

**Note**

SPORTS & GAMES AS CULTURAL HERITAGE

Have you known what is the historical and cultural importance of sports and Games? How and why did different games & sports develop? What were the most popular games & sports? To understand this, let us first understand the terms Culture and Heritage.

Culture is a multifaceted concept that encompasses the shared values, beliefs, behaviours, customs, traditions, languages, and artifacts of a group of people. It shapes how individuals interpret the world and interact with each other through music, dance, visual arts, theatre, literature, and sports. In essence, culture is the lens through which people see the world and the framework that supports social cohesion, guiding both individual behaviour and collective interactions. Heritage refers to the traditions, values, customs, languages, places & objects that are passed on to future generations. It includes intangible/visible elements like folklore, languages, rituals, music, dance, sports, and craftsmanship and tangible/invisible elements like historical buildings, monuments, manuscripts, artworks, and archaeological sites.

Games and sports have been an inseparable part of the history and are deeply rooted in culture. Activities like hunting, running, jumping and fishing that began essential activities for survival. These activities were not just sources of entertainment or recreation but carried cultural meaning, were passed from one generation to another. Today, sports and games have emerged as a universal cultural phenomenon. Every country makes efforts to protect & promote its traditional sports as Symbol of its cultural heritage. Thus, we can say that the activities we do in modern time are nothing but a modified form of what we have received from our ancestors.

As you know, India has a rich and diverse sporting heritage, with traditional games and modern sports deeply embedded in its cultural and historical fabric. Many sports in India have evolved from ancient practices, rituals, and martial training, and are deeply rooted in the country's ethos, values, way of life and the natural environment. Sports and games have been a mode of transmitting the cultural heritage of the people, which was passed on from generation to another.



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LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learner-

- describes the various stages of evolution of sports in India.
- appreciates indigenous and regional games in India.
- identifies the modern trends in sports as cultural heritage.
- analyses the relationship between sports and culture.



DO YOU KNOW?

Have you ever wondered how we know about the history of sports and games in India? Well, the historical evidence of sports and games in India comes from a variety of sources, like ancient scriptures, archaeological finds, temple sculptures, and foreign records.

2.1 EVOLUTION OF SPORTS IN INDIA

Culture represents the transmission of behaviour patterns, values, and beliefs that are accepted and practiced by groups of people. This process happens across generations and forms the foundation of a civilization's identity. Culture includes traditions, religion, community values, and societal influences. Heritage, refers to the things from the past that are preserved and passed down to future generations with necessary modifications to suit contemporary times. It establishes a bridge between the past and the present, ensuring that cultural elements continue to evolve while retaining their core essence.

Sports have always been a part of this cultural heritage, serving not only as a form of recreation but also as a way of transmitting discipline, values and skills across generations. This process is evident in India's long history of sports, where physical activities have evolved alongside the country's cultural and societal development. India's sports culture has undergone several stages of evolution, each linked to significant periods in history, evolving through different eras based on cultural, religious, and socio-political influences.

2.1.1 The Beginning

The earliest information regarding Sports activities can be obtained from the rock paintings in Bhimbetka caves. These caves are located near Bhopal in Madhya



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Pradesh. The rock paintings in these caves date back to at least 10,000 BCE. These paintings show groups of hunters using bows and arrows, spears, and other primitive weapons. This suggests that hunting was not just an activity for survival but was also a measure of skill, strength, agility, and teamwork. In some of the paintings we can see figures running in pursuit of animals. In others, they are running in groups. Thus, we can conclude that these people participated in racing and endurance training. There are paintings of figures in dynamic postures that look like dance-like or rhythmic human figures. Some paintings show people grappling or engaged in physical combat as in wrestling or martial training. Human figures near water bodies indicate early forms of activities like fishing.

2.1.2 Indus Valley Civilization

During the Indus Valley Civilization (c. 3300-1300 BCE, Mature Phase 2600-1900 BCE), physical activities formed an important part of daily life. Archaeological findings suggest that people were engaged in dancing, swimming, and various recreational games such as dice and marbles. The famous “Dancing Girl” figurine from Mohenjo-daro indicates the cultural value of dance, while the Great Bath shows that water-based activities and rituals were significant in community life. Excavated dice and game pieces reveal that indoor games were popular, and seals depicting bows and arrows point to the practice of hunting and archery. These examples show that physical activity contributed to recreation, ritual, and social life, even if the modern idea of fitness and athleticism did not yet exist.

