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HAUGUDU AND KORI KHEL: HERITAGE AND EVOLUTION

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Abstract

Since time immemorial, various traditional games have been being played in Assam as leisure time activity or on the occasion of different festivals. Initially, people were not competitive regarding these games. They usually resorted to frolicking after a day of hard work, to rid themselves of the physical and mental fatigue. Some of the folk games received royal patronage and were recognized as state games. With the passage of time, the rules for the traditional games were, to some extent, changed. Some of the games have disappeared over the years. On the other hand, some games have been modified and transformed. The games that were patronized by the Ahom rulers (Swargadeo), have been recognized as the state games of Assam. One such popular game of ancient Assam was Kori Khel. Usually played during Bohag Bihu, Kori Khel can be played by men and women of all age groups. This game was popular even in the inner circle of the Tai-Ahom royalty. Another game that was popular in ancient Assam was Haugudu. Young boys played this game by singing and forming a circle. As times changed, these games also went through various changes. It can be said that a popular game of the present times, Ludo is a descendant of Kori Khel and Haugudu was an ancestor of the now popular Kabaddi. This research paper makes an attempt to highlight the significance of Haugudu and Kori Khel in the Assamese folk culture and the evolution thereof.

Keywords: Kori Khel, Haugudu, Ludo, Kabaddi

0.01 Introduction:

Since ancient times, people have been playing games for relaxation and to express the joy of living. The specific history of the invention of those games is not available at present. Different types of games are prevalent in different human societies/civilizations. However, sometimes some common features can be found in games of different societies. In Assam

also, various games have been being played as a means of entertainment or as a part of celebrations. Initially, there was no competitive spirit among the participants of these games. People tried to rejuvenate themselves and freshen up their lives by means of such games, usually after a day of hard labour or in leisure time. Gradually, some games prevalent in the society received royal patronage and came to be treated as state games. The games were upgraded with proper rules and regulations in a disciplined manner. It can be said that, the history of sports in Assam started during the Ahom era itself. The Ahom Swargadeos (emperors) used to arrange various games from time to time in order to encourage the subjects of their empire. At those times, some local games such as Hau, Hafola, Xol, archery, Leskes, swimming, Kani-muni, Kori, Kosuguti, Ukuli-mukuli, Pasha, Ghila, KoniJuj (egg fight) were prevalent in Assam. A very popular game of ancient Assam was Kori Khel. It has been stated in history that this game was popular in even the inner circle of the Ahom royalty.

Similarly, another popular game was Haugudu, which was played by young boys by singing certain rhymes and forming a circle. With the passage of time, these games went through some changes. As time flowed, many of these popular traditional games became almost extinct and some other games gained new forms. It can be said that a popular game of the present times, Ludo is a descendant of Kori Khel and Haugudu was an ancestor of the now popular Kabaddi. This research paper makes an analysis of the heritage and evolution of traditional Haugudu and Kori Khel.

0.02 Purpose of Study and Significance: -

Sports is an important part of human life. In Assamese, traditional sports are often discussed as a component of folk culture, although research work regarding the same is quite less. The rhymes etc. related to the traditional games have been mentioned in various books on folk culture, but detailed analysis of the same has not been done. With the flow of time, many of these popular traditional games have become almost extinct and some other games have gained new forms. This humble research work is an attempt to analyze the change and transformation of the popular games of Ahom era- Kori Khel and Haugudu.

0.03 Method of Study: -

Analytical method has been applied in the preparation of the research paper "Haugudu and Kori Khel: Heritage and Evolution". Primary source of information was sports related books, research papers, and articles published in various magazines and newspapers. Secondary source of information were various articles available on the internet.

0.04 Area of Study: -

In this research paper, an introduction to Haugudu and Kori Khel will be attempted and an effort will be made to show how Kori Khel descended from the Pasha Khel of ancient times and the similarities of Kori Khel to the game of Ludo. Also, the evolution of Haugudu and the similarities of Haugudu with the games prevalent in other states of India will also be discussed in this research paper. Mainly, the heritage and evolution of Haugudu and Kori Khel will be discussed in this research paper.

