

Adams and Eves at the Eden Gardens: Women Cricket Spectators and the Conflict of Feminine Subjectivity in Calcutta, 1920–1970

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This article explores how cricket-watching women in Calcutta have been historically portrayed in vernacular literature and newspaper columns. It begins by providing an historical background of women's presence in sport grounds, describing mainly the construction of Victorian ideals of the women-sport relationship. It locates women cricket spectators in two historical phases: before the 1950s, that is, at a time when gender boundaries were comparatively tightly defined and in the 1950s to '60s, namely, when women's agency became a topic of intense discussion. While dealing with the colonial period, it contextualises the reactions to cricket-watching Bengali women in light of the colonial ideologies of domestic womanhood. Further moving on, it traces the subsequent depictions of women spectators, analysing the lampoons and debates around spectatorship. By doing so, the study hopes to locate the shifts in representations of femininity within the news media and in cricket books to understand, in a broader context, the changing gender relations and consumer culture in Bengali society.

Keywords: cricket; women spectators; sport writing; representation; social control

I had no idea that the stadium could be a place to study. After taking my seat, I found quite a few girls keeping their pretty faces buried in glossy film magazines the entire day. Had they decided to study at home, a few cricket lovers would have been able to sit and watch the game.¹

This was the general attitude to women who attended cricket matches at the Eden Gardens, Calcutta in the 1950s to 1960s. Accompanied by cartoons, a number of men ridiculed them in various newspaper columns for occupying seats as cricket spectators while knowing nothing about the sport. But, importantly, even women did not spare their counterparts, as is evident from the text, written by a woman professor. Did women accept the generic inferiority? Certainly not, as is expressed in this letter to a man who regaled his readers with humorous pen pictures of women at the Eden Gardens, 'You may consider women as ignorant fools when it comes to cricket, but my experience tells me that quite a few women understand what cricket is'.²

This article intends to study representations of women's experiences at cricket grounds to add a new aspect to existing debates on women, leisure and domesticity. As one of the most ideological of sports, the game of cricket has evolved its own

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philosophy in which women have been accorded particular forms of involvement alongside men. Literary, visual and oral representations have sustained or reformulated this gender divide. Scholars such as Philippa Velija and Dominic Malcolm have explored the status of women cricketers in the UK.³ But, women spectators have hardly been a point of discussion in the existing literature despite the amount of attention they have historically received from humorists and male partisans. A number of studies have addressed the problematic liaison between domesticity, social space and women as historical subjects in colonial India. Yet none deals with the subject of women watching sport though the latter had led to a number of discussions in newspapers and other media.

The woman question, as Geraldine Forbes observes, was one of the most serious public issues in nineteenth-century India, which arbitrated not what women wanted but how they could be modernised in keeping with male ideas of civility.⁴ The encounter of pre-colonial forms of domesticity with new ideologies reinvented prevalent notions of marriage, family and responsibility in the context of a colonial 'native' public sphere. In the changing sociocultural milieu of the 'new colonial metropolis' of Calcutta, the position of women became a yardstick of Indian men's social status. The colonial critique of gender relations in India generated in the minds of literate Bengalis worries not only about the position of their women but also their ideas about the family and the new nation. One of the most notable developments in the civil society was the emergence of the *bhadramahila*, conceptualised by the elite patriarchy as the confluence of the traditional Hindu woman and the enlightened Victorian lady. A number of journals and instruction manuals were published for the purpose of training them as good mothers and housewives.⁵ The domestic position of these women, however, was unstable. It changed as encounters with various types of colonial policies and politics continually modified women's relations with men, giving rise to new agencies, innovations and restrictions. Scholars have interpreted the cultures of gender relations from various perspectives including class, caste, marriage, labour, nationalism, migration, ethnicity, and so on. What this article perceives as a conspicuous lacuna in the historiography and seeks to redress is the men-women exchange as borne out by participation in outdoor activities such as spectator sport, one of the most gendered of social pursuits.⁶

This article begins by providing an historical background of women's presence in sport grounds, describing mainly the construction of Victorian ideals of the women-sport relationship. It uses memoirs, newspaper columns and general cricket literature to locate women spectators in two historical phases: before the 1950s, that is, at a time when gender boundaries were comparatively tightly marked out, and in the 1950s to 1960s, that is when women's agency became a topic of intense discussion. While dealing with the colonial period, it contextualises the reactions to cricket-watching Bengali women in light of the colonial ideological import. Then it moves away from the colonial period and traces the subsequent evolutions in portrayals of women's spectatorship, the debates connected to it, and the consumption patterns that played a significant role in the representation. By doing so, the study hopes to locate the shifts in gender politics in the sport press to understand, in a broader context, the changing gender relations in Bengali society.

Details of the number and categories (age, social class, caste, sex) of spectators and price of tickets in past matches do not exist or are inaccessible. A quantitative analysis of these factors towards understanding the transition of spectatorship would have had immense sociological and historical value. But this potential could not be

fulfilled since the sources required to calculate the proportion of female to male spectators or to ascertain the number of married/unmarried, accompanied/unaccompanied women are not available. So textual analysis of journalistic and literary accounts, along with oral interviews, is the only recourse to interpret how the gender relation in stadium events changed over the time period in question and the ways in which these changes correlated with gender and family structures in the larger society.

Origin of the Gendered Cricket Gallery

Cricket in Georgian England was marked by significant involvement of women as players and spectators. It is said that they played cricket as early as 1745.⁷ This cricket culture vanished under the vigil of Victorian aristocracy, whose anxiety to maintain the distinction between the gentry and the working class and to give institutional forms to this distinction, led to recasting women's participation in cricket. To prevent women from playing outdoor games, a number of philosophical and physical rhetorics were devised and articulated through three important social institutions.

Firstly, the public school system assigned specific roles to women. The Victorian doctrines that laboured to make men out of boys through physical exertion in public schools discouraged women from playing the same games. The masculinity/femininity divide was fortified through images of what would happen if women were allowed to participate in sport. Andre Odendaal compiles a list of what participation in each of the popular sports could do to a girl. According to his research, horse riding was said to lead to 'an unnatural consolidation of the lower part of the body, ensuring a frightful impediment to future functions'; hockey could 'disable women from breastfeeding'; athletics was seen as a corrupting influence for a 'properly brought up girl' and was bound to 'produce an unnatural race of amazons', unproductive breeders who would contribute to the 'deterioration of the human race'; cycling was 'an indolent and indecent practice which would even transport girls to prostitution'; sport, generally, was 'likely to do irreparable damage to the adolescent girl'; the notion of the naturally frail woman was turned into a virtuous stereotype.⁸ These stereotypes ostracised women from the playing field. They were restricted to the respectable privacy of home lawns where they could play games such as croquet, badminton and tennis while keeping their femininity intact. Unlike the boy-to-man evolution, the girl-to-lady transition was not supposed to be achieved on the playing field. Whoever transgressed the dictum was considered a troublemaker with suspect sexuality.⁹ The lessons were dispensed so perfectly that women in general did not practise outdoor sports till very late into the nineteenth century.

