

**Asst. Prof. Ketki Dalvi, Asst. Prof. Siddha Kulkarni**, Faculty, Law Department, Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune-37

### **Abstract**

Apartheid, the system of institutionalized racial segregation and discrimination enforced in South Africa from 1948 to 1994, was not only a domestic issue for South Africa but also a global concern. One of the most visible and impactful fronts in the global opposition to apartheid was in the realm of sports. Sports, traditionally seen as a unifying force, became a battleground for racial justice and equality. South Africa's apartheid regime imposed racial segregation in sports, excluding non-whites from participating in national teams and banning mixed-race competitions. This blatant racial discrimination in sports led to international condemnation and isolation of South African sports from global competitions. India played a significant role in spearheading the boycott and isolation of South African sports, becoming a leading voice in the global anti-apartheid movement. This article delves into the history of apartheid in sports, with a particular focus on India's role in fighting against this system. It will examine how apartheid affected various sports in South Africa, the international response to apartheid in sports, and India's leadership in calling for a global sporting boycott of South Africa.

**Key Words:** Apartheid, racial segregation, South African sports, discrimination in sports

### **Introduction**

Apartheid is defined as a system or policy of racial segregation and discrimination, especially referring to the former system in South Africa that legally and systematically separated racial groups from 1948 until the early 1990s. The word *apartheid* itself comes from Afrikaans, meaning "apartness," and reflects the strict division imposed between racial groups, mainly between the white minority and the Black majority of Apartheid in South Africa

1. **Racial Classification:** Under apartheid, the South African government classified individuals into racial categories (e.g., Black, white, Coloured, and Indian) that determined where people could live, work, and interact. This classification system was embedded in laws like the Population Registration Act of 1950 .
2. *\*Laws of Se:* Apartheid enforced racial segregation across all aspects of life, including separate educational facilities, hospitals, and public services. Black South Africans were forced to live in designated "homelands" or townships, which were typically underdeveloped and impoverished areas .
3. **Restricted Rightse :** South Africans, particularly Black people, were stripped of political rights, including voting and government participation, under laws such as the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 . These policies prevented racial g forming a unified society and severely limited the freedoms of Black and other non-white communities.
4. **Economic Discrimination:** Apartheid created an economic structure that marginalized Black South Africans, relegating them to low-paying, unskilled labor positions while reserving skilled jobs for the white minority. This entrenched poverty and limited upward mobility for the non-white population .

### **Broader Usage**

Today, "apartheid" is used metaphorically to describe other systems of institutionalized racial or ethnic segregation, even outside South Africa. For example, policies in various regions that legally or effectively separate populations based on ethnicity or religion are occasionally referred to as forms of apartheid .

### **End of Apartheid**

The apartheid era ended in 191son Mandela became South Africa's first Black president after the first democratic elections. This followed years of internal resistance, international sanctions, and economic pressures that led to the dismantling of apartheid policies .

**Apartheid in South Africa**

In South Africa, apartheid laws and policies ensured that sports, like every other sphere of life, were racially segregated. Black Colored and Indian South Africans were excluded from participating in the same sports teams as white South Africans. The government's sports policies aligned with its broader social policies, which aimed to maintain racial divisions and white supremacy. The major sports in South Africa, including rugby, cricket, and football (soccer), were all segregated.

Rugby and cricket were considered white sports, with white South Africans dominating the national teams in these disciplines. Football, on the other hand, was largely played by Black South Africans, although the apartheid regime sought to control and suppress their participation in international competitions. These segregated sports systems were institutionalized by the apartheid government, which used sports as a tool to reinforce racial divisions.

**Segregation in South African Sports**

In the early 20th century, well before the formal implementation of apartheid, South Africa already had a history of racial segregation in sports. Black South Africans were excluded from national sports teams and from competing in sports with white South Africans. The apartheid government formalized this exclusion in 1948, and legislation soon followed to prevent mixed-race sporting events. This racial segregation was most apparent in rugby and cricket, two sports that were integral to white South African culture and identity.

In rugby, the national team, known as the Springboks, was exclusively white. Rugby held a special place in the hearts of many Afrikaners (white South Africans of Dutch descent), and the apartheid government used the Springboks as a symbol of white pride and superiority. Cricket, too, was a racially exclusive sport, with only white players allowed to represent South Africa in international competitions.

