

# Is Indian Cricket riddled with politics?

By Sunil Sarpal



As per media reports, the out-going Chief Selector of Cricket in India, Chetan Sharma, has made a shocking revelation during a string operation conducted by a channel that it is Saurav Ganguly, the then BCCI president, who was instrumental in removing Virat Kohli of his captaincy from Team India, because Saurav did not like him personally.

If true, this sums up the story of how politics has become an integral part of Indian Cricket which at one point of time was considered a gentleman's game.

It is alleged that, earlier, during Saurav Ganguly's tenure as BCCI President, he did not allow Shastri a third term as India coach. Though Ravi Shastri proved to be the most successful Indian Coach under whose guidance Team India made big strides in International matches.

Saurav's removal of Virat Kohli as Captain could have had a debilitating effect on his performance as a batsman but timely regaining of his form saved him from the ignominy of an exit door.

There is no dearth of talent in India but it needs to be nurtured and channelised. But the opportunities are far and few to showcase the talent and represent Team India.

Take the case of Ravinder Jadeja, earlier he was considered a stop gap arrangement but now-a-days both his bowling and batting excelled so much that his position in the side has become indispensable.

To get to know the tricks of the trade, it calls for a great deal of perseverance.

BCCI is one of the richest body in the world and the selection process should be unbiased. Those at the helm of affairs should not be allowed to tinker with the careers of players.

A pool of players worthy to represent India should be made and from that pool, as per the rotation policy, the players should be picked up to play the game. This process will have a sobering effect on the mind of players. Any untoward favouritism or changing and chopping of players should be governed by an unbiased procedure especially adopted for this purpose so that the game is played in a fair manner.

India can only shine on world stage if there is unity and friendship among the playing eleven. Administration should be fool proof and just one person should not be empowered to dictate terms. Such arbitrariness should be abolished from the whole selection process.

The responsibility of the BCCI President is huge, as a result, the most responsible and knowledgeable person should be given the charge to take the team forward. Favoritism, biased and negative narratives should have no place in the overall

process.

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# India vs Pakistan – The October'22 Cliff Hanger in Australia



Virat Kohli – Snatching Victory from the Jaws of Defeat  
India vs Pak match is always a cliff-hanger. The T20 match which was played on Sunday in Australia reminds us of the Sharjah match when Javed Miandad hit a six on the last ball off Chetan Sharma. In this match, Kohli stood his ground like a rock under trying circumstances and snatched the game from the jaws of defeat. This knock is being rated by the purists of the game, as the best ever played by him. He was cool as a

cucumber when the match was headed down to the wire. Kohli's innings teaches a few invaluable lessons too that one needs to build his innings brick-by-brick and not throw away his wicket in a jiffy.

When the going gets tough and the new ball bowlers are wrecking-havoc, patience and perseverance are the virtues which need to be applied. In doing so, one gets settled down and visibility of the ball becomes easy.

The early advantage did rest with India when they won the toss and rightly chose to bowl first on a wicket which assisted seamers. Both Bhuvi and Arshdeep bowled in the right areas, making the ball move both ways and presenting umpteen problems for Pak openers – Babbar and Rizwan. They were clueless against the quality attack. The early 'impressive' spell set the tone of the match and from the beginning itself Pakistan was under a lot of pressure, and in the process, lost both openers cheaply.

Pakistan's batting never settled down till the time Iftikar hit four magnificent sixes to take the team to a respectable score of 159. Indian opening combination of KL Rahul and Rohit was patchy and tumbled early on, handing over the gauntlet to Kohli and Pandya to build the innings. Of the two, Kohli looked more fluid and played a gem of a knock. Some of Kohli's sixes left Pakistan awe-struck. The game went down to the wire and the last ball chip by Ashwin sealed the deal for India.



The MCG ground was sold out like all India-Pak matches the world over

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## The Curious Case of Ravi Shastri





Many Avatars: As a commentator Ravi Shastri's career graph in Cricket and related fields is quite interesting and variable in nature. When he entered cricket arena, he was a left-handed leg spinner. Interestingly, he used to bat right-handed.

Ravi took his cricket very seriously and because of his learning curve, from No. 10 or 11, he was elevated to open the batting for India. Facing the new ball at an International level, by any stretch of imagination, is not a joke. It calls for a lot of grit and determination, which Ravi had in plenty. Transition from a left-arm slow bowler to a genuine all-rounder was in itself an achievement.

During his cricketing career, he won 'man-of-the-series' award in a triangular 50-over tournament between India Australia & New Zealand, winning an Audi car as prize money.

