

CHAPTER- TWO

Traditional Games, Sports & Amusements in Twentieth-Century North Bengal and their Functional Dynamics

Games and Sports are a universal part of the human experience, common to all cultures, genders, and ages, as decisions are taken in an environment of mutual understanding. A game creates a situation where players choose different actions to maximize their results or returns; their pursuit or activities, the rules, are framed individually or jointly and keeping on entertainment in view.

According to Eric Berne, "*Game is a spontaneous or planned social activity carried out most productively for the benefit of the society*"¹, from a broader social and cultural perspective, this definition holds apt as the games are spontaneous expressions of people's joys and entertainment. Games are the most gratifying forms of social contact. The significant social interaction most commonly takes place through games. From a strictly physical viewpoint, a Game can be defined as Shaw, Gorely and Corban quoting Loy 1968 says, "*A game is any form of playful competition whose outcome is determined by physical skill, strategy or chance.*"², this definition appears true more in the physiological and psychological context. In any form of games, generally mental or physical stimulation and at times both are satisfied. Many games serve not only physical exercise and recreation, if properly planned, can serve as a tool to develop practical skills. It imparts training in a way to adjust to the existing social environment.

A game can also be defined as structured or semi-structured activities, usually undertaken for enjoyment; fun can also be an educational purpose. Key elements of games are goals, rules, challenge, and interactivity. In the context of economic studies, the term game is used to describe the simulation of various activities, e.g., for training, analysis, and prediction strategies, and payoffs also.

Games and Sports play a significant role in community life. Traditional games are important as they express the life and culture of communities and contribute to the transmission of values and ideas from one generation to generation. The games play a major role in the communication and entertainment that we experience in everyday life. All children gather experience and learn adjustment in the social context even beyond the school. Thus the games provide an opportunity to teach the learners to adopt a specific artistic career. Their learning in the arts will be even applied in other occupations and will be a part of their leisure-like hobbies.

Games and Sports are the major forms of human communication and expression. Individuals and groups use them to explore, express, and communicate ideas, feelings, and experiences. Each game form has a language of its own and, by its right, a major way of communication. Through the games, individuals and groups express, convey, and invoke meanings. Like other art forms, traditional games have their conventions, codes, practices, and meaning structures. They also communicate cultural contexts. Children benefit from understanding and using these ways of knowing and expressing feelings and experiences.

Both animals and humans participate in sports. But birds and animals take part in sports instinctively, not in pursuit of innate creativity. So there is no creative diversity in their sports. On the other hand, the pursuit of transcending instinct is the

pursuit of humanity. Hence humans are creative. Owing to this creativity, there exist many variations in sporting style and appearance in different countries and time periods. Different philosophical and psychological sociologists in different countries have expressed different views on the question of whether people take part in sports with an irresistible motivation or an indefensible emotion.

Habart Spencer says children want to outgrow the extra vitality of their body through sports. But he did not answer the question as to why bedridden, sick children still play in bed. It is not accepted in this theory that mental freedom and creativity are a fundamental motivation for participation in sports.

Von Shilar has tried to place his sports theory in a philosophical background. Although the theory is not psychologically and ethnically acceptable, it is valuable in terms of philosophical reasoning. He imagined the existence of two motives in man- a tendency related to the senses, or '*sensuous instinct*' and morphological tendency or 'formal instinct'. The first emanates from the human bodily existence and binds man to the boundaries of time. The second, on the other hand, is derived from mental existence, that is, rationalism. This motivation limits him to time. The first motivation is to give a material or material support to time or tomorrow as a result of continuous change. Stability seeks this motivation, instead of change. The third inspiration that Shilar imagines is the sum of the above two motivations. So sports instinct wants to adopt or resort to a subject and at the same time it also creates whatever it wants to adopt.

Swiss psychologist Carl Grus, in his '*Anticipator theory*' says people take part in sports in order to prepare for the future. That is, the girls rehearse their future lifestyles by playing toy kitchenware games because they have to cook later in life.

Boys play war games because they have to take part in the battle of life in the later part of their lives. While playing games respective to their future lifestyle, boys and girls develop an unwavering plan for their future- this doesn't seem close enough to psychology. That said, the boys and girls might have been expected to pay more attention to reading habits.³

In contrast to the Carl Grus, Stanley Hall presented the "*Theory of Recapitulation*" in his book "*Adolescence*". He says that in sports, people hold on to and repeat the past life he left behind. Human beings were once cave dwellers and hunters, so little boys and girls build caves of sand or play hunting games due to this reason.

An embryology was previously prevalent among physicians which were later proven to be misleading. The theory is that the human baby goes through every stage of evolution from a single-celled animal to a human in billions of years.⁴ Stanley Hall's above stated sports theory is a mere, slight alteration of this misleading embryology, and it is no longer recognized today that there is any additional scientific validity in that theory.

Sigmund Freud presented a very important theory. He said that children's sports are not only meaningful but also very important. He said sports free the suppressed desires of a child.⁵ Two types of attitudes can be observed in children, 'Self-assertion' or the tendency of self-establishment being one of them. This tendency is strongest when the opponent is relatively weak. But the child is a little surprised if the opponent is relatively strong and there is also a fearful restraint in him temporarily. This condition is called 'Self-abasement'. Children are amazed owing to the motivation of self-abasement, and so they also imitate people in the world of play,

which they are really afraid of. Many children are actually scared when they see the police. But there is mixed respect in them for the heroism of the police and so in the world of sports he loves to dress up as a cop and play its role in the game.⁶

The '*Cathartic Theory of Play*' or the theory of the circulation of sports was created by the following theory of Freud. Although James Ross was a proponent of this theory, this information was not very unfamiliar even before him. People, especially children, find the release of their repressed emotions in sports. For example, people are naturally warriors but in civilized society there is no opportunity to express that warrior attitude of theirs.⁷ The aspiration of that war is satisfied by the imitation of bloodless war in the field of sports. The question also arises in the case of this theory that the release of the inherent emotion is manifested through sports, but if the desire to release that emotion alone is active behind sports, then why are there so many thousands of variations in the planning of sports? Only in the game of wrestling can the attitude of a warrior be satisfied, then why are there hundreds of sports plans in which the image of war has come up again and again? So it seems that in addition to releasing repressed instincts and emotions, one aspect of socialization must be very active in sports.

In sports, the context of the child's stimulated emotion is understood. Now the question is who plays the role of the stimulus of this emotion? If the emotion is not stimulated with the help of stimulants, then the question of ejaculation does not arise. It is undeniable that the child's social neighbour plays a role in that stimulus. The social environment is again formed by the activities of the elderly. So the child sincerely wants to take part in the social activities of the adults, but due to physical and mental disability and the control and authority of the adults and parents, he cannot take

part in the social activities in real life. The real social environment is completely out of the child's control. In the world of sports, he therefore imitates the activities of adults and descends into the role of adults at will. The world of sports is completely under his control. He can be a policeman or a robber if he wants to. The world of sports is actually the world of make-believe for children. The urge to participate in adult activities is thus considered as an imitation of adult behaviour in sports.

