

Indigenous Games and Its Influence on Contemporary Art-Form of India

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Art is a space, here every being has adopted various skills and activities to express and exhaust creative ideas. Human utilises capabilities in order to creatively perform and to make an impact among others. A sense of competition arises from within in every individual in order to experience differently. Many times man attempted to use 'creative skills' just to feed curiosity. Exploring the unknown space is in every being. This act is one of the reasons for the evolution on earth. This state of mind has the quality of playful gaming mind. Playfulness and games are known from the time unknown. Games are eternal. Every living being have the quality of playfulness- as an infant or as a newly born. Every living being is curious to understand nature through its own experience. Everyone jumps, run around, flip and turn around to get the understanding of their capacities. Indigenous games have evolved differently reflecting upon its immediate surroundings and cultural factors.

Karnataka being rich in natural environment having plain land, mountains, hills, lakes, rivers, sea, flora and fauna have flourished. It has supported man to create various kinds of indigenous games made it popular and games stood strong for centuries. Each game has various versions according to their requirements and environment.

*Algulimane*¹, *Anekallu*², world famous Chess/*Chaduranga*³, *Chowkabara*⁴, *Goli*⁵, *Kannamuchhale*⁶ and *Maneata*⁷ are indigenous

games that can be played by using basic and easily available tools and pawns. These games can be packed in a small pouch and carried while travelling long distances. Probably, this is the actual reason for its successful existence for thousands of years.

Indigenous games have taken thousands of years to evolve and to reach to its present form. Indigenous games remained among civilizations to prepare an individual and educate most of the survival capabilities of negotiate, sustain and to win games. These indigenous games travelled thorough the silk routes and acquired many players interests and transformed and emerged into versions of games. For example, indigenous *Chaduranga/Chaturanga* a board game of India and became Chess in European countries. Is it believable to see another board game *Algulimane* to be seen as *Mancala*⁸ in Africa? Yes, this board has existed in its original forms in India and in Africa. African version of *Mancala* has even numbers houses and odd numbers of houses in *Algulimane*. One of the *Mancala* has 184+ houses in 7 to 8 feet long single board.

Anekallu a games of five stone is practices in India and also in eastern countries. Steve Craige and Iona and Peter mentions about various games played with stones in their books and publications. One of the noticeable stone games is about five stones played by tossed, collecting and catching stones. These

¹ A board game played with 70 seeds.

² A game played with five pebbles, usually played by girls and women.

³ A board game that has all elements of army in India: King, Queen, Elephant, Camel, Horse and Soldiers. Only India had these many varieties of domesticated animals used for war zone. Chess is indigenous to India.

⁴ A board game played using dice in twenty five square (many versions exists).

⁵ An outdoor game usually played by boys using round pebbles made of glass.

⁶ A games of hide and seek played by children in group, usually inside house.

⁷ Young children play individually as well as in groups, imitating their surroundings.

⁸ An indigenous board game of Africa, just like *Algulimane* of India.

characteristics of a game are all in indigenous game *Anekallu* in India.

Goli/Pebbles can also be considered as a game belongs to India. Because there are artefacts/remains from Harappa cultural sites, terracotta pebbles have been found and it's been identified as *Goli*.



These Clay *Goli*/Marbles are made by the Researcher Scholar, to understand the form.

Chowkabara is another board game which is isolated in India. Till now we have not found any sites or artefacts being found in any cultural sites across civilizations. But there is a portion of *Pagade*⁹ in Egyptian civilizations. In *Mahabharata*¹⁰ we get many references about *Pagade* being an important game. *Pagade*'s board has four wings and four players can play this game. But the Royal Game of 'Ur' from Egyptian site has just one wing as a full game and recently rediscovered about the way it can be played by Dr. Irving Finkel in Victoria & Alber Museum, London.

*Kannamuchhale*¹¹ a game of hide and seek, *Maneaata* is a kind of game/play related social behaviour has made its respectable space among every country or village. It has its own versions imitating its surroundings. Some of these versions are on how one mother takes care of a child while cleaning them, dressing, feeding them or while making their children sleep. Sometimes a child plays with their imaginary child holding any object or by holding a doll. All these are acceptable by adults around the child, parents or grandparents don't worry about their state of mind. Many times groups of children get together and plan who will play/act as a mother, a father, children, dogs, doctors, bus conductor, auto driver or a police. Then, children try to imitate whatever they observe and they

all spontaneously and dramatically compose a story and perform accordingly without laughing or breaking the flow in between the act. In actual they assume that they are the chosen characters and perform seriously according to the situation, even after knowing that they are just playing. This is a beautiful state of mind for children to have. This prepares children to their future through sensitive parameters of natural behaviour.

