



## A JOURNEY OF INDIAN SPORTS CULTURE

**Saoji V.**

Director of Physical Education,  
 Govt. Vidarbha Institute of Science & Humanities, Amravati (M.S) India

**Abstract:** India had a very cultured society of sorts around 2500 B.C. the pre- historic period and has had a long history of sports. Hindu religion has always given prime importance to physical fitness and perfection. India is well known as a native place of Indus Valley Civilization. Weapons like bow and arrow, the famous bow Gandiva- Archery, the famous sudarshan chakrs- Discus, toran- Javelin, Mallayudhha- Wrestling, Bharashram- Weight-Lifting, Bharamanshram- Walking, The dagger-A sharp pointed knife, the ace, sword fighting hunting, swimming, boating, horse riding, running, Ball games and Yoga were the major sports played and nurtured in ancient India. Chess- Chaturanga- Shatranj, Cards- Krida Patram- Ganjifa, Chaupar, Chandel-Mandal, Pachisi, Chaugan-Polo, and Martial Art-Judo- Karate are originate in India. These ancient Sports are a gift to the modern era. Traditional as well as local games like Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Kushti, Gulidanda have been a part and parcel of India's great culture, in pre independence period many modern sports like cricket, tennis, badminton, volleyball also came into existence. All these games are played in all over India, further developed by foreign countries and took place in Olympic Games. The trend of Guru-Shishya the modern Teacher -Pupil relationship was traced in the epic period of Ramayan and Mahabhatata.

**Keywords:** Sports Culture, physical education, traditional games, wrestling, hunting, horse-riding, epic period, Vedic period.

### **Introduction:**

India has a very old and rich culture of sports. Many traditional sports are mentioned in ancient scriptures. According to suitable environment of particular culture, different cultural sports are promoted through generation to generation. In Ancient India Traditional games were played not only by keen sports person but also by every member of the family in leisure time to maintain physical fitness. A large number of regional games have been played right from many centuries in India. The most popular traditional indigenous games that are played even today.

### **Pre-Historical Period (2500B.C.):**

India has a sports culture from ancient times it founds in the Vedas and Indus Valley Civilization. Archaeological excavations at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa revealed the presence of a highly developed civilization around 2500 B.C. The city Mohenjo-Daro was well planned and organized, it showed the art of magnificent baths, baked bricks houses, ornaments bronze furniture and seals show that the art was highly developed. There was the hydropathical establishment with open

square area with varandas on all sides and a number of galleries and rooms. This quadrangle contains a swimming pool about 39\*29\*8 feet with steps at one end.

Gambling was a favorite pastime of the people. In this era children used to play with whistles, rattles and clay models of men and women, animals, birds and even household articles. They retain many of their old customs and traditions from which they were mainly hunters and engaged in dancing for celebrations.

### **Vedic Age- (c 2000-100B.C.):**

Vedic period had a rich tradition of sports and games, mainly played for maintaining physical fitness. In Vedic period people were very tall, strong and fair skinned and not entirely vegetarian. They enjoyed gambling with dice, music, poetry and singing is the part of their cultural activities, skilled in use of bow and arrow, spear, battle axe. They also played variety of games marbles, balls and dice. Hunting, swimming, boating. Boxing, horse riding were also some of the major sports played at that time.

An important development took place at the end of Vedic period which has affected the present day course of physical education in

India. The ancient India claims to have been the origin of Pranayama, Yagaasana, a series of physical exercise known as Suryanamaskara, this was an integral part of ancient Indian culture.

#### **The Epic Age (c 1000-600 B.C.):**

This age covered with the period of Mahabharat and Ramayana. This period was one of the grate period of conflicts and blood shade. This period lead physical training directly toward military training like archery, javelin, spear throwing, fighting with swords. However wrestling, swimming, boating and hunting were some of the major sports played and nurtured in India. Lord Krishna is said to be an expert with his Discus- Sudarshan Chakra. Arjun was expert in Archery-the famous bow Gandiv. At that time wrestling was known as Mallayuddha.

The guru shishya trend i.e. teacher-pupil relationship started at the time of Ramayana and Mahabharat. The gurus took their shishya with them and introduce them archery, wrestling, horse riding, weight-lifting-Bharashram, walking-Bharamanshram, hunting, chariot racing and military tactics. Weapons war, the javelin (Toran) and discus (Chakra) were used for sports.

In 7th century B.C. Takshashila was a modern university of that time. 103 students were enrolled in this university, these students are divided in to groups of 20 and trained under a skilled teacher. They were the specialist of archery.

