



GLOBALISATION AND FOLK SPORTS

Bengal Folk Sport ‘Dang-Guli’ on the Question of Crisis

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Abstract: The word “culture” encompasses a broad range of primarily intangible aspects of social life. Folk culture is an integral part of culture. Historical, scientific, anthropological, linguistic, psychological, etc. theories can all be used to describe folk culture. This is folk culture, from which civilized culture evolved. Popular sports, like other aspects of popular culture, are a mirror of social life. However, most popular sports have lost their adaptability due to factors such as urbanization, industrialization, and globalization. In this article, we will discuss the history and etymology, rules, players, and playing style of *Dang-Guli*, a Folk Sport in Bengal. I tried to talk about its meaning and current situation. In light of the findings, the discussion is generally ambiguous and under-researched. The study also seeks to examine popular sports from a globalization perspective.

IndexTerms: Culture, Folklore, Folk Sports, *Dang-Guli*, Globalisation.

INTRODUCTION

Folk culture is not only romantic sentimental culture or a matter of luxury leisure entertainment; folklore is also a major subject in sociological study. Folklore is one of the elements for understanding historical evolution. Many people have researched folk culture at home and abroad. On August 22, 1846, the word “Folk-Lore” was used for the first time in print in a letter written by William J. Thomas to the Athenaeum.¹ Old Saxon word ‘Folk’ (whose cognate is the German word ‘Volk’, which is used in English to mean ‘people’) and the Dutch word ‘Lore’ (which is the English equivalent of ‘Learning’).² Folk sports reflect the image of the social system from the beginning of civilization to the present.

Games that have no written rules, games that are played with little or no equipment, games that don’t require much practice. They are folk sports. Sports like football, cricket, badminton, tennis, volleyball, etc. are played according to the same rules in different societies in our country; even in other countries around the world, there is no exception to this trend. But folk sports do not require any particular norms to enjoy them. On the other hand, sports like *Ikir-Mikir*, *Dang-Guli*, *Ha-Doo-Doo*, *Gadi*, *Bau Vasanthi*, etc. are played in different ways in each region. The rules of one region are not the same as those of another region. Such sports are what we call folk sports. Folk sports are closely related to the customs, cultural habits, and way of life of a particular ethnic group. They are rooted in and intertwined with the folk culture, including ethnic customs and traditions. Folk sports are most intimately connected to the physical and daily lives of the people within that ethnic group, widely practiced and accepted, and they exude a strong ethnic flavour and folk cultural essence. These sports activities, which have evolved from ethnic customs and traditions, typically involve collective participation and follow established patterns. They are commonly observed during special ethnic festivals, holidays, or gatherings.³ Folk sports developed mainly from pre-modern folk culture. Today, the term embraces traditional, ethnic, or indigenous sports and games, but also new activities that are based on traditional practices like pub games and bowling, noncompetitive folk walks, mass gymnastics, and street games. Folk sports developed their distinctive character in opposition to modern sport with its disciplinary rules and its expectation of results.⁴ Folk sports are self-invented sports mainly of rural or village people, but the aim and purpose of folk sports are not limited to physical exercise but also mental entertainment and leisure. There is magic in many games; sex, religion, reforms, etc. are also included. Mundane play equipment like openers, gravel, leaves, twigs, sticks, tamarind, etc. is collected from nature. On the one hand, in folk sports such as spontaneity, tact, skills, craft, and discipline, all things are equally apparent.

FOLK SPORT DANG-GULI: AN ENQUIRY

Dang-Guli is one of the examples of folk sports in Bengal as well as in India. Basically, the natural “dung” or tree branch is the play material. A look at the history of *Dang-Guli* traces their inception to India around the Mauryan period. *Gili-Danda*, which is popular in India, is one of the games in many countries, including Bangladesh, China, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan,

Indonesia, Cambodia, Cuba, and Italy.⁵ This sport is called by different names in different parts of India. In English *Tipcat*, in Nepali *Dandi-Biyo*, in Kannada *Chinni-Dandu*, in Malayalam *Kuttiyum Kolum*, in Marathi *Viti-Dandu*, in Tamil *Kitty-Pul*, in Telugu *Gooti-Billa*, in Punjabi *Guli-Danda*, in Bengal Known by various names like *Dang-Guli*, etc.⁶ Although there are some differences in the nature and rules of the game, the basic equipment of the game is roughly the *dang*, or tree branch. The gameplay is roughly the same. Through field surveys and interviews, it is known that *Dang-guli* was played in almost all the districts of West Bengal.

