

# TRADITIONAL CHILDREN'S GAMES OF BIHAR

*Sarita Sahay*

**Abstract:** This article aims at exploring how children, particularly in rural areas of Bihar, an economically poor but culturally rich state of India, enjoy their leisure with limited resources available to them. Broken bangles, tamarind seeds, old clothes and even hard covers of old notebooks become sports equipment and a source of enjoyment for them, especially for those who cannot afford buying expensive goods.

**Keywords:** Bihar, India, traditional games, limited resources, oral tradition

## INTRODUCTION

A game is a situation that involves two or more players, and in which each player faces a choice between, at least, two behavioural options and strives to achieve the greatest payoff possible (Michener 2000). It is a natural consequence of what it means to be human. Through games, we express ourselves (Hyland 1990; Mead 1962).

All games have certain criteria such as a goal, chance, competition, common experiences, equality, freedom and no impact on reality, and depending on the game, people are engaged in some activities, such as thinking, planning, decision-making, concentrating, timing their minds and gaining knowledge. In addition, in all the games, some or all of the players have fully or partially opposing interests, which causes the behaviour of players to be proactive and strategic. Thus, all the games become sources of moderate exercise, either physical or mental or even both, and the exercise is essential for all of us. The benefits of games are twofold. Firstly, the health-improving impact, which results from moderate exercise, and secondly, the relaxation for a few minutes or a few hours enables us to forget the outside world of today completely (Tunis 1944).

## BIHAR: LAND AND PEOPLE

Bihar, one of the states of India, is situated in the north-eastern part of the country. Its capital is Patna. To the north of Bihar is the kingdom of Nepal. Bihar is surrounded by three Indian states: Uttar Pradesh to the west, Jharkhand to the south and West Bengal to the east. The people of Bihar are called the Bihari.

The name Bihar derives from the Sanskrit word *vihara*, which means 'abode'. The Buddhist Viharas, the abodes of the Buddhist monks, dotted the area in the ancient and medieval period.

Hindi, which is spoken by more than 90% of the urban population, is the official language of Bihar. In addition, Hindi, Bhojpuri, Magahi, and Maithili are also spoken mainly in the rural areas.

The state is blessed with three well-defined seasons: the winter season from November to February, the hot period of summer from March to mid-June, and the rainy season from mid-June to October. The temperatures in December and January fall at times close to the freezing point, while those in May rise above forty degrees. According to the Indian Census Report (2011), the population of Bihar is 103,804,637 and the density of the population is 1100 per sq km. The literacy rate in Bihar is 63.82% only.

More than 80% of the inhabitants of Bihar are the Hindus. The Muslims constitute a larger minority group than the Sikhs, Jains and Christians, who are also part of the population of the state.

The economy of Bihar is mainly based on agriculture as well as trading activities. The chief crops are rice, barley, maize, paddy, sugar cane and wheat. The state is also a large producer of freshwater fish. Almost 80% of the total population of Bihar live in villages. The state has very low literacy rate. According to the World Bank report (Report 2010) Bihar is one of the poorest states of India; yet, a new reform implemented by the government of Bihar and backed by the World Bank funding and technical support is helping to reduce poverty.

Sites of religious and cultural interest are found throughout the state of Bihar. The state attracts visitors due to its importance in Buddhist religion. Nalanda is famous for being the seat of the ancient and celebrated Nalanda Buddhist monastic university. Pawapuri is the place where Lord Mahavira, the founder of the modern Jain religion, supposedly attained *nirvana* (heavenly abode). Likewise, Gaya is an important place of pilgrimage for the Hindus. Buddha Gaya (Bodh Gaya), where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment, is considered to be the holiest place in the world by the Buddhists. Rajgir is another holy place for both the Hindus and the Buddhists. Takhat Shri Harmandir Sahib, the birthplace of the last (tenth) Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh, in Patna city, is a holy place for the Sikhs. Bihar is an important pilgrimage destination for Buddhists from India and across the globe.

The *Chhath* is a major festival of Bihar and is celebrated a week after the *Deepawali* (the festival of lights). The *Chhath* is dedicated to the worshipping of the God of Sun. People in large numbers hold Chhath Puja at river banks and the festival is celebrated across Bihar. During the festival, married women observe a fast for 36 hours and devotees offer wheat, milk, sugarcane, bananas and coconuts to the Sun. The ritual bathing is performed twice: in the evening and during the dawn, usually in the knee-deep water of a river (Bezbaruah 2003: 11).

