5</sup>Subhas Dutta, 'Test Asonno: Kon Bhagyobanra Ticket Pelen Ba Paben', *Khelar Asar* 5, no. 34 (1981), pp. 14–15.

<sup>6</sup>*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 31 January 1980, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup>Makrand Waingankar, 'Past Tense: How the Earlier Boardroom Battles Were Fought...and Lost', *The Times of India*, 22 September 2005, p. 21.

minister, Indira Gandhi, and had the government's full support when he mooted the idea of organising the 1987 World Cup in India.

Dalmiya drafted the bid for the 1987 tournament, to be co-organised by India and Pakistan, in consultation with his Board colleagues and members of the Pakistan Cricket Board, the chief executive Arif Ali Abbasi in particular. The two countries set their political rivalry aside and collaborated to bring home world cricket's most prestigious event. Seven full members of the ICC—England, Australia, West Indies, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, who were entitled to play five-day Test matches—were offered £200,000. Qualifying associate members—countries in the second tier of international cricket that are periodically given a chance to compete with full members in one-day matches—were promised £175,000 as participation fee. The other contender for hosting the tournament, England, offered £53,900 and inflation between the 1983 World Cup and the date of payment to full members and £30,200 to qualifying nations. In comparison with the sum of £99,500 offered as prize money by India and Pakistan, England's purse was £53,000. Although its bid was significantly weaker, England tried to subvert India's offer with Australia's help. It invoked rule 4 (C) of the ICC's rulebook, which said, 'Recommendations to member countries are to be made by a majority of full members present and voting and one of which in such majority should be a Foundation member'. Since none of the two founding members of the ICC—England and Australia—were willing to support the Asians, a majority of votes would not have helped India and Pakistan. However, the ICC Chairman ruled that a simple majority would be sufficient for deciding the host, leading to a win for India and Pakistan.<sup>8</sup> Thus began Dalmiya's long confrontation with England, and India's ascendancy among the power elite of world cricket.

Dalmiya realised that to make cricket more entertaining and credible, it was necessary to reduce human errors such as umpiring mistakes. In 1987, he proposed equipping field umpires with pocket

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<sup>8</sup>Boria Majumdar, *Twenty-two Yards to Freedom: Social History of Indian Cricket* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2004), pp. 408–409.

television sets for instantly watching action replay if they were not certain about a decision.<sup>9</sup> English cricket umpires opposed the suggestion, saying that broadcast technology was not so advanced in countries such as Pakistan to enable proper implementation of this measure, and that the right of field umpires to pass judgments should not be interfered with. Their statements evinced not only a latent disregard for the quality of organisation of cricket in the subcontinent but also scorn for the subcontinent's effort to upstage tradition in favour of superfluous modernity. The cricket establishment soon recognised the need for technological assistance to umpires, and instituted the position of a third umpire in 1992. If the field umpires found it difficult to take a decision, they could refer the case to an off-field umpire who, with access to multi-angle and slow-motion action replay on a television screen, conveyed decisions by switching on red or green lights. This practice revolutionised the game by reducing the number of umpiring errors. It has been gradually expanded so that field umpires can now confer with the third umpire before signalling any decision. Although Dalmiya received no recognition for his pioneering idea, he moved forward with other projects that gradually strengthened his position as a power broker.

## Consolidation

The 1987 World Cup marked Dalmiya's first step into the administration of world cricket. Apart from his important contribution to the tournament, he proved to be an excellent negotiator between politicians and cricket administrators. He convinced the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to waive the Rs. 400,000 tax imposed on the roller and mower imported from Australia for use during the World Cup.<sup>10</sup> Dalmiya's first seat of power materialised at the BCCI elections for 1990–1991, in which Madhavrao Scindia defeated Biswanath Dutt by 16 to 15 votes to become

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<sup>9</sup>Graham Baker, 'Stupid Idea, Says Alley', *Daily Mirror*, 15 August 1987, p. 33.

