TRADITIONAL GAMES OF BANGLADESH

Bangladeshis are proud of their cultural diversity, with its traditions of music, dance, theatre, art, literature and games. The country shares a deep-rooted history of sacred and traditional heritage both tangible and intangible culture of South Asia.

The motivation of the book “Traditional Games of Bangladesh” is to explore and examine the most popular traditional games and sports of Bangladesh. Therefore, this book emphasizes on the games exclusively - Fuli Khela, Bhubon Khela, Charmachiri, Khelkhela, and Shillo Guli and focuses on specific features such as - social and historical background of the game, characteristics, categories and structure; court rule; steps or phases; techniques of body and mind; process of participation; relation between the player and communities etc.

This book ultimately is the outcome of specific research work on the traditional game of Bangladesh, initiated under a global project by UNESCO and IIT leader Tencent to raise awareness about sports and games and to establish an Online Digital Library to archive traditional games documented from the different part of the world.

“Traditional Games of Bangladesh”

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Photo credit: Salahuddin
TRADITIONAL GAMES OF BANGLADESH

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FOREWORD

In 2015, the Chinese IT leader Tencent and UNESCO initiated a project on the creation of an Online Digital Library on Traditional Games with the aim to include as many games as possible from all over the world in a spirit of ensuring open access to knowledge and as a contribution to the protection, preservation and promotion of traditional games. To kick-off the project, pilot countries were identified which included Bangladesh.

Bangladesh with its rich cultural heritage comprising a wealth of traditional practices and living heritage of music, dance, language and still flourishing today has many traditional games alive and practiced.

Traditional games are an expression of common human behavior, of cultural identity, of living heritage but also a laboratory of motor skills, of physical activity, which embrace social learning and foster mutual understanding and tolerance among communities and nations. However, many traditional games have disappeared and those that survive often face imminent disappearance. So, the UNESCO-Tencent cooperation project under the title “The Creation of a Digital Library on Traditional Games” was a timely opportunity to initiate an unexplored yet enriched sector of Bangladesh – traditional games.

Thanks to the generous funding support of Tencent, UNESCO Dhaka Office has supported our UNESCO Office in Beijing in developing a methodology and guideline for identifying, collecting and documenting as well as characterizing traditional games through ICTs and other media. This methodology was applied in the identification and inventorying of selected traditional games of Bangladesh.

This publication is a tangible result of the efforts in Bangladesh and has provided a map of traditional games as well as an in-depth study of five popular and living traditional games of Bangladesh.

I sincerely hope that this publication will be widely utilized, at university, school level and beyond, and will serve its purpose in being a helpful guide for a wide audience, especially youth, and raise awareness about traditional games as part of the rich traditions, heritage and identity of Bangladesh.

I would like to thank Dhaka University and its Department of Theatre and Performance Studies for their support to UNESCO in this project and the realization of this publication.

Beatrice Kaldun
Head and Representative
UNESCO Dhaka Office
FOREWORD

Bangladesh is a harbor of many cultures and a terrain of harmony for the people of different religions and races. Inhabitants living in this land are proud of their rooted traditions of folklore and indigenous performances. Like all other folk and traditional kinds, sports and games are the most aggregated performances that fabricate cultural assimilation and integration; celebrates social form of communitas and entertainments. But it is unfortunate that the traditional games of Bangladesh are neither explored enough as a distinctive genre of folklore nor they are taken into account to create a regular space to play or practice as part of a course, co-curriculum activities, or as an event endorsed in local, regional or national game competitions or festivals. Whereas, participation in traditional games and sports demonstrates that all such endeavors requires discipline, commitment, motivation, and hard work. Moreover, traditional games require and encourage teamwork and cooperation, also provides an opportunity to perform to the best of one’s ability, develop a sense of fair play, and enhance physical fitness or education.

This book - Traditional Games of Bangladesh, therefore is a betimes of publication that examines five most popular games of Bangladesh, which focuses on different features such as – social and historical background; characteristics, categories and structure; court, rule, steps or phases; techniques of body and mind; process of participations; relation between the player and communities etc.

I believe that this book will have a vital role in promoting its significant and necessities to incorporate values of aggregated performance and fosters these values on the playing field, in its rules, and through its established institutions.

I appreciate delightfully to this initiative of publishing the book Traditional games of Bangladesh, the most overlooked genre of traditional performance of Bangladesh. I wish, this book will grab total attention by all enthusiastic youth, adult and concern organizations both from Government Organizations and NGO’s. I personally, would like to give my thanks to UNESCO Dhaka office, who has taken such initiative and two passionate researchers and teacher of Dhaka University Sudip Chakraborthy and Dr. Sydur Rahman, who have responded accordingly to the project on the creation of an Online Digital Library on Traditional Games, initiated by UNESCO.

Professor Dr. A A M S Arefin Siddique
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PREFACE

This book investigates the current status of the traditional games of Bangladesh and exhibits the ‘mapping Bangladesh’. A brief history of the country and its traditional games is initially outlined. The discussion focuses on the collected data of five traditional games titled: ‘Boli Khela’, ‘Bouchhi’, ‘Dariabandha’, ‘Lathi Khela’ and ‘Sholo Guti’. This book is part of the ‘Online Digital Library: Traditional Games of Bangladesh’ archival and visual documentation activity. It is focusing the mapping of traditional games, photos, educational videos and information of the selected five games.

The book is meticulous in its descriptions of traditional games of Bangladesh. The important part of this book is that, this is a comprehensive works to which one can turn for information on these games. It is the purpose of this book to fill this gap, and join the online digital library of the traditional games. UNESCO in Bangladesh and Tencent, supported by Dhaka University, initiates this global project.

As well as researching and documenting about the traditional games of Bangladesh, we have also attempted to assemble mainly those facts, which should be relevant to the student, collector and/or connoisseur of these traditional games, and of course, to the worldwide researchers, whose interest in the games encourages the development of its resources.

For the benefit of the academic reader, there is a reference list of authoritative manuscripts and their locations. An expanded glossary of both Bengali, and other relevant terms has also been added to give context to the reader.