*Teej* and *Chitragnpta Puja* are some other local festivals. *Teej* is an old festival, dedicated to Goddess Parvati, and is celebrated for the well-being of the spouse and children, and the purification of one's own body and soul. The festival is a three-day-long celebration that combines the features of feasts and fasting (Bezbaruah 2003: 11). The *Shravani Mela* of Sultanganj, organised in July and August, is of great importance for the people of Bihar. The Sonapur cattle fair, held approximately fifteen days after the *Deepawali*, is the largest cattle fair in Asia. In addition to these, all the major festivals of India are also celebrated in Bihar, such as the *Makar Sankranti*, the *Sarswati Puja* (to worship the goddess of knowledge), the *Holi*, the *Eid-ul-Fitr*, the *Eid-ul-zoha*, the *Muharram*, the *Mahashivratri*, the *Buddha Purnima*, the *Rakhi*, the *Mahavir Jayanti*, the *Durga Puja*, the *Lakshmi Puja*, and also *Christmas*.

## CHILDREN OF BIHAR AND THEIR GAMES

Playing games is a common characteristic of children all over the world. However, Riess (1989) finds that the rising income level due to the development of the industrial radial city and diverse social values have resulted in different leisure options for different social classes. Due to the growing demands for higher academic achievements and concerns about safety issues, children's time available for unrestricted free play has decreased considerably (McMahon & Sutton-Smith 1999). Parents in Bihar, just like any other parents, no matter how uneducated they might be, also realise that games and physical exercises are essential for the growth of their children. They try to organise activities pertaining to games within very limited resources. Inability to provide expensive gadgets makes them fall back to traditional games. Parents insist on their children's playing outside home. Though it is not institutionalised, it is customary that evening hours (5 p.m. to 7 p.m.) remain game-hours for each child. In hot or cold climate, in open space or crowded parks, in cities or villages, in streets or playgrounds children jump, run, hide, chase each other, and sing and laugh wholeheartedly.

In schools<sup>1</sup>, as a rule, the last period of the day remains fixed for games. Games played in schools offer to the children an opportunity for socialising with the members of various teams, be it from the same class or the same school or other schools. But not all the students are so fortunate as to get a chance to join the school team so that they could take part in interschool tournaments.

In Bihar club-culture is negligible. It is difficult for the children to join any club and play cricket, tennis or badminton for that club. Besides, poor kids cannot afford to buy expensive tennis rackets, nor are tennis courts available to them. Among the modern games only cricket is popular.

Although children play both indoor and outdoor games, the evening hours are generally meant for outdoor games. However, they play simple but expressive games through which they develop a sense of victory and defeat as well as amplify the traits of leadership. There are numerous traditional games played not only in Bihar but also all over India. The selection of the game is based on the availability and number of other children, sports equipment and the age-group of the children. They save their pocket money for buying sports items; however, the majority of them cannot afford anything expensive, so most of the items they play with are not very costly. Girls generally play with the items available at home. They prefer to spend their pocket money on coloured ribbons, nail polish, ear tops, etc. Again, there are many games which do not require any money.

Some games require a group of boys and girls whereas others are played either by girls or boys only. Irrespective of the location chosen for playing – school or home or elsewhere – games are designed to provide fun and entertainment. In addition, games help to inculcate physical and mental control among the participants.

Below the author gives an overview of some popular games played by boys and girls in Bihar, which were selected in view of their popularity. There is hardly any printed or published literature describing these games. However, descriptions of some games such as *kabaddi* and *pachisi* are available on the Internet.

Information about these games was gathered from field visits and personal childhood experience. The described games are chosen from those which are most popular among children. It should be noted that some of these games are also played in other parts of India with minor alterations in the format and a few of these games are played by adults as well.