<sup>10</sup>*The Statesman*, 2 October 1987, p. 14.

the president, and Dalmiya won by an identical margin against C. Nagraj for the post of secretary.<sup>11</sup> His business acumen immensely benefitted the BCCI. A prime example is his negotiation with the Indian home appliances manufacturer Videocon International after the company withdrew its sponsorship of the ongoing Asia Cup and withheld payment of Rs. 750,000 to the BCCI. When the BCCI threatened to sue Videocon, the latter said that its contract was not with the Board but with the Delhi-based Radiant Sports Management, the company in charge of promoting the Asia Cup. In a bleak situation, Dalmiya issued a statement that Videocon would continue to sponsor the tournament as if no violation of contract had occurred.<sup>12</sup> It transpired later that in a meeting with two representatives of the company, N. Gupta and Anand Panshikar, he had convinced the sponsor to honour the agreement.<sup>13</sup> He fought many legal battles alongside Bindra to increase the Board's revenue, most notably against Doordarshan, the state-controlled television which monopolised distribution of cricket matches in India without paying anything and sometimes even demanded money to telecast cricket. He extracted a landmark decision from the Supreme Court in 1993 to deregularise the Doordarshan's right of free telecast, which enabled the BCCI to sell television rights of cricket matches at a premium. The financial windfall generated by the move began BCCI's journey to the apex of cricket administration. Another momentous achievement was the successful proposition for South Africa's readmission to cricket at the ICC annual meeting in June 1991. Geoff Dakin, president of the South African Board, recalled that Dalmiya proposed a tour during his goodwill visit to Kolkata and fixed a schedule after 48-hours of planning. The outcomes were a historic cricket tour and South Africa's support for Dalmiya's future ventures, most importantly in his bid to seize power within the ICC.

On 25 September 1992, the Board announced its intention to submit a combined bid with Pakistan and Sri Lanka (PILCOM) to

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<sup>11</sup> *TOI*, 23 September 1990, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> *TOI*, 30 December 1990, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> *TOI*, 4 January 1991, p. 22.



organise the World Cup in 1996. Dalmiya, appointed the coordinator of the organising committee, drafted the bid document in consultation with his subcontinental counterparts. Both the Asian coalition and England bid £5 million but the former offered more money to associate countries, to be used to develop cricket in those countries. Moreover, the Asian bid allowed teams to sign two independent contracts for jersey logos which would enable the latter to earn a minimum of £100,000, whereas the English bid stipulated the organiser's right to determine the jersey sponsor and the revenue thus generated. 16 of the 19 associate members voted in favour of the Asian bid due to greater financial benefit. Dalmiya developed an ingenious plan to arrange these votes. He had noticed that many of the associate members lacked the resources to travel to ICC meetings. They, therefore, relied on English representatives who were more loyal to England than their association. To ensure that these intermediaries could not sabotage the combined bid, Dalmiya convinced the Reserve Bank of India to release sufficient foreign exchange to sponsor direct participation of the associate members in the ICC meeting on 2 February 1993. The Asian bid won on the merit of huge support, reminding one of Dalmiya's control over the small clubs in Kolkata.

The World Cup turned a new leaf in the book of cricket's commercialisation. The Indian television rights were sold for \$14m. The UK rights alone yielded \$7.5m compared to the \$1m received by the Australia and New Zealand cricket boards for the World Cup in 1992. The tobacco company Wills paid £8m for title sponsorship compared to the £2m paid by Benson & Hedges in 1992.<sup>14</sup> India and Pakistan's profit of £30m was huge when put in perspective with other international tournaments held in the same year, such as the Euro Cup, which made UEFA richer by £69m while the host England lost £1.7m.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Martin Williamson, 'How the World Cup Became a Commercial Hit', *espnricinfo.com*, 5 February 2015, accessed at <http://www.espnricinfo.com/wctimeline/content/current/story/824079.html>.

<sup>15</sup>Mihir Bose, 'Conflicting Loyalties: Nationalism and Religion in India–Pakistan Cricket Relations', in *The Cambridge Companion to Cricket*, edited by Anthony Bateman and Jeffrey Hill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 211.

