

# A Survey of Obsolete Traditional Games and Sports of North Bengal: A Historical Perusal.

BADAL ROY<sup>1</sup> & SUDASH LAMA<sup>2</sup>

*Department of History, University of North Bengal,  
P.O.NBU, Dist.: Darjeeling, West Bengal 734013, India.*

E-mail: lamasudash@gmail.com

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**ABSTRACT:** Traditional games and sports cultivate local and regional customs and strengthen the sense of national belongings. Locally or regionally rooted traditional games encourage exchange between districts and regions and preserve a sense of cultural identity by providing marks of roots and reference. In this paper, the researcher overview the obsolete traditional sports and games spread in the North Bengal rural and urban places. The researcher brings out the procedure of play (rules and regulation) with scoring methods, type of games, and purpose of play of traditional games. Most of the data were collected from the rural and urban people of eight districts in North Bengal, India. The researcher has selected the entire North Bengal and the data collected from the people who were played and come across in their lifestyle of traditional games. The methods used for collecting data are interviews, photos, and live play demo, etc. All together seventeen famous traditional games are played in the villages of North Bengal. These games were designed to develop skills such as logical thinking, building strategy, concentration, basic mathematics, aiming, and so on. While playing the games, the students learned and understood the spirit of sportsmanship. Obsolete traditional sports are evaluated from the North Bengal states of West Bengal. And found that, these traditional games and sports were played in the different regions in the previous era. This study concluded that traditional games which was the primary pastime activity of West Bengal, and carries moral value, cultural heritage and develops integrity among the people.

## INTRODUCTION

Traditional games have a great role in the growth and development of the health and psyche of children. But unfortunately, children of today no longer play outdoor traditional games; rather they are busy enjoying indoor computer games. The affinity of school-going children towards indoor computer games is highly affecting the growth and development of mental and physical health of the child and ultimately they become prone to various diseases at a young age (Proceeding,

<sup>1</sup> Research Fellow

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor (Corresponding Author)

2014). Thus, there is a great need to make them realize the significance of games and sports. Traditional sports refer to special cultural forms that come from the history of human beings, created or to be created (Ernest and Ryszard, 2013). They can reflect the common psychology of a nation and are seen in the everyday life. On this basis, it is suggested that nowadays when the global integration course is accelerating, to reform and to carry forward the traditional games as well as to enrich and develop the modern sports treasury of the world are the inexorable trend of the development of the traditional sports (Rehman, 2013).

### OBSOLETE TRADITIONAL GAMES

Obsolete traditional games are the disappeared sports that were played in the previous era in rural and urban areas for leisure hours or recreational activities (Thomson, 2014). Such as so many indigenous sports in North Bengal like Danguli, Ayabga-ayanga, Bhagbandi, Bouchi, Chikka, Chadar khela, Dariyabanda, Gaigodani, Golaptagar, Moghalpathan, Khadi khela, Kanamachi, Opentibioscope, Rajar kothal, Chunga khela, Moroglorai, Nunta, Chamri, Dhopkhela, Hatepate khela, etc for the rural, these terms may sound as though they are from some ancient civilization. These are the famous traditional games played in the villages of North Bengal. These games were designed to develop skills such as logical thinking, building strategy, concentration, basic mathematics, aiming, and so on. While playing the games, the students learned and understood the spirit of sportsmanship (Sanyal, '65).

### OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The objective of the study is to analyses the contents and features of the obsolete traditional sports in North Bengal and terms of historical origin, present situation, and developing prospect. Moreover, the researcher points out the interactive development of traditional sports and also finds out the relationship or interpretation of traditional sports. The main aim of this research is to bring out the obsolete traditional sports played in this region. This study may help to know about the cultural heritage of these traditional sports and games and it's important in this society (Lee and Schoenstedt, 2011)

### METHODOLOGY

The data and information on traditional games and sports were collected through direct interviews with the people in and around the rural area of various parts of North Bengal; especially the first covered almost all parts of the regions in North Bengal. North Bengal regions are divided based on geographical map structure in Sub-Himalayan North Bengal and plains in North Bengal.

### THE PROCEDURE OF COLLECTION OF DATA

The first author went to all 8 districts and covered at least seventeen rural and urban places in a district for collecting the data. The main procedure of the

data collection is the interview method, photos, and videos. The complete playing procedures from start to finish of the game, rules, and regulations with the scoring method of traditional games are collected. Thus, all information was recorded.