Every child tries to assemble observed knowledge in correct scenario to suit the situation. Puzzle has existed in every situation of human life. All these behaviours in bits and pieces of children behaviour is like a puzzle for a child. Art has always helped human creative skills to flourish. Various forms of chiselled pillars and stone slabs has always come together to build ancient temples from thousands of centuries. Architecture or a rock cut architecture, whether it's a roof or a floor or every corner of ancient temples the idea of puzzle has been an important aspect.

The idea of puzzles has been with visual & performing artists for centuries. Now in contemporary time, popular visual artist from Mysuru, Rani Rekha's 'The Missing piece' a painting is one such example. She has used black space for a missing puzzle's piece to represent the connection between two people.

Yugashri Anandappa a Bengaluru based Print Maker is working with children from past a decade, recording thinking or imagining patterns in children through visual languages. She has worked on series of line drawing with respect to games.

Elements of games have been part of the story-telling whether it is through a cinema or an advertisement. Games and its elements represent the positivity, challenges, being healthy, being happy, being together and being focused. To promote commercial products add agencies have taken the support of games.

In our contemporary popular cultural activities *Dasara*¹² festival is most popular in Mysuru district of Karnataka. One of the important features of *Dasara* is to show case dolls and toys for the duration of nine days usually in the month October of every year. Earlier in 80's there were every kind of toys, dolls were showcased and worshiped. But in recent trends only dolls are given the importance but not for the

⁹ A board game in the form of symbol + (plus)

¹⁰ An epic from India

¹¹ A games of hide and seek played by children in group, usually inside house.

¹² A festival celebration for nine days in Mysuru, worshipping goddess Chamundeshwari.

actual toys, tools and equipments. Every passionate doll collector is collecting dolls from every corner of India supporting indigenous doll makers. There is an important role in reviving vanish ancient doll making techniques. In 21st century doll collectors have shown interest towards plastic made dolls (Barbie dolls dressed in costumes of India) to display in traditional festivals. Material culture is also taking its backseat because plastic, plaster of paris, fiberglass have replaced, wood, clay and natural material dolls.

As we understand about material culture in India, artefacts are usually made using only materials that are capable to transmit good vibrations and materials that have *ayurveda*¹³ qualities in it. Colours used for toys making was from natural materials and wood was specifically chosen and treated till wood is safe to be used by children. Now, it is important to understand the material effects on children before including any new materials in toys manufacturing.

Kinnala dolls, fruits and vegetables made using wood locally known as *Polaki*-a light weight variety of wood, *has* evolved through the centuries from Hampi in Karnataka. *Kinnala* artists remember that their ancestor were the descendants of painters from Hampi dynasty. They were using minerals and natural materials to prepare paint for the murals on walls of the caves. Once Vijaynagara Empire migrated towards Mysuru, *Kinnala* artists continued to make dolls. These artists still exist in few villages and towns of Karnataka. But now in the situation of contemporary commercialisation artists are rarely using natural colours only on demand from clients. Even government has extended their support to enhance and to revive these wooden toys. All these are contemporary scenario in the field of indigenous games and toys. Because of promotions and support from society there is a noticeable improvement in the popularity of indigenous games. Even board games are slowly gaining its space within the families and friends. Even manufacturers are giving much better importance even for the materials used and also decorating it with relevant colours and forms to attract children.

While being and after the pandemic, urbanites have realised the importance of quality time with family

members. As a result antique board games and street games are reappearing among society and urbanities are celebrating life with indigenous games of India.

REFERENCE

- [1] Steve Craig, Sports and Games of the Ancient, 2002, Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data.
- [2] Iona and Peter, Children's Games with Things, 1997, Oxford University Press.

¹³ A medicinal practice from ancient India. Ayurveda doctors use only herbs and minerals as medicine with precise combination of ingredients.