2.1.3 Vedic period

The Vedic period (c. 1500-600 BCE) marked a shift towards the formalization of physical activities in both martial and spiritual domains. Rigvedic hymns describe chariot racing, archery, horse riding, and hunting, reflecting the martial ethos of Kshatriya training. Wrestling (mallayuddha) and contests with weapons such as daggers, swords, and maces also appear in later Vedic and epic traditions. Yog began to take shape during this era as a spiritual discipline focused on the union of body and spirit, though systematic physical postures were codified only in later philosophical texts. Thus, the period combined physical endurance, martial preparation, and spiritual practice.

2.1.4 Epic and Early Medieval Periods (c. 600 BCE-1000 CE)

From the Epic Age through the early medieval era, physical activities and games became increasingly formalized, often under royal and religious patronage. The *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* make frequent references to dice games, wrestling



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{*malla-yuddha*} archery, and mace duels (*gada-yuddha*), highlighting the martial and recreational culture of the time.

Strategic board games also gained importance. *Chaturanga*, regarded as the ancestor of modern chess, appeared around the 6th century CE and reflected both intellectual and martial training. Recreational games such as *pachisi* also became popular.

Martial training continued to be a royal prerogative, with archery, swordsmanship, and hunting emphasized in royal courts. Meanwhile, yoga was codified through Patanjali's *Yog Sutras*, where it was defined as both a physical discipline and a spiritual practice.

While traditions such as *Mallakhamb* and *Kalaripayattu* are often traced back to ancient roots, their verifiable historical development is better documented in later medieval periods.

2.1.5 The Medieval Period (1000-1757 CE)

In the medieval period, physical activities retained an important place in both education and royal life. Traditional Hindu *pathshalas* carried forward aspects of the earlier Gurukul model, where physical training accompanied intellectual pursuits. Wrestling (*malla-yuddha* or *kushti*), archery, and weapon training (*astra-vidya*, *shastra-vidya*) remained central to the martial ethos of Rajput courts.

With the arrival of Turkic (Delhi Sultanate) and Mughal rulers, new sporting traditions were introduced. Polo (*chaugan*) gained immense popularity among the nobility, while falconry, elephant and horse racing, pigeon flying, and hunting became symbols of elite culture. Wrestling and boxing were not only forms of entertainment but also prestigious court sports, with wrestlers often receiving royal patronage. Chess and swimming likewise flourished in Mughal courts, reinforcing the combination of physical skill, strategy, and recreation.

2.1.6 The British Period (1600-1947 CE)

The advent of British colonial rule brought a profound shift in India's sporting culture. With the expansion of the East India Company and later the British Raj, indigenous games such as kabaddi, kho-kho, and rural wrestling traditions gradually lost official patronage. Instead, the British promoted their own sports—cricket, football, hockey, and tennis—through cantonments, missionary schools, and exclusive clubs. European systems of physical drill and gymnastics were incorporated into colonial education policy, emphasizing discipline and military preparedness.

Despite this, indigenous traditions persisted. *Akharas* (wrestling arenas) and *vyayamshalas* (exercise halls) became crucial sites for sustaining local practices





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such as *dands* and *baithaks* (bodyweight exercises) and *mallakhamb* (pole gymnastics), which was revitalized in the Maratha and nationalist eras. These institutions not only preserved physical culture but also became symbols of resistance to colonial dominance.

2.1.7 Post-Independence and Contemporary Sports Development in India

After independence in 1947, India began to view sports and physical education as vital for national integration and youth development. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) emphasized the need to integrate physical education into the school curriculum as a compulsory component of holistic education. Hosting the first Asian Games in New Delhi in 1951, with 11 participating nations under the motto “*Ever Onward*,” marked India’s entry into sports diplomacy on the global stage.

Over the decades, institutional frameworks strengthened. The Sports Authority of India (SAI), established in 1984, provided centralized training and infrastructure development. National-level policies, including the National Sports Policy (1984; revised 2001) and the National Sports Development Code (2011), formalized governance structures, promoting accountability and systematic athlete development.

In recent years, flagship programs have transformed India’s sports landscape. The **Khelo India Scheme (2018)** has identified and nurtured thousands of young athletes through scholarships, competitions, and infrastructure projects. The **Fit India Movement (2019)** has promoted everyday fitness awareness. Most importantly, the **National Education Policy (NEP 2020)** recognized sports as an integral part of the curriculum, placing physical education, arts, and vocational training on par with academics. NEP 2020 advocates a **sports-integrated pedagogy** at all levels of schooling, reflecting a shift from viewing sports as extracurricular to considering them essential for holistic growth.

To align with global aspirations, the **National Sports Policy 2025** was introduced as a forward-looking framework focusing on athlete welfare, transparency in governance, grassroots development, and India’s ambition to bid for and host the **2036 Olympic Games**. The policy also emphasizes inclusivity, integrating sports science, technology, and private sector partnerships to position India as a leading sporting nation.