Popular media, the public, the education community and academics have praised the project in a sharing session, conducted at Dhaka University in mid 2017.

It is encouraging to see the traditional games of Bangladesh at the forefront of global networking, documentaries, articles, books and academic archives. As such, we would like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to the endless number of supporters of this project, in particular, to those who have joined the global community of traditional games since the launch of this archival and visual research and documentation.

For readers, we wish for you to have an enjoyable and stimulating journey of discovery.

Sudip Chakroborthy
Dr. Sydur Rahman Lipon
INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation in 1971. The country’s borders coincide with the major portion of the ancient and historic region of Bengal in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent, where civilization dates back over four millennia, right back to the Copper Age. The history of the region is closely intertwined with the history of Bengal and the history of India.

Bangladeshis are proud of their cultural diversity, with its traditions of music, dance, theatre, art and literature. The country shares a deep-rooted history of sacred and traditional heritage both tangible and intangible culture of South Asia, especially with the culture of Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian and other ethnic groups living in this region.

A ‘sport’ is an athletic discipline with a defined set of rules in which athletes train and compete, whereas a game is a competition between two or more teams with a defined objective and a set of rules that apply to reaching the objective; a person participating in a sport is an ‘athlete’ or a ‘sportsperson’, whilst a person participating in a game is a ‘player’. ‘Sport’ is based on physical strength, it requires professional standards of conduct, and it is highly organised and competitive; whereas, a game is reliant on good sportsmanship and having fun.

Like all other performing heritage, the rich tradition of games and sports in Bangladesh is facing some challenges in reference to its existence, its popularity, and various obstacles in practicing these traditional games.

A number of games are still known to be in practice even in the context of the ever changing socioeconomic condition. Popular and traditional games are chiefly played in rural areas and passed down from generation to generation. Such games are played for both physical exercise and entertainment in a competitive environment.

This publication emphasizes on five games exclusively—‘Boli Khela’, ‘Bouchhi’, ‘Dariabandha’, ‘Lathi Khela’, and ‘Sholo Guti’ to focus on specific features such as—social and historical background; characteristics, categories and structure; court, rule, steps or phases; techniques of body and mind; process of participation; relation between the player and communities etc.
Mohammed in 'Karbala' is a symbolic performance against brutality and inhumanity to 'Ashura' – a holy celebration of the tragic sacrifice of the two grandsons of Prophet Khela' are related to social and religious beliefs. Such as 'Lathi Khela' which is related invites people for social entertainment. On the other hand, 'Lathi Khela' and 'Pasha are related to spiritual and ritualistic approach. For example, 'Dariabandha' game entertaining and competitive environment. Whereas, sacred type of traditional games Secular and sacred: secular type of games generally offers an fun gathering of an aggregated social and cultural community, and that has been practiced generation after generation. In relation to social, cultural, environmental and spatial circumstances, all genres of traditional games can be featured in three nodes. These points are: categories, characteristics and structure.

CATEGORIES OF GAME
Secular and sacred: Secular and sacred type of games generally offers an entertaining and competitive environment. Whereas, sacred type of traditional games are related to spiritual and ritualistic approach. For example, 'Dariabandha' game invites people for social entertainment. On the other hand, 'Lathi Khela' and 'Pasha Khela' are related to social and religious beliefs. Such as 'Lathi Khela' which is related to 'Ashura' – a holy celebration of the tragic sacrifice of the two grandsons of Prophet Mohammed in 'Karbala' is a symbolic performance against brutality and inhumanity.

Games in relation to space- Land, Air and Water: Traditional Games can be divided into three groups in relation to space and environment- land, water and sky. Games played on land are known as games of land; those played on water, such as swimming and boat-racing, are games of water; and flying kites or pigeons are the games of the sky.

Games played indoor or outdoor: Traditional Games in relation to spatial condition can be divided into two groups: Indoor or Outdoor games. Outdoor games are more open, physical, physio-tactical, technical, muscular and rhetorical, such as Bouchhi, where the indoor games such as Sholo Guti are mostly psycho-tactical and intellectual in nature.

Games played by child, young or adult: A variety of traditional games are practiced with the participation of different age groups, such as child, youth, and adult. For example, ‘Bouchhi’, ‘Gollachut’, ‘Kutkut’, ‘Kanamachi’ games are played by children, where ‘Dhariabandha’, ‘Boli Khela’, ‘Nouka Baich’ etc. games are played by youths and adults.

Games played by men, women, or mixed groups: From gender point of view, traditional games give options for men, women, or mixed groups to participate. For example ‘Dhariabandha’, ‘Boli Khela’, ‘Ha du du’, ‘Nouka Baich’ are the games played by men; ‘Bouchhi’, ‘Kutkut’, ‘Eching Biching’, ‘Elating Belating’ are played by women, and ‘Pasha Khela’, ‘Guti Khela’ are played by mixed groups.

Games played in relation to Flora and Fauna: Flora and Fauna are used as characters or rhetorical symbols in different types of traditional manuscripts, literature, entertaining performances, and in the games and sports as well. This category ensures traditional knowledge, process and techniques of using animals, birds or objects, such as cow, bull, chicken, pigeon, monkey, snake, horse etc.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GAME
Bangladesh has a very rich and rooted history of traditional games and sports. Unfortunately, many of the games have declined because of identifiable changes in social structure, agricultural reformation and cultural transformation. However, a number of traditional games are still in practice with high, medium, and low levels of popularity. At least six types of characteristics were identified regarding traditional games and sports, during the primary and secondary research.

Energy and power: games determined by physical energy, power, or skillful physical techniques such as ‘Boli Khela’, ‘Ha du du’, and psychological games based on neuro-logic and intellectual skills such as ‘Guti Khela’, ‘Pasha Khela’.

Point to focus: process of gaining technical or physical skills, concentration, quality or skill of spontaneity and improvisation.
**Eyes:** game conducted by open eye or closed eye, such as ‘Kanamachi’, ‘Phool Tokka’.

