



# Play Materials Used In Traditional Games of Assam

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**Abstract:** Traditional games of Assam reflect the cultural richness, creativity, and simplicity of rural life. The materials, may be called implements, used in western part of Assam as a hole in particular are drawn from many sources. These are collected widely from natural sources and from the surrounding. Sometimes materials are taken from unwanted and wasted things, lying scattered in the environment and in some cases parts of such things are also used in playing such games. Unlike elite games implements for traditional games are managed on the spot, of course there are some readymade implements like kadis (cowries), latims (tops), gutis (pawns), biringguti (marbles), tac (card) etc. This study explores the types of play materials used in traditional games of Assam, their sources, cultural significance, and role in child development. The research adopts a qualitative methodology based on observation, interviews, and secondary sources. The findings reveal that indigenous play materials are eco-friendly, cost-effective, and deeply connected to the socio-cultural environment of Assamese society.

**Keywords:** *Traditional games, Play materials, Assam indigenous cultural, Playing areas or Venus.*

**1. Introduction:** Traditional games and sports form one of the most integral parts of folklore. It is fairly well-known that in the traditional societies of the whole world, such games, sports and pastimes, combined with other varied forms of recreational activities formed the very basis of cultural settings of the mankind. These kept the members of such societies in jovial and pleasant mood with ingredients of fun and frolic in their otherwise busy life mostly spent in search of some primitive needs like food and shelter. Therefore, most of the societies of the world have their own games and sports, signifying their own cultures. The history of origin of traditional games and sports can be traced back to the history of evolution of mankind and in this way, these have turned to be the major factors of social activities throughout the human history. Games and sports originate in the society, run in the society and remain within the society. Before the spread of modern toys and digital entertainment, children engaged in games using materials were not only economical but also encouraged creativity and physical activity. Play materials in traditional games are closely linked with nature and local craftsmanship. Games like Kabaddi, Dhopkhel, GutiKhel, and Tekelibhonga use simple yet functional materials, making them accessible to all sections of society.

**2. Objective of study:** The primary aims and objectives of the study are as follows:

- i) To gain knowledge of the history of traditional games and sports of the state of Assam in the backdrop of social background and circumstance.*
- ii) To identify the types of play materials used in traditional games of Assam.*
- iii) To analyze the sources and nature of these materials.*
- iv) To study the role of these materials in preserving indigenous knowledge.*
- v) To highlight the importance of indigenous games even at the cost of onslaught of modern outfit in present state of world game scenario.*

**3. Methodology:** Methodology is the total process of investigation and analysis followed in a research work. It also includes techniques of data collection and analysis of collected field data. The study based on qualitative research methods:

**i) Data Collection:** For the present study, data have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data have been collected mainly from field setting in Assam. The field work was carried out among the children and adults of the villages under the study area and collected from active bearers of some villages in the Assam.

Some background information regarding ethnographic aspect of the areas have been collected from various secondary sources like census reports, Assamese magazines, souvenirs, atlas and other types of printed sources. In some specific cases, specimens of sports tradition and its parallels are fully taken from printed sources.

**ii) Observation:** Study of rural games and materials used.

**iii) Analytical Method:** Classification and interpretation of materials.

**4. Play materials used in traditional games:** The materials, may be called implements, used in western part of Assam in general and Assam as a whole in particular are drawn from many sources. These are collected widely from natural sources and from the surrounding. Sometimes materials are taken from unwanted and wasted things, lying scattered in the environment and in some cases parts of such things are also used in playing such games. Unlike elite games implements for traditional games are managed on the spot, of course there are some readymade implements like kadis (cowries), latims (tops), gutis (pawns), biringguti (marbles), tac (card) etc.

S.K. Bag has classified the implements as regards the traditional games of western part of Odisha, which may strike similar to all traditional games

- i. Natural materials,
- ii. Materials of unwanted and leftovers,
- iii. Materials from environmental surrounding
- iv. Materials procured from the market (2009;67-68).

## Materials from flora and fauna:

Traditional societies are fond of nature and therefore they collect of the play materials from the realm of flora and fauna of their close proximity. In this aspect the empirical knowledge of the sporting properties of these and animals, formed the basis of the selection.

### Plant materials:

**Ghila:** Ghila is the most noteworthy play material and is used in ghiakhel. It is the seed of a creeping plant. The game is traditionally played since ancient past.

One kind of ghila game is played with two to five or six numbers of players. They take position in a row with their respective ghila placed in a definite distance from them. Players select one striker ghila from their own and strike the ghilas positioned with a typical spinning throw. With their index fingers. The striker ghila is called laighila.

In such act the ghila fall from its stand and the striker owns the ghila. In another kind of ghila game a hole is made to determine the target point of the game. The players who can afford to place ghila in the hole win the numbers of ghila, placed by the opponents in the game.

**Cengguti:** In some areas cengguti is played with seeds of karabirtree, the oleander.

**Lichilatim:** Apart from latim.e tops made of from wood and timber, children play latimkhel with a small and thin stick pierced through the seed of a lichi tree.

Tentedi (tamarind) seed is used as pawns in gataghjulikhel. Likewise bakulguti (the seeds bakul tree) is also used in same purpose. Kacuthari (the stem of kacu, the arum plant) is used in kacugutikhel. Leaves of kacu trees are used to conceal and hide in rows in gutilukoakhel. In most cases gutis are prepared from soil masses. Timbers and woods have major role in Assamese traditional life. Various boats, essential implement of naokhel is made of some specific species of trees. It is believed that uriyam tree (an indigenous) is the best source of boat making.

