

## **Football, by Vidagdha**

“Who am I? I am a football played by the Supreme constantly. This football has no individuality of its own. You have more individuality than I have. My individuality and personality I sold to the Supreme many centuries ago. He was kind enough to buy it from me with His infinite Compassion.”

- *Sri Chinmoy*

Like every boy, and especially Indian boys, Sri Chinmoy adored football. He played it during his early youth in Chittagong and it figured prominently in his sports experiences at the Ashram. Among all the games that he played during his formative years, it was his favourite.

It happened that during one particular game of football, he collided with another player and that boy was hurt as a result. The young Chinmoy, who was mildness incarnate, was

mortified. For two weeks he went every day to the injured boy's house, bringing him extra fruits. He vowed never to allow it to happen again.

As the years passed by, Sri Chinmoy went on to play football in the Ashram's best team and even became its captain. One contemporary has written of him:

“Chinmoy was fast, relied on his speed more than anything else. The idea was to push the ball ahead and then run after it. More often than not, he reached it before the opponent. Then passed it to a teammate.”

Then injury struck, putting an end to Sri Chinmoy's football career:

“Once anything gets fractured, finished. My right foot is fractured — here, in

between the big toe and the second toe. That is why I had to give up football. So many times, for three or four years, I had pain. I had to take injections, even. I have taken at least 12 injections. So when I kick hard, immediately it presses down. But when I run, it does not bother me. Even now, when I use proper football boots, it does not help. I developed an outside kick, but when I fractured my foot, my left leg was not enough. If I played for one day, then I could not walk the following day. After I gave up playing seriously, I only played for fun.

“In India, I did not play football again. I was the coach. In the West I have played a few times for fun. But I will not go near any other player. I am so careful. Such pain I had!”

Sri Chinmoy told this story many times over the

years. In the following account, he describes the Mother's reaction to his injury and the lengths she went to in order to cure it:

“I was a super-excellent football player. I used to play football so hard, so hard. Then, when I was 17 or 18 years old, I got hurt. The big toe on my right foot suffered a compound fracture. I suffered for months and months. X-rays showed that the bone got twisted. The Ashram had quite a few doctors. They had received their degrees from England, so they were highly qualified.

“My maximum height I attained in the Ashram after I had been there for only five or six months. Before that, in Chittagong, I was not even five feet four inches. In six months' time, I went to five feet eight inches. So the doctors had their opinion. According to them, this height that I attained was not properly balanced.

My bones were not formed properly. That is why I received a compound fracture. And even now the pain has not gone from that toe.

“The main doctor was Nirodbaran. He was a medical doctor; then he became Sri Aurobindo’s literary secretary, helper and servitor. He gave me so many injections, but the pain did not go away.

“Mother said, ‘Show it to me.’

“I had to sit in a chair and lift it up, my big toe. Then Mother touched it. For Mother to touch my toe was unimaginable. She showed me such affection. Then Mother asked Nirodbaran, ‘What is the cause of his compound fracture, and how will it be cured?’

“Nirodbaran said to Mother, ‘Calcium deficiency.’

“Mother said, ‘What?’

“He said, ‘He needs milk.’

“We used to get three cups of milk — one at breakfast, lunch and dinner. Mother said, ‘From now on, he has to take three extra cups of milk a day and three more bananas.’

“Now six cups of milk I had to take and six bananas. And the bananas were not tiny! They were very big bananas. So, was it a blessing or a curse? Plus, I received an orange and butter. Butter quantity do I know? In those days also, I was not fond of butter at all! Mother wrote it down that I should be given double of everything. I was the one to drink not three but six glasses of milk, plus six bananas, plus an orange. This was all doctor’s advice, can you imagine! Was it punishment? Every day I had to go to Nirodbaran’s room. He had a little type of refrigerator. From there, an orange and butter I had to take. My sister used to make things for me.

“Then I became reluctant to drink milk. Here, also, I do not appreciate milk. And if you want to know why I hate bananas, it is because I ate six bananas daily for so many years. Now if I take even one banana, I will suffer like anything. Can you imagine? Six bananas! Call it greed. No, I did not want them, for God’s sake! But it was Mother’s order: six bananas, six glasses of milk. O God, in those athletic days, it was possible. Now, six cups of milk if I drink, I will not be able to move.

“Even now, from time to time, I get such severe pain in that toe.”

It seems that many people tried to cure the champion’s injury. Sri Chinmoy recalled, “One day Pranab said that he will be able to cure my toe. So he massaged it only to make it worse!”

Throughout Sri Chinmoy’s life, the game of football continued to supply a very fruitful

analogy for many spiritual lessons. In the following extract, for example, he encourages each aspirant to feel that he is nothing other than God's football. Sri Chinmoy is responding to a question about the spiritual significance of football asked by Adarsha in London on Father's Day, June 20, 1976, while the Master was on a European lecture tour. It appears in his 1976 book *Father's Day: Father with His European Children*.

“From the spiritual point of view, football is extremely meaningful, soulful and fruitful. Each sincere seeker should pray to the Supreme to make him His football. When we kick a football, the football is at our mercy. The football is the instrument. We kick right, left, forward, backward and play with it according to our sweet will. Now, look at this football! It is far better than we are. The football does not quarrel with us, it does not fight us. At



times the football, as an instrument, can fail us; the air can leak out, the bladder can burst, all kinds of problems can come up. But the main wish of the football is to please the football player.

“We should consider ourselves to be footballs of the Supreme. The earthly football, the leather football, is under compulsion to please its master. The football that we kick is under our control, at our mercy. It has become our instrument and it is pleasing us, although it may not be pleasing us cheerfully. But we should be conscious footballs always trying to please the Supreme cheerfully so that the Supreme can at any moment kick us, shape us, mould us, form us in His own way. We should be real divine footballs so that He can use us all the time in His own way, according to His sweet Will.”

In another discussion, Sri Chinmoy likens seekers to the various players on a football team, each one with his own appointed task to complete:

“Each soul has a task and you can know it only through your sincere aspiration. Let us take each soul as a limb of God’s own Existence. With His Hand He does one thing, with His Nose He does something else, with His Eye and Ear something else. It is like a football game. Somebody has to play at the goalpost, somebody has to play on the left and somebody has to be on the right. If all the players stay at the goal, there will be no game. No, the players have to be well distributed. So like that, each soul has its respective job to do. And you will know which position you are going to play only when you deal with the captain. God will tell you where your post is.”