



Review Of Research



TRADITIONAL GAMES AND SPORTS

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ABSTRACT:

In the rural areas of West Bengal, some indigenous or folk patterns and some borrowed patterns of games are played by the children and youths. The borrowed games are mostly Western in origin as introduced by the British in Calcutta and came into the villages by culture- contact. Both categories of games are played side by side, but it is worth mentioning here that frequency of borrowed modern games is large in the surrounding villages of urban spot and it decreases in the interior villages. This is due to the fact of physical and cultural communication and hence, the degree of urbanization. Those folk games are far less formal than modern urban games. The rules of them are relatively simple, unwritten, legitimated by custom, and sometimes revised to fit the circumstances of the moment. The names and rules prevalent in one locality or village often differed sharply from those with another. Those patterns are passed from player to player in almost pure oral tradition with no reference whatever to print and probably with negligible guidance from trainers, parents, or recreation leaders. No bureaucracies or referees' supervision is required.

KEY WORDS: British in Calcutta , degree of urbanization.

INTRODUCTION:

The games and sports as culture traits particularly in West Bengal have certain specific elements. One of these is the utilization of leisure which had its origin and growth in the cradle of agrarian economy of the pre-British India. The informal folk games in the rural culture were marked by lack of institutionalization communication. These indigenous folk games as pastime recreation have been played around the Bengalese core within the narrow cultural circles of the then rural societies of West Bengal for long time. The spirit of those traditional games was mere satisfaction of recreational activities, where participants only got the pleasure while in general there was no special role for recreation leaders and



spectators, and therefore, it worked as a way without reciprocation or encouragement. The British came in India with their new form of economic, educational, and cultural norms. In Bengal, the important urban center like Calcutta was purposely selected by them for trade and commerce. The new city Calcutta as introduced by the British in Bengal had its impact on the traditional pattern of recreation including games, sports and allied activities. This may be defined as a new type of induced institutionalized games that altered to a large extent the passive non-induced games and sports of the earlier era. For instance, one of today's popular sport events of West Bengal, Football, had been brought to India by various groups of Englishmen like civilians, traders, college teachers, military personnel and above all the Navy. The first recorded organized match in this regard in Calcutta was between Civilians and the Gentlemen of Barrackpur. These kind of

friendly matches were organized amongst the European clubs within themselves initially. These matches and clubs have given impetus to the elites of Bengalese in the city to establish institutionalized sports clubs composed of Bengalese in the localities for making the new sport as a regular activity. By this way, the Calcutta Football Club (1872), Trades' Club (Dalhousie Athletic Club, 1878), Naval Volunteers (1884), Howrah United Armenian Club, etc. had been established. In 1889, Calcutta's first knockout football tournament was held. The enthusiastic Bengalee elites were interested in this newly competitive game. It was the students of the then Bengal Engineering college, Medical College, St. Xavier's College, La Martiniere, etc. who founded the first of today's open clubs in the 1880s and 1890s to enable them to go on playing football. Similarly, the oldest cricket club outside the British Isles dates back to 1792 (Chowdhury, 1990). After establishing such game clubs in Calcutta, football and cricket matches between such club teams began to be played fairly, joyfully and regularly. Its devotees moved from one plot on the Maidan (the large and dominant sports-centre in Calcutta) or the Esplanade to the other parts of the city and finally to the suburbs as well as hinterlands. Thus, started a new era of institutionalized major sports in Calcutta and gradually in West Bengal (Sengupta, 1976; Chowdhury, 1990). In other words, this was the beginning of an era where the sports as culture trait along with its two important traits i.e. football and cricket began to diffuse in the rural and urban spots of West Bengal due to the course of urbanization. In general, the institutionalized sports of European origin were widely accepted, organized and played by the people of the state. After independence while the National Government as well as Sports Ministry patronized those sports began to spread in the adjacent urban and mofussil towns through the development of communication. Such is the story in brief, of the first encounter of two major sporting events in West Bengal. Culture is ever changing and transitory. With passage of time it undergoes evolution and transformation. So, the sports of Bengal have undergone various cultural transactions is very much evident. Due to this intermingling, the foreign sports have become inseparable part of Bengalee way of life, and in many cases these seem to be native sports of Bengal, too. (

Objective:

To find out the folk games of Bengal to archive these in this globalization era.

Methodology:

After completion of data collection at the villages as mentioned, data were collected from the Sub-Divisional town, Barasat and Kolkata one after another. The study is basically ethnographic and qualitative one. Hence, the established method of anthropological ethnography, like Participant Observation along with the Intensive Interviews (Structured), Case Studies, Questionnaires, have been used for the collection of empirical data. Furthermore, for collecting records, the textual data from the printed materials like books, magazines, newspapers, internet-sources, etc. were also utilized. All data as collected in this matter are likely to yield results with regard to the main problems of games and sports under urbanization and its socio-cultural transformations.