### **TEER-DHANUSH (BOW AND ARROW)**

One of the oldest games played is the *teer-dhanush* (arrow-bow), with the bow made of split bamboo and string and arrows from thin bamboo sticks. A target is chosen on a wall or tree and boys shoot arrows to hit it. During one of the biggest traditional festivals (ten days long), the *Dussehra* vendors sell colourful bows and arrows on the roadside or at fairs organised in villages and towns. Generally boys under the age of twelve play this game. The game regained popularity after the telecast of some TV series, such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, based on great Indian epics and mythology in the 80s and 90s of the last century.

### **EKHAT-DUKHAT (HOPSCOTCH)**

It is played with a *thippi*: a broken piece of an earthen pot, about an inch-and-a-half in diameter, or a round flat stone. A rectangle about three yards long and two yards wide is drawn. This rectangle is divided into six squares each about a foot wide. The fourth and the sixth squares are each subdivided into two and these are crossed diagonally from side to side.

The first player stands before the starting line and tosses her *thippi* into the first square. Then she skips the first square, hopping to square number two and continues hopping up to square six. Then she turns around and hops back. She stops in square number two, picks up the *thippi*, hops over square one and comes out. She continues playing by tossing the *thippi* in square number two, three, four and so on in subsequent steps. All the hopping is done on one foot, except for those squares that are divided into two and drawn side by side. She puts both her feet down into the two squares with one foot in each of them. The player must hop over or skip the square where the *thippi* has been placed.

A player is declared OUT if the *thippi* fails to land in the appropriate (progressively higher) square, or the player steps on a line, or loses her balance while bending to pick up the *thippi*, or puts her other hand or foot down or steps into the square into which the *thippi* has been tossed.

This game is popular among girls. They play this game during recess at school. Two, three or more girls from the neighbourhood get together to play this game at a place near their homes in the evenings. Sometimes boys also join them if they have no other game to play.

### **GOLI OR KANCHEY (MARBLES OR GLASS BALLS)**

This game is played with glass balls or marbles. One can buy beautiful coloured marbles from shops. The game is so intoxicating that boys often deserve a thrashing from their parents for spending too much of their time playing it.

Each player has to have a *goli*. On even ground, a little hole is dug with the heel of the foot. The players position themselves about two yards away from the hole. Then they kneel down and try to send the marble into the hole. The marble is held tightly with the forefinger of the left hand. The finger is stretched back like a bow-string by the pressure of the forefinger and thumb of the right hand. When the finger is released, the *goli* goes forward, often overshooting the hole. One has to strike out of the way the *golis* thrown by the other boys or, with a gentle blow from one's *goli*, push the other *golis*, so that they drift into the hole. 'Ah! *Goli mari!*' is the excited cry as one's *goli* succeeds in striking another boy's *goli* aside. The latter then waits for his turn to strike his peer's *goli*. Whoever is the first to get all the *golis* (balls) into the hole, is the winner of all the *golis*. This game takes several hours. Children in one street or lane play this game under the shadow of big tree, usually near their homes. At the end of the game, there is always the danger of a big bully snatching all the *golis* of the smaller boys, unless the bully has won the game.



**Figure 1.** Children playing kanchey. (Source: [http://t2.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRKBYrZ\\_QMdTi866C17e-YJGl7qRxbthMIO\\_qHcxgctFBOI6zBF](http://t2.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRKBYrZ_QMdTi866C17e-YJGl7qRxbthMIO_qHcxgctFBOI6zBF))

### **LOOKA-CHHIPI (HIDE AND SEEK)**

Children start playing this game at a very early age. Two-to-three-year-old children play this game with their mothers, grandmothers or elder sisters. A child is asked to close their eyes with the palms of their hands and the mother hides somewhere. Then she calls the child to come and find her. The child runs here and there and everywhere in search of the mother. If the child finds the mother within a limited time, they laugh; if not, they burst into tears. When the mothers sees the child crying, she comes out, or sometimes when she senses restlessness in the child she partly reveals herself so that it becomes easy for the child to find her. This game becomes funny when the mother closes her eyes and the child is asked to hide. The innocent child declares loudly, "Grandma! Don't tell Mom that I am hiding behind the cot". The grandmother too, tells jokingly, "No! I will not tell her that you are hiding behind the cot". The mother, knowing exactly where the child is, runs here and there, to the veranda and into all the rooms and the child enjoys watching her run. Other members of the family also enjoy watching this game.

