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## ***THODA : THE GAME OF THE WARRIORS***

*Thoda* is an ancient practice in Jaunsar Bavar area of Dehradun. It is a game of chivalry and masculinity played mainly by the people of the Rajput caste among the Jaunsari tribe. It is played on the occasion of *Bissu* festival. The game is played among the two major divisions or rather phratry of the Rajputs (also known as the Khasa) the *shaate* and *paashe*. The *shaate* are the followers of the legendary Kauravas and the *paashe* are the followers of the legendary Pandavas. These linkages are made because the Jaunsaris believe that they have resided here since the time of Mahabharat. The game of *Thoda* is a show of the expertise of archery. It is played with indigenously made bow and arrow. The players wear a specially prepared outfit and shoes. There are strict rules and discipline of this game. There is no scope for cheating and if any side breaks the laws it may end up in bloodshed in the earlier days, nowadays it is not so because of the implementation of the Indian Penal Code. The present paper is an experiential ethnographic account of this game. It shall also look into the significance of this game and try to trace its antiquity along with the changes that have occurred with time.

Anthropologists have focused on the importance of the study of folklore, which includes music and dance. This is so because these reveal a great deal about the culture and lifestyle of the concerned people. In this paper the researcher shall discuss a game played by the people of Jaunsari tribe of Dehradun district. The name of the game is *Thoda*. The important aspect of this game is that it is not merely a game but also a revelation of the social structure, and the cultural history of the people of Jaunsar Bavar. The popularity of the game among the people of this region shows the emotional attachment to this tradition of *Thoda*.

In Anthropology, a game is defined ‘as a recreational activity characterized by: (1) organized play, (2) competition, (3) two or more sides, (4) criteria for determining the winner, and (5) agreed-upon rules. Other recreational activities which do not satisfy this definition, such as noncompetitive swimming, top-spinning, and string-figure making, are considered “amusements.” It is relevant to note that most games reported in

the ethnographies are activities in which adults can participate. The games of the world may be classified in terms of distinctive patterns of play. Some outcomes are determined primarily by the physical abilities of the players, some by a series of moves, each of which represents a player's choice among alternatives, and others either by non rational guesses or by reliance on the operation of some mechanical chance device such as a die; some are determined by combinations of these patterns. All these ways of determining outcomes are widely distributed among the societies of the world, and it is therefore possible to offer the following general classification of games: (1) physical skill, (2) strategy, and (3) chance. Each of these three categories requires further definition. Games of physical skill as herein defined must involve the use of physical skill, but may or may not involve strategy or chance; examples are marathon races, prize fights, hockey, and the hoop and pole games. In games of strategy, physical skill must be absent and a strategy must be used; chance may or may not be involved. Chess, go, poker, and the Ashanti game of wari are examples. Finally, games of chance are so defined that chance must be present and both physical skill and strategy must be absent; examples are high card wins, dice games (Roberts *et. al.* 2013).

### **Methodology**

The present paper is based on the rigorous Anthropological fieldwork conducted in the three village of Kota, Majhgaon and Mehlod collectively falling into gram sabha Kuwanoo and Subdivision Chakrata of District Dehradun.

Before we discuss the game and its ramifications it is important here to discuss the theoretical frameworks of Anthropology of Sports and place the study in it appropriately.

This study is based on intensive ethnographic study which was both naturalistic and humanistic in approach. The researcher tried to conduct the study without disturbing the natural flow of the event and keeping in mind to minimize the influence of her presence on the players. The researcher conducted interviews of the players and also did case study of the players in order to understand the game better. It was found that the socio-economic, political environment greatly influenced the game so we tried to study these aspects also. Since the impact of information and communication technology is being experienced greatly on this game also and the pace of social cultural change is enormous the researcher also focused on the material culture involved in this game. A collection of the same was also made for museum purpose.