Ekka-dokka (hopscotch): It is usually played among girls. It is played with a round flat stone. A rectangle about three yards long and two yards wide is drawn. This rectangle is divided into six squares. The fourth and the sixth squares are each subdivided into two and these are crossed diagonally from side to side. The first player stands before the starting line and tosses her stone into the first square. Then she skips the first square, hopping to square number two and continues hopping up to square six. Then she turns around and hops back. She stops in square number two, picks up the stone, hops over square one and comes out. She continues playing by tossing the stone in square number two, and so on till the sixth square. All the hopping is done on one foot, except for those squares that are divided into two and drawn side by side. She puts both her feet down into the two squares with one foot in each of them. The player must hop over or skip the square where the stone has been placed. A player is declared 'out' if the stone fails to land in the appropriate (progressively higher) square, or the player steps on a line, or loses her balance while bending to pick up the stone, or puts her other hand or foot down or steps into the square into which the stone has been tossed.



Schoolgirls playing ekka-dokka

Goli (marbles): This game is played with glass balls or marbles. It is played mostly by boys. One can buy cheap beautiful coloured marbles. Each player has to have a *goli*. On even ground, a little hole is dug with the heel of the foot. The players position themselves about two yards away from the hole. Then they kneel down and try to send the marble into the hole. The marble is held tightly with the forefinger of the left hand. The finger is stretched back like a bow-string by the pressure of the forefinger and thumb of the right hand. When the finger is released, the *goli* goes forward, often overshooting the hole. One has to strike out of the way the *golis* thrown by the other boys or, with a gentle blow from one's *goli*, push the other *golis*, so that they drift into the hole. The latter then waits for his turn to strike his peer's *goli*. Whoever is the first to get all the *golis* into the hole, is the winner of all the *golis*. The game can take takes several hours, and can be very intoxicating; children can spend hours over it.



Playing goli

Lukochuri (hide-and-seek): It is very simple. A group of children often play it. They decide by lots who is to be/are to be, the police and who the thief (*chor*). The team of thieves is given time to hide themselves. Then it is the duty of the police to catch the *chors*. It is played from a very young age, first at home and then with friends outside. As soon as a *chor* is caught, the person who catches him shouts *Chor! Chor!* to indicate that he has been caught and is out of the game. A version of this game is *chor* police.

Dariabandha: Dariabandha is another popular game in the villages. In this game a field is equally divided with lines keeping equal distance from each other. Players are divided into two equal teams. One team stands in the starting line outside the field and each of the players of the other team stands on each vertical black line facing at least on opponent player. This player can move towards the horizontal line at a limited range. Players standing outside enter into the field one by one and try to pass across the field to the finishing point and have to return to the starting position. Thus the team wins the game. If any player in the opposite team touches anybody then the game reversed. This is one of the common games of 8-12 years old kinds of rural areas.



A scene from Dariabandha

Chhua-chhui (touch-me-touch-me-not): Two or more boys or girls usually play this game, one chasing the other. The child who leads touches a tree or a wall or any other chosen object. Then they run fast to the next chosen object so that they are not caught by the others. In this way they run from one object to another until they are caught while not in contact with any of the objects. When the chaser catches the chased, they switch roles.

Lattoo (top): When a boy grows up slightly, he learns the skill of the spinning *lattoo* (top). A *lattoo* is a beautiful pear-shaped toy of wood top made of wood (plastic ones are also available), with a metal pin at the bottom. This is set into motion by aid of a string, turned around the round surface of the top, with a hard jerk and releasing onto a hard surface to spin. The boy whose *lattoo* moves the longest wins the game and gets a chance to spin the *lattoo* of the loser. This is a game which can also be enjoyed alone for hours.



How a *lattoo* is held

Rumal chor (hanky thief): *Rumal chor* can be played with as many members as present. One of them is decided to be the *chor* (thief). The rest sit facing one another in a circle with their eyes closed or open for some time. Within this period the *chor* runs behind his friends and suddenly leaves his *rumal* (hanky) behind one of the sitting players. On some signal from the *chor* everybody starts looking for the *rumal* behind them. The one who finds it runs after the *chor* to catch him. The *chor* runs around in circle and tries to save himself from being caught and take the vacant seat of the person chasing him or her (with the *rumal*). If the *chor* is caught by the person with the *rumal*, he again becomes the *chor*; in this way the game continues. The more players, the merrier the game; the more number of players also means that the circle and hence the running area is more. Girls and boys can play this game together.



Rumal chor

Kumir danga (the crocodile and the bank): This is also an outdoor game. It can be played in a park or where part of the ground is higher. The terms used in the game are *danga* (land) and *kumir* (crocodile), the person who has to catch the other players. The game requires four or more participants, out of whom one is the *kumir*. All the participants stay on the *danga* (a designated area) and the *kumir* remains in the 'water' (the rest of the area). Whereas the members of *danga* try to roam around in the 'water', the *kumir* would not let the other players cross or stand in his or her area (water). If any of them is caught by the *kumir* in 'water', it is their turn to act as the *kumir*. The game is simple and enjoyable if the participants do not stick to their places for long and keep moving frequently from 'land' to 'water' and vice versa. You can help your mates by diverting the *kumir*'s attention by entering his/her area and teasing him/her while they cross over into each other's area.