When a child grows up, they find that this game requires more skills when played with a group of their peers. They can be so clever at hiding themselves that the finder roams about, trying to locate the others, following the sounds they make but does not succeed. It is because by the time the finder reaches the place where the shout appeared to have come from, the one hiding has already moved to another place. The child who covers the eyes of the finder keeps the palms tightly on the finder's eyes, until everyone has gone hiding. Usually the youngest child is chosen to find the older ones.

Sometimes this game is used as a trick by the older children when they do not want to play with the younger ones. They ask the younger child to close their eyes while facing a wall or a tree and count from one to a hundred; by the time the counting is finished they have run far away to play another game. The youngest one is thus abandoned to shed tears.

### **LATTOO (TOP)**

When a boy grows to be ten or older, he learns the skill of the spinning *lattoo*. Boys save their pocket money to buy a beautiful pear-shaped top made of wood, with a pin at the bottom. This is set into motion by aid of a string with a hard jerk and released onto a hard surface to spin. The boy whose *lattoo* moves the longest wins the game and gets a chance to spin the *lattoo* of the loser.



**Figure 2.** A boy playing lattoo. (Source: <http://t2.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcRPmmRxDfq7EJ8AtXba7FucsOhA1SQr0L8qgkWQBZPxCqeWMjHlqg>)

Small kids with no pocket money to buy a *lattoo* take a glass-shaped wooden reel with a hole in the centre and fix a small pencil into the hole. Thus, a home-made *lattoo* is ready for playing. Girls do not play this game.

### **JHOOLA (SWING)**

In the month of *Sawan* (August), girls put up swings on the trees near their homes. One of them sits on the swing and another pushes it. The girl on the swing tries to get it higher and higher, singing a song all the while. Sometimes one of the older girls takes a young one in her lap while she swings, holding the frightened baby fast to her chest. The one who swings the highest is the winner. Sometimes boys also join them.

### **CHHUA-CHHUI (TOUCH ME TOUCH ME NOT)**

Two or more boys or girls usually play this game, one chasing the other. The child who leads touches a tree or a wall or any other chosen object. Then they run fast to the next chosen object so that they are not caught by the others. In this way they run from one object to another until they are caught while not in contact with any of the objects. When the chaser catches the chased, they switch roles.

## **KABADDI**

To play *kabaddi*, one needs stamina, the capacity to hold breath, swiftness and mastery of battle tactics. A line is drawn on sand or on soft earth. Two opposing teams, each comprising five to ten children, stand on either side of the line. A member of one team crosses the line into the opposing camp, chanting the word *kabaddi*, while holding the breath. If they are able to touch one or more members of the opposite team while still uttering the word *kabaddi*, and return to their own side after that, those touched are 'dead' and the raider's side has all the members 'alive'.

But it may as well happen that the raider is physically caught (grabbed) on the opposite side by those whom he touched or by all other members of the opposite team collectively. Then the raider in an attempt to return has to at least touch the dividing line without losing breath while chanting the word *kabaddi*. If they succeed in returning or touching the dividing line, all those who were trying to catch them or touched them are declared 'dead'; otherwise, the raider who is captured is said to be dead. Next, a member from the opposite team comes to raid the opposing team. A team has to 'kill' all the members of the opposing team to win the game. Both boys and girls play this game with their neighbourhood friends of the same sex; yet, boys and girls avoid playing this game together.

## **PATANG BAZI (KITE FLYING)**

*Patang bazi* is children's most beloved game and the onlookers also utterly enjoy it. It looks great when the sky is covered with colourful kites and a cool breeze takes them higher and higher. Another kite flyer, who is trying to bring the kite down, entangles his kite with yours, and an exciting kite fight starts. It is exciting not only up in the sky but also on the ground, when kite looters run along with the kite without caring what they are doing or where they are going.

