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Cricket in South Asia

Cricket, in the South of Asia between 1880-2005, played a political role in not only easing tensions and restrictions of caste members, but allowing Pakistan and India to release some political tensions from a religious aspect.

Cricket was an influential element in politics because, as visible in Document 4, the lower caste of Hindu was allowed to play with the higher caste members. This shows how cricket had let caste mobility into the Hindu religion as well as politics. The reasons for allowing this were the fact that anyone, regardless of caste, could be good at cricket, and the fact that this gesture of caste mobility promotion was in the newspaper. This also allowed British-Indian relations to ease. As seen in document 2, an Indian prince was invited to England to play cricket.

Although it was written by an English newspaper, it could have been a propaganda invitation; nevertheless, it was a kind gesture from a colonist country to an ex-colony. As pointed out in document 3, cricket was shown to unite people—as said by the English historian. This point of view favoured cricket as a tool to ease political and civil unrest. Although cricket did manage to unite British Indian relations in a calm, beneficial manner, it has also been the cause of political rivalry. As displayed by document 1, although cricket helped ease some tensions, the British still take pride in victory against Indians. The petition in the document said that the Englishmen introduced cricket and now the Indians sabotage it and cause unrest. As seen in document 6, the rivalry atmosphere had caused conflict after the Indians won, and the

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nationalistic tone of the document came from the Indians and their victory over the English—as cricket was the only thing, they were allowed to compete against them in.

This document shows how cricket became a political battleground. It may not only have caused rivalry, but also the ability to address the major political issues at that time. As seen in document 10, cricket allows problems like water shorting and internal political conflict to be ignored, but as the chairman mentions, it is an issue that has been greatly argued about. As the head of the Cricket Board, he knew things were out of hand for the Indians, and that cricket could not solve all of the political problems.

Lastly, cricket also played a major role in tensions between Pakistan and India, and between Hindu and Muslim people. As Gandhi points out, it is apparent how cricket has addressed a large part of the religious, political, and social aspects of the tension. In document 8, Gandhi talked about how the teams were religious based and how they were an icon of peace and independence in India—he was also sorry that this distinction was apparent. The religious segregation was a big problem, and it was completely unavoidable for competition. This can also be viewed in document 5, where this issue had been brought forward and addressed – a Pakistani leader had hoped that if Muslims had won, Hindus wouldn't have become aggressive towards them—there were still many Muslims in India at that time. As document 9 mentions, it is clearly addressed that Hindu nationalists were displeased by Muslim Indians who had cheered for the Indians to lose on the cricket field. As mentioned in document 7, the cricket field had become split religiously and become a spotlight that clearly showed the political relational tensions between Pakistan and India. An additional document is also helpful – one from a low-caste Indian's point of view on cricket – where they gave an outlook to how cricket really eased (or worsened) the lower-caste members' lives and gave an entire picture of how everyone was affected by it.

Cricket played a fundamental role in political relations between India and England, and India and Pakistan, where a field could house all of the political tensions between

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the countries. It was a good alternative to actual conflict, and although the effect of it was not always positive, it was and is still a good way for rivals to compete in a friendly manner.

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