Secondly, the time and space required for cycles of production and subsistence in industrial Britain reduced the leisure pursuits of working-class women. They could not freely partake in 'frivolous' sporting activities. Unavailability of lower-middle-class women due to work and upper-middle class-women owing to canons of propriety set women's cricket back. The 'Industrial Revolution' bred a class of respectable urban housewives whose only contact with physical outdoor sports was supposed to be through the experience of the spectacle from outside the field. In the cities, even this spectatorship was allowed only up to a certain point, filtered by protocols of behaviour. As Jennifer Hargreaves has pointed out, the women reduced to the role of watching and praising men's physical antics inside the prohibited space actually reinforced men's superiority over women.¹⁰

The third institution is cricket itself. The invisibility and marginal status of women in cricket is strongly linked to the fact that cricket, self-consciously constructed as ‘the gentleman’s game’, is historically one of the most dogmatic of all sports. Its cultures were shaped directly by the strong currents of colonialism, white supremacy and patriarchy.¹¹ These forces were at their height in mid- to late nineteenth-century Britain when the game assumed its modern character and spread to the colonies. Cricket came to be seen as the gentleman’s highest code of honour. Women cricketers, one historian observes, became trespassers in the hallowed field.¹² Inclusion of women with equal rights as men would have directly challenged the male control of sporting space and subverted values of manliness, muscular Christianity and the ‘imperial mission’, upon which the ethos of cricket was based. Female cricketers could barely claim the denied space and failed to upstage the image of cricket as a game dominated and regulated by ‘gentlemen’. On the contrary, in more ways than one, women spectators carved a comfort zone for themselves.

Sportswomen were also dismissed for lacking athletic body-mind harmony and other qualifiers of outdoor sports, but women spectators were judged by entirely different parameters. Spectatorship hardly infringed their domestic, feminine attributes – the loss of what they had been so zealously guarded against. Moreover, it offered women the chance to sport their feminine aesthetic within the bywords of modesty and propriety. Women in the peripheries, Greg Ryan claims, generally enjoyed a wider range of opportunities and experiences than their counterparts in Britain within their prescribed roles as wives, mothers, daughter and sisters. For most of the nineteenth century women maintained a purely supporting role within the male sporting community, being called upon to ‘launch boats, donate trophies and provide victuals for participants’ as it was believed that their presence as spectators lent a civilising and festive atmosphere to sport.¹³ In colonial India, women spectators in cricket grounds were commonly the ones from elite families who sat in special, secluded tents. The next section will examine a colonial memoir to point out how men controlled women’s participation in cricket grounds.

Women Spectators in Calcutta before the 1950s

The history of organised cricket in Calcutta goes back to 1780. It remained a British activity for a long time. The ‘natives’ formally took to cricket in the 1880s, when some of the educated middle class established clubs to play the game regularly. A number of princes and landlords came forward to sponsor cricket, and the game flourished under their patronage. In the 1910s, however, football outstripped cricket in popularity. On one hand, easy accessibility of playing equipment and field as well as simple laws helped football’s growth. On the other, the ‘Englishness’ of cricket, manifest in the patrons’ and players’ costumes, etiquettes and attitudes towards the game as opposed to the more indigenised, barefoot tradition of playing football, estranged cricket from the ‘cultural self’ of the common people.¹⁴

As a couple of princely patrons, namely Nripendra Narayan of Cooch Behar and Jagadindra Narayan of Natore, died in quick succession in the 1910s, the progress of cricket in the province suffered a major blow.¹⁵ The competitive football tournaments became more attractive than the cricket leagues. The usual cricket matches, barring a few tournaments, were friendlies between clubs or colleges or other institutions. An attempt to revive interest in cricket was undertaken in the mid-1930s. Commenting on the second Maharaja of Cooch Behar Cup in 1936, *The Statesman* reported that

Bengal was taking more interest in cricket than ever before and any movement which would help improve the standard of the game deserved encouragement.¹⁶ Yet spectators were few, and mostly male. Among the most regular women spectators in Calcutta were the ladies from the illustrious Ray family – the first family of cricket in colonial Bengal – keen to catch their relatives in action.¹⁷

Lila Majumdar, one of the cricket enthusiasts and later a celebrated children's author, recounted in an interview with Sankariprasad Basu that Saradaranjan Ray was against girls going out in the open to watch a game.¹⁸ But Kuladaranjan, his brother, had no stomach for such discrimination. He lived far from Majumdar's place, but hardly ever failed to arrive at their house before a match and troop everyone off to Eden Gardens in a bus or a taxi. Once the girls would reach the ground of Sporting Union, the club their family patronised, Saradaranjan would cordially usher them towards comfortable chairs under the tent. A cricket match involving European civilians and Bengali upper-class men in colonial Calcutta was still the grandiose affair as described by George Johnson in 1843 in his book *Three Years in Calcutta*. Narrating a match at the *maidan* (the spacious playing fields in Central Calcutta), Johnson wrote,

On the Cricket Ground stand two spacious tents, not like the paltry affairs bearing that name in England, but lined with fancy chintz, furnished with looking glasses, sofas, chairs and each player's wants are supplied by his turbaned attendants whether it be a light for his cigar, iced soda water or champagne.¹⁹

The situation was much the same in the 1920s except that Indians now gained entry as players and patrons. The scene resembled the festive cricket matches in Britain more than the competitive first-class county cricket. The attendants brought lemonades and young European gentlemen stepped forward to help ladies at the merest hint. Sometimes the affection bordered on the wrong side of passion. Birkmeyer was one of the smiling volunteers whom Majumdar remembered. A potbellied, middle-aged gentleman from the Calcutta Club, Birkmeyer once proposed, pointing to the giggling ladies, 'Oh good! I shall look after them'. Unsure if his tone conveyed anything not cricket, Saradaranjan grimly mused, 'Not with anything strong I hope!'²⁰

Once inside the tent, the women would be cut off from the rest of the spectators even as they were in public. Common people were not allowed near the tents. It was scarcely more than an extended inner household. Aside from letting women watch the proceedings, men were often reluctant to allow them to participate actively in any aspect of the match – evident from Majumdar's story in which the cricketer brothers insisted that their sisters return home for lunch so that they did not sit down with others players at the lunch table.²¹ Men's compulsion to maintain the status quo triumphed over women's urge to be involved in a day-long lived experience of cricket.