Kite flying requires much pocket money as you have to buy many kites, reels of thread and other accessories. Kites come in different sizes and shapes. The common one available at markets is generally square-shaped, whereas some are rectangular and some are made of two ovals joined together. There are also kites with tails. Fine paper is used for making kites. It is strung on a frame of thin bamboo, one stick positioned lengthwise, the other like a bow across it. The kite paper is fastened to the frame with glue. About three inches from the top and four inches from the bottom of the longitudinal stick, fine thread treated with powder glass is fastened, forming a triangle. This is attached to hundreds



**Figure 3.** Kite-flying. (Source: [http://www.itdunya.com/attachments/324850d1323087583-292929-dsc\\_-1321462698-773-640x480.jpg](http://www.itdunya.com/attachments/324850d1323087583-292929-dsc_-1321462698-773-640x480.jpg))

of yards of thread, also treated with powder glass and wound around a spool. The thread on the spool revolves in the hands of the learner as the expert flies the kite. The fight is encouraged by the onlookers by shouting, 'Woh! Katta!' (Look, it's cut!). The person whose kite is cut is the loser and the loser tries to get back his kite from where it fell down.

Every year kites are flown with great enthusiasm on January 14 (Makarsankranti festival day). The sky is filled with colourful kites and it is a scene worth watching. The atmosphere is charged. Girls do not fly kites but enjoy watching it. Sometimes they would hold the spool while their brothers fly the kite.

### **RUMAL CHOR (HANKY THIEF)**

*Rumal chor* is an outdoor game but it can also be played inside if one has enough room to run around. This game can be played with as many members as present. The minimum number of participants is six, out of whom one is the *chor* (thief). The members playing the game sit in a circle with their eyes closed and sing: "Ghoda badam khai, pichhe dekhe jo uski shamat aai" (Horse eats almonds, trouble awaits the one who looks back).

The players sing this song three or four times and within this period the *chor* leaves his hanky (or a small piece of cloth) behind one of the sitting players. When the singing ends, everybody opens their eyes and looks for the *rumal* behind them. The one who finds the *rumal* runs after the *chor* to catch him. The *chor* runs around in circle and tries to save himself from being caught and take the vacant seat of the person chasing him or her (with the *rumal*); if they are caught by the person with the *rumal* before grabbing the vacant seat, they switch roles. The game turns more interesting when it is played at a fast pace and involves all the participants, so that every time the *rumal* is dropped behind a new player. The more players, the merrier the game: this is the rule of this game. The best part of the game is when you sing while expecting the *chor* to drop the *rumal* behind you. Girls and boys play this game together.

### **DENGA PANI (LAND AND WATER)**

This is also an outdoor game. It can be played in a park or where part of the ground is higher. The terms used in the game are *denga* (land: area higher than the ground level), *pani* (water: the ground area or the lower surface), and *magar* (crocodile: the person who has to catch the other players). The game requires four or more participants, out of whom one is the *magar*. All the participants stay on the *denga* and the *magar* remains in the *pani*. Whereas the members of 'land' try to roam around in 'water', the *magar* would not let the other players cross or stand in his or her area (water). If any of them is caught by the *magar* in 'water', they will be out of 'land' and it is their turn to act as the *magar*. The game is simple and enjoyable if the participants do not stick to their places for long and keep moving frequently from 'land' to 'water' and vice versa. You can help your mates by diverting the *magar*'s attention by entering their area and teasing them with a song, "*Hum tumhare pani me, pakado*" (I am in your area, catch me if you can). It is enjoyable in case more than one person teases the *magar* and the latter runs in different directions, trying to catch the running mates. Children enjoy this game and play it for hours till they get tired. Girls and boys play this game together.

### **GULLI-DANDA**

This game is very popular among children in rural areas. *Gulli* is a three-four inches long piece of wood cylindrical in shape. Its diameter is approximately one inch. It is sharpened from both ends like a lead pencil. *Danda* is a wooden

stick. The length of the *danda* is approximately twenty-four inches. A small *gaddha* (pit) shaped like a banana is dug into the ground. The length of this pit is about four inches. Two boys can play this game. The first player places the *gulli* across the pit and puts his *danda* into the pit under the *gulli* and holds the *danda* at an angle of about 45 degrees from the ground. He then pushes the *gulli* off. The second player tries to catch the *gulli*; if he succeeds in catching it, the first player is out and the second player gets a chance to push the *gulli* in a similar way. But if the second player fails to catch the *gulli*, the first player places the *danda* on the pit and the second player throws the *gulli* on to the *danda* from the point where the *gulli* had landed. Even if he succeeds in hitting the *danda*, the first player is out and it will be the second player's turn to play. If the throw misses the target, the first player places the *gulli* on the ground but not on the pit and bounces it slightly by hitting one of its ends with his *danda*; while the *gulli* is still in the air, he tries to hit it hard with his *danda* as far as he can, away from the pit. The second player tries to catch it again. Even if the first player misses the chance to hit the *gulli* while in the air, the first player is out. The distance between the pit and the place where the *gulli* falls is measured by the length of the *gulli* and the player gets points correspondingly.