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

*Ayabga-ayanga* (the tiger and the goats) is a group game played by both boys and girls. A large circle is drawn on the ground. One player plays the role of the tiger and remains outside the circle, while the other players play goats and stay inside it. The player outside recites set rhymes and goes around the circle, trying to catch the players inside off guard. One such rhyme used in the game in the Jessore region is as follows: 'Tiger: Weep, weep'! Goats (in the chorus): What are you crying for? Tiger: Lost a cow. Goats: What sort of cow? Tiger: A redone. Goats: Does it have horns? Tiger: Yes. Goats: Sing a song. The tiger then starts dancing and singing: Who took my cow? Who took my cow? Come here, you who took my cow. Suddenly he stops short and jumps forward to drag one of the players outside the circle. The other players hold him back so that the tiger cannot take the goat away. The goats taken out of the circle by the tiger belong to the tiger's side. The last player in the circle becomes the tiger in the next round (Das, '91).

*Baghbandi* (capturing the tiger) a checkers-like game, played on a board outlined on the ground. The board has 16 squares. Twenty pieces, known as bakri (goats), are placed in groups of five at four places on the board. Two bigger pieces, known as bagh (tiger), are placed elsewhere. Two players, one taking the side of the tiger and the other taking that of the goats, start moving their pieces. The goats try to block the passage of the tiger, by not giving it two vacant positions in a row so that it cannot advance or jump over. If the tiger jumps over a goat to the next vacant position, the goat dies and was removed from the board. If the tiger kills all the goats, the player with the tiger becomes the winner. If the goats can block the passage of the tiger, the player with goats becomes the winner (Ahmed, '74)

*Bauchhi* (the old lady) this game requires two courts outlined on the ground, one rectangular and the other circular, twenty-five to thirty feet apart from

each other. Two teams of eight to ten players are needed for this game. One player of the team winning the toss plays the budi (old lady) and remains inside the circle. The remaining members of the team stay inside the rectangular court. The object of the game is for the player of the opposing team to take the 'old lady' to the rectangle, without being touched. If he can take the 'old lady' to the rectangle, the team earns a point, and the players he touches become out. Variations of the game are known as budikapati, baubasanti budir chu, etc (Bhattacharya, '69)

**Chikka** (tug and trip) this game of physical endurance is played by two teams consisting of five to seven players. The two teams line up facing each other across a line drawn on the ground. One player challenges one of the opposing players by stretching his hands towards him, in what is known as 'giving hetel (the handle)'. The other player catches hold of his hands and they start pushing or pulling in a bid to trip each other. The one who budges from his position is considered out. If a team can trip all its opponents, it earns points and starts the next round. Players also try to trip their opponents with their legs. If a team can trip all the players of the opposing team, it earns points and retains the round. The process is repeated by turns (Chakraborty, 2001)

**Chhadar Khela** (rhyming game) a counting rhyme game, it is played by boys and girls. The players sit on the ground, holding their hands open flat. The leader also holds out one of his/her hands and, touching each hand on the ground, utters the rhyme: ikdi mikdi cham chikdi/ chamer beta laksindar/ seje ela damodar. Everybody waits for the last word to be uttered. The player who is touched with the last word closes his/her hand. The game continues till the last hand is closed (Chakraborty, 2001).

**Chhi-chhattar** (the kite and the cocks) Ten to fifteen boys form a circle, holding each other's hands. One player stands in the middle of the circle. In the Rangpur areas, the child in the middle is called a 'kite', and the others 'cocks'. The kite tries to break free from the ring formed by the cocks. He frets and struts and recites the rhyme: chhi chhai ghoda dabai/ ghoda na ghudi, chabuk chhudi/ chabuk diya marlam badi/ dhula uthe kari kari (What a horse I ride! Is it a horse or a mare? When I smack it with a whip, it only raises row of dust). The player then runs out, breaking the

circle at a point where someone is off-guard. The cocks then run after him, and the one who catches him plays the kite in the next round. The cocks also recite a rhyme: Chhi chhattar kachur bai/ chyabgda pyangdar nana hai/ taker upar ayna/ punti machh khay na/. taker upar gosta/ chhonya dile dosta (What is this? I'm respected as grandpa by children. My bald head shines like a mirror. I don't eat tiny fish. If someone can touch my head, I become his friend). A variation of this game is played in the Himalayan region where it is known as chilla-daoma (Sanyal, '65).