These initiatives build on India’s heritage of indigenous physical culture, with *akharas* and *vyayamshalas* continuing to sustain traditional practices like wrestling and *mallakhamb* (Alter, 1992). Today, India’s sports system blends tradition with modern policy, aiming not only to produce elite athletes but also to embed fitness and play as everyday practices for its citizens. Sports in contemporary India thus symbolize cultural pride, national unity, and aspirational global competitiveness.



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Activity 2.1

India has a rich tradition of martial arts, many of which date back centuries. These include

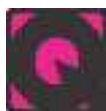
Kalaripayattu, often called the mother of all martial arts, originated in Kerala

Gatka, which originated in Punjab and is associated with Sikh warriors

Silambam, a martial art from Tamil Nadu, and

Thang-Ta, a traditional martial art of Manipur.

Find out about more about any one of these martial arts and make a presentation in class.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.1

1. Tick (✓) the correct option.
 - 1) In ancient times, which of the following activities did people engage in for survival?
 - a. Hunting, grappling, running, and fishing
 - b. Watching sports for entertainment
 - c. Playing organized games with specific rules
 - d. Practicing only yog and meditation
 - 2) How did sports and games contribute to cultural heritage in ancient civilizations?
 - a. They were mainly for the enjoyment of the elite and had no role in cultural preservation.
 - b. They were passed down generations as a way of transmitting cultural heritage and values.
 - c. They were exclusive to religious ceremonies and had no recreational purpose.
 - d. They were developed strictly for military purposes.



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- 3) Which period in Indian history is known for the formalization of yoga as a spiritual and physical practice?
 - a. The Indus Valley Civilization
 - b. The Vedic Period
 - c. The Mughal Period
 - d. Post-Independence Era
- 4) How did the British influence the sports culture in India?
 - a. They promoted indigenous games like kabaddi and kho-kho.
 - b. They introduced sports like cricket, hockey, and football over traditional games.
 - c. They banned all sports activities in schools.
 - d. They replaced all indigenous physical activities with gymnastics only.

2.2 INDIGENOUS AND REGIONAL GAMES

Games have been an integral part of people's life in India since time immemorial. As you know, there are numerous mentions of people participating in games for development of skill, agility, physical fitness, and for mental fitness or for recreation. Various traditional games are still popular amongst children in the urban and rural areas in India.

2.2.1 Indigenous Games

Indigenous games refer to fun or leisure or recreational activities that developed particular cultural group, community, or tribe. Rules for these games are by the local organizers for local participants. These games have helped in preserving the culture and heritage.

2.2.2 Regional Games

Regional games are also the localized games originated for the purpose of recreational tradition of indigenous games, but played only in certain regions of the country.



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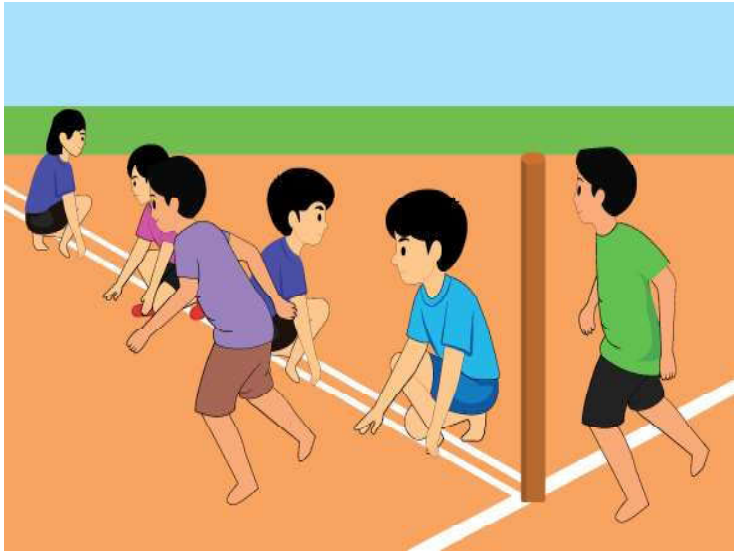
Some of the indigenous and regional games are mentioned below:

Sl. No.	Name of the Game	Description
1.	Kabaddi	Kabaddi, an age-old Indian sport which has been played in the sub-continent for thousands of years is said to have originated as a training exercise for warriors to develop strategy, quick reflexes, and teamwork on the battlefield. This sport, earlier played on the soil, is nowadays played on the mat. The game of Kabaddi is played between two teams, comprising seven players each. Every team has a set of players called raiders and defenders. The raider runs into the opposition's half of and tries to tag out as many players as possible while continuously chanting "Kabaddi, kabaddi" in one breath or, for a fixed period of time, say 30 seconds, (which is being fixed for the modern-day kabaddi). The opposing team tries to stop the raider from successfully returning into his half within that period. The game of Kabaddi is gaining huge popularity in the country after the introduction of Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) which is being televised on the national television. 