It is a dangerous game. Sometimes the *gulli* hits the players' eyes. Girls avoid playing this game. Parents do not encourage their children to play this game, but the latter nevertheless do it.

## **PITTO**

Children divide themselves into two teams. Both the teams stand at a distance of several yards from each other with seven or nine or eleven stones placed midway on a spot and piled up in the shape of a pyramid. A member of the first team takes a ball and tries to strike the stones to topple the pile. The player has to be given three chances to hit the pile. If the member of the first team fails to do so, the second team gets the ball to try. If the first team member manages to hit the pile but any member of the second team catches the ball before it bounces back to the ground, the ball will again be passed on to the second team for continuing the game. If the members of the second team fail to catch the ball, their aim is to stop the members of the first team from assembling the stones to form a 'pyramid' again. To prevent the first team members from doing so, the members of the second team try to hit the members of the other team with the ball. The members of the first team try to avoid contact with the

**Figure 4.** A boy playing pitto. (Source: <http://t1.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GeSuyRUtkk9eCAWBdy4LxSKIMmCVqbGRzXw-VvdJP8M8lXpmIqU-IA>)



ball. If the first team manages to re-pile the stones without any of its members being hit by the ball, they again retrieve the ball to strike the stones, or else the ball is given to the second team to take their chance. This game inculcates team spirit among the players. It is more popular among girls; however, boys and girls play this game together as well.

### ***KATTAM-KUTTAI***

This game is very popular among girls although boys also play it. Only two players are needed for playing this game. This game is played with eighteen (9+9) coins in two different colours. You can also use pieces of broken bangles in two different colours or two varieties of seeds or beads. On a plain piece of paper or on the ground two triangles are drawn in hourglass shape. These two triangles are divided into four parts by drawing a straight vertical line. In each triangle two lines parallel to the base are drawn. Thus in each triangle nine meeting-points are formed, in which two lines intersect. At these intersections beads are placed, with the joining point of the two triangles remaining vacant. Two girls select their own triangles and sit facing each other. The first player moves her bead in the vacant place and the second player captures this bead by jumping over it and going to the next vacant place. In this fashion the game moves on. The one who is the first to capture all the beads of the other player is declared the winner. Girls spend hours playing this game, starting one round after the other.

## **CHAI-CHUDI**

*Chai-chudi* is a popular girls' game requiring two to four participants. This game is played with broken bangles and tamarind seeds. A square is drawn on the floor. This square is further divided into twenty small squares. The middle square of each row is declared 'castle square'. The central square is called 'home', whereas each central square of the outer rows is declared a starting point. Two tamarind seeds are broken into two halves with a hammer or stone. These four pieces of tamarind seeds are used as a dice. They are thrown onto the floor. The number of seeds with white part upwards indicates how many spaces a player may move. During the game, the players' pieces move along the squares. If a piece lands on a square other than 'castle square' occupied by any other player's piece, that piece is captured and must return to the starting point. The player who moves all her pieces home first is the winner. The one among the four players who fails to move all her pieces home is declared loser.

## **PACHISI**

*Pachisi* a national game of India; it is a cross and circle board game that originates from the ancient past, and is also popular in Bihar. *Pachisi* is a game for two or four players, sometimes in two teams. Each player has four beehive-, round- or square-shaped pieces. The pieces of one player are distinguishable from those of others by their colour: red, black, green, and yellow are used. Six cowrie shells are used as a dice. They are dropped by each player in turn and the number of the cowries that fall with their openings upwards indicate how many spaces the player can move the pieces on the playing board, which is shaped like a cross, with a large square in the centre regarded as 'home'. The four arms of the board are divided into three columns of eight squares each. During the game, the players' pieces move along these columns of squares. *Pachisi* or 'that after twenty-five' is indicative of the highest score (25) that can be thrown by a player with cowrie shells for moving the pieces on the board. The one who is able to bring all the pieces home after moving through all the four arms of the cross is the winner.