0.05 Review of Literature: -

Earlier, some discussions have been made about Haugudu and Kori Khel in the books related to traditional games of Assam. A few articles can also be found regarding the same in the books and magazines related to Assamese culture. However, no book titled as Haugudu or Kori Khel have been found till date. Hence, an overview has been made of some books and articles published earlier on the subject, which were helpful in the preparation of this research paper-

English books=

Kate Greenary's "Book of Games" (1889) highlights some games played by children, such as Sila Khel (kite flying), Jopiuwa (jumping), Suwa-sui (game of tag), marble games etc. Pramila Pandit Barooah's book "Traditional Indian Games" (1998) discusses the traditional Indian games. Yavinder Singh's book "Traditional Games" (2005) discusses traditional Indian games along with games played by children. An article titled "Glimpses of Traditional Rural Sports in the North East" by M P Bazbaruah in the book "Rural Sports and Games of India" (2018) edited by Sangya Chaudhary.

Assamese books=

Dr. Nirmalprabha Bordoloi's book "Axomiya Lok-xangskriti" (1972) provides an introduction to Assamese sports and games in the article titled "Khel-Dhemali". A description of the games prevalent in Assam can be found in the book titled "Axomiya Xangskritir Kanika" (1996) edited by Narayan Das and Paramananda Rajbongshi. In the book titled "Axomor Krira Itihas- Thalu Tatha Paramparagat Khel Dhemali" (2015) edited by Chiranjeeb Sarma and Gahin Sonowal, about 350 Assamese games have been mentioned. Various rhymes sung along with the Assamese traditional games can be found in the book "Olouguti Tolouguti" (2016) edited by Upen Rabha Hakacham and Dhaneswar Kalita. Nagen Saikia's book "Axomiya Manuher Itihas" (2016) describes some of the ancient Assamese games.

Apart from these, articles related to games can be found in various monthly or fortnightly magazines and the daily newspapers.

1.0 Core Discussion: -

1.1 Introduction to the Game of Haugudu:

People often run, do somersaults or play team sports to express their joy. Over the years, some of the games that were originally played in the backyards, got modified and were played in the public playgrounds. In the past, the young men used to play Haugudu in the backyard or the fields by forming groups. Haugudu is also known as Hau Khel, Hau, or Gudu. In his book "Axom Gaurav", Professor Narayan Sarma has divided Haugudu into three different types, namely Lora Hau, DhoraHau, Bointya/Bonda Hau, in an article titled "Axomor Khel Dhemali". Mostly popular among the young boys, Haugudu can be played by following the rules given below -

The players divide into two teams and by holding in their breath, start running in circles and try to touch the members of the opposite team and sing the following rhyme till they run out of breath -

Haugudunugudumagurjali

Ghorarnaakedilutali

In some places, this game is played by only singing "gudugudu" continuously and trying to touch the members of the opposite team in the aforementioned manner. The one who can touch the members of the other team is the winner and if they cannot touch anyone, they rejoin their team. Apart from this, if the opposite team can capture them, or they run out of breath while singing, they get dismissed from the game. More than four players were required to play Haugudu.

Due to the geographical and natural differences, different human races have different characteristics and accordingly, different games as well. However, some games played in different regions of the world are found to be similar, although the names are different. The game of Haugudu was prevalent in Assam since the middle ages. It can be assumed that the cow keepers of ancient Assam invented the game for relaxation. It has been mentioned many a times that, a character of the Mahabharata, Krishna, played and danced with his friends, while they were herding. In the same way, it can be said that in the middle ages, the game of Haugudu was invented by young men who went to the woods or the fields for herding. Usually only the men went to the fields to feed the cattle, hence this game was not popular among the women who stayed inside their homes. During those times, this game was a means of entertainment and exercise for men, in mostly rural areas.