### **Review of Literature**

In his book 'The Anthropology of Sport : An Introduction', Blanchard has traced the major researches done in the past two centuries. A summarized version of his review is presented here, 'The treatment of sport defined here

as a game-like activity having rules a competitive element, and requiring some form of physical exertion, has generally been included within the broad category games in the history of Anthropology. During the early years of the discipline, the mid to late 1800 the evolutionists dominated the cultural anthropology literature. Nevertheless some of these nineteenth-century scholars found time to treat the functions of games in human society.

Sir Edward Tylor often called the father of Anthropology was one of the first social scientists to recognize the importance of games as a subject of scholarly investigation. Tylor realized that activities such as sporting events might provide the ant with imp clues about the nature of prehistoric culture contact. In a classic article entitled 'The History of the Games' (1879:63) he argued that while some simple and natural games (eg. Tossing a ball or wrestling) had 'sprung up themselves, 'there were others that were distinctly artificial' with some peculiar trick or combination not so likely to have been hit upon twice that can be traced from a common geographical center..... In the same article Tylor describes the history of polo and croquet. He also treats the significance of sport language its impact on other areas of a particular vocabulary its impact on other areas of a particular vocabulary and how ' Metaphors taken from sports may.....outlast their first sense.' (1879) For example he notes that English word Chicanery (trickery) is from the French *chicane* in turn a corruption of the Persian *chugan* a game played by hitting a boxwood ball with a long mallet similar to polo on foot.

Other nineteenth century anthropologist occasionally mentioned sport activities in ethnographies or within the context of general introductions to culture (eg. A.C. Haddon, 1898, *Study of Man*).

In 1962 ant Raymond Fogelson now at the University of Chicago wrote a Ph.D dissertation entitled 'The Cherokee Ball Game : A Study in Southeastern Ethnology'.

Another important figure in the history of Anthropology's interest in sport and games is Stewart Culin. Culin who has been called the major game scholar of the past 100 years..... In the field of Anthropology . .....His interest was first manifested in published form in his Chinese Games with Dice which appeared in 1889. In 1895 he published an important monograph entitled '*Korean Games with Notes on the Corresponding Games of China and Japan.*' Eight years later one of the most significant of the many articles he wrote on games and sports appeared in the American Anthropologist, 'American /Indian Games' (Culin 1903). In this short piece he classified these activities into two general classes: games of Chance and games of dexterity. In turn he divided the latter into five categories : games that involve (1) archer (2) shooting at moving targets (3) sliding javelins on the ground or ice (4) a ball and (5) racing. All of these can be legitimately defined as sports.

During the first five decades of the twentieth century occasional analyses of sports and games appeared in the Anthropological literature. In Germany Von Karl Weule published a lengthy article, 'Ethnologie des Sportes' (Ethnology of Sport), that appeared in a large volume on the history of sport in 1925. Weule approached the subject from the culture-history school perspective arguing that the primary focus of an ethnology of sport should be two-fold: (1) to trace culture particularly the sport aspect back to its beginning and (2) to put sport as an item of culture into its proper theoretical perspective.

Anthropologist Elsdon Best gave some special attention to games and sports in his ethnographic research. His 1924 two volume work, *The Maori* contains extensive description of the play activities of this new Zealand group. In turn these events were the subjects of a 1925 article that he wrote on 'The Games and Pastimes of the Maori.'

In 1931 noted British social Anthropologist Raymond Firth wrote a thirty-three page article in the professional Journal Oceania entitled 'A Dart Match in Tikopia: A Study in the Sociology of Primitive Sport'. In this he described the competitive dart throwing match of Old Polynesia.

In 1933 Columbia University Press published anthropologist Alexander Lesser's 'The Pawnee Ghost Dance Hand Game: A Study of Cultural Change'.

Another important contribution to the study of sport was Morris Opler's article on the Jicarilla Apache Ceremonial Relay Race that appeared in *American Anthropologist* in 1944. The following year he published a brief description of Japanese-style wrestling.

