EVOLUTION OF COLORS IN INDIAN SPORT JERSEYS

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Abstract

Color psychology plays an important part in many aspects of life. It has so much affect on human thought process that color therapy has emerged as an important branch of medicine. When jersey colors are chosen in sports, care is given to the right choice of color as it has been found that the jersey color has a deep effect on the sports persons psychologically. Warm colors like red and orange makes the athlete higher on energy by causing an excess of adrenalin rush through the blood streams.

Although colored jerseys are not new for India, the thought behind effect of colors on the athletes is a newer one in the country. Indian jerseys in various forms of sports, Olympics and non-Olympics, have undergone several changes since their inception in the early 20th century. This research study has been done in an attempt to find out the logics and reasons for the choice of specific colors in Indian jerseys, the reasons for their variations and changes over age and finally, the psychological effect of the various colors on the Indian sports persons. May be, this can become a base for future medal hopes of the country by choosing the right colors and inciting the right emotions in the athlete, besides the hard training and diet.

Introduction

The concept of sports was first spread by the Greeks. The Greek soldiers needed to be kept fit, both physically and mentally, during their long tenures away from home while they were conquering the world. The sporting activities that they undertook, in order to do so, later on became the base of ancient, and then modern Olympics. Although India was never a warrior nation traditionally, yet many cultures have come into this land through the hands of the conquerors, including the Greeks. The culture of physical activities aggravated with the British rulers and their disciplined army. They also brought various sports to India which was not traditionally known by people of the land earlier, like cricket. Not only that, many of the Olympic sports came into India through them.

In a country where sports are religion, and the ones playing those the gods, it would not be difficult to assume the immense levels of emotions and spirits attached to these sports and the players playing them. The performance of the players puts them on a high stake every time they are playing. A good performance can make them a part of team and a bad one send them out. To give the best of their abilities, talents and skills, the players constantly keep training themselves, not just physically but mentally and emotionally as well. Although in India there would be many factors contributing to the overall performance of the players, but according to some sports psychologists, emotions and feelings play a critical role in the performance of the player.

Sports psychologist James E. Loehr explains that all athletes have an Ideal Performance State (IPS), which is usually accompanied by a set of highly distinctive emotions. The emotional range of players can vary a lot based on the various stimuli they may receive.

But it is a very well noted fact that colors have a distinguished impact on our emotions and feelings. In a similar way, the colors that the Indian sports team adorns also have their own meanings which in a subconscious way help the players to perform at the desired performance (IPS) [1].

In this study, we have tried to trace back the evolution of the Indian sports jerseys as it has been over the years. The study spreads over the most prominent sports played in the Indian subcontinent, such as cricket, football, hockey, and major Olympic sports in which India participates. Through this study we have tried to determine the reasons related to the selection of particular colors and elements of design in the Indian sports jerseys over the years of its history.

Evolution of Colors in Indian sports jersey

India has seen a tremendous upsurge in the popularity of the sports over the past century. This rise in the levels of sporting has been due to the development of quality players with superb talent, skills and abilities but also because of the intelligent use of

Image 1- Kapil Dev wearing the first colored India jersey

psychology and experience gained over the years. This intelligent use of psychology also extends over to the use of color psychology for which there is many examples showing up from time to time, most of which have been recent in the past couple of decades.

Although field hockey is known as the national sport of India, but on the contrary it is cricket that enjoys the maximum popularity and celebrations in India. The Indian cricket team gained its popularity during the 1970's with the advent of quality players like Dilip Sardesai and Sunil Gavaskar. [2] But it was the World Series Cup in 1977-78 that responded to the need for players to have colored clothing during the night matches, since it was easy to lose sight of the white ball against white uniform of the players. [3] The first attempt to create colored kits was then made for the World Series Cup in 1979-80, where the kits remained white except that they had colored stripes on shoulders and waist. But, this design was not appreciated and supported by England. Therefore, in World Series Cup, 1980-81, completely colored uniforms were first introduced. So, each team was supposed to don two colors for the representation of their country, one primary and one secondary. It was here that India chose Blue as their primary color and Yellow as the secondary color (image 1). The kits were totally colored in blue – a sky blue hue, except the collar, two stripes running down from the shoulders on to the arm cuffs, sides, and pant pockets in the secondary color chosen by India – Yellow. A fond memory associated with the 1980's World Series Cup for India is that although they did not win the World Series Cup that year but they did win the prize for 'Best Looking Team'.[4]