Because sports have an imitation of life, the picture of life is definitely captured in the sports plan. Rabindranath too understood that sports are a reflection of real life, and hence he had said- *"We have a special joy in playing games like this. The reason for this is that we want to express in the game the instincts that we are born with to fulfil the need, free from the present responsibility of the need..... The functions of games are basically same as the function of the fulfilment of needs. That is why the imitation of life appears in the games."* Life is imitated in many vows and in the practice of magic but it is to be remembered that- ⁸ *'Long before men perform rites which enact the phases of life, they have learnt such acting in play.'* ⁹ That is to say, the imitation of life took place earlier in sports than in magic and vows. On the other hand there was a desire to get something in real life behind practicing magic and observing vows. That desire is absent in the imitation of life in sports. Being able to take part in sports is the only desire. That is why Rabindranath called sports a *'fruitless action'*.

Imitation of life does not mean the mere imitation of real events. There are many seemingly meaningless sports that mimic life in a deeper sense. In fact, every gesture and physical posture of sports is meaningful. In it, pictures of various real life experiences and sweetness are inspired. In these stances, the small life picture of family and social life is more evident than the big events of this life. Notable: *"And the*

play of children is very instructive if we would observe the peculiarity intellectual (Non-practical) nature of gesture....and a familiar act is represented better than a novel one.....”¹⁰ When an eighth-grader sometimes fixes the drape over her breasts in imitation of her mother, or cuts off her tongue in the role of shyness in imitation of adults while talking nonsense with her partner, it reveals life in one way or another. These emulations are not necessarily imitations of reality all the time. Real life postures are short or symbolic and are often seen in sports. Such as in the ‘Rannabati’ or the kitchenware game, eating food at such a fast pace and making squeaky noises while eating do not actually happen in reality. That is, imitations often become schematic- mechanically symbolic. Home-made dolls do not have realistic hands, feet and face, but just the symbolic analogy.

As sports are basically symbolic and schematic, there is a fundamental difference between real life events and sports simulations. Sports have its own rules and regulations in its own interest. In real warfare, even if the principle of killing whoever comes in the way is adopted, it is not done so in sports. Even in games like ‘Mollokrira’, ‘Chhora khela’, ‘Laathi khela’ etc., which are direct imitations of war, the opponents cannot be hurt in any indistinct manner; weapons have to be operated only according to certain rules.

Rhymes are an integral part of social sports. In rhymes again some meaningless words are used; like ‘Elating- Belating’, ‘Ichon Bichon’, ‘Etol Betol’, ‘Ikir Mikir’ etc It should be remembered that these meaningless words are also associated with the life signs of a very primitive life. The lifeblood of any language is its vocabulary. A word must have two qualities again, one is the power of its identification, i.e., Denotative power; and the other is its expressive power or Connotative power. But in the very first

instance man did not master the power of this quality language. At first he made chaotic random noises with his mouth.¹¹ Living in a group life centred on something - it could be a woman who won the war, it could be a hunted animal - everyone was excited with the same kind of emotion and made a same kind of sound to express their exhilaration. The kind of sound they made regarding a particular thing, the same kind of sound they would make later to mean that thing again. In this way, sounds gradually became meaningful and transformed into words.¹² Later, the words came to be used to refer to situations other than the precise conditional situation in which it was created. That is, the meaningless sound created in the hustle and bustle of festivals and merriment gradually turned into words. Even if we look at today's child, it is possible to imagine those languages less primitive men. The child first makes random noises with his mouth before learning to speak. Gradually, in way of imitating adults, he learns to pronounce certain words through hearing and practice, and that is when the first unnecessary, random sounds are forgotten. In sophisticated language we still use many meaningless words today. Imitative words like 'Jhan-Jhan', 'Gam-gam', 'Sar-sar' etc along with prepositions Aaa Uu 'Bahba' etc are used which although have Connotative power but don't have Denotative power. But the appellative power is the lifeblood of the word. Those powerless and meaningless sounds are still hidden today in the imitative subjective words and prepositions. So it can be said that the rhymes 'Elating- Belating' or 'Kith-Kith-Kith' of the games and many other such meaningless sounds are not lifeless or insignificant; for it is in those syllables the signature of efforts of primitive man to acquire the articulation of words and speech are hidden.

On worldly sports, Rabindranath commented- *'Venery, disguised in different forms at will constitute the true nature of such rhymes. It is not preserved dead as in the past. They are alive, they are moving; these relative variances are making you*

*suitable for the situation, especially in the future.*¹³ This statement of Rabindranath is literally true in every sense in the field of worldly sports. Different names are seen in different places, times and subjects of these sports. In the context of the previously discussed Variation of version, the workmanship of the sports are particularly memorable. For this manoeuvring, the same hide-and-seek game later appeared as a thief-cop game to make you fit. *Boubasanti, Buri chu, Chiburi* etc. are the same sports, but in order to become suitable for the situation, different names and forms have been taken in different places in the society. The same can be said of folk sports- that they are not preserved dead; they are alive, they are moving and that is why the shadow of the most noticeable changes in society has fallen on the structure of such worldly sports. It is because of this lustfulness that the task of analyzing folk sports becomes difficult. Over the ages, this sport has acquired its present form by absorbing so many elements of different societies from different eras all over its body like a globe or a snow globe that its extraction of what was its primitive appearance and exactly in which society it was created becomes very difficult. Yet it is precisely because of this power of assimilation of all the significant elements of youth that sports can inevitably cast a shadow of laughter, tears, and pain. To mark these as suitable interactive elements after conducting proper judgment and analysis is the work of researchers and not of creative and playful teenagers.

Fantasy plays an important role in the minds of playful children and adolescents. The ability to see this dream in one's imagination is much more active in the child's mind than in adults. With this power, the child can imagine a trivial object as something that is of pleasure to him. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore-

*“If we have to imagine an idol as a human being, it has to be formed exactly like a human being- even if there remains a slight gap in imitating, our imagination gets disturbed. We are controlled by the insensate nature of the external world; what is happening in front of our eyes, we can never see it as a dream. But whatever a child sees with his eyes, he can perceive it as a dream in way of his imagination ”.*¹⁴

There is no difference between a toy made of a piece of cloth with a human figure, he sees the creation brought to existence by his will crystal clear in front of his eyes. This is why there is a fundamental difference between adult sporting goods and toys of children. A bat and ball in the hands of adults is only a bat and ball; but a child's wooden horse is much more than just a toy horse to him. It is his king of birds and he himself is a prince. He easily accepts a trivial stick as a gun or a sword. He does not mind taking the seven pieces of ceramic material potsherds decorated on top of the other, as a huge fort. The child sees the toy as both a toy and something extra too. He sees the wooden horse as a toy because he could not control it if it was a real bird king. It would be out of his scope to control that. But whenever he actively enters the game with the horse, he reaches the world of his fantasies- the world of make-believe and the wooden horse then becomes the king of birds. This is why an expert calls children to be sub-creators.¹⁵ Even when aged people enjoy fairy tales, they become ‘sub-creators’ because if they don't, the original essence of the fairy tale is lost.