Point to focus: techniques, skill and process of sensorial and unsighted contact, reflection and communication.

**Words and rhythm:** games determined by rhythm, lyric, verse or prose, such as ‘Kutkut’, ‘Openti Bioscope’, etc.

Point to focus: spontaneity on rhythm, lyric, prose and verse.

**Conflict and crisis:** games of conflict and crisis such as ‘Edur Biral’, ‘Chor Police’ etc.

Point to focus: identify the point of conflict or crisis, process of dealing with conflict or crisis, way of resolving the conflict.

**Rules and improvisation:** game determined by set rules and improvisation such as ‘Lukochuri’, ‘Kumirkhela’.

Point to focus: basic quality of physical flexibility and process of gaining improvisations quality.

**Sound and breathing:** game determined by breathing, breathing with the sound, breathing with vocal tone or words such as ‘Bouchhi’, ‘Ha du du’, or ‘Kanamachi’.

Point to focus: techniques, process and utility of breathing, function of breathing and breathing with vocal sound, and sense of rhythm, verse or lyric.

**STRUCTURE OF TRADITIONAL GAMES**

Considering the process of playing traditional games, they can be understood as a structure with a sequence of four phases.

a) **Mutual disagreement:** Structurally, this is the beginning or first phase of a game. A number of enthusiastic players from the community/society agree to play a game and decide to form two or more groups/teams mutually to contest or challenge each other in a given game situation.

b) **Building excitement or crisis:** In the second phase of the game, players build excitement or raise crisis gradually. As the game progresses, players from both sides try to accumulate or gain numbers/points/rounds/objects etc. to make or offer clear challenge to each other.

c) **Mounting excitement or climax:** In progression of the game, both opponent sides create one or more ultimate excitement or climax to win or defeat. In this stage, the game situations become tough and competitive or make a clear difference to win.

d) **Resolution or consequence:** The last or final phase of the game shows a clear consequence or resolution which can occur in three ways—win, defeat or draw. Resolution or result can make two groups of participants reintegrate again to the situation before the formation of teams, or it can be a cause of separation due to win or defeat.

**LIMITATIONS**

Traditional games of Bangladesh have always been considered and discussed under the subject of Folklore, Folk Tradition or Folk-Cultural Studies. No comprehensive work or intensive research has been undertaken on traditional games as a unique and distinctive genre. A few self-guided researchers are known to be involved in researching traditional games. Among the books and articles found on traditional games in Bangladesh, focus is generally on ‘name of the games’, ‘process of playing the games’ and ‘locality where the games are played or collected’. Among the limited number of books and articles written on the traditional games, very few references are found that explain ‘historical, social, ritual, religious or secular background, and source of evolution or social facts behind the Game. Essentially, historical and social backgrounds behind the games are unknown.'
In absence of a complete inventory, games of ethnic communities of different language and social practice in Chittagong hill tracts regions are not incorporated in this chapter - 'mapping Bangladesh'.
BOLI KHELA

Photos taken in Mahajon Hat, Potia, Chitagong.
'Boli Khela' generally translates into English as the ‘game of strong men’ or ‘game of wrestlers’. ‘Boli’ comes from the word ‘Bol’, meaning physical or muscular power and ‘Boli’ is a person who possesses the ‘Bol’ or power. Therefore ‘Boli’ is a person or wrestler who demonstrates physical power, while ‘Khela’ denotes a game. So, ‘Boli Khela’ means the game of the powerful peers.

‘Boli Khela’, is a traditional style of wrestling, originated in Chittagong, Bangladesh. It is a combat sport that includes grappling techniques like clinch fighting, throws and take downs, joint locks, pins, and other grappling holds.

‘Boli Khela’ is commonly played during the special festive occasions, like celebration of the Bengali New Year. Use of various musical instruments such as drums, flutes increase the intensity of the game and publicize the event. In addition to it, the music creates an environment of excitement while the players are showcasing their talent.

Generally, musical team member wear colorful uniform, where participants normally wear traditional costume, lungi, during the game. Nowadays, many players prefer wearing short pants.

A number of enthusiastic individuals from the same region are known as the organizers of the ‘Jabbarer Boli Khela’ each year in the Chittagong region.

The organizer awards a ‘Boli’ with money and a trophy. But social acknowledgement and celebration are the highest achievement that a ‘Boli’ wins after the competition. Sometimes participants receive a lump sum as an honorarium for their participation, even though they do not win the game.
SIGNIFICANCE

‘Boli Khela’ is traditional wrestling of Bangladesh. Though this game is a specific regional game, it attracts people as well as visitors from various parts of the country. ‘Boli Khela’ is characterized by its highly rated physical skill. Muscular power, physical strength, and techniques in a given performing situation define this traditional game. Another perspective can be added in this game, it is a male dominated game that uses strong male-body to prove its ‘existence of the strongest’ in the society.

VARIATION

Considering the use of physical strength and muscular power of a male in performing condition, there are some alike games in other parts of Bangladesh, called ‘Kusti Khela’ / ‘Kusti Kheir’ / ‘Kushti Loral’, or ‘Bhaiafi Kusti’ which also uses similar type of physical strength and muscular power. Though there are a few differences in rules and process, but the core connotation of the game is the same.