**Chungakhela** (the crackers game) an adult game, played mainly in Jalpaiguri, on the eve of SAB-I-BARAT. The opposing teams try to hit their opponents with crackers. Sometimes the crackers cause burn injuries. The game is spectacular, with sparks and flashes of crackers, coupled with deafening sounds, amid cheers from the spectators. Starting from sunset, the game continues till midnight. This expensive and dangerous game is now almost extinct (Ahmed, '74).

**Danguli** (tipcat) a favourite boys' game played by two teams of five to six players. A two-foot-long stick, known as danda, and a five- to six-inch stick, known as guli or phutti, is used to play the game. There is a similar game in Europe called tipcat, where the longer stick is used to tip the 'cat', the smaller one (Sahay, 2013). The object of the game is for one side to strike the guli with the danda. The other side has to catch the guli before it falls. If the guli is caught, the player who has struck it is out. If the guli isn't caught, he continues till he is out. If he is out, the next player in the team comes in. One team plays after the other. The game is also known as dangbadi, gutbadi, tyamdang, bhyatadanda, etc (Bornikowska, 2015).

**Dariyabanda** (stealing the salt) This is a popular competitive game, played by two teams composed of five to seven players each on a square outlined on the ground. Several small squares are drawn inside the big one, depending on the number of players. One of the squares is called gadighar (team's chamber) and the other is called labanghar (salt chamber). At the start of the game, the members of one team stay inside the gadighar while their opponents stand in a way that no one can pass from one square into another. A member of the team darts forth or dodges past the players on guard and tries to cross all the cells and return to the gadighar. If one of the members

succeeds in moving across all the squares without being touched by the opposing team, his team earns points and wins the round. But if he is touched by the players of the rival team, his team loses the round. The other team then starts playing. At the end of the game, the points earned by the opposing teams are added up to decide the winners (Das, '91).

**De Pakhal** (turn him around) a game of formulaic questions and answers, played mainly by cowherds. One boy holds another around the waist and asks him a question. The boy then lifts his head and answers the question. One such rhyme popular in the Jessore region is as follows: teke re/ ki re/ kane giili/? Shvashur badi/ ki dekhe eli/? sholir pona/ dharli ne ken/? chhabal kole, tor chhabaler nam ki/? apang dulal, tor nam ki/? budo gopal, de pakhal (Hi, there!/ What's up?/ Where have you been?/ To my in-laws./ What have you seen? Young fish./ Why haven't you caught them?/ 'Cause I've my boy in my hands./ What's his name?/ Apam Dulal./ What's your name?/ Budo Gopal./ De Pakhal). As soon as the boy utters the last line, the rest of the boys grab him by the hand and start whirling him around (Das and Chatterjee, 2015).

**Gaigodani** (tending the cows) a game played by cowherds while tending cows (Paul, 2014). The sticks of the cowherds are the playing objects in the game, which is best played in wet, sticky mud. The game involves four or five boys around. One player flings down his stick so that it sticks in the mud. The next player tries to knock down the first player's stick or to fling his stick so that it is parallel to the first stick. If he succeeds in doing any of this, he wins both sticks. But if he fails, the first boy takes up his stick and plays again to win the second player's stick. The winner then tries to win a third stick from the third player. When he wins all the sticks, he starts throwing the sticks away one by one and sends the owners to look for theirs. In the meantime, he hides his stick. When the players find the stick of the winner, they touch it with their sticks. The one who touches the stick last becomes the gai (cow) and, as a loser, begins the game (Boro *et al.*, 2015).

**Golap-Tagar** a team game, with an equal number of players on both sides, and played by both boys and girls. The chiefs of the teams are called 'kings'. The teams stand fifteen to twenty feet apart, separated by a boundary. At the start of the game, the

king names his players after flowers or fruit. Then the king blindfolds one of the players of the opposite team and calls one of the players of his team by their flower or fruit name, for example, 'Come, my Rose', or, 'Come, my Jasmine'. Then Jasmine or Rose goes over and flips the player on his forehead. The blindfold is then opened and the player has to guess who touched him on his forehead. If he succeeds, he jumps ahead, and if he fails, the opponent's player does so. The game continues till one team captures the land of the other. The opposing team members then lift the winning king across the boundary. In another variation of the game, the members of the losing team carry the winning players' piggy-back across the boundary (Chakraborty, 2001).