During the period between 1930 and 1960 the social science literature was occasionally graced by contributions from non-anthropologists who addressed sport-related issues of interest to anthropologists.

In 1939 Corrado Gini wrote an interesting piece on baseball and shinny as they were played among the Berbers in Libya of North Africa an article that was published in 'Rural Sociology'. Another important contributor to the ant understanding of sport and games during this period was folklorist Paul Brewster. Among his many articles on these subject was a significant one addressing 'The Importance of Collecting and Study of Games.' (1956).

Several scholars from the rank of Physical Education also added to the limited literature in this area describing the sport activities of particular primitive people (eg Dunlap, 1951; Stumpf and Cozens, 1947) and stressing the importance of looking at sport from cultural perspective (eg Federickson, 1960).

The year 1959 was a critical one in the history of anthropological treatment of sports and games. That year John Roberts, Malcolm Arth and Robert Bush published their seminal article entitled 'Games in Culture' (1959).

This publication one of the first systematic attempts in the discipline to delineate the constant features of 'Games' served to stimulate productive theoretical debate regarding the general role of play and the special role of sport in human society.

In 1960 produced a variety of ant pieces with sport themes. Typical of the period is ant Robin Fox's classic article on Pueblo Baseball: 'A New Use For Old Witchcraft' 1969. In this journal of American Folklore publication.fox describes the introduction of baseball into Cochiti Pueblo in New Mexico.

In 1964 presidential address to the American Anthropological Association, Leslie White (1965:633-34) gave some credibility to the the anthropological study of sport by suggesting that the discipline provided a viable model for the analysis of professional sport in the particular baseball which he saw as a vital expression of the American cultural system itself.

During the mid-sixties there was a greater tendency for ethnographic field workers to take notice of sport and play activities among the people they were studying and to include some of this material in their monographs.

In 1973 review of three sociological books on sport, anthropologist Joyce Reigelhaupt. Clifford Geertz is one of the premiere theoretician among contemporary American Anthropologists. In 'Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,' an article that has become something of a classic in the discipline.

Of equal importance to the coalescence of the anthropologist interest in sport during the 1970s was the work of Edward Norbeck In 1971 he wrote an article 'Man at Play' that was published in special Natural History supplement.

In 1973 Cheska organized a session on this topic for AAHPERD Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance. In 1974 The Association for Anthropological Study of Play (TAASP) was born. The organization had its 20<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in April of 1993.

The number of Anthropologists dealing with sport in their research and writing has increased dramatically in recent years: a reality witnessed in the volume of papers, articles and monographs (eg. Azoy, 1982: Blanchard,1981: James, 1984: Lewis 1992:Oxendine, 1988:Poliakoff, 1987).

'Although the anthropology has perceived sports as a research object with certain disciplinary delay, today we know that it can contribute importantly to the sports issues by producing original ad fresh understandings on sports whose significances can be best understood when we locate them through ethnographic enterprise. The appearance of few anthropological works and articles on sports (Blanchard 1995; Sands 1999; special issue 'Anthropology and sport' of the The Australian Journal of Anthropology 2002, edited by Catherine Palmer; Philip Moore 2004: 37-46) is a promising in a sense that

the link between the anthropology and the sport is possible and even productive. Thus, anthropological studies on sport have widened noticeably the field, firstly, by stressing the ubiquitous nature of sport (Blanchard 1995), and secondly, by showing that sport is culturally conditioned imaginary or social category that, along with material artifacts, social customs, and ideologies, is transported across cultural lines (Sands 1999). Also, by flavoring each and every national community, sport has become, as shown by Richard Lapchick's volume (1996), its own medium of communication, and has important ramifications for national, international and multicultural relationships (Kotnik 2009).