Dalmiya's coordination of the World Cup made him famous in the circles of sport management. The BBC named him as one of the six most powerful people in sport. In an interview given to BBC's Radio Five, he spoke about the exercise of power, acquisition of wealth, accountability, and the necessity of judiciously integrating product, price, place and promotion for cricket's commercialisation.<sup>16</sup> He considered globalisation of cricket and reduction of the number of draws, i.e. no results, in Test matches to be essential for the sport's survival. He also wanted to empower smaller nations to abolish the ICC's 'cosy-club mentality'. Many journalists were certain that Dalmiya was a strong candidate for the ICC chairmanship and his win could end the Marylebone Cricket Club's (MCC) authority over ICC business.<sup>17</sup>

The ICC's mandate unequivocally stated that a Chairman needed two-thirds majority of votes from full members, which Dalmiya was not certain of achieving. Yet, he entered the fray with the reputation of being a ruthless manipulator and assiduous leader, someone who had the potential to become, in the words of a *Guardian* journalist, 'one of the greatest power brokers in sport, a name to mention alongside those of Havelange, Nebiolo and Samaranch'.<sup>18</sup> In a smear campaign, a number of British journalists portrayed him as a radical and ambitious kingpin who 'puts profit before prudence', and could destroy the tradition of cricket by replacing Test matches with One-day matches and shifting the ICC headquarters to Kolkata.<sup>19</sup> As it transpired, Dalmiya managed the votes of three full (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) and ten associate members. His opponent, Australia's Malcolm Gray received the votes of four full (Australia, England, New Zealand, West Indies) and seven associate members, and South Africa's Krish Mackerdhuji received the votes of two full (South Africa and Zimbabwe) and five associate members. The stalemate necessitated another round of voting from which Mackerdhuji withdrew. This

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<sup>16</sup>Dalmiya among Six Most Powerful Sportspersons', *TOI*, 16 June 1996, p. 22.

<sup>17</sup>David Hopps, 'Chaos Fear over ICC Chairman', *The Guardian*, 9 July 1996, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup>David Hopps, 'Asian Tiger Tweaks Lord's by the Tail', *The Guardian*, 10 July 1996, p. 24.

<sup>19</sup>Alan Lee, 'Controversial Dalmiya's Intent Rattles Established Order', *The Times*, 16 July 1996, 10.

time both Dalmiya and Gray secured the votes of four full members, and Dalmiya beat Gray 25-13 when associate votes were taken into account. However, Dalmiya was not declared the Chairman since he did not garner two-thirds majority among full members. The BCCI's legal advisors pointed out that the ICC's laws did not stipulate any such special majority. Bindra, now the BCCI president, dropped a bomb at this juncture, accusing Australian delegates of trying to recruit him as their candidate, thereby splitting the powerhouse fostered by him and Dalmiya.

Dalmiya was nominated for the position again the next year. At an ICC meeting on 22–23 March 1997, England, Australia and New Zealand proposed the creation of an executive board consisting of a chairman and representatives of full members to run the ICC, while there would be the two-year position of a president with ceremonial power. Many members protested the division of authority. After protracted discussions, it was decided that the president would lead the executive board.<sup>20</sup> Dalmiya, having united the majority of the associate members, won unanimously at the ICC conference in June 1997, thus becoming the first Asian to head any international sport organisation. Instead of occupying the ICC office in the clock tower in the Lord's cricket ground, he stayed in Kolkata and ran world cricket till 2000 over teleconference and occasional visits to England.

As part of his globalising efforts, Dalmiya started one-day cricket tournaments involving the Test-playing nations in cricketing outposts such as North America and Southeast Asia. An example was the Friendship Cup, contested between India and Pakistan, which was played in Toronto, Canada, from 1996 to penetrate a new market. The inaugural Asian Cricket Council Trophy, held in September 1996 in Malaysia, gave countries such as Brunei, Fiji, Japan, Maldives, Papua New Guinea and Thailand their first taste of one-day international cricket. The Mini World Cup in Bangladesh in 1998 made a profit of £8m, whereas the World Cup in England in 1999 netted around £32m. Dalmiya organised a 'cricket week' from 2 to 9 April 2000 which

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<sup>20</sup>Majumdar, *Twenty-two Yards to Freedom*, p. 417.