**Mogalpathan** (draughts) also known as solaghunti, is a checkers-like game, with sixteen pieces on each side. The game is played with two additional triangular courts at both ends of the baghbandi court. The players place their pieces in the squares and move their pieces forward one position at a time. If a piece jumps over his opponent's piece to the next vacant position, the opponent's piece dies and is removed from the game. The one who kills the opponent's pieces first wins the game (Nakornkhet, '89).

**Nunta** (count till seven) In this team game, one player becomes the owner of a large circle outlined on the ground. At the start of the game, everybody remains inside the circle excepting the owner, who remains outside. The owner goes around the circle reciting nunta, a rhymed formula. When he finishes reciting the rhyme once, the players inside cry out 'one'. When the owner finishes reciting the rhyme for the seventh time, the players inside rush out of the circle and the owner takes possession of the circle (Das, '91).

**Openti Bioscope** is mainly played by girls. Two players face each other and touch their arms to form an arch. The other girls pass under the arch in a circular path reciting a rhyme until they come to the last line: amar nam Jadumani, yete habe anekkhani (My name is Jadumani, I have to go a long way). When the last line is uttered, both the girls bring down their arms on the girl passing under the arch at that moment. All the others then rejoice, holding the girl aloft (Kar, 2013).

**Rajar Kotal** (king's constable) a team game played by both boys and girls. The players sit in a circle, holding hands. One player, the king's constable, stays outside the circle. The game begins with him going round the players, reciting the rhyme: kantar pichhe ke ghure? rajar kotal/ kiser janye? ek chhadi kalar janye/ kal ye niya gechhila? ghoday mute diyachhe/ dhuya dhuya khao ni? chhi! hak! thu!! tabe ek chhadi niya yao (Who's behind me? The king's constable. What for? For a cluster of bananas. Did you not take one yesterday? Horses pissed on them. Eat them after washing. Wack! Wack! Then take a cluster from here). The constable then pretends to cut down a cluster of bananas and takes away one of the players. The constable begins circling them again, chanting the same rhyme. The game continues till the constable takes away all the players (Chakraborty, 2001).

#### OBSOLETE TRADITIONAL GAMES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The personality is the typical pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaviours that make a person unique. Personal development covers activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talents and potential, build human capital, and facilitate employability, enhance the quality of life and contribute to the realization of dreams and aspirations. Not limited to self-help, the concept involves formal and informal activities for developing others in roles such as teacher, guide, counsellor, manager, life coach, or mentor (Burgues Pere, '90).

#### CONCLUSIONS

After the analysis of the data, it was found that almost all the people agree that traditional games, recreation, and leisure sports have a rich culture and heritage value to preserve; they are important for passing on ancestral knowledge to the new generation; they sharpened observational and mathematical skills, and they develop logical thinking. The result from the people stated that these traditional games give more fun and joy than other competitive games; they are suitable for all ages, so they increase the interaction between generations; they are most suitable for girls to enhance their overall personality (Rehman, 2013).

All people support that, traditional games, improve the creativity of youngsters; they improve conflict management, team building, and understanding group dynamics; and they are more useful than modern games in developing children's skills (McMahan and Sutton-Smith, '99). The people agree that this traditional game produces integrity among the people, all the children and adults play in a street joined with all religious and all caste people together, it may result in that, it proves the integrity and unit among the people. The traditional games develop the social culture and heritage among the people. The traditional games plying in the different categories, such as some games plying in the seasonal, some are in the religious function, some are in the celebrations, some are in all years. The traditional games and sports with its varieties of plying throughout the North Bengal develop physical, mental, social conditions, and spiritual faith of mankind (Akbari, 2009). Traditional games and sports may be of different kinds but these are for personal, peace, community, human resource, learning, and understanding, uniting force development. Overall these traditional games are for fun, wellness, fitness, and social integrity (Bandyopadhyay, 2007).

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The modern generation should take efforts and pain to transfer the traditional games to its new generation.
2. We strongly recommend that the young and aged people should be taught and organize the traditional games for this new generation
3. Competitions focusing on traditional games should be organized to prevent and popularize traditional games.
4. All most North Bengal rural and urban people support that more efforts should be taken to promote and preserve traditional games. ‘
5. Govt. of West Bengal and Govt. of India should encourage a setting-up organization or provide assistance to maintain and promote traditional games.
6. Print media and electronic media should give exclusive more coverage to traditional games.

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