The tangs and gutis of tanggutikhel are prepared from matured bamboo pieces. These are subjected to sunstine for becoming fit to play. Bamboo sticks are used in larukhel and khorkhel in Darrang district. Folk-technology in preparing these implements has a pivotal role to play and is traditionally handed down from generation to generation.

**Animal materials:** The kingdom of animals has immense role in traditional games. Birds like sen, bulbuli, kukura etc. are trained for its respective fights. As regards animal's elephant hatijuli, buffloes in mahjuj are popular examples. An interesting sidelight can be thrown to the human factor in maljuj. Eggs from a considerable implement in egg fight, popularly calledkanijuj.

**Others materials:** Cloth materials also from a sizeable part of implement as dhop is made of waste clothes. It is primary material of dhokhelHandkerchiefs are used in rumalchorkhel. Ropes are used in racitanakhel. Earthen materials are used in some games. In kalahbhanga, tekelibhangakhels such materials from pottery handicraft are taken as implements. Papers and pencils as used in chor police games are also popular among the children. Sketches are drawn kadidhal, beghdhalmogalpathan, baghgaru etc. Sometimes in papers and pitchboards. In most cases boards are drawn for these games in the ground itself Couries are gathered from market.

**5. Playing areas or venues:** Playing areas or venues of traditional games vary according to its kinds. Games like gaskupati etc. are played atop the trees, selected for this purpose. Field games are almost numberless. Prominent ones are gudukhel, haukhel, matikupati, kabbadi etc. are played in open fields. Water games include dalpunga, ghaicoa, ghariyalghariyal, satorkhel etc. Games like ghila, baghdhal, mogalpathan etc. are played in both open air and indoors on boards drawn on ground.

**Dhanukarkhel:** This game has long ancestry. The game is also called teerkhel. This is very popular among the tribes of the North-East. The game once found patronization from Ahom and Koch. Kings and other Kings who ruled over in different times.

**The method of making bows and arrows:** A chip of matured bamboo about 1/2 inches (37 cm) wide is stripped and polished in a manner so that the two end sides are thinner than the middle part. The back side of the bow should be flat and its inner side should be left-elevated. One deep out each side of the bow should be done to hold the knots of the string. The strip of bamboo is cut to a size of two to three and a half feet (0.6 meter of 1.75 meter) in length. The string of the bows made of strips of cane or tender bamboo. It may be made of some other rope of strong fiber also. The string should be long enough as to link and tie up the bended sides of the bow. The knots at both the end the bamboo strip should be such that they can be easily fastened and unfastened.

Arrows can be made of reed or bamboo strips. The portion opposite to the sharp point, that is the end portion to be filled at the string at the time of shooting should be cut in the shape of the English letter U. The length of an arrow should be 4-5 inches (10-13 cm) longer than the difference between the string and the bow at its highest elevation. This is necessary so that the shooter can have a full grip with his left plane at the back of the bow. When the string is pulled to shoot an arrow, the bow must be equivalent to the size of one fourth of a circle.

There is another kind of bow used for shooting small balls of the size of a plum resembling a marble ball. Such balls are made of soil dried up in sun or burnt in fire. Stick of this kind of bow is not longer than 2 feet (0.6/0.9 metre). Two strings are tied in this bow. The two strings are knitted with thread so as to pull them together placing the ball on the knitted with thread so as to pull them together placing the ball on the knitted string. This kind of bow is similar to catapult used to throw hard balls and its string is generally made of flax or hemp.

The third type of bow is called kadphaidhanu. In this bow a piece of wood remains fitted from the string to the stick of the arrow. On the stick there are some holes made to pass the arrows. The holes are bored from one to the other end of the stick. The arrow may be kept seated in any one of these holes. The arrow should be such length that about 4 inches (100 mm) remains emerging when the string is pulled to full tension.

Then the string is to be pulled to the fullest tension and the arrow fitted on the piece of wood in such a way that a push on it will trigger the arrow to fly at the greatest speed. In ancient times Kadphaidhanu was largely used in wars by the countries of Europe. Use of this type of bow are not found in India and Assam now a days.

To avoid air obstruction the head of an arrow is sharpened to a point, Some shooters tie feathers and leaves of nahar (an indigenous tree) on the stick of the arrow.

**Conclusion:** Games and sports are included as ingredients of Folk-culture of human society. These are the cultural manifestations through which a nation or society can express its feelings of joy a pleasure. From ancient past games and sports have been inherently associated with the human society as an element of historical, social, and cultural tradition and heritage. Therefore, it can be accepted as traditional. Traditional games are always outcome of social product and it involves a process of transmission from one generation to other. So, its conduct and arrangement are also accomplished in traditional mode. Its initial identity is invariably local and it is limited among some coexisted groups and subgroups. It's does not require any hard and fast playing infrastructure for holding and play performance. Rather it is arranged in accordance with the need of the time and partakers. Traditional games of Assam are deeply rooted in nature and culture. The materials used these games reflect the simplicity, creativity, and ecological awareness of Assamese society. Preserving these materials and games is essential for safeguarding cultural heritage and promoting sustainable practices in modern times.

### Reference:

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