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2.	Kho-Kho	Kho kho is another popular sport which was invented and developed in India and continues to remain a popular sport among school children. Kho-Kho is played by teams of 12  players. Nine players of the chasing team enter the field and 8 of the players sit on their knees in a straight line alternately facing in opposite directions. The 9th player (active chaser) must try to tag the running players (attackers) within a set time limit. Chasers must follow a specific direction during their pursuit. If a chaser wants to pass the chase to a teammate, they can tag them while uttering the word “Kho.” This teammate then becomes the new active chaser, while the previous one takes a sitting position. Members of the defending team enter the field in batches of three, and try to avoid being touched by members of the opposing team. The side that takes the shortest time to tap all the opponents in the field is declared the winner.
3.	Kushti	Kushti or Pehlwani is one of the oldest sports in India and dates back to the prehistoric period, or around 4000 BC. One of the first mentions of Kushti is found in the Mahabharata epic. Kushti is distinct from free-style wrestling, which is practiced all over the world. In the traditional Kushti, the game ended only when one of the players signalled their defeat. However, modern bouts do have distinct rounds and a referee who steps in when necessary. Kushti is now included in the Olympic Games as one of the competitions. In the traditional game, the winner is one who is able to pin both of the opponent’s shoulders to the ground. Although this may seem easy, it is not. However, the players can employ body locks,



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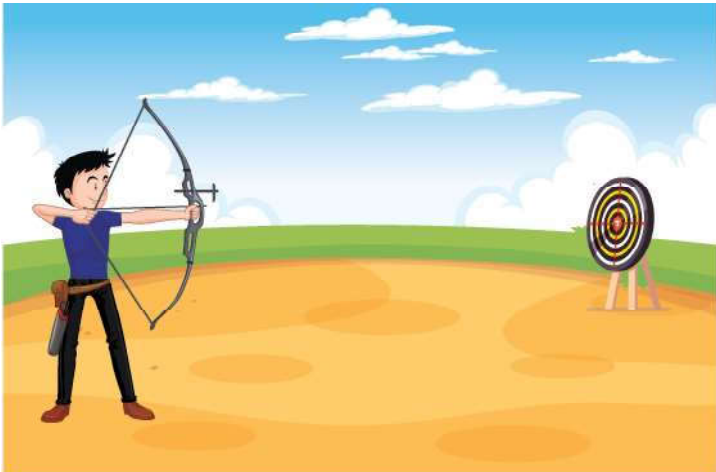
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Sl. No.	Name of the Game	Description
		throws, submission holds, pins, etc., on their opponent instead of punching or kicking them. The two most best known methods employed by pehelwans to subdue their opponents are the Kasauta and Dhobi Pachad. Other nations employ different techniques such as triangle chokes and all.
4.	Mallakhamb	An ancient Indian discipline known as Mallakhamb blends yog, exercise, and martial arts. The words “Malla” refers to wrestling and “khamb” refers to pole signifying its origins as a training method for wrestlers or pehlwans to hone their strength, flexibility, agility, and coordination while balancing, and holding poses on a wooden pole or a rope. Therefore, “Mallakhamb” often refers to a “gymnast’s pole.” The classic kind of mallakhamb is called pole mallakhamb. Participants compete on a wooden pole that is 2.6 metres tall and has a base circumference of 55 centimetres. The pole gradually narrows until it has a top circumference of 35 cm. In the Hanging Mallakhamb, a shorter wooden pole is suspended from hooks or chains, allowing it to swing. This variation increases the difficulty by introducing movement, requiring extra balance and control. In Rope Mallakhamb, a thick rope 8 to 10 feet in length and with a thickness of 1 to 1.5 inches is used. The rope is suspended from a fixed structure or ceiling, and participants perform aerial movements while gripping and wrapping around the rope. 
5.	Archery	The ability to use a bow and arrow is known as archery. Indian archery has a long history that begins with the Vedic era. Hunting with a bow and arrow was an essential skill for surviving and finding food for early man, with the passage of time, the bow and arrow evolved into a military tool and developed into a sport. The Mahabharata and the Ramayana