Image 2- jersey of Indian Cricket team in World Cup 1992

A lot of design elements changed over the decade in the Indian kits, but the colors for India remained Blue and Yellow. Also a very crucial point to understand is that, until the last Benson & Hedges World Series Cup in 1996, the uniforms of the teams were always identical in terms of the design elements in it, but the only differential parameter for the teams was of their two chosen colors. The evolution of jerseys saw many stark changes, such as the deep purple shade of kits of the Indian uniform in the 1992 World Cup held in Australia & New Zealand (image 2). It was the first time when the colored kits were introduced in the World Cup and also some matches were played under the lights. It is said that the matches became even vivid to watch due to the colored jerseys and undoubtedly India's jersey was an eye-catcher. [3]

It was not until 1997-98 when the teams started donning their customized jerseys and did not follow any code of standardized jersey that had been prevalent until then throughout all World Series Cup. This upturn came in the World Series Cup when Benson & Hedges could not sponsor the event because according to a new law in Australia, cigarette companies could not associate themselves with the sporting events and this is how World Series Cup came to an end. [3] So India also designed their jersey with the tri colors in vertical arrangement, on each side (image 3). The primary color of the kits remained sky blue but the color of the pants was taken a deep shade of blue. But, in the

Image 3- Sachin Tendulkar in the Indian jersey at Sharjah Cup final 1998 vs. Australia

1999 Cricket World Cup, in England, the Indian team reverted back to Blue and Yellow. This time there was no tricolor on the jersey instead, the Board for Control of Cricket in India's (BCCI) logo was used on the shirt. The crown circumference of the logo was magnified immensely and was put diagonally across the chest (image 4).

Image 4- Indian cricket jersey at World Cup 1999

Until 2003, a number of modifications were made in the Indian jersey (custom designs) using the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) logo as the main design element. But in this year a radical change was brought into the design of the jersey for the 2003 World Cup in Africa. It was the first time the tricolors of the nation had been used for the Indian jerseys in World Cup. The tricolor swathed across the chest diagonally and bands of black used on the arms and the sides. Even though the secondary color had been replaced, the color

still found its place on the chest as the name of the team (image 5).

Image 5- Indian cricket jersey at World Cup 2003

But it was for the 2007 World, where the new sponsors, Nike (sponsor of Indian cricket jersey from 2005 till date)[5] designed a new jersey for the Indian team. The color of the jersey turned a lighter shade of blue and the tricolor was put on the right side of the jersey in a vertical spline band. Yellow was almost replaced by the color orange to write the name of the team on the chest and the name of the main sponsor (Sahara India) above it in white which was finally transferred on to the arm due to ICC's Logo Regulations [6] and the color of team's name remained in yellow (image 6).

It was then the year 2010 when the next major change in color came, when Nike redesigned the Indian jersey's color to a dark shade of blue and this time it was Orange that overtook as the secondary color in the Indian jersey (image 7). According to Nike's marketing head, Mr. Sanjay Gangopadhyay, the jersey was an outcome of an intense research based on the Indian subcontinent. According to him the darker blue shade instilled the boldness and aggression to the much younger team. [7] Also, there are two explainable reasons for choosing orange. First, as a part of Nike's research it was concluded that Red and Orange are the most apt colors to depict boldness, therefore orange in the kits "heightens the streak of boldness". The other reason is that blue and orange are complementary colors, therefore when placed against each other; the colors tend to appear brighter, more intense. The colors get enlivened, by a dash of orange against blue or blue against orange. [7] It is this concept that Nike employed in making the jerseys for the Indian cricket team.

Image 6- Indian cricket jersey at World Cup 2007

Image 7- Indian cricket jersey in 2010

Image 8- Indian cricket team jersey at World Cup 2011

The 2010 jersey did not last long as the new change came in for the World Cup 2011 held in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The color this time was lighter than the previous design but a deeper blue than the

sky blues previously used in the Indian jerseys. The tricolor band became vertical without spline and it's blending of the tricolor also changed sublimely. The orange hue, present on collar, arm cuffs and pants, became brighter and a deep blue shade was used on the back of the jersey in a stylish design element (image 8).

2011 even witnessed the ICC T20 World Cup for which Nike again designed the jerseys in a new fashion. The color of the jersey became brighter and the tricolors swathed in brilliance over the left part of the jersey with three stars over the BCCI logo (image 9). The three stars on the jersey symbolize the three World Cup wins of India till 2011 (1983 ODI World Cup, 2007 T20 World Cup, 2011 ODI World Cup) [9]. The players liked the new T20 format jersey and a few players even mentioned that this new jersey would become iconic for India in T20 format.[8] Virender Sehwag even said that having the national colors over his heart automatically tells him that he has to play at his maximum and it gives him the emotional boost to perform at his best.[9] But BCCI's superstitions ruled over the concepts by Nike and they asked the players to play in the 2011 ODI World Cup jersey, as they had won the world cup in it and that it would bring good-luck to the team in the 2011 T20 World Cup too.[10]

So much has been for the most celebrated sport in India, but the impact of color psychology has also been witnessed in the sports like football and hockey in India.