consisted of a one-day match between Asia and the Rest of the World in Bangladesh and a 15-match tournament for the emerging nations in Zimbabwe, in which Denmark, Holland, Ireland, Kenya, Scotland and Zimbabwe A participated. He considered appointing a number of former cricketers as brand ambassadors who would visit countries such as Fiji and Thailand to assist development programmes.<sup>21</sup> Most of the associate countries remained loyal to him as the ICC started sharing the revenue generated by broadcasting rights and sponsorship. Nevertheless, probably as a rhetoric to reassure full members, Dalmiya declared in an interview that he was a traditionalist who thought Test cricket was real cricket. One-day cricket was the version suitable for introducing the sport to new countries.<sup>22</sup>

During Dalmiya's three-year leadership, the ICC's bank balance swelled from £20,000 to £11m—a massive resurgence factoring in the expenditure for the organisation's expansion and global development programmes.<sup>23</sup> Dalmiya overhauled the ICC by establishing a new cricket committee comprising cricketers to deal with playing aspects and chief executives to handle management issues, setting up a new finance and marketing committee, and upgrading the development committee.<sup>24</sup> Full members started playing nearly equal number of matches among themselves. The ICC reserved the rights to organise World Cups and Champion Trophies and receive a large share of revenue, implemented a plethora of new regulations for organising matches, incorporated a number of new countries into its fold, and professionalised its own structure with specific committees for audit, finance, code of conduct, women's cricket, development, and dispute resolution. To make the ICC representative of the cricket world, the system of rotating the post of the president every two years among the full members was adopted. It was in complete contrast with the FIFA or IOC presidencies which were monopolised by a single person for decades.

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<sup>21</sup>Pat Gibson, 'Dalmiya Widens ICC's Net', *The Times*, 9 February 2000.

<sup>22</sup>Vivek Chaudhury, 'Chairman Dalmiya in the Hot Seat', *The Guardian*, 1 May 2000, p. A8.

<sup>23</sup>Subroto Sirkar, 'Improving ICC's financial position was his main gain', *The Hindu*, 1 July 2000, <http://www.thehindu.com/2000/07/01/stories/07010281.htm>, accessed on 7 July 2016.

<sup>24</sup>'Dalmiya Assumes Leadership of International Body', *India Abroad*, 27 June 1997, p. 60.

The organisation's annual meeting, traditionally held in London, took place in Kolkata in 1997. The venue is now rotated among cricket-playing nations.

Despite generating the financial windfall, Dalmiya was criticised for being overbearing and replacing old tradition with new money. His conduct of the match-fixing controversy in 2000 left a lot to be desired. Matthew Engel, editor of *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack*, the annual that has symbolised and championed cricket's 'tradition' since 1864, wrote that Dalmiya almost split the cricket world in his quest to control it, and had been an incompetent leader who should be replaced by someone more capable.<sup>25</sup> The former Australian cricketer Ian Chappell called Engel's criticism ill-informed and nonsensical, stating that the ICC should extend Dalmiya's term for its own benefit.<sup>26</sup> The ICC chief executive, David Richards, who had worked for the ICC from before Dalmiya's appointment, said in an interview, 'we started from a small base and we've come a long way in a short time, especially under the present president', adding that the organisation had overcome centrifugal national interests and become a global body. An annual sum of £1m was reserved for development programmes across the world.<sup>27</sup> Dalmiya retained his clout even after the end of his term as the ICC president. His friction with the English cricket board continued. When England was unwilling to tour India in 2001 due to security concerns in the wake of terrorist attacks, he did not compromise as his predecessors would have done and announced that India would cancel its 2002 tour of England unless the visit took place.<sup>28</sup>

Although he had been accused of corruption many times in his career, none of the claims were ever substantiated. In 2000, tax police raided his office and various properties across India. Arun Agarwal, an Indian financial adviser, alleged that Dalmiya abused his position

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<sup>25</sup>'Dalmiya Gets ICC Backing', *The Times*, 2 April 1999.

<sup>26</sup>Mark Baldwin, 'Dalmiya Hits Back over Call to Resign', *The Times*, 17 April 1999.

<sup>27</sup>Christopher Martin-Jenkins, 'World Cup Profits to Help Cricket's Growth', *The Times*, 22 June 1999.