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Sl. No.	Name of the Game	Description
		are the first Indian literary works that mention archery as a valued skill. Many of the protagonists in these two epics were  reputed to be skilled archers. The bow and arrow later evolved into a military tool. Today, archery is a recreational activity. Additionally, it is currently a part of the Olympic Games.
6.	Gilli-Danda	Gilli-Danda is a very popular Indian game, especially in rural India. The game is played with small piece of oval shaped wood with tapering edges, known as 'Gilli' and a long wooden  stick called 'Danda'. The player needs to hit the Gilli at the raised end, which flips in the air and tries to hit the 'Gilli' as far as possible to get maximum runs. The players of the defending team try to catch the Gilli to dismiss the hitter - just like in the game of cricket. The player or team with maximum distance covered by the Gilli - which is being scaled by the



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Sl. No.	Name of the Game	Description
		'Danda', is finally declared the winner. There is no limit of a number of players in this game.
7.	Kancha/ Marbles	This is another popular traditional game in the Indian subcontinent since times immemorial. In fact, the earliest evidence of round marble in Indian history was found at Mohenjodaro. The game of Kanchas or Marbles may be played both indoors or outdoors, though, it is most commonly played outdoors. This game is still quite popular among kids in the  rural areas and semi-urban cities. Kids enjoy the game for winning the colourful marbles or kancha and collect it in large numbers.
8.	Pitthu/Lagori	This is a very popular game amongst kids in the country and is known by different names in various parts. The game of Pitthu is played with a ball, preferably a rubber or tennis ball, and six to seven flat pieces of stones piled vertically. In this game, one team tries to hit the stack of stones with the ball from a distance and then, attempts to arrange them back before the players on the opposing team collect the ball and hit one of the members of the attacking side. Each team gets 



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		nine chances, 3 players getting 3 chances each, to knock down the stones. If one team is unable to knock down the stones the next team gets the chance to throw the ball. There are no fixed rules for the number of players in a team or duration of the match.
9.	Pachisi/ Chaupar	Chaupar, or Pachisi, is a board game that originated in ancient India. The game was popular among Indian royal families and is also mentioned in the Mahabharata part. It is a game of skilled that remains popular in rural India. It is considered a precursor to Ludo and other dice games from the West. The name pachisi is derived from the Hindi word 'pachis' which  means "twenty-five", the largest score that can be thrown with the cowrie shells. Pachisi is a board game which is played on a symmetrical cross. Each player has 4 pawns of a different colour. 6 or 7 cowrie shells are used as dice. The player's pieces move around the board based upon a throw of six or seven cowrie shells, with the number of shells resting with aperture upwards that indicate the number of spaces the player moves. A player must get all four pawns to the centre of the board to win the game.
10.	Chess	The game of chess is widely popular across the globe but this game played on a checkered board with 64 squares arranged in an 8x8 grid, played in India. This strategy game is believed to be derived from the ancient Indian game Chaturanga around the 6th century BC. The game featured elements that mirrored military tactics and the different pieces represent various branches of an army, such as infantry, cavalry, elephants, and



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Sl. No.	Name of the Game	Description
		 chariots. Its emphasis on planning, positional play, and strategic manoeuvring laid the groundwork for what would later evolve into shatranj. Chaturanga is also the likely ancestor of the Eastern strategy games xiangqi (Chinese chess), janggi (Korean chess), and shogi (Japanese chess).
11.	Gutte or Gitte	Children and adults enjoy playing this age-old game. The game is played with five tiny stones called <i>gutte</i> or <i>gitte</i>. The player tosses and spins one stone in the air and collects other stones  from the ground. The stones have to be gathered before the stone thrown in the air strikes the ground. The procedure is repeated until the airborne Gutta hits the earth. When there are several stones in the air, the process becomes more difficult. This game is very attractive because of its low cost and simplicity.



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Sl. No.	Name of the Game	Description
12.	Hopscotch or Nondi	This traditional game is amongst the top 10 most popular traditional games in India. The players make a grid pattern on the mud or concrete floor to play the game. It is a modified version of the popular stapoo played in the North or kith kith played in Tamil Nadu. The boxes are numbered between one and six, or occasionally between one and eight or ten. A ladder-shaped pattern is created on the floor. The player, then, hurls a little stone or another flat item into any of the grids that have been created. The player has to pick up the stone and return to the starting place outside the grid. While the player makes her/his way to the numbered block, she/he has to avoid hitting any of the grid's edges.
13.	Kite flying	In India, kite flying is a popular traditional sport for individuals of all ages. The basic goal of the game is to maintain your kite in the air as long as you can. The winner is the one whose kite is left in the air until it is the last. An international kite festival is held on January 14 and 15 in Gujarat. 
14.	Lattoo	Spinning top or Lattoo is a popular traditional game in Indian villages. In the beginning, tops were made of clay. Later, wooden tops began to be used. Today, multi-coloured beautifully designed tops are also available. Two or more players can play this game. They may even use a string to spin the top and also to lift up the spinning Lattoo. They wrap their tops with the string and then make it spin by pulling the string and unwinding it. This makes the 