Speaking of a forgotten housewife, Lila Majumdar takes us to the greatest of cricket fans among the women in the Ray family – her aunt Mrinalini Devi, mother of the famous Bengal players Kartick, Ganesh and Bapi Bose.²² Majumdar laments the fact that male cricket lovers were deprived of the critical comments she made to the family sitting around her. Importantly, cricket had become a point of conversation among women contrary to the stereotypical image of cricket as an exclusively male domain, at least in the upper-class families where cricket was an essential part of daily life. India's fielding, Majumdar rues, would have improved beyond recognition had the players been privy to the drills Mrinalini Devi

recommended.²³ The amount of cricket knowledge among colonial women is difficult to estimate since it seldom spilled out of the household and was noticed in the male public sphere that dominated the discourses of colonial cricket. The enthusiastic women watched silently; they did not speak or write about cricket though a few among them, namely, Lila Majumdar and Sukhalata Rao were gifted and widely read authors. Maybe they did not feel the urge to publish. It is more likely that they were not permitted to infiltrate canons of cricket writing or tarnish the sanctity of what was seen as the pursuit of moral manliness.²⁴ Furthermore, Majumdar's accounts suggest that patriarchal sentiments dominated spectatorship. It was similar to the Victorian paradigm of rational, knowledgeable manliness, the prevalent norm around which much of upper-class domesticity in late colonial India was organised.

Women's leisure was something society disliked. Shudha Mazumdar once accompanied her elder sister to a late night drama at the Minerva Theatre, after which she could not enter her parents' place for a month.²⁵ In an article published in 1940 titled 'The Modern Girl', Krishna Hutheesing criticised society's tendency to make value judgments without actually understanding the necessity of women's recreation. Usually the epithet 'modern' was used interchangeably with 'decadent' to describe young women who were 'frivolous, gay, pleasure seeking and not serious minded', therefore a 'drain on society'. The modern girl's attitude to pleasure had changed significantly. The author remarked that,

Pleasures are more conspicuous than they used to be, and girls who have to work in offices or at other jobs, desire some sort of recreation during the evenings. All young girls cannot be expected to sit at home after a hard day's work and read books, though there are always exceptions. . . . But those young people who like a little gaiety and frivolity should not be condemned unless they make a fetish of it.²⁶

P.K. Bose thinks that colonial urban society stressed the relationship among man, woman and child as a unit, creatively constructing the family as a sanctuary where colonialism could not enter.²⁷ Tanika Sarkar takes a different stance when she says that early nationalist males envisioned the family as a sovereign state per se, to be governed by the patriarch.²⁸ The common thread between these arguments is that women were 'guarded against' socialising with Europeans as much as they were not permitted to interact with other men in a bid to uphold the family's honour. A reading of the historical literature on womanhood in late colonial India suggests that domesticity then became the *raison d'être* through which notions of modernity, progress, and new nation were reimagined. The colonial state sought to consolidate its claim of benevolence by passing acts to reform domesticity. The Indian intelligentsia, on the contrary, used the logic of domesticity and its newly conceived role for women and children to establish its autonomous agenda of hegemony over the family unit.²⁹ It is this disposition which pressed the cricketers to prevent their sisters from mixing freely with fellow spectators and team members.

Writing on the gender politics in the lived experience of cricket, Sudeshna Banerjee speculates that the idea of informed spectatorship was effectively invested with the social discourse representing intellect and knowledge as male traits, as opposed to the supposedly feminine properties of uncontrolled emotion and passion.³⁰ This male-female dichotomy, she argues, becomes evident in the 1950s and 1960s when women's unmistakable visibility in the viewers' stands in Indian cricket grounds threatened patriarchal monopoly over cricket. Since the male bastion was

not in favour of women reordering the stadium space, discursive strategies in the form of public comments, literature and newspaper editorials were used to dissuade women from infringing the gender divide in cricket.³¹ Banerjee singles out Sankariprasad Basu, perhaps the most brilliant of cricket writers in the Bengali language, as the spearhead of this attack. The next section will analyse Basu's and other writers' works to identify the nature of the so-called patriarchal politics and the shifts in women's spectatorship.

Women Spectators in Calcutta in the 1950s and 1960s

Sankariprasad Basu saw cricket as a holistic expression of the arts and sciences of life. He closely watched and commented on women spectators in his columns for *Anandabazar Patrika*, the most widely circulated morning daily in Calcutta, and in his books on cricket. Basu's comical pen pictures of women spectators and audiences for cricket matches and commentaries, Banerjee argues, come across as representations of women as an emerging, but unthinking and ignorant, category in cricket enjoyment.³² The problem with Banerjee's otherwise agreeable article is that her conclusion is based on the casual reading of only one of Basu's seven books on cricket. I shall analyse the other books as well come at a fuller understanding of Basu's complicity in gender politics, if any.

Basu's earlier books gave literary expression to what was a growing popular reaction in the 1950 and 1960s – that women did not have the intellectual capacity to understand cricket. This was a common complaint that nearly every woman cricket spectator had to bear. Banerjee cites a woman author, also a devotee of the game, who used to be publicly heckled with intricate questions about the technicalities of the game and had to overhear the remark that women, invariably ignorant about the game, were unjustifiably blocking tickets and depriving male connoisseurs of much-deserved cricket viewing.³³ Basu does not blame a woman directly; he writes hilarious stories about women spectators, especially about their dresses and habits.