The child creating his world of fantasies can easily build the edifice of his dream through trivial objects assembled with the help of his creative power. But when the same object is imagined in the same sport from time to time, its analysis becomes very complicated. The same cloud when driven by the wind, takes up the shape of an elephant

sometimes, sometimes a buffalo, and sometimes of a rhino in the sky. Similarly, in folk sports too, the same object is sometimes imagined as a symbol of different things in the very fast transition of fantasies. This variable imaginative power can be found especially in the games of 'Danguli' and 'Lal lathi'.

Fantasy should not be confused with dreams or hallucinations. Man does not intentionally cause hallucinations, but he himself becomes the victim of hallucinations in certain situations. But fantasies are always created out of our voluntary imagination. Man is a slave to hallucinations but the creator of fantasies. Fantasy is therefore a day dream or very imaginative, but the logic behind it is not quite reciprocated.¹⁶ Fantasy is a work of subtle imagination, but a completely logical thing. Although some sports are complicated by the extreme application of fantasy to fantasy, yet the logic behind has not deviated from it. Children and adolescents have fulfilled the desire to participate in social work as adults by tying up the real world, which is out of their control, into a web of complex fantasies and bringing them into the world of sports and under their control.

Theoretical aspects of how children imitate contemporary real life in their sports can be seen through the use of symbolic religion, physical expression, fantasy and even meaningless words. Rabindranath Tagore's statement on folk rhyme can be easily applied to folk sports as it imitates contemporary real life. It states- "*Hundreds of different forgotten joys and sorrows are scattered among them, like the footprints of the extinct dynasty birds which fell on the muddy shores of old oceans of the ancient world- then over time, under hard pressure, the mud has turned to stone along with the footprints- those traces were imprinted on their own and even got washed away on their own- no one dug them out, and no one preserved them in care too.*"¹⁷ In the same way, many laughter and tears have been absorbed in these worldly sports; and many of the heartaches are

easily attached to the broken rhythms of it. The minds of a few people of the ancient, floating on the sea of time, have reached the shores of this distant present; and all his forgotten pains, as if attached to our minds, are being nurtured by the warmth of life and are being revived with tears.¹⁸

The theory of the game is the study of strategic situations. This theory has applications primarily in the fields of economics and business, but also in political science, the law, and everyday life activity. Game theory has often been interpreted as a part of a general theory of rational behaviour. This theory recommends what agents should do in specific interactive situations, given their preferences. When the outcome of an agent's action depends upon the actions of all the other agents involved, it is said to be interactive. Game theory studies these interactive situations. The fundamental idea is that an agent in an interactive decision should take into account the deliberations of his opponents, who, in turn, take into account his deliberations. Because game theory arose from the analyses of competitive scenarios, the problem is called the game, and the participants are called players. But these skills apply to more than just sports and are not even limited to competitive situations. In short, the game theory deals with any problem in which each player's strategy depends on what the other players intend.

Game theory was propagated by Von Neumann and Morgenstern in their book,

*“The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior”, Game theory and the Equilibrium notion was first presented by them, and they focused only on a specific kind of two-person games, so-called zero-sum games; in these games, one player's payoff is exactly the inverse of that of the other player.”*¹⁹

Though ‘*Game Theory*’ has many applications in economy, political sciences, or organizational theory, the fact, there are no elements in this theory that seemed useful from the perspective of traditional games, as it is informal and unstructured.

The possible reason could be, as Lloyd S. Shapley [Grolier Encyclopedia, 1995]²⁰ claims,

“Although the terminology of players, moves, rules, and payoffs might suggest a preoccupation with sports or recreation, the theory of games has seldom been of practical use in playing real games. This may be because the theory is based on idealized players who have clear motives and unlimited skill and calculating ability.”

This fact is further collaborated by Espen Aarseth as he explains:

“Game theory; a branch of mathematics and economics is not about entertainment games at all, but competitive situations in general.”²¹

Swiss psychologist Karl Groos in his ‘*Anticipatory Theory*’ explained-‘*Game is a pre-exercise in preparation for serious business of life*’; when a child plays a certain game by his desire, it shows glimpses of his future activities in life.

Stanley Halls propagated the theory of ‘*Recapitulation*’ in his book ‘*Adolescence*’. He said that through games and sportsman reestablishes the bygone traditions of his society. Therein two types of mentalities in the children - ‘*self-assertion*’ and ‘*self-abasement*’. The child asserts himself freely when the opponent is weak, but when the opponent is stronger, the child becomes overwhelmed. This is called self-abasement. And he tries to imitate the stronger opponent in the world of sports. For

example, most of the child fears the Police. But he has also respect mixed with his fear for the Police. So he likes to play the role of Police in his sports.

Despite the constraint, the Game theory is existing because the principles are simple; the applications are far-reaching. Interdependent decisions are everywhere, potentially including almost any endeavour in which self-interested agents either cooperate or compete. Probably the most interesting games involve communication because so many layers of strategy are possible. Game theory can be used to design reliable commitments, threats, or promises or to appreciate propositions and statements offered by others. There are two fundamental types of games: one is sequential, and the other is simultaneous. In sequential games, the players must make alternate moves, while in simultaneous games, the players can act and move at the same time. These types are distinguished because they require different analytical approaches.

All folk sports are imitations of life in one way or another - this topic has been discussed in the current study. In order to prove this point, the study later discusses and analyzes the representative local folk sports of Bengal. This analysis seeks to identify the potential social origins of sports, - which social conditions led to the creation of such folk sports, crossing the path of many changes and being still prevalent in the lands of North Bengal till today.

Most of the worldly sports were created in the distant past. Various types of additions and changes have occurred since then and those sports have gradually reached us today. Sometimes these sports are overshadowed by different elements of society, so its analysis has become complicated. In the analysis of those sports, one had to proceed in a way similar to getting directions while walking on a foggy, dark path. And the main reliance behind everything was three to five years of labour feasible field surveys. For the

sake of field study, I am refraining from presenting huge and complex objects here which I feel are superfluous.