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Sl. No.	Name of the Game	Description
		top rotate on the ground. The players also need to pick the top with the string as fast as they can. The winner is the player whose top spins the longest.
15.	Vallamkali (Regional Game of Kerala)	Boat racing, or Vallamkali, is one of Kerala's best known traditional sports. Also known as the Snake Boat Race due to the distinctive shape of the boats, Vallam Kali is a significant cultural event, especially in Kerala's backwaters during the Onam festival. The first of these boats appeared in the early fourteenth century. 100 to 120 feet is how long they are. Due to its ability to support enormous loads, it can transport both people and military equipment. To keep the boat stable, all of the rowers must work together and row in unison. Thus, the sport of vallamkali requires extreme teamwork. 
16.	Silambam (Regional Game of Tamil Nadu)	Silambam is an ancient Indian martial technique practised in Tamil Nadu. It is one of the oldest martial disciplines in existence. Most South Indian kings employed the martial skill 





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Sl. No.	Name of the Game	Description
		of Silambam in battle. Silambam is related to Kalaripayattu, the martial art of Kerala. The Silambam stick is designed to be used in a combat situation. It is now used between two players. The end of the stick is marked with a sticky substance. This makes it easy to determine the count of touches. Players should aim to use the Silambam to make physical contact with their opponents. The loser is the player who has received the most touches.



2.2 Activity

Designing a New Game

Objective: Create an entertaining and inexpensive game that can be played with simple materials.

Instructions

1. **Game Name:** Give your game a creative and catchy name.
2. **Number of Players:** How many people can play at once? Is it an individual or team-based game?
3. **Materials Needed:** List the materials required to play. Try to use common household or classroom items.
4. **Objective of the Game:** What is the goal of the game? (e.g., to score points, to complete a task, to be the last player standing, etc.)
5. **How to play the Game:** Write simple step-by-step instructions on how to play. Be clear and concise.
6. **How to Win:** Explain how a player or team wins the game.

Draw a diagram or illustration of your game setup.

Once you have completed your game design, test it out with friends and make improvements if needed!



**Note****INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.2****1. Mark the following statements as True or False.**

- a. Kabaddi originated as a training exercise for warriors.
- b. In Kho-Kho, the active chaser can move in any direction to tag the runners.
- c. Kushti, or Pehlwani, is a traditional Indian wrestling style that dates back to around 4000 BC.
- d. In traditional Kushti, a match ends only when one of the wrestlers signals their defeat.
- e. Mallakhamb combines yog, exercise, and martial arts, involving acrobatic movements on a wooden pole or rope.
- f. Archery in India has its earliest mentions in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

2.3 MODERN TRENDS IN SPORTS AS CULTURAL HERITAGE

Sports are an integral part of the cultural heritage of India. They are not merely physical activities; but are deeply rooted in spiritual and philosophical fundamentals, ancient wisdom, and spiritual traditions of the country.

2.3.1 Games/Sports and the Spiritual Connection

Yog, which finds its origins in ancient Indian philosophy. The physical postures (asanas), breathing exercises (pranayama), and meditation techniques of Yog have a spiritual basis. In addition to its physical benefits, yog is a holistic discipline. It promotes spiritual growth, mental clarity, and inner peace. It embodies the principles of balance, harmony, and self-awareness. Many athletes in India incorporate yog into their training regimens. It helps to enhance their performance, increase mental focus, and maintain overall well-being. Thus, yog serves as a bridge between the physical and spiritual dimensions of sports.



**Note****2.3.2 Games/Sports and Mythology**

Games/Sports in India often draw inspiration from religious and mythological narratives. This adds layers of cultural significance and symbolism to athletic pursuits. For instance, archery, has deep roots in Indian mythology and epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. It symbolises precision, focus, and determination. Athletes who practice archery not only refine their skills, but also connect with the classic heroism and spiritual discipline embodied by figures like Arjuna and Rama.

2.3.3 Games/Sports and Rituals

In addition to individual sports, collective rituals and ceremonies are also associated with sporting events. Traditional rituals are often performed before competitions. Before competitions, athletes often Perform rituals such as prayers, group Huddles or symbolic gestures to Calm nerves & strengthen focus. This reflects a reverence for divine blessings and protection. These rituals serve to sanctify the sporting arena and invoke spiritual energies. These ceremonies inspire athletes to perform at their best.