The exclusion of non-white athletes extended to other sports as well. In football, Black South Africans were barred from competing in the national league, and separate leagues were established for white, Black, Indian, and Coloured players. South Africa's international sporting engagements were based on these segregated systems, leading to global condemnation.

**The International Response to Apartheid in Sports**

The global sporting community, particularly after World War II, began to take a stand against South Africa's racial segregation policies. As South Africa continued to field all-white teams in international competitions, pressure mounted for the country to be excluded from global sporting events. The first major international response came in the 1960s when South Africa was expelled from the Olympic Games due to its refusal to integrate its sports teams.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) suspended South Africa from the Olympics in 1964, citing the country's refusal to condemn apartheid and include non-white athletes in its teams. This suspension was a turning point, as it marked the beginning of South Africa's sporting isolation. By the late 1960s, the global community had grown increasingly intolerant of South Africa's apartheid policies, and many international sporting organizations followed the IOC's lead in suspending South Africa from their competitions.

**India's Role in the Fight against Apartheid in Sports**

India emerged as one of the leading nations in the fight against apartheid, particularly in the sporting arena. India's commitment to opposing apartheid stemmed from its own colonial experience and its position as a newly independent nation that championed the causes of anti-colonialism and racial equality. Under the leadership of figures like Jawaharlal Nehru and later Indira Gandhi, India took a moral and political stand against apartheid in South Africa, and sports became one of the main areas where India exerted international pressure.

**India's Early Boycott of South Africa in Sports**

India was one of the first countries to implement a sporting boycott of South Africa. As early as 1946, before apartheid was officially implemented, India refused to send a cricket team to South Africa due to the country's racial segregation policies. The Board of Control for Cricket in India

(BCCI) refused to participate in any series where players would be selected based on race, effectively cutting sporting ties with South Africa long before many other nations took similar steps. India's sporting boycott extended beyond cricket. In the 1950s and 1960s, India consistently called for South Africa to be banned from international sporting events, arguing that sports should be open to all races and not serve as a tool for racial oppression. India's stance was reinforced by its membership in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), a group of nations that advocated for decolonization, racial equality, and global justice.

### **The Role of the Commonwealth**

India also played a pivotal role in shaping the Commonwealth's response to apartheid in sports. As a member of the British Commonwealth, India used its influence to push for the isolation of South Africa within the Commonwealth's sporting competitions. The Commonwealth Games, in particular, became a platform for anti-apartheid activism, with India leading efforts to exclude South Africa from participating.

In 1961, South Africa was forced to withdraw from the Commonwealth Games due to its apartheid policies. India's leadership in this boycott helped set the tone for future international sporting events, where South Africa's participation was increasingly restricted. By the 1970s, South Africa had been expelled from most major international sporting competitions, including the Olympics, the Commonwealth Games, and international cricket and rugby.

### **The Gleneagles Agreement and the Sporting Boycott**

One of the most significant moments in the global boycott of South African sports was the signing of the Gleneagles Agreement in 1977. This agreement, signed by Commonwealth countries, committed member nations to preventing sporting contact with South Africa. The Gleneagles Agreement was a response to growing international pressure to isolate South Africa in the sporting world, and it represented a major victory for the anti-apartheid movement.

India played a crucial role in the negotiation and signing of the Gleneagles Agreement. Indian diplomats and political leaders had long advocated for the complete isolation of South Africa in sports, and the Gleneagles Agreement was seen as a formalization of this effort. Under the agreement, Commonwealth nations agreed not to participate in any sporting events that involved South Africa, and they discouraged their athletes from competing against South African teams.

The Gleneagles Agreement was a turning point in the international sporting boycott of South Africa. It signaled a unified stance among Commonwealth nations and further isolated South Africa from the global sporting community. India's leadership in pushing for the agreement demonstrated its commitment to the anti-apartheid cause and its belief in the power of sports as a tool for social change.

### **South African Sports under Apartheid**

The impact of apartheid on South African sports was profound. The exclusion of non-white athletes from national teams and international competitions created a sporting landscape that was deeply divided along racial lines. In rugby, for example, the Springboks were seen as a symbol of white South African identity, and the exclusion of Black players from the national team reinforced the apartheid government's message of racial superiority.