Two methods of ascension and disembarkation have been adopted in the case of logic formatting. No conservatism was accepted where any one method had to be adopted. Sometimes conclusions have been reached by presenting investigative arguments and sometimes arguments have been presented in favour of the decision by guessing.

The present analysis attempts to apply the linguistic survey seriously. Without a linguistic analysis of the various rural terminology used in various sports, it is impossible to trace its origin. Researcher do not know if there has been any full-fledged research work in this country or any other country on the origin of folk sports or any of its related subjects. There are some sporadic short essays (articles). So it can be said that in the past, no research has been done directly on the subject. Therefore, for various information and proofs, we have had to take a lot of help from many other books in the country and abroad, including books on epics, history, sociology and anthropology and in order to make this research indisputable and constructive, special efforts have been made to use and refer to the text works of world-renowned scholars. Yet Researcher think it is dangerous to claim that this discussion is completely confirmed as the first study on the subject.

Apart from the sports in which primitive society, the magic of primitive society, etc., are reflected, in various other respect too, mainly the method shown by Lewis Henry Morgan, and the method followed by George Thomson for a better understanding of Greek society was pursued. If we look at the society and the social system of the primitive human group, which has lagged far behind the present level of civilization, we

can understand how and what levels and norms the people of the present age have overcome- this is Morgan's unprecedented method.

In the end, it can be said that no human thought, consciousness, imagination or plan is independent. Everything has a social basis or a social source. So sports, especially folk sports, have gained its knowledge from one or the other social source. Its source needs to be explored deeply in the society. The role of conflict in this society is the root of all man-made things- this suffix is identified in the materialistic philosophical and scientific interpretations of history, established by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Therefore, if researcher do not acknowledge the place of the dialectical analytical technique of that philosophy, the discussion of the analysis method of this study will definitely remain incomplete.

Every national, ethnic, and cultural group owns a treasure of traditional games of their own; those still have cultural and educational value and often stimulate the intellectual and emotional development of their races. Traditional games are popular games among specific groups/regions; these are played by everybody- boys and girls, children and adults. Those games are played in fields, on the street, at home, known for generations, even transmitted from one generation to another generation, and thus sustained. Such games exist in every race and every country; the games are numerous, and each game is an illustration in miniature of its culture and civilization. Traditional games are part of the folk culture in which the child/adult actively employs all his physical, motor, sensory-perceptive, even intellectual, linguistic, social, and emotional abilities.

Folk games' popularity is both in rural as well as urban areas through generations. Before we enter into detail, let us look into the definition and views of eminent scholars. According to Brunvand,

“Folk games are a form of structured play, have an objective, have rules, have variability, and usually need no special equipment or specific playing area.”²²

As per Renson R & Smulders, H.,

“The term ‘Folk’ refers to a group of people who share a common culture and lifestyle. Folk games are active games with a recreational character, requiring specific physical skills, strategy, or chance, or a combination of these three.”²³

As ‘Metin And’, a Turkish scholar, says,

“Some games demand the spoken word, rhymes, or chants, yet other games require the suppression of all sound. At the opposite pole from these games rich in verbal dimension, we find games where demand the spoken word, rhymes, or chants; yet other games require the suppression of all sound. At the opposite pole from these games rich in verbal dimension, we find games where speaking is strictly prohibited. Some are mere diversions meant to while away the tedium, and some have a serious, perhaps religious or magical significance.”²⁴

Folk games are, in general, expressions of joys and celebrations of people mostly demonstrated in vocal form than otherwise. Citing the example of the Turkish folk games ‘Metin And’ distinguishes four main categories of verbal expression: songs and chants, rhymes, tongue twisters, and riddles. Songs accompanying games and question-and-answer chants enjoy the greatest popularity among girls. ‘Folk’ games are those traditional games passed along informally from one group to another. They

are, more often than not, preserved by oral tradition throughout centuries. These games can amuse, instruct, and inspire. They reflect the values and beliefs of their cultures. Games help the minds and imaginations of children to grow mature, providing a chance to act out individual roles, make choices, and thereby gather experience of the thrill of winning and the disappointment of losing.

Each culture and tradition possesses its wisdom. Traditional games provide an inexpensive and effective way to help children explore traditional culture to gain insight and wisdom. To share this culture with children is to introduce them to an important part of their heritage. Each part of our nation was marked by the existence of different local folks, so through games, we can explore even the heritage of the people that inhabited that particular region. These games demonstrate some important aspects of traditional folk values and ways of life. First, they show children that despite changing times and culture, children of earlier generations enjoyed fun and joy like them today. In they are fun, they involve suspense, or competition, or skill and challenge, just like today's games. Children learn various aspects of their own traditional life through the practice of these games. Through traditional games, children recognize divergent views and the importance of cultural values.

Traditional games can inform, teach, persuade, and provoke thought. They can reproduce and reinforce existing ideas and values, challenge them, or offer new ways of thinking and feeling. They can confirm existing values and practices, and they can bring about change. As a result, the art of playing imparts an important role in shaping our understanding of ourselves as individuals and members of society, even understanding the world in which we live. But interest in games, in general, had greatly declined during the first half of the twentieth century and was revived primarily by scholars of other disciplines after World War II. Sociologists,

Psychologists, Anthropologists, and educators have primarily argued that the playing of games is of functional and developmental importance. Its importance' covers physical, psychological, social, intellectual, and even touches, all other aspects of human behaviours. But most important, such scholarship exemplifies that playing is not trivial, and, as George Eisen poignantly suggests in *“Coping with Adversity: Children’s Play in the Holocaust”* (1987), *play, or perhaps more accurately playfulness, maybe an essential aspect for survival.*”²⁵.

Besides, traditional games can be enjoyed across generations, allowing people of different ages to interact. People of all ages can be invited to join in, thereby fostering a sense of unity among the local communities. One of the main aims of adopting traditional games in schools is to create opportunities for children to interact with different kinds of people in different situations.

Games always play a diverse and important role within a community, and they have also provided link themselves with one another and with larger social networks. They also have a strong impact on the psychological and social qualities of life. To many people, these games are a cordial way to spend their leisure time and to keep fit and active. Moreover, traditional games offer opportunities for people to get together and to have social contact with each other. In modern times when growing individualization, these traditional games can help to develop community bonding, as every participant and the spectator are a valuable asset to the growth of their community.

The benefits provided by traditional games through outdoor environments and nature experiences are remarkable and extensive. According to Dr. Joe L. Forst,

“These include inner peace, stress reduction, fitness, healing, mental health, and creativity; physical, emotional, and intellectual development; bonding with nature, appreciation of nature, and a heightened sense of beauty. Play and learning are mutually supportive and necessary for a healthy childhood and competent adulthood.”²⁶.

The main focus of my discussion is to identify and compile a list of those games and make a record of the traditional children’s games, to examine the possibilities of using traditional children’s games in contemporary education, and to make them applicable for children’s practice.