HISTORY

‘Boli Khela’ is a very popular game in the Chittagong region. It is not historically proven, but traditionally believed that the ‘Boli Khela’ originated in the subcontinent during the Mughal dynasty (1526-1857). Every year, a special event named ‘Jabbarer Boli Khela’ is held at Lal Dighi Maidan in the port city Chittagong, which attracts a crowd from various parts of the country, including visitors from abroad. In the year 1902 (or 1909), a man named Abdul Jabbar Saudagar (merchant) started organizing ‘Boli Khela’ in Chittagong. He aimed to prepare young people to fight against the then British rule. The golden age of this game lasted from the end of World War 1 until the partition of India (1947). There is another ‘Boli Khela’ in the Chittagong region, such as Shahabuddiner Boli Khela, a game by the name of Shahabuddin. The game with different names such as ‘Kusti Khela’, ‘Kusti Loral’ etc. exist in different forms in other regions of Bangladesh. Though the game ‘Boli Khela’ is named after Abdul Jabbar Saudagar, but the right of the game belongs to many other families, groups or communities who are practicing ‘Boli Khela’ as part of tradition.
COURT AND RULES

‘Boli Khela’ is played on a circular or square ground of sand or mud. The participants are not allowed to use any weapons and have to fight with bare hands and legs. Games are usually 10-30 minutes long and game ends when one of the wrestler’s back-falls on the ground. Participants normally wear traditional costume lungi during the game. Nowadays many players prefer wearing short pants. The players touch the ground with a sacred loom; recite religious texts ‘Sura’, keep eyes to the sun and take a deep breath before they start.

‘Boli Khela’ is a series or round-based competition. A player is eliminated from the round if his back falls on the ground. The winner from the first round prepares himself for another round with a different player. In this way, one player gets qualified for the second or quarterfinal rounds. The number of rounds depends on the number of competitors.

STEPS OR PHASES

STEP 1
Two players stand in a straight line face to face in presence of a referee in the circular or square ground of sand/mud/grass. With a signal from the referee both players stand in front of each other with their bodies bent. Both players contact with their heads and hold hands tightly for a few moments.

STEP 2
The player's hands are allowed to grab each other's hand, arm, or waist, aiming to push and throw the opponent's back to the ground. If any contestant is able to push the backside of the opponent's body or throw his back on the ground, he is considered winner.
Weapons or any kind of objects like metal, wood, plastic, glass etc. are not allowed during the game. Punch, blow, kick or solid push from head or legs is not allowed. For final touchdown, techniques that involve hands such as dirt, grapple, clinch and holding up are allowed.
After playing for a long time, if any of the players cannot defeat his opponent, then the referee can call it a draw. However, if a player wins one round after the other including quarterfinal, semifinal and final round, he is awarded as the champion of the year.
Photos taken in Hargoj, Gajaria, Manikgonj.
'Bouchhi' is a popular traditional game in Bangladesh. 'Bouchhi' consists of 'Bou' and 'Chhi'. Here, 'Bou'/Budi'/Ghughu' means beautiful young bride and 'Chhi' is a vocal sound with one long breath. 'Bouchhi' is a rural courtyard game mainly played by girls of five to sixteen years old. In some parts of the country, boys and girls both participate in this game. 'Bouchhi' is a seasonal game practiced in dry season, especially during spring, autumn and winter. A plane-grassy land is needed to play 'Bouchhi'.

**SIGNIFICANCE**

In 'Bouchhi, a display of one long breath with a loud vocal of ‘Chhi...’ is the key force of the game to create its competitive nature. Essentially, 'Bouchhi' is a game that consists of individual physical rhythm, holding a long breath, operation of speed and strength, techniques, and spontaneity. Team accord is also important to triumph the game. The game 'Bouchhi' is characterized by its high focus on physical performance. Especially, running with the sound 'Chhi...' and one long breath, is the key skill that one child needs to gain. Finally, 'Bouchhi' is a fun traditional game played by and for children.

**VARIATION**

The game 'Bouchhi' is commonly played in different regions of Bangladesh. The name 'Bouchhi' is not common all over the country. In some local communities 'Bouchhi' is called 'Buri-Chhi' or 'Chhi-Buri'. Some differences and modifications in terms of rules and court layout are seen as variation. In some regions, the straight line (see court image) that connects two circular courts as the house of bride and the house of groom is not used. Running and chasing with the vocal sound 'Chhi...’ is more centered on the straight line.
HISTORY

There is no historically authentic evidence about ‘Bouchhi’. But most of the reviewers and analytical critics explained that, once upon a time there were social conflicts related to marriage ceremonies. Basically, the game has originated from this social conflict, which is based on the abduction of a bride by the groom’s relatives. The groom’s side tried to abduct the bride forcefully and bride’s side tried to protect her.

It is told that sometimes this kind of violence used to spread among two to three villages. To remember those hostile memories of abduction, people started to use various mediums of folklore – ‘Bouchhi’, the popular game of Bangladesh has evolved through such social conflicts.

COURT AND RULES

‘Bouchhi’ requires two circular courts outlined on the ground in two different sizes marked at least 8 to 10 feet distant from each other (see court image). Bigger court’s shape is at least 4 to 6 feet in diameter, which represents the house of the groom or ‘Jamai Bari’. The smaller court is 2 to 3 feet in diameter and represents the house of the bride, ‘Bou Bari’, or the house of the father of the bride.

One channel line of 6 to 8 feet is drawn between the circles. Both circles spare at least 2 feet gaps from the line on each side. Both teams contain 5 to 10 players. One player is selected from the toss winner team to represent the bride and sent to the small court—a symbol of sending the bride to her father’s house. In contrast, the members of other team stay inside the bigger court—a symbol of the groom’s house. The members of the bride team represent the relatives of the bride. Their chief task is to protect the bride from abduction or snatching by the groom. Bride’s team is allowed to stay around the small circle without restraint.

The most exciting and competitive part of this game is snatching the bride or ‘Bou Churi’ while she is protected and kept inside the small circle. One member from the groom’s side is in action toward the small circle and tries to snatch the bride back to their house. As a result, the competitive nature of the game is increased slowly.
Selecting group or team: To play ‘Bouchhi’, participants assemble first and apply tricky local humor using leaves or fingers to divide themselves into two teams with mutual understanding. Then a toss decides the bride’s team and the groom’s team.

Deciding the game plan: One long breath with vocal sound ‘Chhi...’ is refereed as ‘one unit of breathing’; and a total number of 10 to 12 breath unit is considered as ‘one breath circle’ for one team. Both teams decide on at least 5 to 7 breath circles to play for winning the game. Only the groom’s team is allowed to snatch the bride back to groom’s court as many times as they can within one breath circle. Both teams’ change their sides after one breath circle, therefore groom’s team becomes bride’s team in the next breath circle. Followed by this rotational process, only groom’s team lead the game to earn point/number by snatching the bride. Finally, the team who can snatch the bride more times within the decided breath circle wins the game.