This game is popular among young people as well as adults and has been played all over the subcontinent for thousands of years. During the *Deepawali* festival this game is played by gamblers; the winner believes that he has received the blessings of Goddess Lakshmi in the form of cash.

An interesting occasion when *Pachisi* is played is during the marriage ceremony when the newly married couple is made to play it. The outcome of the



**Figure 5.** Pachisi board with pieces. (Source: [http://www.crumiller.com/chess/chess\\_photos/miscellanea/PachisiIvoryPiecesWithBoard.jpg](http://www.crumiller.com/chess/chess_photos/miscellanea/PachisiIvoryPiecesWithBoard.jpg))

game is supposed to indicate who will play a dominant role in the married life. The groom makes every attempt to win in order to be the ruler of his house. The game of *Pachisi* played during a marriage ceremony is sometimes a simplified form of the otherwise elaborate game.

This game is said to be a predecessor of the 19th-century game in Europe, called Ludo, but there are many other westernised commercial versions of it (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pachisi>).

### **GUDDA-GUDDI KI SHADI (MARRIAGE OF DOLLS)**

This is again one of girls' popular games. Girls request their mothers or grandmothers to make dolls. Pieces of cloth are used for making them. Toy kitchen goods made of plastic or tin are bought at the market. Toys made up of clay, cloth and wood are sold during festive periods. Radha-Krishna, elephants, horses, birds, etc., are favourites with children. Girls use these toys to decorate their doll houses.

Sometimes they arrange marriages for their dolls. At first, they divide themselves into two groups. One group acts as the boy's party and the other group as the girl's party. They sing and dance and perform all the rituals of a real



**Figure 6.** Marriage of dolls. (Source: [http://t0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQIvozFHxO5IoIpsJ5VHFao\\_silMfyjEinJkWQrBbLKGmkiqwyN1w](http://t0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQIvozFHxO5IoIpsJ5VHFao_silMfyjEinJkWQrBbLKGmkiqwyN1w))

marriage. Sometimes boys also join the group when they realise that girls are going to distribute *bhunja* (roasted grains) and *gur* (jaggery) after the wedding ceremony. They spend hours organising and performing these ceremonies.

## CONCLUSION

The article introduces seventeen traditional games of Bihar. According to the classification of games provided by folklorist Anu Vissel, games can be divided into: (1) running games, (2) jumping games, (3) skill-demonstrating games, (4) strength-demonstrating games, and (5) throwing games (Vissel 1997). So, fourteen out of these seventeen games can be grouped into these five broad categories: (1) running games: *looka-chhippi*, *chhua-chhuai*, *rumal-chor*, *denga-pani* and *pitto*; (2) jumping games: *ekhat-dukhat*; (3) skill-demonstrating games: *goli*, *lattoo*, *patang-bazi*, *gulli-danda* and *kattam-kuttai*; (4) strength-demonstrating games: *jhoola* and *kabaddi*; (5) throwing games: *teer-dhanush*. A sixth category of games appears necessary to be included here, which consists of games meant for entertainment only: *gudda-guddi ki shadi*, *chai-chudi* and *pachisi*.

In addition to these games, there are many other traditional games like *gho-gho rani*, *atta-patta*, and *raja-mantri-chor-sipahi*, which children play at different stages of their childhood.

Games of more recent times, which have reached here through metropolitan cities (Carom, Ludo, Snakes and Ladders, Business, computer and video games), are also played in Bihar. However, these are played by the children of the urban areas or economically better off strata.