Blanchard has given the following objectives of Anthropology of Sport which are significant in any research study dealing with games

1. The definition and description of sport and leisure behavior from a cross-cultural perspective.
2. The study of sport in primitive ,tribal, non-western ,third –world and underdeveloped societies as well as in historical and contemporary western society
3. Analyzing sport as a factor in acculturation enculturation and cultural maintenance and adaptation to change
4. Viewing sport as a perspective on other facets of cultural behavior
5. The analysis of sport behavior in human prehistory
6. The analysis of sport language
7. Treating the role of sport in a multicultural educational environment
8. The development and administration of sport /recreation programs for special populations
9. The application of anthropological methods in the solution of practical problems in sport setting such as physical education, recreation and intramural programs
10. The development of constructive leisure time activities that utilize the sport model and
11. The creation of attitudes conducive to cross-cultural understanding. As Cozens and Stumpf (1951:72) have noted 'If Cultural ant teaches us anything it teaches us to look beneath the surface of what we see and to develop our tolerance of the other fellows pleasure (Blanchard 1995).

Preparation of the festival-The game of *Thoda* is played on the occasion of the Bissu festival. 'The festival of Bissu is celebrated for five days starting from Baisakhi. The people of the village paint their houses cattle sheds with a white mud called *Kameda* and rust colored mud *geru*. They clean up the wooden

houses by scrubbing it with ash and scrubber made of grass called *daab or kaash*. The male members collect all their weapons like sword (*talwaar*), axes (*danngra*), and bow and arrows. They decorate their houses with *buraas* (rhododendron) and then sing to the deities. Special dishes are prepared like Namkeenpudi (*kachodiya*) and *shakuliya*. This festival is celebrated in every village and *khat* (local sub-division) of Jaunsar bavar. In it besides dances and songs thoda is played. It is the center of attraction. It is based on the traditions of Kauravas and Pandavas and the bow and arrows are prepared accordingly. This tradition is observed to perpetuate the dignity of the warriors (Majumdar 1963).

In order to invite people inspite of their busy schedules they sing the following song

*Bissu khelda aaye jilotiye*  
*Bissu khelda aau,*  
*Mere naande balu o,*  
*Mei ghinu gaye o,*  
*Naandu balu peen deiya,*  
*Map deiya gaaso o,*  
*Maai diyo seedoru dhio,*  
*Baba diyo suro o.*

This means that people are being invited for Bissu fair and to play Thoda, So the person says how will I come to play Thoda I have small children and my cow is in milching stage, who will feed my children and who will give green grass to my cow. Then he says that I have requested my paprent to take care of them and my parents have allowed me to come. My mother has given me *Sidku* , *roti* bread and ghee and my father has given me *sura* (drink) and sent me for Bissu.

The song displays typical agrarian family duties in Jaunsar-Bavar and how people cooperate in family matters.

### **Game and Ritual**

The game of *Thoda* is played on the occasion of *bissu* festival. This is a five day festival. It begins with *Lagada*. Second day is called *bisauri*. The third day is called *Baiga ka bissu*. The fourth day is *sankrant*. Each new month starts on the *sankrant* in Jaunsar Bavar. Usually it falls in synchrony with the festival of Baisakhi, in the month of April. The fifth day is called *Bada Bissu*. It is on this day that the game of Thoda is played. The fieldwork was done in a group of villages called Kuwanoo. Here the festival usually falls on 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> April. On the occasion of *Bissu* the three villages Mehlohd, Kuwanoo and Kota celebrate together in a common ground near the village. In each of these villages the people of the village start from the *saanjhaaangan* of their

respective village in a procession. The game is played in the name of Lord Shirgul (a local god) The youngsters dance with bamboo sticks in their hands and the *baajgi* plays *dhol* and *damaanau*. One of them leads the procession with a holy spear in his hand. Then they collect at a common spot and put the holy spears under a tree where there is a small temple also. The festival commences. One of the major attractions of this festival is *Thoda*. The people of distant villages of Jaunsar Bavar and Sirmour region villages like Jakhna, Jubbal, Sarna etc. which is in Himachal Pradesh come to play it.