He mentions a lady, sitting in the posh 35-rupees' season ticket stand, changing her sari³⁴ during the lunch and tea breaks and emerging brand new every session. She even changed her hairdo as frequently as the captain shuffled his bowlers on the field.³⁵ He allegedly overheard an old man imploring a maiden to put on some more clothes to ward off the chilly breeze hitting her frame.³⁶ A lady forced by her husband and son to accompany them, wove each of them sweaters while the latter were watching the match.³⁷ His funniest contribution is the versed satirising of two ladies in the winter of early 1967:

All the wools of the entire flock of sheep grazing in the Himalayas have gone into the making of this lady's sweater. The other lady, braving the chill wearing merely the fabric as befits an ascetic, is scorching the ground with her gleeful cackles.³⁸

Another of his embellished ladies, who mistook the end of the first day's play for the end of the match and kept asking her companion about the winner even though the match was far from drawing to an end, is commonly cited as the paradigm of women's abject knowledge of cricket.³⁹

Shibram Chakraborty, the peerless humorist of Bengali literature, observed in women spectators not the zeal to see but the urgency to show. He convicted the ladies guilty of using the cricket stadium as a ramp to flaunt the best designs in their wardrobe, if not to attract cricket-watching men then at least to tease their female

counterparts.⁴⁰ Evidently quite a few authors alongside Basu criticised this putative exhibitionist tendency among women.

Banerjee claims that these writings hinted that women could not enrich cricket appreciation. It is true that there were oblique references to how women came to the grounds to show themselves off physically, or to do mindless activities such as knitting or eating. But categorising such writings as a reflection of the period's male discourse disregards the plurality of responses from the public sphere around cricket. A special issue of the *Amrita* magazine compiled as many as 12 essays on women in cricket. While some essays, notably those by Jayanta Dutta and Pushpen Sarkar, appreciated the women who went to the ground ignoring society's conventions, others, particularly those by Mukul Datta, Nabendu Pal and Tathagata Mitra, ridiculed women for the so-called silly things they did at the ground.⁴¹ The collected essays demonstrate that the status of women spectators was actually a matter of debate and a topic ripe for public consumption.

The main point that Banerjee's criticism of male monopoly seems to have missed is that a number of women came forward to mock their vain counterparts too. Monica Bandyopadhyay shares some sidesplitting stories in an essay in *Mahila*, a women's magazine, on her experience of watching the India-MCC Test match in 1961. She writes,

I had no idea that the stadium could be a place to study. After taking my seat, I found quite a few girls keeping their pretty faces buried in glossy film magazines the entire day. Had they decided to study at home, a few cricket lovers would have been able to sit and watch the game.⁴²

During the match, she overheard the lady sitting next to her confiding to her brother that Barrington, who was actually fielding at 'fine leg', would do better to start bowling instead of hovering at 'mid on'. The two fielding positions are half the ground apart, which is evidence enough of the lady's level of appreciation and her compulsion to show off. In another instance, a Marwari lady, having been woken up from her siesta by a commotion following Tony Lock's superb catch to dismiss Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi, whimpered, looking appalled at the sight of the prostrate fielder, 'Hay Ram! Why is he lying down? Is he hurt?'.⁴³ Then, when the tiny Ramakant Desai hit a glorious six, an unusual occurrence in those days, an ageing grandmother started shouting, 'Can't you see where you are hitting? If the ball lands on my head and crushes it, will you pay the doctor's fee?'.⁴⁴

The crown, according to Bandyopadhyay, goes to the young girl who went gaga over Nari Contractor's performance in the match, while the record books affirm that Contractor scored four and 11 in the respective innings, and it was one of the shoddiest performances in his career.⁴⁵ Nearly every cricket writer made fun of the fact that women turned up in large numbers to watch the cricketers they were physically attracted to.

Bandyopadhyay concludes her essay with scathing remarks. The contest among women to pit one's culture and physicality against another, she says, betrays their lack of knowledge and sophistication rather than substantiating the claims. Women who do not understand the game should not even step inside a stadium. They have no right to pretend to be cricket enthusiasts and deprive authentic cricket fans of the space to sit.⁴⁶ She redeems the 'proper' female cricket fan by attacking the 'improper' ones. Being published in a popular women's magazine, the article had the chance to communicate the cricket pedagogy to a sizeable section of women.

On reading Basu's other works, it becomes clear that he did not necessarily believe in male superiority in matters of cricket appreciation. He might have portrayed women as superficial, cacophonous spectators more interested in knitting, dressing up seductively or getting weak at the sight of handsome players, but he dutifully chastised ignorant male followers and admired women who understood cricket. In the same book in which he lampoons women spectators the most, he sketches one of them as knowledgeable. Banerjee observes that Basu makes certain qualifying remarks about her sexuality in this regard. He eagerly emphasised her difference in matters of dress and disposition, possibly implying that she had the intellectual ability to control her sexuality unlike most women who were supposedly ruled by their physicality. At the same time, he clarified that the woman did not unnecessarily masculinise herself – by not wearing men's clothes and flaunting masculine mannerisms. Rather she was present in the grounds as a 'human'. It is striking that the moment the author accepted this woman's knowledgeability, he grants her the ability to transcend female sexuality and attain what is clearly a higher stage for the author – that of the human. But 'the human', as a higher state of consciousness than the purely female, was unmistakably a signifier of the supposedly male possession of intellect and judgement.⁴⁷ The girl wanted the reservation of her right to watch a live match much the same way as the Government of India was then protecting new, fledgling industries by limiting maximum output of bigger enterprises. Women's interest in cricket, she persisted, should be nurtured rather than ridiculed.⁴⁸ Basu held up his hands in reply, saying that cricket literature cannot flourish without jocular references to women. So, for the sake of his trade, he would not leave women alone.⁴⁹ In a way, he confessed to having written those humorous anecdotes to address the demands of the market which was primarily male.

A bizarre story appears in the last of Basu's cricket books. Rain interrupted the play on the first day of the Test against Australia in 1964. As the groundspersons were making a heavy weather of the waterlogged areas, a lady offered to help them with her hair dryer.⁵⁰ The story most probably is apocryphal, but it leads to speculations regarding the nature of women spectators. The lady, as is clearly borne out, was wealthy enough to afford and fashionable enough to carry such an appliance into a cricket match. The probability of that lady breaching the soft mud of the outfield to talk to perspiring groundspersons borders on the impossible. Secondly, the story holds that she understood the crisis, got involved and wanted to expedite the mopping up process so that play could be resumed without much delay. Here Basu either mocks women's presumptions, or announces the coming of the cricket-educated women he had previously hinted at.