<sup>28</sup>Vivek Chaudhury, 'Defiant Dalmiya Confronts the Snipers', *The Guardian*, 3 November 2001, p. A2.

of power as the solitary negotiator in various deals. Dalmiya allegedly sold the television right for the Mini World Cup in 1998 for £1.875m, which Dalmiya disputed, saying that the deal was worth £6.25m. His old associate Bindra turned against him, remarking that Dalmiya was 'in the grip of the mafia and sharks'.<sup>29</sup> Dalmiya would challenge his critics to sue him and prove him guilty in the court of law. He also dismissed insinuations that racism underpinned much of the criticism he faced. However, he was never short of friends. The journalist Rajan Bala was told by his counterpart from the largest circulated Bengali newspaper that the latter's chief editor considered Dalmiya 'prime ministerial material' and prohibited sport correspondents from writing anything critical of him.<sup>30</sup> Kolkata newspapers, even those not read too widely, were taken seriously within the sporting sphere for their proximity with the captain of the Indian team and the most powerful person in Indian sports.

## Decline

A section of cricket administrators in India were not happy with Dalmiya's meteoric rise. One of them was his old friend Bindra. Dalmiya opposed some of Bindra's decisions about monetary hand outs to provincial associations and sponsorship deals in the late 1990s, considering them unprofitable. While he was justified in overturning unacceptable decisions, his use of strong-arm tactics such as banning Bindra from the BCCI for two years as punishment for abusing him increased the number of his adversaries. Some of Dalmiya's associates in the CAB too were looking for an opportunity to subdue him. They found one when spectators rioted on consecutive days of the Test match between India and Pakistan in Kolkata in 1999. Dalmiya's order to evacuate the galleries to protect cricketers backfired as the police used unnecessary

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<sup>29</sup>Mike Selvey, 'Dalmiya Sues over TV Rights Abuse', *The Guardian*, 1 May 2000, p. A2.

<sup>30</sup>Rajan Bala, *The Covers Are Off: A Socio-historical Study of Indian Cricket 1932–2003* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2004), p. 223.

violence to drive out spectators, causing many injuries and widespread criticism. Some CAB officials reportedly accused Dalmiya of mismanaging the fixture and playing with the lives of spectators. They remarked that the match referee Cammie Smith did not contradict Dalmiya in fear of missing assignments in the future.

Moreover, it was alleged that Dalmiya interfered too much in the work of the two joint-secretaries. Some people even conjectured that he had retributively set the police upon the CAB members who had mulled suing him for disclosing the association's account which showed a profit of Rs. 11.4m.<sup>31</sup> What hurt his reputation the most was the allegation that he no longer looked after small clubs, the policy which had underpinned his success both at the local and global level. He was blamed for populating the CAB and the BCCI with inefficient minions. The candidates defeated in elections purportedly dominated the office-bearers with his support. Many employees from his personal business were employed in CAB work, and he was accused of awarding bids for advertising, transport etc. to people close to him.<sup>32</sup> He mishandled a television rights deal in 2004 which cost the Board more than a million pounds. His negotiations with the ICC about unjustified penalties meted out to Indian cricketers, and the ambush marketing clause during the Champions' Trophy in 2002 and the World Cup in 2003 which would have hurt Indian cricketers the most, caused severe frictions between the BCCI and the ICC. His failure to persuade the Indian government to waive entertainment tax led to the Champions' Trophy in 2004 being shifted to England.<sup>33</sup> His attempts to thwart the government's plan to take over cricket administration in 1999 had made him unpopular in political circles. His bitter experience with Scindia, who never had sufficient time for cricket owing to his political responsibility, might have driven much of Dalmiya's apathy towards politicians. When asked to give up the BCCI, he was said to have told the Secretary for

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<sup>31</sup>*Bartaman*, 22 February 1999, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 22 February 1999, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup>Sumit Mukherjee, 'From King-maker to Pariah', *TOI*, 17 December 2006, p. 22.

Sports, N.N. Khanna, ‘We have not come here to listen to trash from you’.<sup>34</sup> Such attitude, and the tendency to approach the government only for benefits, did not charm those looking for a chance to dispose of him.