Similar to the Indian cricket history of jersey, the color of football kits was also blue for the Indian team but it has been very similar to the kits made for the Indian hockey team at the same time. The football kits for the Olympics in 1956 had sky blue and navy blue as the primary and secondary color respectively and the national emblem on the left side on the chest (image 10). The color combination since then did not change much alike the hockey team's kit. But then it was in 1984, under the guidance of the foreign manager, Milovan Ciric (Yugoslavia)[11], when he made the players to play in kits having Orange

Image 9- jersey of Indian cricket team in T20 World Cup, 2011

Image 10- Indian football team's jersey in Melbourne Olympics 1956

Image 11- Indian football teams jersey in Melbourne Olympics 1956

jersey, White shorts, and Green stockings (the national colors) in order to instill the feeling of team spirit and pride.[11] Though after Milovan's time as a manager, such a similar psychological tactic was seen once more by Josef Gelei (Hungary)in 1991, who incorporated the use of color red in the jerseys along with the tricolor on the arm cuffs and collar. He tried to bring the psychological dominance of color red to advantage for Indian team along with the strength of national colors, but this jersey format was not supported long until the most popular color of the nations' team was chosen back – Blue. The hues after that changed at times but the majority of instances it was a rich deep shade of blue with varying graphic elements, and the color of the shorts varied from white, blue and orange. The team had two kits – One for home matches (blue) and one for away matches (orange).

Image 12- Indian football team's jersey in Melbourne Olympics 1956

Image 13- Indian football team's jersey in Melbourne Olympics 1956

Then in 2010, Nike released the new kits for team India which are predominantly blue with a light blue patch on the top of the sleeves with a smaller orange trim just below while the away jersey is predominantly orange with a light blue patch on the top part of the sleeves and a smaller white trim just below (image 14). [12]

When it comes to hockey, there have not been a lot of dedicated designing inputs for the Indian hockey team in recent history. The team played at times in the jerseys from the Indian cricket team. Thereby, it would be prudent to say that the colors of the team even in hockey have been the same as that of cricket and football. But these jerseys have not always been adapted from cricket. Hockey being the national sport

Image 14- current football team's jersey of India

has borne the colored kits and national colors more than the Indian cricket team. The kit for the Indian hockey team in 1956 Olympics was a very simple one. The color of the jersey was sky blue with secondary color being navy blue on the collar, band of buttons and the national emblem with a short horizontal band above it on left side on the chest (image 15). Navy blue was also the color of the shorts then. By the 1980's very miniscule changes had come in the selection of colors for the India hockey kits as the two main colors remained the same – sky blue and navy blue; but the minor changes took place in the color of the shorts the team played in and few elements on the jersey. Such as the

area on the jersey bearing the emblem and short horizontal band formed a patch of navy blue color where the emblem was made in sky blue color.

This current color combination continued till the starting of the 21st century but the national emblem was first replaced by a small tricolor flag on the same spot. Then in 2004[17], the colors got inverted and navy blue became the primary color and sky blue the secondary color at the same places. But since then the color and the kits in hockey have undergone a lot of influence from the Indian cricket kits as they became more popular and identifiable colors for Indian team and from there came the transition in the colors of the past hockey team to the current design which for the team in home matches is blue in color and has two tricolor bands swathed diagonally across the chest forming a 'V' and India written on the chest in orange color and the same design in white for away matches.

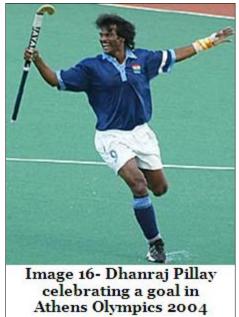Image 15-Indian hockey team against Pakistan in the final at Melbourne Olympics 1956

Indian jerseys in Olympic sports have always been predominantly blue without any specific design elements. The players wear random designs of t-shirts, but ones having blue as the dominant color. For combat sports the color given to each country is either blue or red and the selection of color is random, so choosing national colors for the player cannot happen. [13] This bi-color competition rule was implemented from the 2004 Olympics in Athens and is being followed since. [13]

Discussion

India has had a long history of sports but it would be very unwise to neglect the importance of colors and the role that they have played in the sports over the century and more proactively in past decades.

The reason why blue was predominantly chosen for Indian jerseys is not documented anywhere. It may thus be only presumed as to what may have been the reasons. The time when India started participating in Olympic Games, the country was still under British rule. In Olympics at that time, there were predominantly two colors, red and blue. The red color was always a psychologically stronger color than blue, and hence was not offered to India who was still under foreign rule. May be that was one major reason why blue became India's color. In

Image 16- Dhanraj Pillay celebrating a goal in Athens Olympics 2004

case of those events which desired colors outside red and blue, the teams generally sported their national flag colors. However, Indian thought process has forever been

Image 17-Indian hockey team in a qualifier match for London Olympics 2012

that the national flag is help higher above the head and cannot be brought lower than that, i.e., on the body. As a result, Indian flag colors were not chosen for the jerseys and blue was chosen the primary jersey color, with white being the alternate color. This remained so for years.

