Ashim Roy  
Guest Lecturer, Dept. of Sanskrit, Mathabahanga College, Westbengal.

ABSTRACT
Since ancient time, the relationship between the Guru (teacher) and the student (disciple) has always been considered as an integral part of Indian sport. Indian games & sports reached a peak of excellence when Buddhism held sway here. In Villas Mani Majra, Tiruvedacharya describes many fascinating games, namely, Chess, Cards, Snakes & Ladders, Mancala, Archery, Equitation, Hammer-throwing, Chariot-racing and many more. In Manas Olhas (1135 A.D.), Someshwar writes about bhrasram (weight-lifting), bhramashram (walking) and also about Mall-Stambha (wrestling). It is noticeable that many of today's Olympic disciplines are sophisticated versions of the games of strength and speed that flourished in ancient India and Greece. Chess, wrestling, polo, archery and hockey (possibly a fall-out from polo) are some of the games believed to have originated in India. This paper attempts to provide some insights into some of these games & sports that were popular in Ancient India.

KEYWORDS: Sports, Games, Ancient India.

INTRODUCTION
The history of sports in India dates back to the Vedic era. There were well-defined values like the mantra in the Atharva-Veda, saying, "Duty is in my right hand and the fruits of victory in my left." In terms of an ideal, these words hold the same sentiments as the traditional Olympic oath: "...For the Honour of my Country and the Glory of Sport..." The founders of the Olympic idea had India very much in mind when they were deciding on the various disciplines. There is an amazing link between Greece and India which stretches back to 975 B.C. The zest for chariot-racing and wrestling is and was common to both the countries. Many of the present day Olympic disciplines are sophisticated versions of the games involving strength and speed that were common in ancient India and Greece.

Most traditional games & sports of India were transmitted to foreign countries, where they were developed further. Some such games include Chess, Snakes and Ladders, Playing Cards, Polo, the martial arts of Judo and Karate. Particularly, the games of chess, ludo (including ladders and snake), and playing cards, now familiar across the world owe their origins in ancient India and Greece.

Games in Ancient India
Chess
The famous epic Mahabharata narrates an incident where a game, Chaturanga was played between two groups of the warring cousins. The age when epic Mahabharata was written is variously dated around 800 BC to 1000 BC. In some form or the other, the game continued till it evolved into chess.

Chess originated in ancient India and was known as Chatur-Angra - Meaning 4 bodied, as it was played by 4 players. From this name we have its current name Shatranj. The word Checkmate has its root in the Persian term Shat Mat which means 'the king is dead'. The Sanskrit translation of this would be Kshatra Mruta. Another term, 'the rook' which is the name for one of the counters used in chess, originated from the Persian term Rookh which means a soldier. The Persian terms according to sources are derived from the Indian term Rash, which obviously seems to have originated in the Sanskrit word Raksh which means a soldier from Raksha which means 'to protect'.

The Indian origin of the game of chess is supported even by the Encyclopaedia Britannica according to which, About 1785-89 Sir. William Jones, in an essay published in the 2nd Vol. of Asiatic Researches, argued that Hindustan was the cradle of chess, the game having been known there from time immemorial by the name Chaturanga, that is, the four angels, or members of an army, which are said in the Aamarakosha (an ancient Indian Dictionary - S.B.) to be elephants, horses, chariots and foot soldiers.

Another version says that the game of chess was originally called Ashtapada (sixty-four squares). "Ashtapada" in Sanskrit denotes a spider - 'a legendary being with eight legs' and this game was played with a dice on an 8×8 checkered board. 1000 years back, the squares weren’t black and white like we see in the presently used chess board. Other Indian boards included the 10×10 Dasapada and the 9×9 Satrakramkat. Later this game came to be known as Chaturanga. The Sanskrit name Chaturanga means ‘quadrupartite’ — the four Angas (divided into four parts) which symbolize ‘the 4 branches of the army.’ Like real Indian armies at that time, the pieces were called elephants, chariots, horses and foot soldiers.

Unlike modern chess, Chaturanga was mainly a game of chance where results depended on how well you rolled the dice. Played on an authentic cloth by 2, 3 or 4 players, Chaturanga combines the basic strategy of chess with the dynamic challenge of chance as each move is determined by the random roll of a wooden dice. In fact, in the Mahabharata, Yudhishthira and Duryodhana played a version of Chaturanga using a dice. The game Chaturanga was a battle simulation game which rendered Indian military strategy of the time.