For playing traditional games, the materials needed are often not expensive, easily available. Sand, pebbles, and sticks, etc., Are freely available everywhere. These games are also played with water, soil, piece of wood, piece of pottery, cloth, rope, stones, marbles, and other such things that can be obtained with little or no difficulty. Some of the material and spaces used for play and the games associated with them are; stick - *Dangguli*, piece of cloth - *Putuler biye*, open ground - *Dariyabanda*, *Gollachutt*, *Golokdham*, fields-*Madankam* , sand- up *patta*, pieces of bangles-*Putuler biye*, pebbles- *pittu*, *Kitkit*, stones - *Guti* , marbles - *Guli* and so on.

A traditional game can be turn-based, or the player can change sides when the match is going on. In traditional games where units have orthogonal actions, players may switch sides in alternate turns (e.g. pursuers swapping roles with evaders), either on a turn-taking basis or when a pursuer(s) succeeds in capturing a victim. The state of a player and/or object may be changed when one player moves to catch an opponent, evade being touched, protect himself or herself, guard a player, rescue a player, reach a destination, etc., the actions that can be performed with the objects are: throw, deflect,

pick up, discard, strike and arrange, etc.,²⁷. Besides these, there are games of physical contact, movement, distance, defense, suspense, and blocking games.

The abundance of games guarantees splendid gradation and diversification to suit different age groups – from kindergarten to adults, irrespective of genders, including small and large groups'.²⁸. There are games for younger children even there are games for only adults, there are games for women as there are for men. There are also group games as well as team games. These games are easy to learn and to teach. In the games, rules are easy to modify and to adapt to different contexts and situations.

The traditional games played by children have an important role to play in the development of the children. Through game playing, children move between good and evil and learn moral lessons. Games instruct children to introduce them to their own culture along with the mental and physical skills required for both minors and adults. Through games, children are thought self-confidence, art and tricks and even adjust to changes. They show them how to think, solve riddles and how to make correct choices. And finally, feed the secret hopes and fears and dreams of the children.

Competition has to be considered in the cultural context and to be valued in terms of physical skills, entertainment, and, especially, social cooperation has given community sentiment. The games touch and deal with all aspects of human development such as - motor, cognitive, emotional, moral, and social behaviour and employing all the senses.

The category of children's traditional games is very rich and varied. The publication of proceedings of "*Traditional Games and Children of Today*" conference dedicated to the Belgrade—OMEP (Organization Mondiale Pour Education Prescolaire - World Organization for Early Childhood Education) Project on

traditional children's games mentions that the richness of traditional games is evident by their number.

Some of the popular anthologists, scholars, and play theorists have a huge collection of games to their credit. For example, Opie and Opie (1969) have an index of 2500 games (and their varieties), Sutton-Smith recorded (1972) more than 300 games in New Zealand, and Renson (1981), recording games of a narrower group than defined here in various parts of Flanders, obtained 95-233 protocols of different games, or 806 protocols in total²⁹.

The number of categories of children's games proves the wealth and variety of children's games. As a list to the effect follows - bouncing games, clapping games, walking games, counting rhyme, tongue--twisters, mocking rhymes, riddles, funny rhymes, chasing games, catching games, hiding games, dueling games, games of competition, jumping games, games of wit, games of expression, strength, agility, chance, humour, disguising, daring, games for expressing sympathy, etc. The anthologists of various countries and cultures in compiling and studying traditional games, the traditional games divides into three types; games of physical skill, games of strategy, and games of chance. The games of physical skill are those in which physical strength plays the main part. The other type of traditional game is the game of strategy. The Hide-and-Seek/Lukachupi kinds of games are games of strategy. The third type of game is games of chance. The three elements: physical skill, strategy, and chance, generally emerge separately but sometimes concerning each other.

To understand common and universal traditional games, it is essential to understand and discuss various criteria for the classification of traditional games of different regions and cultures of different countries and all the concerned classification

systems. According to the publication 'Belgrade-OMEP Project on traditional children's games,' the following will serve as one of the criteria for classification: This description covers a wide range of traditional games.

- The content of games (chasing, seeking, hunting, games, etc., as in the book by Opie and Opie, 1969).
- The psychological functions employed in the game (games of motor and intellectual skill, games of humour and social interaction, games of perception, memory or speech, etc.).
- The social functions of games (games primarily stimulating social integration, or social differentiation and individualization; games of cooperation vs games of competition, etc.).
- The psycho-developmental criteria (i.e., a classification derived from the developmental stage of the psychological functions employed in the game, for example, sensory-motor, pre-operational, concrete-operational games, according to Piaget's theory; developmental classification derived from other theories of psychological development are also possible).
- The structure of games as a criterion for classification opens complex problems but also allows various classifications of children's games; some existing systems, such as those in which games are divided into games of skill vs games of chance, or games of competition, dueling vs. Games of cooperation and expression, etc.,³⁰.

French Sociologist Roger Caillois comes out with his definition describing play in four forms, and it is fundamentally sociological and a blend of psychology and philosophy. According to him, games can be classified as games of -

1. (Competition), e.g. Chess, racing, wrestling, and fencing, etc.
2. (Chance), e.g., counting-out rhymes, heads or tails, betting, etc.
3. (Mimicry or Simulation), e.g., mimicry, role-playing, etc.
4. (Vertigo), e.g., Swinging, tight rope walking, whirling horseback, etc.”³¹.

The above forms of play, as defined by Caillois, are expressive forms of human personal and social behaviour.

Another category of traditional children's games cited in Belgrade—OMEP traditional games project focuses on games in which the child actively engages all his physical, motor, sensory, intellectual, emotional, and social abilities. Based on this specification, the games are reduced to two categories a) traditional children's games with rules, and b) non-rule regulated games, games in which behaviour is mostly regulated, but not by rules, but by behavioural patterns (1986).

The first category of games – traditional games characterized by the existence of an explicit system of rules which regulate the behaviour of the players. The Typical examples are traditional children's games are hide-and-seek, games of marbles, tag, etc. The other category of games - is those games based on stable behavioural patterns. It may be the result of the physical characteristics of objects and toys used in the game (i.e. the manner of throwing or catching a ball or a boomerang or the game of bow and arrow etc.). Another source of universality is the motor patterns in human behaviour (e.g., various games of balance, dumping games, leaping, running, all games of motor agility, etc.). There are also games whose characteristics result from a combination of the physical characteristics of objects used in the game and characteristics of human mobility, such as rope-jumping games, sack-racing, walking on stilts, etc.). In all these games, physical, material factors play a great role.