Playing games is a common characteristic of children. All over the world, children like to run, play, laugh and enjoy themselves. Games involving much movement and running satisfy younger and older children's need to move and so develop their skills. Moving together, paying attention to one another, and adapting themselves to one another are skills that are developed by playing different types of games (Lazar 2005). Children play a variety of indoor and outdoor games. These games have a rich cultural and heritage value. They are an important vehicle for passing on some ancestral knowledge to the posterity. According to Edgardo Civallero (2006), "a people's intangible heritage is composed by the non-material part of its culture: tales and narratives, games and songs, music and all the knowledge usually transmitted by oral or sound means, in traditional societies as well as in urban westernized ones". Parents know it well that playing games is necessary for the physical as well as mental growth of their children. They insist that their children go out in the evening and play. Poor children enjoy their leisure, using whatever things available to them. Girls use broken bangles, tamarind seeds and old clothes in their games and resort to their imagination. When they make beautiful dolls, making use of old clothes, and doll houses from mud and hard covers of their notebooks, adults are also attracted to them. Similarly, when they make mats and baskets using grass and flower petals, it becomes a decorative item not only for their doll houses but for their own homes as well. Thus, the games that girls play not only entertain them but also help them develop some necessary skills. The imaginary power as well as girls' skills are appreciated by other people and this way they develop a sense of achievement. Sometimes the elders of the family, such as the father, grandfather or uncle, help their children in making swings and kites and solving of puzzles. This way they spend some quality time with their children. This strengthens the family bonds and develops a sense of family.

Thus, we see that games become a source of moderate exercise, either physical or mental or even both, for children, and are essential for their health and development; on the other hand, they constitute a source that develops group and family sense necessary for their social well-being. Poverty does not deter the children of Bihar from playing games and enjoying their leisure.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> About 94% of schools in Bihar are located in rural areas. 69% of primary schools have a *pucca* (permanent building), 4.68% – a partly permanent building, and 0.78% – a temporary building. 2800 elementary schools and 15 upper elementary schools are working without a building (in tents, etc.). Most of the elementary schools in Bihar have 3–4 rooms. In 1991, a new universal educational programme was launched (Kaushal & Patra 2011).
- <sup>2</sup> Kabaddi – an Indian sport played by two teams. The Kabaddi Federation of India was founded in 1950, and it compiled a standard set of rules. The Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India (AKFI) was founded in 1973 (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabaddi#India>, last accessed on June 20, 2013).

## REFERENCES

- Bezbaruah, Madan Prasad 2003. *Fairs and Festivals of India*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.
- Census Report 2011. *Census of India 2011*. Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs. [http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/prov\\_results\\_paper1\\_india.html](http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/prov_results_paper1_india.html), last accessed on June 25, 2013.
- Civallero, Edgardo 2006. *Traditional Games, Music and Oral Tradition: Intangible Tools in Multicultural Libraries*. <http://eprints.rclis.org/10100/1/tradgame%5B1%5D.pdf>, last accessed on June 19, 2013.
- Hyland, Drew A. 1990. *Philosophy of Sport*. New York: Paragon House.
- Kaushal, Savita & Patra, Sudhanshu S. 2011. *Elementary Education in Bihar: Some Reflections from DISE Data*. <http://www.dise.in/Downloads/Use%20of%20Dise%20Data/Savita%20Kaushal%20&%20%20Sudhanshu%20S.%20Patra.pdf>, last accessed on June 19, 2013.
- McMahon, Felicia R. & Sutton-Smith, Brian 1999. The Past in the Present: Theoretical Directions for Children's Folklore. In: B. Sutton-Smith & J. Mechling & T.W. Johnson & F.R. McMahon (eds.) *Children's Folklore: A Source Book*. Logan: Utah State University Press, pp. 293–308.
- Lázár, Katalin 2005. Why Play and Sing? The Role of Folk Games and Folk Songs in Everyday Life. *Traditiones*, Vol. 34 (1), pp. 191–197, doi: 10.3986/Traditio2005340115.
- Mead, Georg H. 1962. *Mind, Self and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Michener, H. Andrew 2000. Game Theory and Strategic Interaction. In: E.F. Borgatta & R.J.V. Montgomery (eds.) *Encyclopedia of Sociology*. USA: Macmillan Reference USA.
- Report 2010. *Bihar – India's Poorest State – Begins to turn Around*. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTTRANSPORT/EXTRURAL/0,,contentMDK:22497836~menuPK:515376~pagePK:64020865~piPK:149114~theSitePK:515370,00.html>, last accessed on June 19, 2013.
- Riess, Steven A. 1989. *City Games*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Tunis, John R. 1944. *Sport for the Fun of it*. New York: A.S. Barnes & Company.
- Vissel, Anu 1997. The Traditional and the Recent in Modern Schoolchildren's Games. *Journal of the Baltic Institute of Folklore*, Vol. 2, pp. 134–183.