Haugudu, which was vastly prevalent in both the banks of the mighty Brahmaputra river, can be said to be the original form of the game of Kabaddi. Kabaddi also originated in India. According to the experts, Kabaddi was prevalent in India since the Vedic age. According to the popular belief, this game was popular among the Yadavas of the

Mahabharata era. In the poetry book "Abhang" by Maharashtrian poet Tukaram Maharaj, it has been mentioned that Sri Krishna played this game as a child. This game was also popular among the Kauravas and the Pandavas. However, the name Kabaddi was not prevalent at those times. Hence it can be assumed that the history of Haugudu is also ancient. As time passed, the game of Haugudu transformed into Kabaddi. Presently, Kabaddi is played all over India including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh. This game is known as Ha-du-du in Bangladesh. Haugudu is known as Chedugudu in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka, Wandikali in Kerala, and Jubbarghana in Punjab. Although the names are different, the rules for playing Haugudu and Kabaddi are almost similar. In the Assamese dictionary Hemkosh, Kabaddi has been described as an ancient game in which, one has to enter the ground of the opposite team and return, holding in one's breath the whole time. In the game of Kabaddi, the player chants "kabaddi kabaddi" instead of Haugudu. Kabaddi is a disciplined game of the modern times. In each team of Kabaddi, there are seven participants and five extra players. Similarly, the playground also has specific measurements. Apart from this, Haugudu was only played by young men, while Kabaddi can be played by men and women alike. Kabaddi was modified into a modern disciplined form in the year 1921 in Maharashtra. This game was played in the Olympics for the first time in 1934. Since then, Kabaddi has always been one of the popular games of India. The games of Haugudu and Kabaddi display the strength, courage, valour, skill and energy of the participating teams. These games are also helpful in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. In the ancient times, people maintained good health through the means of sports. In the present times, Kabaddi is available as a video game or mobile game. With the improvement in technology, the lifestyle of human beings today has also changed. That is why, the games that were earlier played in the fields or backyards are now played in stadiums. Mobile phones have become an indispensable part of human life. Children and teenagers are now more attracted to mobile games in comparison to outdoor games. Children from not only cities, but also villages are intrigued by video games. As a result, Kabaddi along with the other outdoor games are now available as mobile games. Nowadays, the games that were originally played in teams can be played by a single person in a phone. Hence, the physical labour and exercise essential for the original games are not required anymore. However, Kabaddi competitions are still organized in the playgrounds at present times.

1.2 Introduction to the Game of Kori Khel:

An important game among the traditional Assamese games is Kori Khel. This game was played by the young and the old, men and women alike. Apart from the popularity among the commoners, this game was highly regarded in the private chambers of the royal families too. This game had

different rules according to the age of players. This game requires four or six Koris (seashells). If Kori was not available, this game was played by the seeds of Karobi tree (*thevetia peruviana*) or plum seeds (*prunus domestica*). This game is played following different rules in different societies. In Assamese society, Kori Khel is played by either four or two players. The players draw boxes on paper or on the ground and with a specific movement of the hand, throw the koris (seashells) into those boxes, if the koris fall upside down, the game continues. Nagen Saikia has expressed his opinion in the book "AxomiyaManuhorItihas", page 341, that Kori Khel was brought to Assam by the aryan. Since seashells are found in the sea, it can be assumed that this game originated in regions nearby the sea. In Assamese dictionary Hemkosh, this game is described as a game played by four people with six koris.

In every region, the lifestyle of the people living in the region highly influenced their culture and their games. The relevance of ethnic festivals, religious activities and the natural environment are inherent in most of the traditional games. Kori Khel is held during Bohag Bihu (festival of spring). On the occasion of Bihu, the elders or the young men of the villages arrange these games in the Nam-Ghar or at someone's house. This game is related to the rural lifestyle of Assam and it gained popularity among the Ahom royalty during the reign of the Swargadeos (Ahom emperors).

Kori Khel is said to have originated from the game of Pasha Khel of 6th century. There is not much difference between Kori Khel and Pasha. The rules of playing Kori Khel and Pasha are quite similar. Paintings of Pasha can be found in the caves of Ajanta and Ellora, which proves that this game is ancient. In the Mahabharata too, it is mentioned that Shakuni defeated the Pandavas by means of a game of Pasha and took over their kingdom. Only the elders of the family took part in this game between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The game of Pasha can be played by two to twelve people. In ancient times, married couples also played this game as a leisure time activity.