Universal patterns of interaction and communication are also a common source of this category of games. The hiding and disclosing games (from the simplest such as peek-a-boo to very complex games with masks and disguise, etc.), mother-and-infant interaction games, games of competition and cooperation, betting games, daring games, all team games, etc. Very close to the games discussed above are games that are based on general patterns of speech behaviour: riddle and conundrums, dialogue games, message-twisting games, tongue-twisters, senseless rhymes, tales without ending, word twisters. Intellectual games (games of reflection, games of wit, games of logic, games of intellectual skill, etc.) are based on universal patterns of intellectual behaviour. Discussing games classification, Richard M. Darson observes

“Since 1900, folklore scholars have devoted comparatively little attention to traditional pastimes, no classification systems have been prepared for games and recreations as they have for folk narrative and no new theories of play have been advanced by folklorists.”³².

According to him, *“students of traditional recreations and games have devoted the bulk of their time in recording, editing, and annotating texts. But each investigator has also had to cope with the problem of the nature of the traditional pastimes, if for no other reason than to find a suitable classification system for his material, the perusal of any standard collection reveals the difficulties along configurationally lines, frequently according to the nature of the activity involved (chasing, guessing and hiding games), often based on the sex of the players (games of little girls, boys) and occasionally according to the type of equipment used (specialized versus readily available objects)’(Darson,176)”*.

The cross-cultural studies of Roberts et al. were restricted to games of physical skill, strategy, and chance. Within this limited approach, they also found that games of physical skill were the most widespread, whereas strategy and chance were found in fewer cultural contexts. Furthermore, there were relatively few statistically significant cultural associations with games of physical skill, whereas there were many with games of both strategy and chance. This suggests that the physical activities of play and games have a relatively stronger adaptive component and that those of strategy and chance have a relatively stronger cultural component. In kinds of play where the major reliance is upon physical activity, that is, we might expect custom to play a smaller role than in those kinds in which symbolic matters are the heart of the play (Sutton-Smith 1972).

Involving folk music as part of playing games leads Janet M. Cliff, says

“Song games in English appear to depend on context as to whether they are games or songs. A song game is a game that is sung. Unlike singing games, the song does not provide the structure for the activity. Besides the fun, the action, and the possibility of words focusing on a meaningful situation, singing games are also appealing because of their social context. Even the few games which can be played alone (e.g., jump rope, ball bouncing games) are often played with others around, and all of the games are learned from someone else.”³³.

Furthermore, she adds, the most popular combination of folk music and folk games in English is singing games, ‘that is, a game which has a song that creates the structure (and often also the rhythm) of the activity. Scholars have always separated jump rope, handclaps, the ball bouncing, and counting out from other singing games

without any explanation, although such activities are as much singing games as Farmer in the Dell. In Dells games generally, small groups (3-14 people) of young (6-10 years) females usually participate in singing games (1992, 129-151). However, some girls dislike these games and refuse to participate, and some boys often engage in these activities. But these games are discarded; the tune for a particular text is fairly consistent throughout the English-speaking world. The same tune can be found for different texts, further complicating the study of singing games.

One such example of singing game cited by 'Evelyn Carrington' in singing games from folklore record is as under

The Fox and the Chickens.

(The Hen.) Who's going around my sunny wall to-night?

(Fox.) Only little Jacky-Lingo.

(Hen.) Don't steal any of my fat chicks.

(Fox.) I stole one last night,

And gave it a little hay;

There came a little blackbird.

And carried it away (Carrington, 188: 169-173).

The fox steals one chicken every time, and so on till they are all gone. The chickens' then form in procession behind the fox, and the hen tries to catch them again. The fox rushes forward to prevent her.

The proper and strict classification of mentioned games cannot be slotted under a specific category as they fit into multiple genres.

Sutton-Smith makes a similar admission in his study *‘The games of New Zealand children’* (1959), adding that the reason for the difficulty in classifying games is because games are complex group behaviors deriving their nature from many sources.”³⁴.

One has faced several paradoxical situations while study children's games as some games appear to be so widespread that they may well be universal, while others appear to be products of human diversity. So the problem of fitting such games into a definite category is unwise. Another problem is raised by the scholar of the nineteenth-century that speaks *‘children’s games were the residue of earlier adult cultural customs’*, while in this century, play theorists largely emphasized children's creativity through play (Darson, 1972).

In the same way, for the traditional games of India (North Bengal), a strict classification of the games is difficult to arrive at, as the following quote suggests in the Standard dictionary of folklore mythology and legend says

*“The classification of games has been the subject of many studies and there are almost as many ways of considering the subject as there are writers on the matter. Games may be discussed according to the season in which they are played; according to the sex or age of the participants, etc.”*³⁵

1. According to different stages in life (according to age);
 - A. Childhood (5-15years)
 - B. Youth (15-25)
 - C. Adults (25-60)
 - D. Old age (above 60 years)
2. According to gender:

- A. Females
 - B. Males
 - C. Both females and males
3. According to the playing occasion:
- A. Ordinary or Common or Regular games played during day or night
 - B. Games played on special occasions like feasts and festivals
4. According to play area:
- A. Indoor games
 - B. Outdoor games
5. According to time of play:
- A. During day time
 - B. During night time
6. According to place (the type of settlement):
- a. Urban games
 - b. Rural games
7. According to the number of participants:
- A. Individual games
 - B. Group games
8. According to the apparatus used:
- A. With the help of objects
 - B. Without the help of any object
9. According to physical or mental skills:
- A. Games of physical skills
 - B. Games of mental skills
10. According to functional activity:
- A. Games of Sitting
 - B. Games of running

C. Games of throwing

D. Games of jumping

Traditional children's game is not a monopoly of any one ethnic group, though there are some exceptions, where these games are played similarly, but with the difference in name and rules. Some of such traditional games are, hide and seek, hopscotch, tug of war, top-spinning, kite play, etc. They retain the basic structure with slight variations in the play form or content or presentation. *'The New Book of Knowledge'* points out

*"Down the ages children have watched adults and imitated them. Out of these imitations came games. Games are seldom invented. They grow, changing to meet the needs and customs of each new generation."*³⁶.

Names and customs change, children may dress up their games with new words and new names, but the old games live through all the changes. It is based on this premise that the transformation of traditional games into modern games is considered for introducing them to children in schools as part of the regular curriculum.

According to the 'Belgrade—OMEP traditional games project', two major functions to be fulfilled by traditional children's games, and these are the regulating mechanisms in social relations. These two major functions, vital for the functioning and the preservation of every culture, are social integration (i.e., the assimilation of group members, the submission to rules, social norms, etc.) and differentiation (i.e., increasing distance between group members, the segregation of subgroups, individualization, personalization, etc.)