### **Space of the game**

The game is played in one corner of the ground. The village folk make a huge circle and the few who play the referee stand on one side. The game is played in the center of this circle. The people cheer their own players and shoot the opponents. Sometime they even use abusive words for the opponents. They also keep a watch on the players so that they do not break the laws.

In his monograph the Himalayan Polyandry D.N. Majumdar (1963) observes that '*Toda* play which is a mock performance of bow and arrow fight. Women sit around in groups, at a safe distance from the scene of the fight. Relatives from outside the village act as rivals. With their legs well shielded with woolen pads, the bow and arrow fights are a good training and test of war-man ship. Mock duels are fought alternately. Shooting above the legs is not permitted, violation of the rule often leading to serious fights.

### **'Thodai'- The Players**

The game is played among the two major divisions of the Jaunsari tribe. The two major divisions among Jaunsaris are *shaate* and *paashe*. The *shaate* are supposed to be followers of the Kauravas and the *Paashe* are believed to be the followers of the Pandavas. They play against each other. G.S. Bhatt 'The spatial –social structure of Shanthi and Panshi are partly mythical and partly political-cultural.....According to mythology people with cordial relation with Pandavas came to be identified as *Paathe* and those antagonistic and inimical to them as *Shaate* (Bhatt 2010)..

The major players of the *Thoda* are the Rajputs or the Khasas. It may be played by people of Brahmin caste and the Koltas but they play it with their own caste people. Here the only condition is that they play with the people of the other *aals* (lineage), The people of same *aal* cannot play against their kinsmen from the same *aal*.

When the people proceed towards the game field called *jubad* they move with joy and ecstasy. They sing aloud songs of brave heroes. These are called *Livor* or *Limbura*. There are two types of *Livor* one which are based on the fight between devta Shirgul and muslim rulers and the second base on *Shaate-Paashe* wars. For example



*The Paashe will sing  
 Phulo lo phultu jalti daai,  
 Dhaad liyayi shaathi ki baadiyo khaai—limbira o limbira  
 Kaali aayi baadli ringoli gijo  
 Shaathi ke gaao di podli bijo—limbira o limbira  
 Tungo ri lakdi kodua dhua,  
 Shaathi re bedo ra siyaana bhu—limbira o limbira*

It means that the *Shaate* steal others goods and divide the booty among themselves. The black clouds have surrounded the field and vultures have started swirling in the sky. It seems that thunderbolt has struck the opponents. If the wood burns it creates smoke. It seems that the sayana of *Shaate* is dead.

While singing this song they will proceed towards the field. Loud music is played on drums. The boys hold long sticks and dance and shout aloud. On their way they will keep challenging the opponents. The women who are dressed beautifully walk behind the young lads. This The opponents accept the challenge and the *Shaate* sing

*Dhaav shuni kubhiyan Jodi daara, uda pode mukhe thode malbekhe,  
 Shiga aai danda jubidi khe, teri dedva shaafdi chudi aa-aa  
 Kho shia uchala echa kaalpod, jesri bijo shi podi -aa*

This means that I am calling you to play *Thoda*. Hurry and come to the *Jubad*. I will break your bones. Do not jump so much that you will remain awe-struck and will be unable to move. As they approach the field their song and music becomes louder and excitement grows.

### **Rules of the game**

The rules for this game are very simple but at the same time the discipline must be maintained. The players have to hit below the knees and above the ankle. Above it is a foul. If any of the players break the rules the players take out their *daangra* (Axe). In olden days cheating in the game lead to bloodsheds but nowadays it is not so because of the implementation of the Indian Penal Code. But it can certainly lead to a verbal dialogue.

In olden days the game went on till one of the players quit and accepted his defeat. But now due to the game being turned into a tournament the winner is one who makes the maximum hits on the opponent.