In his later works Basu conceded that an increasing number of women were being initiated into the game with every passing year. They were improving fast enough to dispel the long-held idea that they lacked knowledge of the game. Possibly the feedback of his female readers urged him to change his stance. In 1965, Rita Mitra complained,

I study in class X. Once during a Duleep Trophy match, I overheard two gentlemen talking among themselves. Either they don't understand cricket or they don't recognise players from this country. One of them asked, pointing at Durani, 'Does this lad bowl good enough to play Tests regularly?' His friend asked him who it was, to which he replied, 'Why? Prakash Poddar?' Why do these people go to the stadium – is it to watch the garnished girls you describe?⁵¹

Rina Bose, in 1967, wrote about her encounter with an elderly man who blamed the presence of women for the decline in the quality of cricket. She requested Basu to launch a protest against such offensive remarks.⁵² In a joint letter, four women students from the Calcutta Medical College in 1968 congratulated Basu for exposing the sham of female cricket fans whose ‘stupid’ actions give the entire community a bad name.⁵³

Basu is extremely critical of male chauvinists, saying that the scrawny youths dancing in the galleries looked more effeminate than the ladies. Just as the unemployed have no right to question women’s capability to work hard, the ticketless or cricket-less fools, he says, should not mock women’s love of cricket.⁵⁴ Mentioning instances of uninformed gentlemen and launching a diatribe against ignorant male supporters certainly do not concur with Banerjee’s criticism of Basu as the archetypal woman-basher. Basu seems rather more intent on building committed spectatorship around cricket than satirising women to increase his marketability.

One significant aspect of such writings is the differentiation of live viewers and radio listeners. While the behaviour of the women spectators was under continual scrutiny and funny episodes were offered for public consumption, the ones who stayed at home listening to radio commentary were praised and were shown to have often surpassed their husbands in their knowledge of cricket. Narayan Gangopadhyay, in a short piece called ‘Paribarik Cricket’ (‘Cricket in the Family’), draws a dramatic picture of his sister-in-law intently listening to the Bengali radio commentary of a Test match while knitting a cardigan, and then dumbfounding him by appreciating a boundary the stylish Rohan Kanhai hit through the ‘square leg’ region of the field.⁵⁵ The new household is significantly more liberal towards allowing women to evolve beyond their traditional roles as silent consumers. Even more astonishing is the sister-in-law’s daughter storming into the room yelling about the bet she and her friend had wagered on the previous day’s play, which she had won. In one stroke, the male privilege of public gambling had gone up in smoke too. Such occurrences of family bonding over a sport or girls’ freedom to use money might not have been too unfamiliar, but were being articulated for the first time.

Jayanta Dutta’s *Rupasi Eden-er Rupasi Cricket* (‘Glorious Cricket at Beautiful Eden’) is a dialogue between a young man who possesses an encyclopaedic knowledge of and passion for cricket, and his curious girlfriend.⁵⁶ The man shares a number of anecdotes through which he tries to explain to his partner the philosophy of cricket – which is essentially the Victorian paradigm of the elite sport. The lady turns out to be an attentive and receptive listener. She patiently sits through stories of honesty such as that of Wally Grout, who threw his wicket to amend the umpire’s decision in his favour on a previous occasion which he thought was an injustice to the bowler. She asks her beau to repeat the story of the noble Jack Hobbs, who more than once walked away simply to honour the opponent’s claim that he was out despite being sure of his being ‘not out’. She asks keen questions and in the end emerges a knowledgeable lady. Not once has her femininity been disputed. Her womanliness is rather well documented in her reactions to the ‘bodyline’ strategy, where the bowler aims to hit the batsman’s body to intimidate him into making a mistake, or to Len Hutton batting England to safety with a broken right arm.

Achintya Kumar Sengupta’s representation of women in *Mriga Nei Mrigaya* (‘Hunt Without the Deer’) almost echoes Dutta’s position.⁵⁷ The last essay in the book is a discussion among four cousins, one of whom is a girl, trying to determine the best performances in cricket. The girl contributes the least, but comes up with

value judgements at every instance. Not once was her judgement clouded because of the cricketer's good looks. Sengupta gives her the liberty to watch and enjoy cricket. But she does not have the autonomy to choose, the author makes the choice for her.

The real shift in the 1960s was the broadening of horizons of female cricket fans. The muffled voices of yesteryears' housewives now started reaching out. Ajita Chakraborty, the second ever female psychiatrist from India, had gone to London to study medicine in 1951, with the opinion that outdoor sport is a male activity. She returned in 1960, and was surprised to see so many urban women excited about cricket while people in the UK were losing interest in the game.⁵⁸ An interview with Ila Sinha, sister of Prasad Sinha, the first ever Bengali umpire to officiate in a Test match, was illuminating.⁵⁹ The experience of watching Test matches at the Eden Gardens for 50 years makes her the grand old lady of the stadium. She started going to the ground with her father, later with brothers and cousins. Interacting with her brothers who played for Sporting Union, and reading the family's collection of cricket books augmented both her historical and technical knowledge of the game. She could identify most of the fielders from her seat in the crowd, which even the legendary radio commentator Ajay Bose sometimes failed to do.⁶⁰

In the 1960s, cricket penetrated the household through radio commentary in Bengali by the famous quartet of Ajay Bose, Kamal Bhattacharya, Premangshu Chatterjee and Pushpen Sarkar. The audience-friendly radio coverage demystified a lot of cricket terminology, strategy and jargon for women. They got to know cricketers and started appreciating the details of the game. Girls chatted about cricket in whatever way it concerned them. It did not have to be technically correct or concern the techniques of players – debating the degree of good looks among cricketers was a popular pastime among girls. Writing about the conjugal fantasies of young Bengali girls in the Calcutta of the 1950s and 1960s, Manisha Roy states that besides Hollywood stars, they were attracted to cricketers and tennis players for physical attractiveness.⁶¹ She narrates a recollection in which a woman says that she was attracted to Gregory Peck and her friend Nina liked the cricketer Naresh Kumar.⁶² Roy forgets to mention that Naresh Kumar actually was a tennis player (fuelling the debate on the abject sport knowledge even among educated women). In a Brajadas story by Gour Kishor Ghose, we get a glimpse into the household of a High Court judge. His only daughter plans to garland the dashing batsman Budhi Kunderan on the cricket field and then collapse on his lap, unconscious. But her dream cannot materialise unless she gets a ticket. Her father, a man of stature, is not being able to procure one either. To pressurise her father into action, she goes on a hunger strike!⁶³ This degree of enthusiasm, certified by real life incidents, expanded cricket's domain by opening new topics of discussion and creating new consumers for the game. The extent to which these stories reflect the changing social inclination is arguable, so is the purpose of their production. The next section will investigate the rationale behind the shifts in women's spectatorship and the diverse reactions to it.