Gulli danda (two sticks): It is played with a *danda* (stick) usually about two feet in length and a smaller piece of stick called *gulli*, which is about 4 inches. A groove is made in the ground in which the *gulli* is kept at an angle. Often a circle is made on the mud around where the *gulli* is kept. The *gulli* is hit with a stick and while it is in the air, the striker has to hit it with the *danda*. If the *gulli* is caught by the opponents in the air, then the player is out, otherwise the player and his team gets the points which is equal to the measurement of the distance traversed by the *gulli* as measured with the *danda*. While the *gulli* is in the air, the player can also attempt to toss it a few times with the *danda* before finally hitting it away. This is a great skill and enables the player to get the points as a multiple of the times he tosses the *gulli*.



A gulli about to be hit with a danda

Pitto, also called lagori: Children divide themselves into two teams. Both the teams stand at a distance of several yards from each other with seven or nine or eleven stones placed midway on a spot and piled up in the shape of a pyramid. A member of the first team takes a ball and tries to strike the stones to topple the pile. The player has to be given three chances to hit the pile. If the member of the first team fails to do so, the second team gets the ball to try. If the first team member manages to hit the pile but any member of the second team catches the ball before it bounces back to the ground, the ball will again be passed on to the second team for continuing the game. If the members of the second team fail to catch the ball, their aim is to stop the members of the first team from assembling the stones to form a 'pyramid' again. To prevent the first team members from doing so, the members of the second team try to hit the members of the other team with the ball. The members of the first team try to avoid contact with the ball. If the first team manages to re-pile the stones

without any of its members being hit by the ball, they again retrieve the ball to strike the stones, or else the ball is given to the second team to take their chance. This game inculcates team spirit among the players.



Pitto in full swing

Langdi tang or langdi (crippled leg): It is played amongst a group of children. They divided themselves into two teams of equal number of players. In a defined area one person from the first team hops on one leg (*langdi tang*) and tries to touch/catch as many players of the second team as possible. After that, a person from the second team tries to do the same to the first team. As a player is touched, he/she has to sit or wait outside. Whichever team loses all its players first loses the game.



Langdi

Raja-Mantri-Chor-Sipahi (King-Minister-Thief-Soldier): Chits are made for *raja* (1000 points), *mantri* (500 points), *chor* (0 points) and *sipahi* (100 points). These chits are then thrown in the middle and four players pick one each. The one who gets the chit with '*raja*' written in it then exclaims 'Who is my *mantri*?' The *mantri* responds, and he/she is then asked by the *raja* to identify the *chor* from the remaining two players. If the *mantri* guesses correctly, then he/she retains the points; else, the points are surrendered to the *chor*. Each round continues like this. The player with the highest points wins in the end.

Kanamachi (blind fly): A number of children stand in a circle. One of them becomes the *kanamachi*. He/She is called so because a piece of cloth is tied over his eyes and he cannot see. The children then gradually increase the circle, and the *kanamachi* runs after the others trying to touch one of them, as if buzzing around haphazardly like a fly. The children shout out the rhyme '*kana machi bho bho, jake pabi take chho*' (trans. from Bengali: Buzzing fly, catch whoever you can). The person who is touched has to be identified by name. If correctly identified, he/she becomes the new *kanamachi*, and it goes on.

**Kanamachi**

Kabaddi, also called *ha-du-du*: Kabaddi is sport where two teams occupy opposite halves of a small circular or rectangular arena, and take turns sending a 'raider' into the other half, to win points by tackling members of the opposing team; then the raider tries to return to his own half. The raider must not cross back to his own half unless he touches any of his opponents. If he does so then he is declared as 'out'. There is also a bonus line which ensures extra points for the raider if he manages to touch it and return to his side of the field successfully. The word 'kabaddi' is derived from a Tamil or Kannada word meaning 'holding of hand', which is indeed the crucial aspect of play. It is widely played in rural areas of India and Bangladesh. Now it has become an international sport, with World Cups being organized. Needless to say, India is the current champion in both the men's and women's versions.

**A kabaddi match in progress**

CONCLUSION:

These are just some of the more popular ones. There is no end to the number of these types of games and each can have its own variations. Children like to run, play, laugh and enjoy themselves. Hence, playing games comes naturally to them, and they should be proactively motivated to go outside and play, instead of being indoors all the time. Games involving much movement and running satisfy younger and older children's need to move and so develop their skills. Moving together, paying attention to one another, and adapting themselves to one another are skills that are developed by playing different types of games.

Children play a variety of indoor and outdoor games. These games also have a rich cultural and heritage value. They are an important vehicle for passing on some ancestral knowledge to posterity. According to Edgardo Civallero, "a people's intangible heritage is composed by the non-material part of its culture: tales and narratives, games and songs, music and all the knowledge usually transmitted by oral or sound means."



Echick-Bichik



Hari Vanga



Pith Jhappa



Panch Kori



Tik-tok



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