

# **BENGAL PAST AND PRESENT**

**A JOURNAL OF MODERN INDIAN AND ASIAN HISTORY**

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# **BENGAL PAST AND PRESENT**

## **A Journal of Modern Indian and Asian History**

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# Sports and Recreational activities among the Jews of Calcutta: 1930s-1950s

Kaustav Chakrabarti

The Jewish Community of Calcutta spent their time in a variety of ways to make it worthwhile. Sporting activities were indulged in with great verve for physical fitness as well as recreation. Both boys and girls participated in a plethora of games and tournaments. Besides, there were other modes of recreation like reading, going to clubs and travelling. All these activities not only strengthened solidarity in the limited social space of the community but also highlighted their extrovert character. This paper makes a modest attempt to focus on these aspects.

## Sporting Activities among the Jewish Community

For young people, sport was a great attraction. There were many young Jewish men and women who competed with distinction in a wide variety of sporting events, either with a team or individually. Many played hockey, basketball, badminton, while some enjoyed boxing. Most shared with their elders the joys of swimming and tennis, while some also played golf. The Elias Meyer Free School and Talmud Torah held its first annual sports on February 28, 1937 at the Jewish Sports Ground. The programme contained 21 events contested by infants, junior, senior and old pupils of the school.<sup>1</sup> The Annual Hockey Inter Synagogue Match under the auspices of the Headquarters, Rover Scout Crew, was played on 24<sup>th</sup> April, 1938.<sup>2</sup> The game was both fast and exciting, and some excellent hockey was witnessed by a record Jewish crowd.<sup>3</sup> Maghen David Synagogue were lucky to win by the only goal scored.<sup>4</sup> The Maghen David team composition was as follows: Captain A. Cohen, J. David, A. D. Cohen, E. David, A. Aaron, M. Isaacs, S. Harazee, J. Morris, B. Raymond, J. Ferris, W. Raymond.<sup>5</sup> The Beth El and Neveh Shalom team composition was as follows: Captain J. Joshua, I. Twena, N. Marshall, A. Jacob, A. Raphael, M. Judah, M. Ezra, D. Noah, I. Solomon, A. Mośes, J. Cohen.<sup>6</sup> The referees were H. Isaac and E. David.<sup>7</sup> R. M. Sassoon presided and J. R. Jacob gave away the trophies.<sup>8</sup> The Inter-Synagogue Challenge Cup was donated by B. R. David, the miniatures by



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