2.4 HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF GAMES AND SPORTS

India's traditional games are not just activities for enjoyment, they are powerful cultural symbols rooted deeply in history, mythology and religious tradition. Many indigenous sports are being played from ancient times and continue to transfer the spirit of India's heritage.

Kabaddi links to mythological stories and folk traditions reflects the values of courage and teamwork passed down through generations. It is more than a game of tagging and breath control. It was believed to have been played by warriors to display their physical strength, mental alertness and bravery. Kho-kho is one of the oldest and most strategic Indian games, which is known for its agility and coordination. Played for centuries in villages, often featured in festive celebrations and agricultural fairs. It has cultural significance as well as provide agility, unity, and shared joy. Gilli-danda, a simple game played using a stick (danda) and a small wooden piece (gilli), can be seen in ancient paintings and texts. It was a favourite pastime across age groups. It provides skills like hand-eye coordination, reaction and competitiveness.

These traditional sports are more than entertainment. They pass down skills, ethics, and stories from generation to generation. Playing these games, children not only learn fair play, strategy, and cooperation but also connect with their roots. In an emerging world, they work as bridges between the past and present, helping preserve the cultural identity of India.



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2.5 DIVERSITY IN INDIA'S SPORTS CULTURE

India's sporting background is as diverse like its geography and languages. From the big mountains of north to the tropical coasts, each region has its own unique games, developed by local customs, climate, and community traditions.

In northern states like Haryana and Punjab, wrestling which is also known as Kushti has been practiced in mud called Akhadas for centuries. Wrestlers or Pehalwans are respected figures in society, they are known not only for their strength but also for their disciplined life. Their strict training includes morning routines, diets and moral codes passed down by gurus, forming a legacy of honour, perseverance, and cultural pride.

In West Bengal and Assam, boat races during festivals like Durga Puja and Bihu. Long, narrow wooden boats powered by coordinated teams of rowers cut through the water in thrilling races. These events bring entire communities to the riverbanks, mixing athletic performance and spiritual significance with agricultural cycles.

Down south in Kerala, the ancient martial art Kalaripayattu is a symbol of strength, balance and inner discipline. Kalaripayattu originated way back centuries ago is a combination of physical combat, control and weapon mastery. It is more than a fighting technique, reflects a way of life that integrates body, mind, and spirit.

In the Northeastern states like Manipur and Mizoram, Thang-Ta (a martial art involving swords and spears) and Mizo Inbuan (traditional wrestling) respectively flourish. These indigenous sports are closely knotted to tribal rituals, storytelling, and seasonal festivals. They are not just games but cultural expressions of identity and community strength.

These traditional games and sports illustrate the country's varied cultural range. Each region, has its own stories and traditions, contributes to the broader picture of India's sporting heritage. It shows that our practices may differ but the values of unity, courage, and joy in participation bind us together as one nation.

2.6 COMMUNITY CONNECTION

In Indian society, sports bring people closer and foster a sense of belonging, no matter what the background is. Whether in cities or villages, playgrounds or open fields, games become places where communities connect and grow together. In local park where children, teenagers, and adults come together to play cricket. They may come from different backgrounds, speak different languages, or belong to different age groups but on the field, they are a team. Develop friendships, build trust, and strengthen social bonds.



**Note**

Traditional games like bullock-cart races, tug-of-war, or village kabaddi matches are more than physical contests, they are part of a collective celebration. Families watch together, cheer together and often remember these moments for years to come.

Sports also act as a unifying language in a country as diverse as India. Youth from different castes, communities or regions play on the same team leaving behind all the barriers. A kabaddi match between neighbouring villages or a cricket tournament involving teams from across the district offers more than competition it builds mutual respect and cultural exchange.

Sports can be a source of courage and opportunity. In urban slums or rural regions, sports programmes provide young people a platform to grow. Through training camps, school-level competitions, children gain self-confidence, discipline, and life skills. Sports become a path to break cycles of poverty, giving them goals and aspirations they might not have had otherwise.

2.7 SPORTS AS CULTURAL HERITAGE

In India, sport is not just about winning or losing; it is closely connected with our culture and way of life. All over India, many games and sports are celebrated during festivals and social occasions. Such activities bring people together, strengthen community connections and keep our traditions alive. During festivals like Diwali, Holi, and Navratri, traditional games and competitions are frequently organised in villages and towns. For example, wrestling matches and bullock cart races are conducted in some regions. These events bring happiness and joy and reflect our rich culture.