It is mentioned in the Manasa Kavya that Lord Mahadeva played Pasha with goddesses Ganga and Durga-

Ganga Durga LoiyaGoxaainKhele Pasha Xari

Heno Bela JaanDilaFulerPoxari

(ancient Assamese literature)

Since games and sports are a part of folk culture, many folk songs and beliefs are involved with the games. Along with the history books, the Bihu songs also mention Kori Khel from time to time-

Deuta Oi Kerela Bengena Saak

Dhal Kori Khelute

Dodaideu Ghorote, Muror Xulokile Paag

(traditional Assamese bihu song)

Kori Khel was also mentioned in the novel "Miri Jiyori" by Rajanikanta Bordoloi - "mother and son are seared, facing each other and playing seashells. Women are naturally skilled in throwing the seashells. By holding six seashells with one thumb, she threw five of them and gained ten points by aiming for ten points." (Second Chapter, near the town of Lakhimpur)

(Translated from the original Assamese novel)

The aforementioned examples provide evidence that Kori Khel was prevalent in Assam since time immemorial.

Kori Khel also involves some ancient beliefs in Assamese folk culture. People believe that by playing Kori, Indra Dev (god of rains and thunder) can be provoked. As a result, Lord Indra Dev gets aggravated and makes it rain. Therefore, villagers often play Kori Khel in the time of Bohag Bihu in the hope of heavy rainfall and fruitful harvest. Symbolically, Kori Khel is related to fertility and procreation. In primitive society, seashells were used for religious purposes too. Seashells are used in astrology practices and prediction of the future, even today. They are used in witchcraft practices and are also used as protection for children from various diseases, according to traditional beliefs in rural areas. Apart from these, seashells were also used as currency in ancient times.

There are many similarities between the traditional game of Kori and the popular game of Ludo of modern times. In the year 1896, Pasha was modified and transformed into Ludo. Therefore, Pasha, Kori and Ludo can be termed as cousins. Ludo can be played by two to four people. Just like people played Pasha or Kori in the older times, likewise, nowadays people play Ludo as a pastime. The game of Ludo requires strategy which activates the brain cells. The players need to play carefully and save their own ludo pieces by rolling the dice.

In present times, Ludo is available as a mobile game. Nowadays, Ludo boards are no longer required to play Ludo. People can be found playing this game for relaxation while waiting for someone, during train or bus journeys, or during leisure time in the colleges or at home.

Although Ludo is very popular presently as a mobile game, the tradition of Kori Khel is found to be continued in some places of Assam till today. It is admirable that the tradition of playing this game related to the rural lives of Assam is still being maintained. The villagers of the Amguri Diksu-Nopam Maut village of Sivasagar (a district in Assam) arrange this game of

Kori from the first day of the month of Sot (last month of the Assamese calendar) till the eve of Bohag Bihu (Bohag is the first month of the Assamese calendar). The residents of this village are maintaining our tradition and also helping in introducing the new generation to our culture.

Although Kori Khel was played all over Assam, the rules for playing the game were different in different regions. In Lower Assam, this game was mostly played by women and girls, whereas in Upper Assam it was mostly played by the elderly people.

2.0 Conclusion:

Games and sports are a part of our daily lives and sports greatly help in the development of our physical and mental ability. People all over the world have been arranging various games since ancient times. In present times too, sports are regarded as an important part of society. Besides, mobile games such as Ludo and Kabaddi are very entertaining and intriguing for people of all ages. These games have been developed according to the needs of the changing times and changing human mindset.

3.0 Decisions Derived:

1. The game of Haugudu has been being played in Assam since ancient times. This game gained popularity among the youth as a means of displaying physical strength and valour. The popular game of modern times Kabaddi is a disciplined form of Haugudu.
2. Kori Khel was prevalent in Assam as a form of the ancient game of Pasha. Initially this game was brought to Assam by the Arians. With the course of time, this game got dissolved in Assamese folk culture.
3. The game of Ludo originated from Pasha and Kori. Nowadays, Ludo is mostly played as a pastime.
4. Mobile games such as Ludo and Kabaddi are very entertaining and intriguing for people of all ages. These games increase mental exercises among people but reduce physical movement. As a result, mobile games cannot provide us with all round development like physical and outdoor games do.

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