Towards a History of Women in Vernacular Cricket Writing

According to Basu, three types of women were to be found in the stadium:

- (1) The old and middle-aged upper-class women who exploit the stadium as a space to socialise, and at the same time sustain social status by participating in lived cricket experience.

- (2) The very few women who actually understand cricket – such as Monica Bandyopadhyay or Ila Sinha or the Ray women.
- (3) The well-dressed girls whose cricketing desires are limited to fancying handsome young cricketers. The type which prompted Peter May to station the good-looking cricketers in the outfield in front of stands full of girls to garner support in a foreign country.⁶⁴

Interviews with a number of women spectators help to understand why they preferred cricket to other sports and why the late 1950s to early 1960s marked the break with the past. A major factor was Eden Gardens' central location and easy accessibility from all parts of the city. In the cricket stadium women could play out domestic roles such as knitting or managing the food basket besides watching the game. The sanitation facilities at Eden Gardens were horrible. The semi-permanent stands were imperfectly engineered, inconvenient for sitting or walking from one side to another. Yet, it kept up the picnic tradition of the adjacent public garden, also named after the Eden sisters who donated the plot of land for sporting activities. If women decided to watch a live match, the principal options would be football and cricket, discounting tennis, badminton and wrestling for not being so spectator-friendly. Wealthy women went to watch polo matches with the family. Football was still the favourite game in Calcutta. But skirmishes among rival fan groups or even fans from the same club before and after nearly every big match made participation physically risky, and women were especially advised not to attend football matches. Watching a cricket match was argued to be logically safer since it did not promote aggressive masculinity like other body-contact sports. Violence among spectators, if any, was more verbal than physical barring a few occasions, and the atmosphere resembled that of a get-together rather than an intense contest. This image of cricket as a safe, leisurely and festive sport could persuade even the most disinterested lady to join the ranks of her cricket-going family members or friends. Obsession over a cricket player was another factor.⁶⁵ A few women were introduced to the game early in their lives by fathers and brothers, or because it was the main dinner conversation and there was no escape.⁶⁶ Many wives had begun to share their husbands' curiosity in cricket. While some of the women were forced to participate, others were genuinely inclined to going to stadiums. One of my respondents even said that men and women bonded well inside the stadium. She criticised the exhibitionist tendency in modern men – as manifest in body painting or jingoistic slogans – as harmful to cricket appreciation.⁶⁷

The emerging cycles of consumption in the 1960s diminished the earlier gender divides to some extent. The changing texture of family life along with the family-oriented character of cricket explains the shift. It was not an objective condition though; not all families were comfortable about letting the daughter go to the stadium with a group of friends, and certainly not alone.⁶⁸ But cricket watching as a family outing was in vogue.

Judith Walsh points out a shift in family relationships in late colonial India where the younger generation of Indian men, inspired by colonial modernity, conferred greater authority in the household to their wives, undermining the customary exercise of power by the earning male. She further argues that women found this newly conceived romantic, dyadic husband-wife relationship elevating their position, and complied without defiance.⁶⁹ The companionate household was a significant departure from previous home environments where authority prevailed over

affection. In the new, cohesive family units, members shared leisure interests more than at any other previous historical period, drawing women into previously denied leisure consumption. It is tempting to suggest 'democratisation of the family', following Indrani Chatterji's question over a previous historical period, but men-women interaction in matters related to the public space, that is, watching cricket suggests that such relationships were ambivalent rather than democratic in the context of newly independent India.⁷⁰

The link between most of the women spectators' experiences is the symbolic/actual presence of male mediators between women and cricket. On being interviewed, a few regular male spectators revealed an immediate reason why men did not want women to be in the ground. The stadium for them was the place to exercise liberty from household prohibitions. Women's and even elders' presence in the vicinity impeded free swearing and smoking among groups of friends.⁷¹ This opposition to women's presence effectively empowered the female as a voyeur who did not directly engage with the male domain but violated it by mere physical occupation of space and gaze. On a different note, they might have been concerned about their wives spying on their holiday activities, which often surpassed the norm of 'gentlemanly' behaviour. This unconscious empowerment reflects men's concern over the possible loss of authority over the social space. It does not seem coincidental that the tendency to mock women's presence in cricket became a stock response in the 1950s and 1960s as women spectators and commentary listeners suddenly encroached upon the by far undisputed male privilege of watching and understanding cricket. In the nineteenth century learned, active women were few and far between. Now a profusion of educated, modern women increasingly questioning male preserves compounded the problem.⁷² But was it really a problem?

Analysis of the newspaper columns suggests two significant developments in the 1960s: women entering territories of knowledge which had been deemed inappropriate and unnecessary for their kind and their increasing consumerist role in contemporary society. The very idea that women might acquire non-prescribed knowledge was problematic. It had led to numerous debates in the public spheres for over a century. As women's access to education increased, they started negotiating with the long-established traditions through what has been described by Geraldine Forbes as the ideology of 'social feminism' – combining their assertion of rights with traditional familial expectations and obligation.⁷³ The 'new women' of the 1960s outgrew domestic stereotypes and shared men's social pursuits, often encouraged by men themselves. It was rather the sportingly unsophisticated women who the newspapers lampooned.

In addition to poor knowledge, the other aspect of women spectators to have come under attack was the dresses they wore. Clothes were a significant part of constructing the ideal upper-class/caste woman. In the colonial period, the aesthetic form and moral content of a *bhadramahila* or the ideal lady, one commentator has argued, was informed by nationalist discourses of creating the ideal female in response to colonial critiques of 'animality and sensuality of Bengali/pagan women in particular'.⁷⁴ The colonial texts labelled Indian men as sexually depraved, who derived pleasure out of tormenting women. These accorded European reformers the power to liberate women. The Indian intelligentsia undertook moral reform projects to counter colonial judgments of their innate incapability of self-improvement. One of the outcomes of this conflict over the construction of feminine subjectivity was Indian men's greater control over all aspects of women's lives, which came to include

sartorial reforms. To be considered a 'lady', a woman had to comply with the sartorial-moral enterprise of the elite patriarchy. The sexually chastened female body became an icon for the emerging aspirations of Bengali culture and nationalism.⁷⁵ Women then started reclaiming the agency of draping one's body as nineteenth-century ideologies lost their relevance in the late colonial and post-colonial period. In the 1960s, a number of sexist taboos were relaxed, with spatial variations, in the wave of worldwide counter-culture movements. The demands for greater individual freedom outweighed the social constraints of the previous age by deviating from the norm. Hitherto hindered spaces of recreation opened up, most notably cinema and theatre. This is precisely the point which came under criticism – women achieving autonomy of their bodies and leisure interests.⁷⁶

The family of a woman had its peculiar opinion on the morality of going to certain places for certain pursuits. Conservative households considered an independent woman a bad woman. Singing in a nightclub for one's livelihood was considered equal to prostitution but singing in concerts to the drunken public of the locality until midnight marked musical talent. Keeping late nights, smoking and drinking alcohol, dressing in Western attire as opposed to Indian outfits, and even having male friends in some cases characterised suspect morality. The so-called prudery over moral behaviour was waning, but not all prohibitions died out quickly. Groups of women in cinema halls or sport grounds or political rallies sometimes raised concern about physical safety but not moral questions as much as before, but the sight of a solitary woman in a public assembly such as this sent the moral alarm bells ringing.