One of the popular example is the Dahi-Handi celebrated during Janmashtami festival in many parts of India specially in Maharashtra. In this event, young people prepare a human pyramid to break a clay pot filled with curd or butter and hang it high in the air. This sport is based on stories from the life of Lord Krishna. It imparts us teamwork, courage, and unity. In the same way, in Tamil Nadu, the Pongal festival embraces many traditional events and in Assam, the Bihu festival features games like boat racing. These festivals provide fun and entertainment. It helps people connect with their local traditions and celebrate the harvest season.

To one side from traditional events, modern sports like cricket and kabaddi are also celebrated in a grand way. Mega tournaments are often accompanied by music, dance, and colourful decorations, making them cultural celebrations. Participants enjoy these events with great enthusiasm, keeping them an important part of their social life. In India, games/sports are not just about physical activity, they are ways to come together, sharing joy and expressing themselves. Sports promote values



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Note

Sports & Games as Cultural Heritage

like friendship, discipline, cooperation, and respect, which are important for building a healthy society. People are also focusing on fitness and wellness along with playing sports, they are going to gyms, yog centres, and fitness studios. These places offer different types of exercise for the body and mind. Some use modern equipment, others follow traditional Indian practices.

Ayurveda is India's ancient system of health now becoming popular again. It uses natural techniques like herbal treatments, massages and special diets to improve health. Ayurvedic therapies help people feel relaxed and balanced. On other hand Yog, which is deeply rooted in Indian culture, is now practiced all over the world. Yog includes physical exercises (asanas), breathing techniques (pranayama), and meditation. These practices are known to reduce stress, improve concentration and keep the body and mind sound.

Modern exercises like cardio, weight training and high-intensity workouts are also becoming popular among young people, which help them to maintain fitness, reduce weight and improve strength. The new trend in India is to combine traditional practices with modern fitness methods. People are focusing not only on looking fit but also on feeling mentally, emotionally and spiritually healthy.

Traditional games like kabaddi, kho-kho and gilli-danda also play an important role in our culture, which are simple, need low cost equipment and can be played anywhere. They help in quick thinking, teamwork and physical fitness, and keep us connected to our heritages. In many regions in India, local games reflect the lifestyle, history, and beliefs of the people. These games are passed down from one generation to another, helping preserve our cultural knowledge.

Sports in India act as a bridge that brings people from different communities, backgrounds, and languages together. Whether it's a local wrestling match or a national cricket tournament, sports help us feel united. This blend of old and new, traditional and modern, makes our sporting culture rich and meaningful.



DO YOU KNOW?

Holistic well-being includes wellness of body, mind, social, and spirit. The human body is interconnected; our physical body depends on our mental state and vice versa. Your social support influences your mental well-being.



ACTIVITY 2.3

1. Make a list of a traditional events during festivals in different part of the country.





INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.3



Note

1. Tick (✓) the correct option.

1. How does yog serve as a bridge between physical and spiritual dimensions in the context of Indian sports?
 - a. By focusing solely on physical strength and stamina
 - b. By enhancing flexibility without any spiritual focus
 - c. By combining physical postures with meditation and mental focus
 - d. By promoting competition and rivalry among athletes
2. Which traditional Indian sport has roots in mythology and involves themes of precision and focus?
 - a. Kabaddi
 - b. Kho-kho
 - c. Archery
 - d. Gilli-danda
3. Why are traditional games like kabaddi, kho-kho, and gilli-danda considered important in Indian culture?
 - a. They are the most popular sports globally.
 - b. They only focus on physical fitness.
 - c. They connect individuals with ancestral knowledge, values, and cultural heritage.
 - d. They are only played during international competitions.
4. In which Indian state is the ancient martial art of Kalaripayattu practiced, symbolizing discipline and spiritual enlightenment?
 - a. Punjab
 - b. Kerala
 - c. Assam
 - d. Haryana



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Note

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In essence, the chapter underscores the integral connection between sports and cultural heritage, portraying them as dynamic elements that shape the identity and values of societies.

Concept Map



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Write a description of Kushti game.
2. Discuss whether Malkhamb is an indigenous or regional game.
3. Explain various stages of sports evolution in India.
4. Write a note on “Gilli Danda” and “Kite Flying”.
5. Sports is considered to be a cultural heritage. Discuss how.





Answer to intext questions

2.1

- 1) a) Hunting, dancing, running, and fishing
- 2) b) They were passed down generations as a way of transmitting cultural heritage and values.
- 3) c) The Vedic Period
- 4) b) They introduced sports like cricket, hockey, and football, while traditional games declined in support.

2.2

- 1) True
- 2) False
- 3) False
- 4) True
- 5) True
- 6) True

2.3

- 1) c) By combining physical postures with meditation and mental focus
- 2) c) Archery
- 3) c) They connect individuals with ancestral knowledge, values, and cultural heritage.
- 4) b) Kerala

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Note