Cards
The popular game of cards originated in ancient India and was known as Krida-Patram. These cards were made of cloth and depicted motifs from the Ramayana, Mahabharata along with ancient artwork. The tradition is still carried on today with floral motifs and natural scenery. This game was patronized especially by the royal and noble class. In medieval India, playing cards were known as 'Ganjifa' cards and were played in practically all royal courts. It is recorded to have been played in Rajputana, Kashyapya Meru (Kashmir), Utkala (Orissa), the Deccan and even in Nepal. The Mughals also patronized this game, but the Mughal card-sets differed from those of the ancient Indian royal courts. According to Abul Fazal’s (Author of the Ain-e-Akbari) description of the game, the following cards were used. The first was Ashwapati which is the “lord of horses”. The Ashwapati which was ranked the highest card in the pack, represented the picture of the king on a horseback. The second represented a General (Senapati) on a horseback. After this card came ten other cards with pictures of horses from one to ten. Another set of cards had the Gajapati (lord of elephants) which represented the king whose power lay in the number of elephants. The other eleven cards in this pack represented the Senapati and ten others with a soldier astride an elephant. Another pack had the Narpati, a king whose power lies in his infantry. The other cards were known as the Dhampati, the lord of treasures, Dalpati the lord of the squadron, Narapat, the lord of the navy, Surapat, the lord of divinities, Arsapat, the lord of genius, Fanapat, the king of the forest, Abhapati, the lord of snakes and so on. Based on reports by Abul Fazal, we can say that the game of playing cards was invented by sages in ancient times who took the number 12 as the basis and made a set of 12 cards. Every king had 11 followers, thus a pack had 144 cards. The Mughals retained 12 sets, and so they had 96 cards. The Mughal Ganjifa sets have representations of diverse trades like Nakkash painter, Mujallid book binder, Rangruey, dyr, etc. In addition to this, there were also the Padishah-i-Qimash, the king of the manufacturers and Padishah-izar-i-Safid, the king of silver, and many more. The pre-Mughal origin of the game of cards is evident if we examine the pattern of painting on the cards. We also find that despite the observation of Abul Fazal that Akbar introduced the pack with 8 sets, we find that even earlier, in Indian (Hindu) courts we have packs with 8, 9 and 10 sets apart from the usual 12. The numbers were derived from the eight cardinal directions. Ashtadakapala, for the pack with 8 set, from the nine planets Navagraha for the one with 9 sets and from ten invocations Dashavatara of Vishnu for the pack with 10 sets. The largest number of such cards are to be found in Orissa. The painters from Orissa have represented various illustrations like the Navagunjara, a mythical bird-human animal which was the form assumed by Sri Krishna to test Arjuna’s fidelity. Illustrations from the Dashavatara of Vishnu are also portrayed All these cards were hand-made and were painted traditionally. This required considerable patience and hard meticulous work. The kings usually commissioned painters to make cards as per their preference. The commoners got their cards made by local artists who were found in urban and rural areas. In order to obtain the required thickness, a number of sheets of pieces of cloth were glued together. The outlines of the rim were painted in black and then the figures were filled with colors. As cards were played by members of all strata of the society, we find a variety...
Kalaripayate claims to have been the origin of Judo and Karate. Similar to karate was Martial arts known as Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala), Sri Lanka and Malaysia. This game is also and remember the number of coins or seeds accumulated by the opponent. This is that the newer sian board games. Early references to dicing can be found in the Ṛig Veda as well ger. Dicing is believed to have later spread westwards to Persia, influencing Per-
The oblong or cubical dice (akṣa) is the precursor of the more primitive some dating back to the third millennium BCE, which were used for gambling. The British took the game to England in thinking. Two players compete on a board consisting of between seven and twenty pits per player; each player has to collect the coins or shells or seeds with which the game is played, the player with the maximum number being the win-

The game serves a dual purpose: entertainment, as well as dos and don’ts, divine and religious variations. It was very popular among women and required a good memory and alertness, as they had to count and remember the number of coins or seeds accumulated by the opponent. The British took the game to England in 1892 and named it Snakes and Ladders and changed it according to Victorian val-

The game serves a dual purpose: entertainment, as well as dos and don’ts, divine reward and punishment, ethical values and morality. The final goal leads to Vaikuntha or heaven, depicted by Vishnu surrounded by his devotees, or Kailasa with Shiva, Parvati, Ganesha and Skanda, and their devotees. In this age of moral and ethical degeneration, this would be a good way of teaching values to children who think they already know more than their parents.