Some agents of consumption, such as newspaper columnists, fetishised the women for their own benefit. Contrary to the usual masculinisation of female sportspersons, women spectators were invariably portrayed as physically graceful, elegant beings. Heterosexuality is not compulsory, but feminine traits are, because their advertisement increases the marketability of the stadium event's appeal. The body is central to this process; as a dressed and ornamented object it is used to visually signify gender – this is described by Paechter in a conference paper titled 'Reconceptualising the Gendered Body: Learning and Constructing Masculinities and Femininities in School'⁷⁷ In addition to adorning signs of gender, such as clothing, make-up and hairstyle, bodily gestures articulate and affirm one's gender role.⁷⁸ As we have observed, mainstream cricket writings used all possible gender stereotypes to describe women's involvement with the game. The news media made a business out of exaggerating women's irrationality, using images of women spectators to decorate the printed page with feminine grace. They often focused on women's role as a transgressor, not only of the cricket field but of conservative societal norms, aiming to draw male readers – both casual and critics.

At a time when India lost more matches than they even came close to winning, the descriptions of spectators were often more interesting than that of the match itself. The second day's play during the India-England Test match in 1964, for instance, was too boring to write about. So Achintya Kumar Sengupta started describing what two girls might have understood from the day's play, producing a piece of humour that would light up the cricket fan's morning.⁷⁹ Newspapers highlighted female celebrities attending a match to attract male readership. They covered every movement of Sharmila Tagore and Anju Mahendroo, the prospective brides of Tiger Pataudi and Gary Sobers, the respective captains of India and West Indies, during the Test match in 1967.⁸⁰ Till the late 1960s they depicted most of the women who went to Eden as having little or no personal agenda of spectatorship,

acting mostly in their family's and friends' accord, with the primary desire to flaunt. Some authors such as Basu admitted to having written amusing stories of women spectators for the sake of literature or to create a profitable niche for their writings, though this study shows Basu's agency to have been far more deeply rooted in the desire to uplift knowledge of cricket.⁸¹ Women were frequently accused of blocking seats of male cricket lovers. The black market for tickets scaled new heights in the 1960s, further eliminating the lower-middle-class people from Eden's concrete stands, while upper-middle class women with the right connections and financial solvency to afford the high price went to the stadium in droves.⁸² These ticket-less people tried to feel good by reading match reports in newspapers, and consumed the cynical portrayal of fashionable, upper-class women whose presence, they had reasons to believe, made the tickets scarce, depriving them of the tactile enjoyment of cricket.⁸³ But the sarcasm gave way to acknowledgement of an agenda, and the metaphors were withdrawn as soon as women emerged as potential consumers of newspapers.⁸⁴ As women grew in understanding of the game, they hammered out credibility as cricket fans. By the early 1970s the brand of jokes and cartoons stopped for ever.

Conclusion

This article has tried to analyse literary mediation of cricket spectatorship to shed light on how cricket writings broadened the ambit of their circulation by manipulating gender relations in Calcutta. Like most other outdoor sports, the stress on male physicality is a recurring theme in cricket. The domain of sociability as players, administrators and consumers is fundamentally male as well, where women were incorporated in very specific capacities. Women had for long been declared physically and mentally incompetent to comply with the needs of playing cricket. Those who did conform to the prescribed qualities were labelled 'masculine'. This study of women spectators has shown how cricket writings imagined femininity in new ways according to their commercial potential.

But this periodic creation and utilisation barely deterred women from going to the stadium. Initially, during the colonial period, the extent to which they could participate in a stadium event depended on the normative acceptability of women's actions. The prohibitions slackened as women increasingly became important in the consumer society. Their 'encroachment' of a space previously reserved for men reconfigured the structure of the unitary sport 'place' into a discursive and contested stadium 'space'.⁸⁵ Contemporary writings acknowledged this shift in the social space. The domination was over, but men still implicitly controlled the gendered space primarily because they were the agents who created, maintained and revised the gender hierarchy.

Some women acquired knowledge of cricket after having watched and read about cricket. That knowledge should have enabled them to vindicate the criticisms, but the self-rehabilitation was not realised in practice. As a result, the behaviour of women spectators in general continued to be seen as a charade of a noble game. This image was stabilised as an objective social situation, against which women rebelled. They solicited the support of men in this project but gradually grew independent. These dialogues ratify the stadium as a structured hierarchy of fields whose essence was one of struggle rather than autonomy of existence. At the same time, the actions of the agents within the field kept the structure open to revision.