Once Shastri's cricket career came to an end, he took to

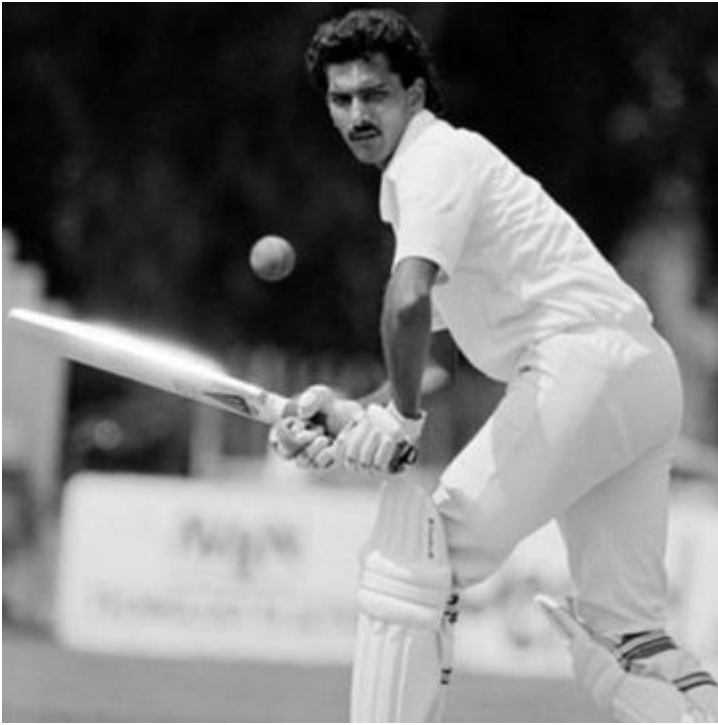
cricket commentary alongside the likes of Richie Benaud, Bill Lowery, Tony Gregg and Ian Chappel – all legends of the game. His comments were always commendable and commentary noteworthy. He possesses the right 'oratory skills' to speak precisely on air.

Later on, when BCCI wanted his services to be utilised as a Manager of Indian Team, he performed that responsibility to perfection. As a Manager, he displayed an exemplary equation with the then India captain MS Dhoni and later on with Virat Kohli to take Indian Cricket forward.

Again he was elevated to the position of Director of Team India. He coached Team India admirably for two successively tenures. He literally became the backbone of Team India and took the team to dizzy heights. He successfully introduced Yo Yo test as a compulsory yardstick without which entry into Indian side was not possible. Clearing the Yo Yo test enables a player to prove that he is fit enough to represent Team India.

Now, that Shastri is no more India Coach, and he has been replaced with Rahul Dravid, Ravi is back to his stint as a commentator.

The amount of exposure and experience that Shastri has secured, in different capacities, during his cricketing career, it is perhaps a good idea for BCCI to utilize his services for a more responsible assignment such as being the BCCI President.



Many Avatars: As a cricketer

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## **In Cricket – Look before you take the leap**

The most important feature that everybody should bear in mind is that if you opt for cricket as a career then not being successful, is not an option and you stand nowhere.

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## **Is Cricket really a game of glorious uncertainties?**





Can you recognise each of these iconic cricketers?

Cricket is a funny sport. Common belief is – it is a game of glorious uncertainties. If it is so then how come Sachin scored 100 International tons? He must have reached the pinnacle so as to deal with any bowler and topple him.

People always talk of Sachin because of his enormous achievements. They do not talk of Kampli who was more gifted but unlucky not to have ticked the right boxes. Poor chap could not linger his career. People do not talk of Martin Crow, who was perhaps the best, but abandoned his career because of cancer. People talk of Viv Richards who blossomed because of army of fast bowlers and batsmen in his support and an astute leader in Clive Lloyd.

But the lone warrior from India in 70s was none other than Sunil Gavaskar. He single-handedly dealt with enormous

challenges all over the world. Virat Kohli was once hailed as Sachin's successor. Sachin scored 100 International tons in all formats of the game as against 70 by Virat. Nobody has the right to question Virat's talent and inconsistency. He has already established himself as a talent beyond imagination. At 33, he can still reinvent his batting. Dry period happened even in Sachin's career but a phone call from Sir Viv Richards enthused a self-belief in him when Sachin was considering retirement from the game. Virat too needs motivational counselling and not criticism. It is Virat and only Virat who will salvage his position in the side.

Brian Lara, another legend of the game, opinionated that do not write off Virat. He will come back with much better player. There have been instances when players just fade away and come back becomes next to impossible. Because failure for a longer period of time leaves the person hapless and shaken. Lot of debate and criticism dent the self- belief. Media these days write stories which are 'reader savvy' without considering its ill-effects. He needs support from all quarters so that his blade shines once again.

Cricket has become a '*junoon*' among the enthusiasts. Every now and then some class act appears from no-where and the show goes on and on.