Dalmiya courted some avoidable controversies such as an eye donation scandal which besmirched his reputation as a skilful negotiator. The CAB’s offer of 1000 free Test tickets to the India–Australia Test match in 2001 to those who pledged to posthumous eye donation was resisted by voluntary organ donation campaigners. The International Eye Bank and *Ganadarpan*, two organisations which promoted organ donation for medical purposes without material incentive, called this offer unethical and illegal. As a response to the nationwide campaign by voluntary organisations against the growing human organs trafficking racket, the government had enacted the ‘Transplantation of Human Organs Act’ in 1994. Under the Act, ‘offering’ any human organ for ‘payment’ became a punishable offense, with a minimum two years of imprisonment and Rs. 10,000 fine. Dalmiya held a meeting with the representatives of welfare association but was unable to convince them that the CAB wanted to popularise organ donation and the ticket was more of a goodwill gesture than a commercial incentive.<sup>35</sup>

The West Bengal government pitted a former police chief against him as the presidential candidate in the 2005 CAB election. Dalmiya won in spite of the state’s best efforts to humiliate him. However, his stock plummeted when Sourav Ganguly, the Indian captain from Kolkata who was long considered his protégé, was first stripped of captaincy and then dropped from the national team for poor performance. Much of the respect Dalmiya received from the people of Kolkata was due to his intervention to include Ganguly in the Indian team in 1996 against fierce opposition. His detractors used Ganguly’s dismissal as an opportunity to float the rumour that Dalmiya, a non-Bengali, did not care about the Bengali icon anymore. Bindra stated that Dalmiya had

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<sup>34</sup>Jaywant Lele, *I Was There—Memoirs of a Cricket Administrator* (Mumbai: Marine Sports, 2011), p. 12.

<sup>35</sup>Nilanjan Dutta, ‘Eye for Test Match Tickets Scheme Draws Flak in Kolkata’, *TOI*, 1 March 2001, p. 7.



always interfered with team selection, and was responsible for Ganguly's misfortune.<sup>36</sup> When Dalmiya moved up the date of the team selection for the next series and lobbied for Ganguly's inclusion, Bindra remarked that this was a ploy to placate the cricketer's followers ahead of the India–South Africa encounter in Kolkata. The match could have sparked riot in the absence of the local hero in the team.<sup>37</sup> Ganguly was selected to play in the next series but Dalmiya was by then out of favour and options to retain his power over Indian cricket. Dalmiya's main rival, the central minister of agriculture Sharad Pawar, wanted Ganguly to shift to his camp. He promised to reinstate the cricketer if Dalmiya stopped intervening in his favour. A politician from Maharashtra, Pawar made a public show of sympathy towards Ganguly by inviting him to his residence in New Delhi to talk about the future of Indian cricket.<sup>38</sup>

Cornered by his opponents, Dalmiya lost the BCCI elections in November 2005. Pawar asked the Congress leader Sonia Gandhi for help in return for greater influence for Congress in the Maharashtra State Assembly. Gandhi instructed her political secretary Ahmad Patel to call Congress politicians involved in cricket administration, such as Rajshekhar Reddy from Andhra Pradesh and Digvijay Singh from Madhya Pradesh, and mobilise support for Pawar. The sport minister Oscar Fernandes and the Bihar chief minister Lalu Prasad Yadav turned against Dalmiya.<sup>39</sup> His defiance of the encroachment of politicians into cricket proved to be his undoing. He subsequently faced corruption charges which, even though never proved, spoiled his credibility. He was expelled from the BCCI for alleged misappropriation of funds during the 1996 World Cup. The BCCI official Shashank Manohar made a statement that during Dalmiya's tenure, litigations were all the Board was involved.<sup>40</sup> Even Ganguly turned against him during the CAB elections in 2006, accusing Dalmiya of having played with his career.

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<sup>36</sup>*ABP*, 1 November 2005, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 22 November 2005, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup>*Aajkal*, 21 December 2005, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup>*ABP*, 30 November 2005, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup>*Aajkal*, 2 December 2005, p. 1.