The publication also cites that examples of this kind of preparation for social integration are the games of motor and mental skill, manual dexterity, motor, and

communicative competence, logic, etc. Other examples are following rules by every person and submission to the group; joint activities, which imply the coordination of individual actions: self-control - the control of personal desires and impulses. In addition to serving socio-cultural purposes, the games are helpful to children in achieving and developing physical, psychological, and mental skills. Ball games such as handball games, with hand, with feet, bat or stick develop hand-eye coordination, motor control. Bowling games like marbles, bowls, and shooting games of the longbow, crossbow, throwing games of discs, coins, sticks, dart others develop concentration, marksmanship, and perception of position.

‘The history of games in India dates back to Vedic times’ (Subrahmanyam, 1975:56). It is widely considered that people of that period must have had some specific exercises and games as part of their physical culture to maintain physical fitness for wielding weapons, and riding, hunting, and swimming, and also for recreation. As Dr. Vadla Subramanyam says

“Though Chariot racing was the chief source of amusement of the early Aryans and their pastime was gambling and generally racing, they were also deeply interested in music both vocal and instrumental. Among the instruments, we find a reference to are the Veena, Drum, and Flute. Early Vedic Aryans were also greatly interested in dancing.”³⁷.

The requirement of a very meager apparatus and space was the prominent feature of traditional games of India, unlike that of the western world. However, like the west, the numerous traditional children's games have a rhythmic musical component in the form of chants and counting rhymes.

The traditional Indian games have similarities with the games played around the world through different names; such as 'hide and seek', 'top spinning', 'kite play', and 'tug of war'³⁸. Though games are played by and large as pastimes for fun and amusement, they become an integral part of the celebrations during festivals, fairs, and on special religious occasions where children and adults participate in huge numbers as other members of the community too bond with them by watching and encouraging the participants. They play areas of the games include streets, verandas, inside the house, under the shade of the trees, temple premises, meadows, gardens, orchards, fields, on the banks of river or lake, and open grounds outside the villages.

Let us consider the game *Guli Game* (a game played with marbles or pebbles). A popular game played in North Bengal, India. It may be categorized variously depending on the following parameters:

Age - it is played by both children and adults;

Gender - it is played by females

The number of participants - played in groups of 4 or 5 but often also played individually.

Play areas - this game could be played indoors as well as outdoors.

Time of play - it is played in the daytime.

Playing occasion - it is a common and regularly played game with no special festive or religious significance.

Location - it is usually played in rural rather than in urban settings.

Skills - this is a physical skill rather than a mental skills game.

Objects used - played with inanimate objects.

Functional activity - it is a game played by sitting on the ground."³⁹.



Fig. 2.1. Photograph collected by Researcher

Chor-Police game (thief and Police):

Number of players: - Four players

Focus: - On observing the facial expressions and mannerisms of the players.

Preparation: - 4 pieces of paper of equal size are used. King, Minister, Police, and Thief are written on each paper piece, and the papers are rolled in such a way that the text is inside the roll and all pieces look similar.

Procedure: - Children stand together, forming a circle, and one player takes the folded papers in hand, shuffles, and opens the palms. Then each player picks one paper and checks what he got. The text written in the paper should be a secret, and other players

should not know what others got. Then the players spread out without giving any direct reference to what character they have. They give subtle hints, and these are picked up by the other players to identify correctly the character got by the opponent. To begin with, the Police identify themselves and look around for the thief by observing the reactions of the players. The player who got a thief is naturally anxious and tries to mislead the Police by acting confident, whereas the players who got king and minister are less anxious and look cheerful. Here the trick is to identify who is faking and who is not by carefully observing the facial expressions and their mannerisms. If the Police succeed incorrectly guessing the thief, the Police get one point and the thief 0 points. The other characters King and Minister will also get the point each. If the guess is wrong, then the Police get 0 points, and the thief gets 1 point. Thus the points gained by each player are noted down on paper and added up at the end of the game. The game goes into 10 or 20 rounds or as pre-determined. The winner of the player who gets the maximum points.

Purpose: - Improves agility, reflexes, stamina.

Benefit: - The game helps to develop improvisations and face reading skills.

Aam Paka game is the most amusing and popular game played in most of the villages in North Bengal. The description of the game: A circle is drawn as the field of the game and circle by the mango leaves; the player climbs the tree and south '*the mango has gone ripe*' the man at the root known as a thief (selected after lottery). The function of the theft is not to allow anyone to get down from the tree. If anyone comes down and touch by the theft then he would have to replace the theft. But those who would escape the theft and kiss the mango leaves kept around the circle. The team would be declared the winner and get the right to climbs the tree.⁴⁰

Nalchiti Game: North Bengal is known for its rivers and pools. So it is natural that some of the games are played either in the pools or in the river. *Nalchiti* is such a game that plays in the river and pools. The participants are efficient swimmers. The players are divided into two equivalent groups. The play starts with the attempt to throw water at the opponent when all the members are out being touched by the water. Then the other groups take the role and some processes are repeated. This game is played for long-duration even continued for a few days.



Fig. 2.2. Photo collected by Researcher

Taitai Game is also an interesting game simple but placing. The little boys and girls enter into the ponds and scan in a circle. Then the slap on the water repeatedly at the movement of the water targeted by them takes the weed at a distance. Contending girls and boys now tried to follow the weed and bring it back would be declared as the winner. The high successful winners are declared as king towns successfully become a

minister and one successful will be the next team the game is played at the time at bath.

Sholabangha Game: The breaking of an extract of jute. The game requires a large space (20/30 Feet) at least and it must be a circular one. A group will spread the broken pieces of the strict and the contending group has to pick up the pieces. Pieces should be picked up simply bending the body and after it, he should trend Right Street and try for the next. If misses looser the pond. If anyone fails he will be ex-fail the game. The process of the games continued with an outbreak.

Bouche Game (the old lady) is a simple but exciting game, but more defensive than aggressive. It also needs large open space the contending teams should have equal numbers (8-10) two and closer are drowned keeping a distance between twenty yards one and closer is small while the other one is bigger and square the player's scan in the bigger occupies by the players. Circle one is for Buri for the capital lady. The capital lady would try to rich the bigger room avoiding the touch of the opponent. The persons occupying the bigger and enclose goes out for 'cants' with the closing breadth to touch the opponent. If he succeeds then the member he touches would be out of play. If all the members of the opponent team are out then Buri. The capital lady can reach a bigger enclose safely.

Chikka game is a simple but popular game playing in most of North Bengal especially in the rural belt. It is played between two teams having 5-6 players each. It is played in an open space and a long time is drown in the middle of the field one of the team members stands on the line while another side stands of the line. The game starts with a challenge between the party standing on the line and the other who stands by the line as the challenger. The challenger tries to push the opponents standing on the line. On

the other hand, the competitors of the line try to pull the legs of their challengers if successfully gain the point. On the other hand, if the members of the opponents avoid the leg-pulling and cross the line then he earns points for his teams.