In cricket, South Africa's racial segregation meant that talented non-white cricketers were denied the opportunity to compete at the highest levels. One of the most famous examples of this was Basil D'Oliveira, a Coloured South African cricketer who was forced to leave South Africa to pursue his career in England. D'Oliveira's inclusion in the England cricket team led to the cancellation of a planned tour by the South African cricket team in 1968, highlighting the international tensions caused by apartheid in sports.

Football, too, was deeply affected by apartheid. Black South Africans were barred from competing in the same leagues as white players, and South Africa's international football team was all-white. As a result, South Africa was expelled from FIFA in 1964, further isolating the country from the global sporting community.

### **India's Ongoing Commitment to Anti-Apartheid Sports Boycott**

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, India remained steadfast in its commitment to the sporting boycott of South Africa. The country refused to participate in any sporting events involving South Africa and consistently called for other nations to do the same. India also played a key role in the United Nations' efforts to impose international sanctions on South Africa, including sports sanctions.

In 1973, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for a worldwide boycott of South African sports. India was one of the strongest advocates of this resolution, and its diplomats worked tirelessly to ensure that the resolution had broad international support. The UN boycott helped further isolate South Africa from global sports, and by the 1980s, the country was excluded from virtually all major international sporting competitions.

### **The End of Apartheid and the Re-entry of South Africa into International Sports**

The collapse of apartheid in the early 1990s brought about significant changes in South Africa's sporting landscape. With the election of Nelson Mandela as the country's first Black president in 1994, South Africa was welcomed back into the international sporting community. The lifting of sanctions allowed South Africa to rejoin organizations like the International Olympic Committee, FIFA, and the International Cricket Council.

India played a key role in welcoming South Africa back into the fold. In 1991, India became the first country to host a South African cricket team after the end of apartheid. This historic tour marked South Africa's return to international cricket and symbolized the country's re-entry into the global sporting community. India's decision to invite South Africa to tour was seen as a gesture of reconciliation and a recognition of the importance of sports in healing the wounds of apartheid.

### **Conclusion**

Apartheid in sports was one of the most visible and controversial aspects of South Africa's racial segregation policies. The exclusion of non-white athletes from national teams and international competitions highlighted the injustices of apartheid and fueled the global movement to isolate South Africa in sports. India played a crucial role in leading the international sporting boycott of South Africa, using its moral authority and diplomatic influence to call for the isolation of apartheid in sports. Through its early boycotts, leadership in the Commonwealth, and advocacy at the United Nations, India helped ensure that apartheid could not be normalized in the sporting world.

The end of apartheid and South Africa's return to international sports marked the beginning of a new era, both for South Africa and for the global sporting community. India's role in this process, particularly in its early sporting boycotts and its support for South Africa's re-entry into global sports, remains a testament to the power of sports in promoting justice and equality on the world stage.

### **References**

1. "Apartheid." *Britannica*, <https://www.brom/event/apartheid>.
2. Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*. Little, Brown, 1994.
3. "Apartheid Legislation 1850s-1970s." *South African History Online*, <https://www.sahistory.org.za>.
4. Clark, Nancy L. and William H. Worger. *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*. Longman, 2016.
5. "Bantu Authorities Act, 1951." *South African Legal Acts*, <https://www.sahistory.org.za>.
6. Sparks, Allister. *The Mind of South Africa: The Story of the Rise and Fall of Apartheid*. Ballantine Books, 1990.
7. "The End of Apartheid." *History.com*, <https://www.history.com/topics/africa/apartheid>.
8. Guelke, Adrian. *\*Rethinking the Rise and Fall of Apartheid: South Africa and World Politics\**. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
9. Allen, Dean. *\*Empire, War & Cricket in South Africa\**. Manchester University Press, 2015.
10. Booth, Douglas. *\*The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa\**. Routledge, 1998.
11. Nauright, John. *\*Sport, Cultures, and Identities in South Africa\**. Continuum, 1997.
12. Collins, Tony. *\*Sport in Capitalist Society: A Short History\**. Routledge, 2013.