In case of cricket, the story might have been a bit different. Not being an Olympic sport, it might have chosen some other color, but maybe it was highly affected by the other sports which all had blue jerseys in India, like football and hockey. That may have been a predominant reason for the cricket jersey also having been blue.

Another reason for which Blue was chosen as India's dominant color (especially cricket) is that it is the color of the 'Chakra' in the flag which is in the centre of the flag and it holds an important and integral meaning of the flag. Another, it is not saffron/orange as it is one of the three equally distributed colors in the flag and not the dominant color in the flag, similarly white and green.

Image 18-Indian hockey team taking on Spain in the final of Moscow Olympics 1980

Although, orange and white have been the color of the away kits for India in football and hockey respectively, green has never been chosen as the dominant color for any of the kits for India because it holds a stronger association with Pakistan's team than for India.

Then, according to a research done on the subject of colors in uniform and their association with players (Jenna Dover, 2011) [1], and by the results they compiled, it said that, male players prefer cooler colors and that darker shades of colors evoke a stronger feeling of dominance within the players, thereby helping them achieve their better performances – the Ideal Performance State (IPS) [1]. It is this similar concept of darker colors that Nike tried to incorporate in the Indian cricket jerseys released in 2010.

But the research also mentioned a point, that it is not just the mental aspect of the color psychology that aids the performances of the players, but it is also the association of the color for the athlete/player. [1] For example, a player wearing a green, white and blue kit would be at a higher dominant emotional state, considering those are the colors of his/her school/university he/she studied in. Therefore, the importance of the color becomes more crucial than the actual effects of the color. [1] It is for the same reason that why the color red could not popularize in Indian football or hockey kits, even though researches have shown that red color gives a psychological advantage to the team wearing it by creating intimidation through the psychological dominance of the color.[14]

Image 19- Indian hockey team after an Azlan Shah Cup win

Although for wrestling, boxing and taekwondo in Olympics do not have a choice for colors to play in, but by a research done on Athens Olympics, 2004 it was found that players who wore red uniforms won 10% more games than the ones in blue.[15]So, for the Olympic events we can always wish to see our athletes compete in red, though which does not guarantee a win over the skills of the athlete and the competitor, but it sure will be a psychological reinforcement to the mindset of the player.

Image 20- Indian archery team in London Olympics 2012

MilovanCiric's attempts at making the team play in national colors and Nike's T20 jersey design with Indian colors over the chest are few of the examples accentuating the

Image 21- fans with the Indian tricolor watching a cricket match

importance of psychology of colors in sports and for players which has also been felt and remarked by the players. Shabbir Ali, ex-India coach and former Indian captain, in an interview (Sportstar, August 2000) said that he remembers the time when Milovan used

to make them play in national colors. It would give them the feeling of team spirit and fill them with a sense of pride. [11]

On a marketing note, Nike has been very persistent with bringing out new designs of Indian jersey, cricket especially, quite often as with every new tournament there is a new look. With every kind of a format there is a look, thereby encouraging the Indian fans to prize themselves with all the variants and designs of the Indian jerseys thus designed. But this ordeal hasn't been very easy for Nike as the poor performances of the team in 2007 World Cup did not give lot of positive associations to the jersey worn by the team in the world cup.[7] The Indian cricket jersey designed in 2010 also faced a similar contusion from the Indian fans as the depth of shade of blue in jersey was a close reminiscence of the 1992 World Cup jersey and thus the tragic history associated along with.[7] Based on this psychology of association of colors in the Indian fans, Nike launched a mega campaign in 2011 by the name 'Bleed Blue' which saw tremendous success and popularity, added by India's win of the 2011 Cricket World Cup.[16]

Conclusion

An example of a superstitious BCCI [10] is worthy enough to state that the emotional association of the colors of the team are more crucial motivators than the psychological aspect of the colors themselves and that stands true in a country like India, where cricket, football and hockey are not just sports, but are deemed as religions followed by a huge population, and emotions, feelings and associations precede the statistical or tactical aspects of the game.

Undoubtedly, changing the color of nation – Blue, would be a herculean task for any designer as this color has withstood decades of evolution and has amassed immense memories and associations with it. But a lot of scope remains in addition and support of the nation's color – through colors. The task would be very challenging as it's not just the color psychology we speak of here; it's the hearts of a billion people throbbing for their team.

"The soul becomes dyed with the color of its thoughts"
- Marcus Aurellius

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