Chamri game is the game that reflects the early tradition of North Bengal most effectively. It carries the rich legacy of regional light. The game starts with sketching a pond on the playing land. The pond is surrounded by 15-20 lethal youths the players. One of the members of the lethal party presents to fill the pond and others try to prevent him from doing that it results in the mock war with the note of instrumental music the lethal party displays various lethal skills. When the participants feel tired the declared end of the game. This game also displays the fish catching art at the end of it. The sport that is played in North Bengal has two sections. Historical relation with the first division can be seen. In the game when a brave young man stops the stick with the stick (the first thing to play is to create a pond like a puddle to prevent other players who came in the stick they come from. Eventually, artificial war held, whether the pond should be a land for agriculture land or the state – the fight against these rights has come from early times, we can see his galaxies In playing leather⁴¹.

Ram Shyam Jadhu Madhu Game game requires four children. On 16 equal pieces of paper consecutively there should be written Ram 800, Shyam 700, Jadhu 600, and Madhu 500, four times each. Then these pieces of paper are folded and mixed well before being thrown in front of the players. Everyone picks up four pieces each, the thrower being the last one to pick. Now they will try to match the papers chronologically as Ram Shyam Jadhu and Madhu. Who becomes last in matching, is awarded zero. Others get their due points. This game is great fun for the children.⁴²

Okaboka Game is mainly young children, except the female one, participate in this game. The number of players ranges from two to ten/twelve. Each and everyone sits on the ground making a circle and putting their fists on the ground. One player pinches the fist of everyone in the roundabout way along with the rhyme '*Okaboka Chamti Poka Pochkao*' on which fist the Pochkao is uttered, is removed from the ground and, the game continues in the same way until one fist is left. Whosoever fist is left behind will be punished – he will put his palm on the ground perpendicular and other players will try to hit his palm from right to left while he tries to avoid it removing his palm from the ground in realtime. Who fails to hit the target will be punished in the same way. This game is very amusing to the children.

Kachhare-Machha Game is structured for the boys only. This is also a rhyming game two or more two boys are required for the game. One will be defined as 'thief' and others will remain aside assembled; one of them throws away a bamboo stick as far as he can. While the thief runs to pick that stick, others climb on the tree. Then the thief rhymes '*Kachhare Maccha Mache keno Uthla*' and the others on the tree answerers '*Oi Je*' (pointing to the thief). After that, they throw a tree leaf one by one and if the thief succeeds to catch one, the thrower of that leaf will be considered a new thief. Notably, the thief at the first stage is chosen to throw the process of finger choice or number choice.

Pata anna/Sat anna game is proposed for both boys and girls and a group of them participate in the game. One is defined as a thief and others play around him. The thief is defined in a specific process. One of the groups popped one of his fingers secretly and calls others to catch his fingers; whosoever catches the popped finger is considered as the thief. In the next stage, the thief calls others to fetch leaves. Each of the other players fetches leaves seven times and puts them in a circle. After that one leaf is

chosen from the assembled leaves and one player digs a hole and puts the leaf in it covering the hole with soil. There remain some more holes side by side covered with soil. All these works are done on the back of the thief. Now the thief is asked to find the leaf and he gets seven chances to do that. If he finds it out he is freed from his duties. But if he fails he will be again defined as a thief for the new game.⁴³

Ekka-Dokka is a game through which the child develops physical coordination by skillful control of shifts of balance using one leg. Skipping develops stamina and breathes control. Hide and seek develops sensitivity, alertness, concentration, and powers of observation. Running, jumping, and hopping games develop agility, speed, and self-control. Group games, both games of competition and cooperation and games of expression, help overcome social isolation and inhibition through group interaction and sportsmanship.



Fig. 2.3. Photograph collected by Researcher



Fig. 2.4. Photograph collected by Researcher

Kabaddi game is famous in all villages and small towns of the Indian subcontinent. It is a very simple game played outdoors without the need for any apparatus. To play Kabaddi, one needs stamina, the capacity to hold breath, swiftness, and mastery of battle tactics. The line is drawn on sand or soft earth. Two opposing teams, each comprising five to ten children, stand on either side of the line. Any member of one team crosses the line into the respondent camp, chanting the word Kabaddi while holding the breath. If they can touch one or more members of the opposite team while still uttering the word Kabaddi and return to their side after that, those touched are ‘dead’, and the raider’s side has all the members ‘alive’. But it may as well happen that the raider is physically caught (grabbed) on the opposite side by those whom he touched or by all other members of the opposite team collectively. Then the raider, in an attempt to return, has to at least touch the dividing line without losing breath while chanting the word Kabaddi. If they succeed in returning or touching the dividing line, all those who were trying to catch them or touched them are declared ‘dead’;

otherwise, the raider who is captured is said to be dead. Next, a member of the opposite team comes to raid the opposing team. A team has to 'kill' all the members of the opposing team to win the game. Boys and girls play this game with their neighborhood friends of the same sex; yet, boys and girls avoid playing this game together.⁴⁴

However, traditional games can be classified according to age, gender, the number of participants, time of play (day and night), place (indoor and outdoor), rural or urban, animated or unanimated, physical or mental games in the historical, social and cultural context. After considerable deliberation, a broad list of categories of traditional games has been devised to facilitate the grouping of the categories of games that were collected for this project, based on the field experience and the methodology followed by the Researcher for collecting the games. From the above, it is once again clear that the process of categorization of the games is not simple but a complex one, and should be studied from various angles of structural and functional aspects, have a practical categorization of traditional games, but to begin with, there are three broad categories of games from which study of categorization could be carried forward.

The games discussed above are some of the popular games played in North Bengal, and both children and older people alike are familiar with those games though regionally varies. As with many of the traditional games, the games mentioned below bear the striking features of simple rules of play, minimal requirement of space, and material to play, at the same time giving opportunity for a large number of children to play together and at a time.

This chapter is an attempt to discuss the features of games in a general context and their significance in society. The study of the scholars available in the field, and giving

a comprehensive account on the game theories, as well as different genres of games, based on its game plan, covering physical and mental involvement. To assert its role and attempt to take an Overview of North Bengal's traditional games with ample examples along with their different contextual functions of the games referred to in the context to our purpose. To a large extent, the literature survey and the field study added to the chapter to support our contention in the later chapters.

In this context, we have seen the commonness of games played in different countries by varied races, which don't differ much in spirit and even in forms. Thus folklore, played as referred to in different places, is no exception from the game *Teesta buri*, *Madan kam*. In the case of other divisions, we can safely quote *Dariabanda*. *Gollachut* naturally comes under the definition of above mention historians and sociologists. So to conclude, this chapter certainly would be meaningful in the context of this thesis, and traditional Games, Sports and amusements may be regarded as an important feature of Socio-Cultural life in North Bengal.

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