Sociological Research Colloquium

13 November, 2026 | Friday | 3:00 pm
M N Srinivas Seminar Room

Soccer Cultures, Regions and Regimes: Towards a Sociology of Sport in India

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ABSTRACT:

There are at least two approaches to the study of sport, strikingly seen in the existing literature. The first one falls into a diachronic mode of tracing the history of practice, players, custodians, sponsors, origin and development of a particular game, its associations, tournaments, and related events. Secondly, sport as a microcosm of social life, an idiom or a mirror that reflects the wider dynamics of power, control and hierarchy in particular social milieus, while invoking master categories of sociology and anthropology. Sporting events that celebrate the potential of the human body and physical culture have long been driven by sociopolitical and ideological impulses. Sport mirrors a social domain in which a multitude of practices involving the body-mind interfaces, contestations, conflicts, solidarities and alliances are constantly expressed and negotiated. Drawing from the figurational sociology of Norbert Elias, this presentation seeks to explore the social and political present of Indian football—among other "lesser" sports—with reference to its colonial past that strikes a chord with the cultures of masculinity, identity, regional absorption, hierarchy and governance. Cultural moorings of the heartland and its peripheries of the nation and their political predilections and alignments impinge the state of any sport and therefore the field of Indian football as well. The soccer culture in discussion here draws heavily from the domestic and regional mores of the game along with its global counterparts and indices including patrons, players and fans.

Ratheesh Kumar works as Associate Professor at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He has previously taught at the Department of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad and at the School of Interdisciplinary and Trans-disciplinary Studies, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi. His areas of interest include sociology of education, popular culture, media anthropology, sound studies, interdisciplinarity and debates in ethnography. He was a Charles Wallace India Trust Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Research in Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), University of Cambridge (2021-2022). He was also an Associate Fellow at Wolfson College, University of Cambridge. His recent publications include "*Practising Interdisciplinarity*: *Convergences and Contestations*" (Co-ed), Routledge, 2024.

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