Players Position: The groom’s side takes position inside the big circle while the bride’s team takes position around the small court. A player from the groom’s side is selected to take position inside the small court as the symbol of bride in the father’s house.

Start the game: A member of the groom’s team is selected as a snatcher to move out of the court and snatch the bride back to their own court. The snatcher starts moving towards the bride’s house, with a long breath and vocal sound ‘Chhi...’ to snatch her back while not allowing the bride being touched by the member of bride’s team.
Valid movement for a Chaser/snatcher and Protector
a. Snatcher is allowed to stay outside of the groom’s court as long as she/he does not lose breath and vocal sound ‘Chhi…’ during snatching the bride.
b. To create a clear and safe runway to bring the bride back to the court, snatcher is allowed to move only around the channel line (see court image), not to cross over the line.
c. To make a secured runway to snatch the bride back, snatcher can chase and make the protector ‘dead’ (off from the game) by touching as many of them as s/he can.
d. In the moment of losing breath with the sound ‘Chhi…’ a snatcher is allowed to take any of the two moves to return back to the groom’s court. i) Snatcher can run back directly to the groom’s court avoiding being touched by any member of the bride’s team. ii) Snatcher can take a very short break inside the bride’s court to regain breath to get back to own court. During this time, snatcher is not allowed to chase their opponent.
e. The key task for protectors is to protect the bride and keep a strong barrier against the snatcher, who wants to get the bride back to the groom’s court.
f. During the defense, protectors maintain safe and strategic distance from the chaser to remain untouched.
g. On the way back to the groom’s house if snatcher loses her breath, protectors are allowed to touch and send her out of the game as an inactive player. Touched snatcher then becomes inactive until the next breath circle begins.

Disqualification
a. During the move to snatch, if any protector or bride’s team member is touched by the chaser/snatcher, s/he is considered as a ‘dead’ or inactive player. S/he remains inactive until the next breath circle begins.
b. During the move to chase or snatch, if snatcher loses breathe with sound ‘Chhi…’ and is touched by the protectors/bride members, snatcher is considered as a ‘dead’ or inactive player until the next breath circle begins.
c. During the move to snatch, if a snatcher makes the mistake of crossing over the channel line, snatcher is refereed as a ‘dead’ or inactive player until the next breath circle begins.
Photos taken in Hargoj, Gajaria, Manikgonj.
DARIABANDHA

‘Dariabandha’ is a physio-tactical game mostly played in village/rural areas in Bangladesh. It is played on the plain ground after cutting paddy or crops, in rural courtyard, in school playground or any other open space.

‘Dariabandha’ is an outdoor game usually played by young boys and adult men. Possession and defense are the main strength that ensures competitive excitement of this game. To win the game, player’s physical strategy, technique, improvisation quality and spontaneity are more important than showing muscular power.

‘Daria’ means a person who rows the boat or vessel and ‘Bandha’ means obstacle or blockage. Symbolically, ‘Dariabandha’ stands for a game of possession and defense. The time the game was first mentioned is unknown. It is a traditional game passed down from generation to generation.

The right of the traditional game ‘Dariabandha’ belongs to the community in a collective ownership.

The game ‘Dariabandha’ is ordinarily practiced in a number of regions in Bangladesh. Some dissimilarities and alterations in terms of rules and court layout do exist. Especially, the role of the team leader, a salt trader named ‘Sikka’, is not always alike in other parts of the country.
movements of ‘Sikka’. The court plan and rule can differ from region to region. For example, the rules of movement on the court-line (both horizontal and vertical) in Manikganj region cannot be followed in other regions of Bangladesh.

HISTORY
According to some references ‘Daria’ means a person who rows the boat or vessel and ‘Bandha’ means an obstacle or blockage. Behind this game, is an interesting story linked to trading and smuggling salt, but it is not historically identified. It is told that, in the river of the southern part of Bangladesh, salt merchants would transport their salt by the river and that local robbers would hijack very often salt-vessels. According to some references, this social problem linked with salt trading, is reflected in the game ‘Dariabandha’. In this game, one team represents the salt smugglers creating obstacle for the salt traders, while other team represents the salt traders trying to keep on trading salt.

SIGNIFICANCE
‘Dariabandha’ is a highly physio-tactical game that involves player’s physical strength, strategy, technique, improvisation and spontaneity rather than muscular power only. Moreover, the game ‘Dariabandha’ gives a common ground for the people of the community to renew integration, social solidarity, and a process of mass participation in a given entertaining performance space.

VARIATION
With only little variation, the game rules and the process of ‘Dariabandha’ are almost the same. In some other regions, this game is played with different names, such as ‘Bodhon Ghar’ in Rajshahi Division, ‘Ready Ghar’ in Khulna division, ‘Ready Going’ in Barishal Division, and ‘Phool Ghar’ in Kustia District. Moreover, some other teams in different areas do not follow ‘Sikka-Shoi’, the captain’s call to start the game, and valid
COURT AND RULES

The playground of ‘Dariabandha’ consists of 8/10 courts, square in shape. Each court is 6/8 feet in size. At first, two square courts are placed alongside in order and it is called ‘Aagh Court’ or Frontcourt. Another two courts are placed in the back, which is called ‘Pich Court’ or Backcourt. Additionally, 4/6 courts are placed in vertical order followed by front to back courts. In between two square courts, there is a vertical column-line linking to front and back courts. Finally, the playground of ‘Dariabandha’ is turned into a big court, rectangular in shape, after placing of 6/8 square box or court. This rectangular shape is divided by one vertical column-line and three to four horizontal row-lines. According to the number of participants, courts can be more or less. The central column-line and each four horizontal row-lines are used as a walkway for the players (smugglers - who create obstacles to the salt-traders) to move. The captain or leader of the smuggler/protector team is called ‘Sikka’. He has the power to move all through the vertical walk-way column-line while other players are allowed to move in horizontal row-line only.