### **Material Culture**

#### ***Dress code of thoda***

The players wear a lower garment like a *payjaama* which is made of wool, rucksacks, and is called *jhangal*. Some of the players even wear a leather

pad on their lower leg. On the upper body they used to wear a woolen shirt but now most of them wear a shirt. On the waist they tie a cloth called *maanji*. In this belt they also bear a *daangra* (hand axe). But now they wear a belt. On the head they wear a Gandhi cap.

D.N. Majumdar (1963) also observed that

'Men have also to make strong bows and arrows, required for the mock fights which are an essential part of this festival. Old socks, woolen pads for the legs, and other materials for this purpose are taken out, and repairs are made. Men try to keep their old weapons intact, year to year, but these have to be made anew for the younger people. The Koltas do not always have all these sets of huge and strong lower garments, *Jangel* and shoes, so they have either to use whatever they have, turn by turn, or borrow some from those of the other castes. The bajgis do not play with bow and arrows as they have to be busy all the time with their musical instruments. These bow and arrow mock fights are played *aal-wise*..... If some bajgis from the other not belonging to the same aal turn up on the occasion, the local bajgis may play with them. The Koltas, if they be more than one aal in the village, play among themselves, or with their guests from outside, but they never play with the Rajputs or with those belonging to the higher castes. As a rule the playmate for these bow and arrow mock fights are pre-arranged and no attempt is made to change them. All the partners are selected by mutual consent and arrangements.'

### ***Implements Used***

The bow is approximately 5.5 ft in length. Its stave is made of bamboo. Its string is also made of thin bamboo strip which is tied to the ends of the stave with strings. The arrow used for the purpose of *thoda* is also made of reed. The arrow measures approximately 2 feet. It is a simple arrow with a blunt metal tip. The arrow is placed on the string and pulled back. This requires a lot of strength itself.

### **Songs Sung during the game**

When the game is being played each player sing about his glorious lineage and about the bravery of his forefathers for example

*Het mera shate uri, het mera naaliya,  
Beta oso singa ra, ju bano urde kaago di gaadi,  
Jaaya oso khoshta, mera mara paani ne maago.*

This means that you cannot play *thoda* against me, no one can defeat me, I am son of Singa who was a great warrior, so swift as if he flew like a crow flies over the huge *baan* trees. I am son of a Khasa and One whom I hit and defeat cannot even ask for water.

Communication is also effected by games. We find certain Metaphors arising from the game of *Thoda* for example

*Jubad ujadna*- to challenge somebody

*Suthan laana*- to accept the challenge

*Gaashki laana*-to cheat

*Shori Kaatna*-To accept defeat

*Bissu ka bish*-to be extremely tired

### Significance of the game

According to Clifford Geertz games have a symbolic significance. *Thoda* is a mock-fight to upkeep the chivalrous traditions and the ethnic identity of the warrior clans. The oral literature of Jaunsar Bavar area reveals stories of chivalry of men, the aggressive nature of the men-folk. How they fought for the prestige of their family. They make reference to the historical fights between the different rivals, how they fought each other, how the opponents were defeated. In Jaunsar bavar the family history is remembered and it regulates the social behaviour, and relationships. The traditional rivalry is reflected in the game also.

Similar trend was found in other tribes also

‘Sport is an important aspect of cultural identity for New Zealand Maori migrants living in Australia. Maori sporting endeavors, especially at festivals such as the Taki Toa Tournament in New South Wales, often reveal distinctive Maori features of cultural performance, in the rituals prior to a game, in the spirited manner with which a game is played, and in the whānau (large/extended family) spirit of belonging and celebration that is encouraged after a game’ (Bergin 2002).

The nature of *Thoda* is very robust. It is a game of vigour and strength. It discloses the martial nature and character. The players need to have a lot of physical strength and endurance power. In a way it is a test of their masculinity. It was revealed that after suffering the blow of the arrow the players do not give up easily. The blow is so powerful that they get blood clots in the place of hitting. The players feel so much pain that they turn deaf for some time and cannot even hear the sounds of the *Dhol*.