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Notes

1. Bandyopadhyay, 'Mahilader Cricket Preeti' ('Women's Love of Cricket'), 118.
2. Basu, *Cricket Omnibus I*, 419.
3. Notable among the studies are Malcolm and Velija, 'Female Cricketers and Male Preserves'; and Velija and Malcolm, "'Look it's a Girl'".
4. Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, 12.
5. Borthwick, *Changing Role of Women in Bengal 1849–1905*, 5–59.
6. Some good studies to have addressed this gendering of sport include Aitchison, *Sport and Gender Identities*; Hargreaves, *Heroines of Sport*; and Hartmann-Tews and G. Pfister, *Sport and Women: Social Issues in International Perspective*.
7. *The Reading Mercury* reported on 26 July 1745 a match contested between 'eleven maids of Bramley and eleven maids of Hambledon, all dressed in white'.
8. Odendaal, "'Neither Cricketers Nor Ladies'", 117.
9. Odendaal, "'Neither Cricketers Nor Ladies'", 116.
10. Hargreaves, 'The Victorian Cult of the Family and the Early Years of Female Sports', 73.
11. Birley, *A Social History of English Cricket*; and Williams, *Cricket and Race*.
12. McCrone, *Playing the Game*, 142–143.
13. Ryan, *The Making of New Zealand Cricket 1832–1914*, 21.
14. Majumdar and Bandyopadhyay, 'From Recreation to Competition', 137.
15. Docker, *History of Indian Cricket*, 8–9.
16. *The Statesman*, 19 November 1936, 12.
17. The Rays are one of the most famous families who have contributed significantly to Calcutta's cultural heritage. Upendra Kishore Ray Choudhury was a notable author and held patents for a number of important innovations in print technology. His son Sukumar Ray was a celebrated children's author, and his son, Satyajit Ray, probably the most internationally acclaimed filmmaker from India. Saradaranjan Ray, called the 'W. G. Grace of Bengal' for physical similarity, was the first Indian college principal to promote sport as a part of the curriculum. His brother Kuladaranjan Ray was a leading Indian cricketer in his time. They are the most prominent among other family members.
18. Basu, 'Not Out', 99.
19. Johnson, *Three Years in Calcutta*, cited in Majumdar, *Twenty-Two Yards to Freedom*, 144.
20. Basu, 'Not Out', 100.
21. *Ibid.*
22. She could have been the first female cricket analyst in India had microphone been invented and sport editors commissioned women to write on cricket!
23. Basu, 'Not Out', 101.
24. Nabaneeta Dev Sen remarked that if a female writer tried to venture out of her family life into territories regarded as male, every obstacle would be placed to block her path. See Tharu and Lalita, *Women Writing in India*, 206.

25. Mazumdar, *A Pattern of Life*, 111–13.
26. Huthesing, 'The Modern Girl', *The Statesman*, 21 Jan 1940, 6.
27. Bose, 'Sons of the Nation'.
28. Sarkar, 'Rhetoric against Age of Consent', 1870.
29. Banerjee, 'Debates on Domesticity and the Position of Women in Late Colonial India', 462.
30. Banerjee, 'Fleshing Out Mandira', 481.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., 481–482.
33. Ibid.
34. The sari is the traditional outer garment worn by middle-aged and elderly women in most of India.
35. Basu, 'Ramaniya Cricket', 175.
36. Basu, 'Eden-e Shiter Dupur', 79.
37. Basu, '*Ramaniya Cricket*', 150.
38. Those who understand Bengali please read the original four lines:

*Himalaya-meshpal koriya nishesh/ Ek nari lomoboti poriache besh/ Onyo nari
tapaswini pottimatro gaye/ Huhu shite hihi hasi thotete goraye.* (Sankariprasad
Basu, *Anandabazar Patrika*, 7 January 1967, 9)
39. Basu, 'Ramaniya Cricket', 149.
40. *Anandabazar Patrika*, 5 January 1967, 4.
41. *Amrita*, December 1969.
42. Bandyopadhyay, 'Mahilader Cricket Preeti', 118.
43. Ibid., 118.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., 119.
46. Ibid.
47. Banerjee, 'Fleshing Out Mandira', 481.
48. Basu, 'Ramaniya Cricket', 155.
49. Ibid., 156.
50. Basu, 'Sara Diner Khela', 319.
51. Basu, *Cricket Omnibus I*, 418.
52. Ibid., 421–422.
53. Ibid., 422.
54. Basu, 'Not Out', 253.
55. Ibid., 349–350.
56. Dutta, *Rupasi Eden-er Rupasi Cricket*.
57. Sengupta, *Mriga Nei Mrigaya*.
58. Ajita Chakraborty, interview with author, 26 October 2011.
59. Ila Sinha, interview with author, 1 July 2011.
60. Bose, *Akash Cricket Bani*, 2.
61. Roy, *Bengali Women*, 59.
62. Ibid., 69.
63. Ghosh, 'Saptam Gulpo', 40.
64. Basu, 'Ramaniya Cricket', 150.
65. Manjari Mukhopadhyay and Sanchari Roy, interviews with author, 30 June 2011.
66. Narayanan, 'The Indian Spectator', 205.
67. Ila Sinha, interviews with author, 3 August 2011.
68. Basu, *Cricket Omnibus I*, 421.
69. Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India*.
70. Chatterjee, *Unfamiliar Relations*, 5.
71. Soumyen Mullick, Achintya Sanyal and Swapan Nag, interviews with author, 30 June, 2011.
72. The public debates around the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, which empowered women by entitling them to claim divorce and inherit a part of paternal property, is a notable point in this discourse.
73. Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, 7.

74. Bannerji, *Inventing Subjects*, 126.
75. Bannerji, *Inventing Subjects*, 125–129.
76. In *The Shadow Lines* (originally published in 1988), Amitav Ghosh narrates the male tendency to draw a line to women's liberty in the 1960s rather precisely. This is how he describes the reaction to a man's objection to his niece's wish to dance at a nightclub even after having accompanied her all the way and buying drinks,
- ‘Listen, Ila’, Robi said, shaking his head. ‘You shouldn’t have done what you did. You ought to know that; girls don’t behave like that here’. ‘What the fuck do you mean?’, she spat at him. ‘What do you mean “girls”? I’ll do what I bloody well want, when I want and where’. ‘No you won’t,’ he said. ‘Not if I’m around. Girls don’t behave like that here’. (Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, 66)
77. Cited in Caudwell, ‘Femme-fatale: Re-thinking the Femme-inine’, 146.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 31 January 1964, 1.
80. *Dainik Basumati* even sent a reporter to Sobers’s hotel room to check what he was doing with Mahendroo. Sobers must have been a real gentleman, or the reporter would not have lived to send his correspondence. See *Dainik Basumati*, 7 January 1967, 8.
81. Basu, ‘Ramaniya Cricket’, 156.
82. Not all of them had the right connections, as is evident from the story of the High Court judge’s daughter.
83. Basu sympathises with a friend who annually spent a lot of money buying a ticket from the black market for his wife. See Basu, ‘Ramaniya Cricket’, 154.
84. The percentage for female literacy in West Bengal jumped from 20.79 in 1961 to 26.56 in 1971 and to 34.42 in 1981, while the male average grew from 47.69 to 57.03 in the 20 years. I could not track the gender breakdown of newspaper readership in that period, but considering literate people read newspapers, I presume the number of women now reading newspapers was significantly more than ever, and the press could not risk losing them as readers by publishing comical reports. See <http://www.education.nic.in/cd50years/g/z/EI/0ZEI0401.htm> (accessed 21 December 2011).
85. I have used Michel de Certeau’s analysis of space as a practised place. See De Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 117–119.

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