As a part of the court plan, these lines of walkway (both column and row lines) consist of double-line keeping one feet gap for walk or move by the players. Central column-line or vertical walkway is referred to be used vertically by the captain or ‘Sikka’ only and row walkway line is referred to be used horizontally by the other players of the team. Finally, the captain along with his team members take position inside the column and row-line respectively and the opposite team (salt trader) take position outside of the front court to start the game or trade salts by possessing and passing each and every single box court.
Deciding the game plan

The basic rules and conditions of ‘Dariabandha’ is to cross and pass all square courts from front court to back court and in return to front court avoiding obstacles; that is physical touch by the opponents (smugglers). During the move from the frontcourt to back court, all courts are considered as immature court, or ‘Kancha Court’ in Bengali that denotes immature stage or primary stage of the game and during return from the back court to the front court, all matured courts are considered as ‘Paka Court’, that represents final phase of the game.

According to the court rules of the game, all players who are in the move from front to back court is called immature or ‘Kancha’ player, and while returning from back to front court, a player is considered ‘Paka’ or matured player by the opponents.

The first target of salt trader team is to cross all immature courts to become mature, so as to meet the criteria to make the final move. During return, the target of the final move by ‘Paka’ players is to convert all immature courts into matured courts by entering them one after another. The salt trader team will win the game if any one of the matured players can make a successful move or entry into last of the frontcourts.

In all the moves from front to back and in return to the front court, all players of trader’s side must remain untouched by the protectors (salt smuggler) staying on the walkway lines.

Players can apply jumping, rolling, dragging, or other more innovative physical techniques to pass or cross the row-lines and box-lines, without being touched by the protectors.

Players can apply jumping, rolling, dragging, or other more innovative physical techniques to pass or cross the row-lines and box-lines, without being touched by the protectors.

Selecting group or team

The group or team can be divided in many ways, such as married-unmarried, east west or north south, senior-junior from neighborhood villages or random selection using local funny techniques.

A referee tosses a coin and decides teams of salt trader and salt smuggler.
STEP 2

Make a successful move to become ‘mature’

To start the game, captain of salt smuggler speaks out with loud voice, ‘Sikka Shoi’, which means game on. Then all players of the trader’s side start moving in and try to pass all courts from the front side to back side. In this stage, all traders are identified as immature or ‘Kancha’ player. The target of all ‘immature’ traders is to pass and cross the courts from frontcourt to outside of the back court to become mature or ‘Paka’ player. More than one ‘mature’ or ‘Paka’ player, from outside of the back court, then take the final move to the front court to win the game. But to enter into the court from back to become ‘mature’, salt trader faces strong physical resistance by the smuggler. In this stage of the game, mature salt trader convert all immature court and players mature by entering into court one by one. The salt trader team is claimed to be dead (mora) if any member of traders is being touched by any of the smugglers, during the move from front to back and back to front. If the salt trader team becomes dead they lose their chance to make points and exchange their position for the next round. Therefore, salt trader team takes position in smuggler’s side and the smuggler team goes to trader’s side.

STEP 3

Make your final move to win

Make your final move to win: ‘Paka’ player takes final and successful entry from the backcourt to turn out all immature courts and players into mature one by one. Once, any of the matured players enter into last immature courts of front side successfully, trader’s side wins the game. But if a matured player gets touch by the opponent’s team (salt smuggler), traders team lose the game and change their side as smuggler. And this is how first set of the game is completed.
LATHI KHELA

Photos taken in Hargoj, Gajaria, Manikgonj.
‘Lathi Khela’ is a traditional Bangladeshi martial art - a kind of stick fighting practiced mainly in Bangladesh. A ‘lathi’ practitioner is known as a ‘lathial’. The word ‘Lathi’ means stick, and ‘Khela’ means sport or game. Therefore, ‘Lathi Khela’ translates to a game of sticks. ‘Lathi’ is normally made of bamboo and sometimes bound at short intervals with iron rings. A typical ‘Lathi’ measures 6 to 8 feet (2 to 2.4 m). Some are shorter and may be wielded like a baton or bludgeon. In the past, sticks could have been paired with shields, as can be seen still in ‘Noribari’ demonstrations (mock stick-fight). ‘Lathi’ is mentioned as a weapon in some folk or traditional manuscript written in medieval era.

No individual creator is cited or mentioned by researchers and community people. Traditionally, the practice and performance of ‘Lathi Khela’ always represents some family or group of people in specific region of Bangladesh. Usually, a ‘Lathi Khela’ team or a group becomes known by the name of their region, locality, or family, such as ‘Sardar Barir Lathi Khela’ in Manikgonj, ‘Jessorer Lathi Khelar dal’ in Jessore, ‘Rajshahir Lathial’ in Rajshahi, ‘Mymensingher Helim Boyatir Lathi Khelar dal’ etc. Along with the family, group or person, some other institutions and cultural organizations also exist in Bangladesh who are practicing and presenting ‘Lathi Khela’ as a form of traditional game and or performing arts.

Rhythm and instrumental music, vocal tone, and dance are used during ‘Lathi Khela’. Lathi Khela mainly is a tool of social and secular entertainment but for a time this game was associated with the ritual of ‘Ashura’ celebration (remembering tragic death of two grandsons of Prophet Mohammad, historically happened in Karbala, Iraq), wedding ceremonies, ‘Sankranti’ (last day of a Bengali calendar year), ‘Pahela Baisakh’ (first day of Bengali calendar year), village fair, etc.
The rights and ownership belong to the people of rural community. ‘Lathi Khela’ is traditionally practiced and performed by some family or groups organized within the community. But any person or groups from anywhere can practice and perform ‘Lathi Khela’. There are no fixed or standardized rules in this game. The rules, Style, and characteristics are developed and modified by the players, groups, and organizations in different parts of the country.