It grooms the youngster in martial nature. It prepares them to deal with difficult situations. The winners of the game become heroes and gain fame. ‘The world of sport heroes is a world of creative enchantments because, in some moments, like flashes of intense light, athletes become mythical icons representing mastery over mortality. The heroic sports figures must be seen in their cultural context in order to understand their social meaning and their communal impact (Holt, Mangan and Lanfranchi 1996). Oriard (1993) has shown that the athlete-hero in America embodies the ‘land of opportunity’ and is, therefore the most widely popular and most attractive self-made man’ (cf. Archetti 1993).

### **Gender-Specific Game**

It is a gender specific game i.e. it is played only by men. The women may watch it but they do not play it. Thus it is a manly show. The reason being that the Jaunsari society is patriarchal in nature. Women occupy a respectable place in the Jaunsari society, but the need for physical strength and endurance for this game may have kept them away from *Thoda*.

This is an important and nonpartisan observation since it was realized that 'The practice of sports is 'gendered' and should be understood as expressing and articulating gender differences. MacClancy's (1996) analysis of female bullfighting in Spain is a case in point. He demonstrates how anthropologists have unproblematically accepted bullfighting as exclusively male in spite of the fact that over the last two centuries women have been bullfighters, taking the same risk and bearing the same scars as the male *matadores*. Brownell (1995, 1996) has demonstrated that the international success of Chinese sports women has made possible for them to represent the nation in a way that is unlike Western women's representations of their nations. The ability to endure pain and sacrifice as feminine values a re-part of the national discourse transforming Chinese women into national models. Sánchez León (1993) has analysed the gendered meaning of the two most popular sports in Peru. Football, a male practice, is related to freedom and improvisation, whereas volleyball, a female practice, is seen to display the sense of responsibility and discipline of Peruvian women (cf. Archetti 1993).

### **Social Stratification reflected in the game**

The Jaunsari people were declared to be a scheduled tribe in 1967 but they have always had a very rigid caste system. The hierarchy among the castes has until recently been strictly followed. Today it is one of the tribes with caste system.

'On the analysis of the composition of tier village population at our field centres, we found a three-tier structure in Jaunsar-bavar. Generally speaking, there are just a few stereotyped castes present in the village community, the hierarchial order of which may be arranged as follows:

- (a) on the top, there is a dominating group of 'high castes', including the brahmins and Khasas (Rajputs).
- (b) In the middle, there is a number of castes, which form an intermediate group, including Badi, Sunar, Jagdi, Nath, Lohar, Bajgi, etc
- (c) At the bottom, there is the low caste, which includes Koltas in general and at some places also Dom, Mochi, etc.

Although the caste hierarchy has its historical and geo-economic background, its general acceptance and currency have religious sanction. It

was due to a belief in divine dispensation that they secured the status differentials in Jaunsar-Bavar (Majumdar 1963).

This caste hierarchy was also evident in the *Thoda*. The main players are the high caste Rajputs. The game is not played among people of the same *aal* (lineage). The *shaate* play against the *paashe*. The Brahmins rarely play it. The *Bajgi* do not play it. Sometimes the *Koltas* may play but the *Koltas* of the *Shaate* will play against the *koltas* of the *pashee* not play it. But the *bajgis* and the *Koltas* can play only with people of their own caste.

### Conclusion

The theoretical conclusions we can draw from this game are as follows. Games are an important means of communication. It develops a unique linguistic metaphors and literature of its own in the form of songs etc. It establishes a relationship between the player and the audience, involving strong emotions and sentiments. It culminates with construction of new hero identities. It also constructs strong ethnic identities like in the case of *Thoda*. It is linked to prestige of the people. The gender issue is also important in Sports and reveal the attitude of the society towards the different genders.

Games also reveal the cultural history of the players. It shows the social structure of the society in which it is played including the social hierarchy. Games are also connected to rituals. The popularity of the game is utilized by politicians to gain advantage.

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