The Supreme Court exonerated Dalmiya in 2007 for want of evidence, and in 2010 the Kolkata High Court dismissed similar charges levelled by the CAB. Acquitted of corruption allegations, he contested and won the next CAB presidential election. He was appointed as the interim BCCI president from June to October 2013 when the current president, N. Srinivasan, was under prosecution for his involvement in match-fixing and financial irregularities. Finally, he returned as the BCCI president in March as Srinivasan was forced to resign. His time at the top was short as his health declined and he died on 21 September 2015. In a piece evaluating his administrative career, the English cricketer Mike Atherton wrote that Dalmiya had the biggest impact on transforming cricket from a pastime to a commodity, and shifting the sport's epicentre from England to India.<sup>41</sup> As someone reluctant to give interviews, Dalmiya hardly ever opened up to journalists about his legacy. The media outpour after his demise unanimously admitted to his significance as the person who revolutionised cricket.

## Conclusion

Dalmiya's emphasis on marketing as the way of ensuring cricket's survival and growth was nearly equally praised and contested during his lifetime. On the one hand, Ganesh Mahalingam, the head of sales and marketing of LG India, an official sponsor of the 2003 and 2007 World Cups, remarked that Dalmiya was largely responsible for ushering corporate sponsorship into cricket. On the other hand, former English cricketer and senior MCC official Ted Dexter commented that flow of money eroded cricket's integrity and ethical responsibility.<sup>42</sup> Not everybody liked the transformation of the ICC from a gentlemen's club to a rich, powerful, and professional business enterprise. Commenting

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<sup>41</sup>Mike Atherton, 'Despair at Modern Cricket? Blame Dalmiya', *The Times*, 24 September 2015, p. 66.

<sup>42</sup>Joanna Slater, 'Cashing in on Cricket', *Far Eastern Economic Review* 166, no. 9 (6 March 2003), p. 33.

on Dalmiya's impact on India, a correspondent to the *Mumbai Mirror* newspaper wrote that he was to Indian cricket what Steve Jobs was to Apple.<sup>43</sup> His career illustrated many historical shifts in global sport, including asymmetrical shifts in a global sport's organisation from its centre to its former periphery, and the effect of commercialisation on tradition and ideology. His contribution can be analysed by focusing on five major loci of action: integration of Asian and African nations into a power bloc; judicious use of political influence; effort to separate sport and politics which collapsed after his reign to cricket's detriment; decolonisation of cricket's administration; and unprecedented commercialisation. A full assessment of his legacy will be possible after at least a decade. While time tests his career, it is essential to recognise the extent to which he influenced his contemporaries and posterity.

## Timeline

- 1940: Born in Rajasthan.
- 1959: Became the chairman of his family business.
- 1963: Supplied building materials for the Birla Planetarium in Kolkata.
- 1979: Joined the BCCI as deputy treasurer.
- 1983: Elected the treasurer of the BCCI.
- 1987: Organised the World Cup along with colleagues from the BCCI and the PCB.
- 1990: Elected the secretary of the BCCI.
- 1991: Supported South Africa's readmission to international cricket and organised their tour of India.
- 1992: Re-elected the secretary of the BCCI.
- 1993: Sold the television rights to broadcast Indian cricket to a non-governmental enterprise after a landmark court ruling.

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<sup>43</sup>Vijay Tagore, 'Dalmiya: 1940–2015 Messiah, Rebel', *Mumbai Mirror*, 21 September 2015. <http://www.mumbaimirror.com/sport/cricket/DALMIYA-1940-2015-MESSIAH-REBEL/articleshows/49040382.cms>, accessed on 6 July 2016.

- 1996: Coordinated the World Cup co-organised by India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- 1997: Elected the president of the ICC.
- 2001: Elected the president of the BCCI.
- 2001: Confronted the ICC over a 'racist' sanction against five Indian cricketers.
- 2003: Formed a contract system for cricketers and started pension for former cricketers and umpires.
- 2004: Organised the resumption of regular India–Pakistan cricket matches.
- 2006: Expelled from the BCCI on corruption charges.
- 2007: Resigned as CAB president.
- 2008: Elected the president of the CAB.
- 2010: Readmitted to the BCCI as no charges were proved and he withdrew his case.
- 2013: Became the interim president of the BCCI.
- 2015: Elected the president of the BCCI unopposed.
- 2015: Died of a cardiac arrest in Kolkata.

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