#### **The Historical Period (6th Century B. C.):**

This was the time of birth of Buddha. This period (560B.C.) was called historical period because India was increasing with confidence. The Buddhist movement under Gautam Buddha and Jain movement under Bhagwan Mahaveer influenced on social life and education in India, Buddhism and Jainism both preached and practiced non-violence. In fact Goutam Buddha kept himself healthy by exercise.

Despite of the teaching of Buddha, fighting was continued. But in the peace time people kept them busy in training by wrestling, boxing, running, jumping, spear throwing,

horse riding. The renowned Chainsaw traveler Hieun Tsung wrote about the sports activities like fighting, wrestling, running, archery and ball games which were popular among students of Takshashila and Nalanda. In 5th century A.D. more than 5000 students were enrolled in Nalanda University and they received a careful attention by a daily practice of pranayama and suryanamaskara.

#### **Medieval Period:**

Nearly two hundred years up to the beginning of 13th century Rajput's Kingdom regained supreme, they were devoted to physical training and military art. In this period the Rajputs tried to excel in the use of arms and in Nobel horsemanship. Another favorite pastime on horseback was throwing javelin for accurate marksmanship for they required great skill of body balancing and controlling at the same time. Wrestling was the most popular game of the people, the wrestlers were known as "Jaitis" and the wrestling arena was called as "Akhara". Hunting, and spring hunting, bow and arrow were also popular.

#### **The Muslims and Their Pastimes:**

This was the period of conflict and blood shade. The Muslims rulers had lavish palace and courts and enjoyed outdoor as well as indoor games

In 226 to 641 A.D. Persians played the game Chaugan (Polo). The old polo grounds are still to be found at Bilaspur, Haripur, and Bidar. Akbar himself was a skillfull exponents of Chaugan. Muslims Emperors gave a royal patronage to wrestling. Almost everyday Akbar watched wrestling bouts. Outdoor games like Swimming, Boxing, Hunting, Animal fight, Gladiatorial combats and indoor games like Chess, Chaupar, Chandel-Mondal, Pachisi were played in that period..

Chess originated in North-West India during Huri domination (A.D.455-543). It was known as Chaturanga/ the Army Game/ Shatranj. This game became very popular in Jahangir's region. Chaupar, Chandel-Mondal, Pachisi were invented by Akbar these were his favourite pastime games and he was a keen player of these games.

After 1192 and 1526, the Mughal history boasts about such sports, as the Mughal Emperors were patrons of hunting and wrestling. The Agra Fort and the Red Fort were the popular venues of many wrestling bouts in the times of Emperor Shah Jahan.

#### **Maratha Period:**

In the last spell of the Mughal Emperors the religious sentiments of hindhus were hurts. Many efforts were made to destroy the Mughal Emperors. During the rule of Maratha Emperors, Chhatrapati Shivaji's guru, Samarth Ramdas, built several Hanuman temples all over Maharashtra, for the promotion of physical culture among the youth. In the period of Chhatrapati Shivaji's Maharaj and The Peshawas the movement of establishment of talimkhanas, Vyauamshalas and Akhadas was started in each and every village. Some were already in existence but many patriotic people started it with the aim of national re-generation through physical training. For self-defense people were trained through exercise such as lathi, benethi, use of sword and spear, mallayudhha, dandand baithakas etc. while dand, baithakas and folk dance were a regular feature of programme. Some of the vyayamshalas are in existence till today.

#### **Sports in Modern Era**

The present day concept of coaches is also considered to have it the history of traditional sports in India. The Guru-Shishya trend or the Teacher-Pupil relationship in the ancient India is believed to be the initiator of contemporary coaching concept. The Gurus in ancient India used to teach various Indian traditional sports to their Shishyas like archery, chariot racing, wrestling, hunting, horse riding, weight-lifting, hammer-throwing, swimming, Javelin Throw (toran) or the Discus Throw (chakra). Another Indian traditional sport,

Sword fighting is also believed to be the ancestor of modern Fencing. These traditional sports were played quite extensively in different parts of India and they are being played in India in present days, as well. Some of these games have also made their way to the regional and international tournaments like Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games, SAF Games, etc. These sports are considered among the most notable ones in the history of traditional sports in India. They have made themselves a hallmark in the world of sports, as well.

Traditional Games in India like these have always been a part and parcel of India's great culture. The improvised modern games actually trace their roots back in India. And surprisingly, these traditional games have yet not lost their touch, but actually kept their existence alive, even today. If taken a look minutely, most of these games are played all over the world.

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