A detailed description of the type of play, participants, and equipment is available from the '*Banglar Loksongskritir Vishwakosha*', which is described below, - "A double-pointed bullet, one and a half feet long and one and a half inches in diameter, with a dung and nine inches of pulley back, is the instrument of play. Two long marks are cut on the ground at an interval of seven or eight cubits on both sides with dung. The players each stand at one end of a spot and place the bullet on the front spot. They hit one end with a stinger; hitting one end causes the bullet to bounce up, and as it bounces, it is hit again and thrown across the next spot. Whoever lands in the furthest place by such a thrower gets the chance to play first. The winner stands on the front spot and throws the shot across the next spot. Then he throws the stinger on top of them. If he gets stung by touching the bullet, he gets a chance to play; otherwise, he doesn't get a chance to play. If the stinger touches the bullet, the stinger hits one end of the stinger and hits it hard as the stinger bounces. In this blow, the distance from the point where the bullet fell, measured with the right, to the point where the bullet fell is the number of *Dings* he wins. Thus, the one with the lowest is the second. Thus, the third is the fourth, and so on. Players decide how many *Dangs* a turn will be. The one who has the lowest number of *Dangs* has to be given a bed. Punished took the bullet in his hand and stabbed him."⁷

The description we get of how the game was played and the points scored is as follows: "A stick about a cubit long is thrown from a small oblong hole dug in the ground, four inches long and tapered on both sides. If an opponent hits the ball before it hits the ground, the penalty kick goes away. If it is not caught, the shot is thrown at the pole placed on the ground. If a stick or *dang* is shot, the donation of the '*Dang*' holder is lost. If the bullets do not hit the dung, the '*Dang*' wielder tries to send the bullets away by hitting them. The number measured from the distance from the shot to the hole with the '*Dang*' will be the point of the '*Dang*' holder."⁸

Finding differences of opinion about the meaning and nature of the game, Dr. Pallab Sengupta, folklorist of Bengal says, "Various issues like land acquisition, distribution of agricultural work, and hunting are hidden in the game of '*Dang-Guli*'".⁹ Folk researcher Dr. Asim Das has tried to find the underlying meaning of the game. According to him, "the hollow hole in the ground is nothing but a symbol of the female vagina. For the player to try to put his shot into the hole is to try to deposit the seed in the vagina. It is because of this that crop production is possible."¹⁰ Eminent Folklorist of Bengal, Barun Kumar Chakraborty says, "The stick used in playing *Dang-Guli* is a symbol of the digging stick used in primitive agriculture. Moreover, the *dang* is also a symbol of the penis. '*Guli*' are 'edible tubers' collected from the soil. The hole through which *Dangs* are played is a replica of the female genitalia. Others consider the *Dang* as the father of the child and the *Guli* as a symbol of the new-born child."¹¹ The '*Banglar Loksongskritir Vishwakosha*' similarly states, "*Dang* is the father-organ; the hole in the soil is the mother organ; and the bullet is the child. If the bullet is caught before it hits the ground, the child will not be born, so the donation of the '*Dang*' holder (father) will be lost. One can also interpret the '*Dang*' and the '*Guli*' as a sexual competition between father and son through a Freudian lens. Of course, the conflict between father and son is also recognized in anthropology."¹² Although there is a female share in participation, it is very low. Regarding the game, Dr. Wakil Ahmed said, "There is a similarity between the game of cricket and the game of *Dang-Guli*. A batsman has more responsibility than a bowler in cricket. In the game of *Dang-Guli*, the *Dang* holder also has more responsibility. The bat and ball are almost identical in pitch and hole, equivalent to the bat and the shot. A batsman can be out in many ways. *Dangs* also follow different methods of outing. It can be said that it is the village version of the game of cricket."¹³

GLOBALISATION AND THE FUTURE OF FOLK SPORTS

The main aspect of sports is physical activity or improving physical fitness. Among sports, folk sports are more important because, in addition to physical performance, social bonds also exist there. The folk sport doesn't require notebooks, pens, or modern instruments. Basically, materials obtained from nature are the main equipment in the game. The main purpose of rural people is to have joy. The importance of games in building social bonds, brotherhood, and cohesion is immense.

According to ancient scholar Charak,-

"Dhammartha-kam-mokshanaamrogyam moolmuttamam.

Roga astatsyapahrtaraha Shreyaso Jivitsya cha!!¹⁴

In other words, *Dhamma* (Religion), *Artha* (Property), *Kama* (Desire), and *Moksha* (Salvation) are attained by a healthy body. None of these can be mastered in a diseased body. And one of the ways to keep the body healthy is through sports or games. Modernization in today's globalized world is the folk sports of rural Bengal as a traditional form of rural environment, urbanization, information and communication technology, etc. Metaphors are something people like to play; they raise questions about existence. The internet has put the game in jeopardy.

The future of folk sports is in deep crisis. Football, cricket, and volleyball have gradually made an impact in rural areas over the past few years. Talking about *Dang-guli*, Shashibhushan Das, who played this game, said, "It is a very old game; sages played this game. Cricket and this game are similar, so not everyone plays them anymore. Also, there was a fear of getting caught in the face; that's why many people don't want to play."¹⁵ Prosenjit Naskar, researcher at Jadavpur University, said, "Today's game means playing PUBG; now nobody wants to win in terms of physical exercise; now people are very comfortable. Due to the advent of mobile phones, people have become greedier for money, which is why no one participates in these games anymore."¹⁶ Primarily on the question of crisis in multiple interviews, several vintage points, like the popularity of cricket, the advent of mobiles and modern mobile games, etc., have come up. To save the sports recently in Uttar Pradesh the Gilli Danda International Federation (GDIF) was established, and in the second year of the new education policy, '*Gili Danda*' or '*Dang-guli*' is one of the 75 sports that the central government has announced to introduce in schools.¹⁷ But even so, in today's globalized world, folk sports are almost extinct. Therefore, it is necessary to judge the nature of research as well as government and private initiatives. Extensive research on this topic will reveal regional history and increase knowledge about folk society.

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