‘Lathi Khela’ is also practiced and presented by the other groups, Institutions, and organizations as third party, such as- Lathial Academy in Kustia (practicing ‘Lathi Khela’ academically), Theatre and Performance Studies Department (practicing ‘Lathi Khela’ as part of course curriculum) in the public universities, National Fine and Performing Arts Academy (arranges ‘Lathi Khela’ festivals and conducts ‘Lathi Khela’ training), Shadhona Cultural Circle – A Centre for Advancement of South Asian Culture (practice and present ‘Lathi Khela’ as part of traditional performance both in and outside the country), etc.
HISTORY

‘Lathi Khela’ or the game of sticks has an ancient history in South Asia, tracing back to the region’s aboriginal inhabitants. Rich farmers and other eminent people hired ‘lathial’ for the security of or to take hold of wealth and land as a symbol of their power. Duels were used as a way to protect or take land and other possessions. A proverb in some South Asian languages is “whoever wields the lathi keeps the cow”. Zamindars (feudal lords) sent groups of ‘lathial’ to forcefully collect taxes from villagers.

‘Lathi’ training was at one time, included in the ‘Bratachari’ system of education (a traditional system of movement for spiritual and social improvement). Moreover, ‘Lathi Khela’ is performed expressly on the occasion of some sacred and social rituals, mentioned above. In some cases, ‘Lathi Khela’ is presented in national or regional festivals organized by the local government or non-government cultural organizations. It is played mostly in dry or in winter season. In 1933, an ‘All Bengal Stick Challenge Shield’ was established in Majampur of Kushtia District, in, the then, East Bengal. Groups from all over Bengal, including a few enthusiastic English players participated in the tournament. Some other competitions are seen nowadays organized by NGOs and other Organizations.

STEPS OR PHASES

Concert (instrumental music)

‘Lathi Khela’ begins with a heavy concert by a musical team to prepare the players and to gather spectators as well. They usually perform popular songs with their local and handmade instruments, such as ‘Kolosh Jaanj’, ‘Dhol’, ‘Dhak’, ‘Khol’, Harmonium, Clarinet etc. The concert session runs for 15-20 minutes. After the concert, the ‘lathial’ group enters into the field in an organized way followed by the musical rhythm and the group displays several sessions of ‘Lathi Khela’.

Baauijak (a call to start the game)

At the end of the concert session, ‘Sardar’ (the lead person of the team) takes the lead in the game. He comes forward to the spectators and delivers at length, fixed lines of prose and poetry in a loud voice, while his team members reply to the lines. It is called ‘Baauijak’. This call is for the players to take position and start the game with dance, movement and choreography. Historically, the call ‘Baauijak’ was used to announce to the stick fighters to get ready to fight against their opponent. ‘Baauijak’ is basically the rigorous oral act-react between the opposing team leaders. It is also a final call and preparatory session for the stick fighters. According to the team leader of the Sardar Barir Lathi Khela in Manikgonj district, the concept ‘Baauijak’ was taken from the movement or chorographical patterns of a group of small birds, named ‘Babui Pakhi’.
**NORIBARI (PAIRED GAME)**

Two players confront each other in this session. Sometimes, a veteran player introduces the two competitors. He is known as Sardar. During the game, players show their skill through the technique of stick fight. The two players keep fighting until one is being held by the other. Usually, the pair starts the game slowly and increases the tempo gradually. In this session, Sardar contributes some comic punch lines to entertain the audience.

**KATHIBARI (GROUP DISPLAY)**

a. Group display by ‘Kathi’ or sticks: Commonly, 6 to 8 players take part in this session of group display, known as ‘Kathibari’. The game is performed with a specific rhythm of different kinds of body movements and gestures. The players stand around, sit, recline in different position and engage with each other. It is another display of technique and skill in choreography.

b. Land possession: This session demonstrates high skill of defense and acquired techniques of stick fighters. It involves 1 player against a group of 6/8 players. The play symbolically represents a group of people attacking to acquire the land of an individual, and how the individual defends against the invaders with only a stick. It shows the invaders surround the individual. They hit the individual but he defends from the center of a circle, using various techniques. The players maintain a particular rhythm to perform this game.

**LATHIPECH (TWIRLING THE STICK)**

At this stage of the game, players demonstrate the technique of twirling the stick in various ways. The players grab the middle of a stick and twirl it around both sides of his body in different motions.

In addition, the Sardar Bari’s Lathi Khela team presents some entertaining performances, such as ‘jadu’ or magic, ‘bohorupi’ or mask performance, ‘chhukri nach’ or dance of a young lady enacted by a male performer, etc.
SHOLO GUTI

Photos taken in Hargoj, Gajaria, Manikgonj.
SHOLO GUTI

The name ‘Sholo Guti’ derived from ‘Sholo’ and ‘Guti’. Here, ‘Sholo’ means sixteen and ‘Guti’ means pawn, so it is a game of sixteen pawns. A geometrical pattern of court and 16 pawns or ‘guti’ for each side is needed to play the game. This game is very similar to the game ‘Chess’ and the traditional dice game ‘Pasha’.

‘Sholo Guti’ is one of the most common and regularly practiced games of Bangladesh. In rural areas, this game is played frequently in leisure time. Basically, different age groups, children to adults, play this game whenever they meet peers.

This game is played almost year round. During the monsoon, it is played inside the house or at least one terrace. But in summer, it is played in quiet and calm outdoor situations, such as under the tree at paddy field-side, and pond sides. There is no time or seasonal restriction in this game.

SIGNIFICANCE

‘Sholo Guti’ is a game of twoness; only two players can play the game. But the game can be explained as a game of neuro-tactical and intellectual game between two players, where mental, psychological, and intellectual dualities and its competitiveness hold the total excitement of the game.

This game can also be identified as a game of neuro-tactics that demand a high level of focus and concentration over the court arranged by the two sets of sixteen pawns. Therefore, this game is characterized by its calculative systems, strategic and neuro-tactical plans, and the degree of popularity among the community.