If paramapadgam teaches moral values, pallankuli develops skill and quick thinking. Two players compete on a board consisting of between seven and twenty pits per player; each player has to collect the coins or shells or seeds with which the game is played, the player with the maximum number being the win-

Mancala If Paramapadgam teaches moral values, Mancala (Pallankuli) develops men-
tal skill and quick thinking. Two players compete on a board consisting between seven and twenty pits per player; where each player has to collect the art of making and painting cards, the memory that Indians played the game of cards with their own specific representations of the Narapati, Gajapati and Ashvapati was forgotten-

Snakes & Ladders The game had its origin in India and was called Moksha Patam or Parama Padam or Mokshapat. It was used to teach Hindu Dharmula and Hindu values to children. The British renamed it as Snakes and Ladders. The game was created by the 13th century poet saint Gyandev. The ladders in the game represented virtues and the snakes indicated vices. The game was played with cowrie shells and dices. Later through time, the game underwent several modifications but the meaning is the same i.e good deeds take us to heaven and evil to a cycle of re-

The game of mancala is also believed to be of Indian origin. It is a board game played on a square board (Mancala), and is also well known in Persian culture (Molk). Mancala is an ancient traditional Indian sport. It is played in different parts of India and is also popular in Persia. It is similar to the game of draughts, but differs in that the pieces are not captured when they land on an opponent’s territory. The game is played by two players, each sitting opposite each other. The board consists of twelve rows of seven holes each, arranged in a circle. Each player has a set of seeds, which are placed in their respective starting positions. The game begins with each player taking turns to move their seeds by jumping over the opponent’s seeds, capturing them in the process.

The game of mancala is also believed to be of Indian origin. It is a board game played on a square board (Mancala), and is also well known in Persian culture (Molk). Mancala is an ancient traditional Indian sport. It is played in different parts of India and is also popular in Persia. It is similar to the game of draughts, but differs in that the pieces are not captured when they land on an opponent’s territory. The game is played by two players, each sitting opposite each other. The board consists of twelve rows of seven holes each, arranged in a circle. Each player has a set of seeds, which are placed in their respective starting positions. The game begins with each player taking turns to move their seeds by jumping over the opponent’s seeds, capturing them in the process.

Mancala Mancala is an ancient traditional Indian sport. It is played with seeds and, as the name 'Mancala' means 'a gymnast's pole', it is named after the gymnast's pole that is used in the sport. Mancala is a simple yet challenging game that requires strategy, planning, and quick thinking. The objective of the game is to create a sequence of moves that will allow you to win the game. The game is played on a square board consisting of twelve rows of seven holes each, arranged in a circle. Each player has a set of seeds, which are placed in their respective starting positions. The game begins with each player taking turns to move their seeds by jumping over the opponent’s seeds, capturing them in the process.

The game of mancala is also believed to be of Indian origin. It is a board game played on a square board (Mancala), and is also well known in Persian culture (Molk). Mancala is an ancient traditional Indian sport. It is played in different parts of India and is also popular in Persia. It is similar to the game of draughts, but differs in that the pieces are not captured when they land on an opponent’s territory. The game is played by two players, each sitting opposite each other. The board consists of twelve rows of seven holes each, arranged in a circle. Each player has a set of seeds, which are placed in their respective starting positions. The game begins with each player taking turns to move their seeds by jumping over the opponent’s seeds, capturing them in the process.
Kalari Payattu

Kalari is the Malayalam word, for a special kind of gymnasium, where the martial art known as Kalari Payattu, is practiced. It had its origins in the 4th century A. D. Legends claim, that the art began with the sage Parasurama, who possessed mystical powers. He built temples and also introduced other martial arts that have influenced and shaped many other arts. The art reached its zenith in the 16th century.

CONCLUSION

Ancient India had a rich tradition of games that were played and passed on through generations and cultures for not only leisure but also to develop mental capabilities and maintain physical fitness. During ancient times, physical fitness was given prime importance, especially by the kings and the higher-class warriors. Here we discussed some well-known indoor & outdoor games that took birth in the soils of Ancient India, many of which are still actively played throughout the world.

REFERENCES