VARIATION

The game ‘Sholo Guti’ is known by different names in different parts of the country, such as ‘Bagh Bondi Khela’, ‘Guti Khela’, etc. Some other ‘Guti’ games do exist: playing with different rules, shape of court, or number of pawns (such as ‘Panch Guti’, the game of five pawns).
HISTORY
There is no historically authentic evidence, but most of the reviewers and analytical critics explained that, ‘Sholo Guti’, or game of Pawns, has a clear resemblance with the game of Chess. In earlier times, this game was called Mughal-Pathan war game. Considering the rules and process of playing ‘Sholo Guti’, a player or observer can easily associate with a vision about war plan or strategy.

It is known that, in the time of medieval era, the war between Mughal and Pathan has made a deep impact on the socio-political situation in this region. And in addition to it, some other researchers have assumed that the game ‘Sholo Guti’ is connected with the primordial game ‘Pasha Khela’ or Game of Dice.

The game ‘Pasha Khela’ is cited in the great Indian mythological epic, ‘Mahabharata’, which was written in pre-historic era.

COURT AND RULES
Two kinds of court for ‘Sholo Guti’ are seen in practice– temporary and permanent. Temporary court is drawn on a clean and bright surface, both while playing on the muddy ground and/or concrete. Permanent court can be seen engraved on the concrete floor of some houses in rural areas, generally in the extended room or veranda. This kind of permanent court narrates a long tradition of ‘Sholo Guti’ that has been passed on generation to generation.

The court of ‘Sholo Guti’ is the assembling of two triangular shapes attached with two long sides of a rectangular shape. This court consists of a total number of 37 dot-points, emerged from the geometrical intersections of 14 lines placed vertically, horizontally, and diagonally. Two sets of sixteen pawns or ‘Guti’ of two different colors are placed on 16 dot-points from the beginning of the two opposite sides of the court. Pawns or ‘Guti’ can be made with anything, like sixteen pieces of stones or bricks, or slices of leaves etc. For ‘Sholo Guti’ both temporary and permanent courts are used to play, but temporary court is much common in practice.
Start the game
To start the game, both players sit on the ground facing each other, keeping the court on the ground between them. For the first ‘Chaal’ or deal of a pawn, two players make a mutual agreement. Game then starts with a first deal of a pawn next to any empty dot-point. A number of sets are decided before the game by the players. In most of the cases, ‘Sholo Guti’ is played with 3 to 5 sets of games at maximum.

Beating pawns
The main intent of this game is to beat pawns or ‘Guti Khaoa’ of other player’s one by one till the last pawn. According to the rules of the game, a pawn is allowed to move one time only from one dot-point to the next dot-point in any direction. A pawn is beaten when one pawn finds a chance to transact by the leaping over pawn/s of other players. Therefore, a pawn of a ‘Sholo Guti’ can make two different moves technically. One is Strategic move (a pawn can move one time only, that is ‘Chaal Deoa’) and another is Beaten move (a pawn can move more than one, that is ‘Khaoa Chaal’). Strategic moves can ensure that player’s own pawns are safe, or create attacking net by his/her own pawns, or provoke opponent to make a mistake and be beaten. Whereas, Beaten move can be one or even multiple moves, if one pawn gets one or multiple chances to cross opponents pawn/s by leaping or jumping over opponents pawn/s next to, behind, or around it. During the beaten move, if one player loses all of his/her 16 pawns, or if he does not find any empty dot-point to move, he loses the game.
CONCLUSION

The book, ‘Traditional Games of Bangladesh’, is the outcome of a continuative research on the traditional games and sports of Bangladesh, initiated through a global project by UNESCO and Tencent to raise the awareness about traditional games and to establish an Online Digital Library focused solely on Traditional Games. In reference to the activities, a range of primary and secondary research has been completed to develop methodology and guidelines for identifying, collecting, sourcing, inventorying, and characterizing traditional games, mapping traditional games, selecting games for documentation, meeting the communities, filming, and creating audio-visual documentary.

The ultimate aim of all those extended research work is to finalize a set of templates and questionnaire, and making a complete audio-visual documentary on selected five traditional games to inventory at Bangladesh level to archive in ODL.

Therefore, all the visual and written documents contained in this book are the conscious cohesive arrangement of data and documents accumulated from the research activities on traditional games and sports of Bangladesh. A number of games and sports still exist with high, medium, or low range of popularity and practice in context of the diversified traditional culture of Bangladesh. However, this book emphasizes on explaining and examining five games exclusively– ‘Boli Khela’, ‘Bouchhi’, ‘Dariabandha’, ‘Lathi Khela’, ‘Sholo Guti’ and tries to explore the features of the games.

Finally, a number of observations and propositions can be stated as concluding words, which we have experienced throughout the project activities. These are as follows:

Observations
a. Traditional games and sports of Bangladesh is taken into account and mentioned within the topic of folklore, not as a separate or distinctive genre.
b. The declining number of Traditional Games and Sports in Bangladesh. No effective set up of program is initiated by the government, NGOs or other stakeholders to preserve and safeguard the traditional games from disappearance.
c. No other games, except ‘Ha du du’, is seen practiced or played with professional status at national level.

Recommendations
a. Different organizations and institutions like Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Shishu Academy, Primary Schools, High Schools, and other cultural organizations can provide a regular space to play traditional games as part of a course, co-curriculum activities, or an event for cultural competition and festivals.
b. Considering all possibilities of competitive merits and physical, physio-tactical, technical strength and skilfulness of traditional games, a number of games can be endorsed as national game and sport for the competition of national sports or games.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boli Khela</td>
<td>Bol</td>
<td>physical power or energy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Boli</td>
<td>a person who possess the Bol or Power</td>
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<td>Bouchhi</td>
<td>Bou bari</td>
<td>bride house</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chhi</td>
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<td>groom</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mora (dead)</td>
<td>inactive player</td>
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<td>Dariabandha</td>
<td>Aagh Court</td>
<td>front court</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bandha</td>
<td>to make obstacle</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Daria</td>
<td>a person who rows the boat</td>
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<td>Baauijak</td>
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