WHERE DID THE GAMES GO?
INQUIRY OF BOARD GAMES IN MEDIEVAL
MARATHI LITERATURE IN INDIA

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India has a very prominent traditional board game culture, which is evident through numerous game boards and game pieces that are surviving. The spectrum of game board variations documented displays its association with the rich culture of crafts in India. Apart from these sets, there are ample examples of game board graffiti's present in various public spaces, temples being one of the most prominent of them. Many scholars, just to name a few, I. Finkel, R.K Bhattacharya, and L.K. Soni (published in 2011); Vasantha (2003); Fritz and Gibson (2007); Rogersdotter (2015), have documented and/or commented on these appearances of game boards in spaces. Most of these documentations are from the region of Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh. There are game board surveys from the states of Punjab (Gupta, 1926), Gujarat (Soni and Bagchi, 2011), Marwad (Samanta, 2011), Haryana (Sinha and Bishwas, 2011). Nevertheless, for some reason, there is very little work on board games in the state of Maharashtra. Though the literary documentation of sedentary games of Maharashtra is found in a book by 'Anant Babaji Deodhar' named 'Marāṭhī Khēḷāncē Pustaka' published in 1905; which mainly is anthropological documentation. It does not touch upon the references of this game information.

Sāripata (chausar), pat Songtyā (asta chima) existed in the Marathi household until the earlier generation (Pre WWII) in form of cloth boards and wooden pieces. However, it does not show its appearance as game board graffiti's in spaces in the post-Yadav period (14th century). Few games like mancala, Indian hunt games do show their presence in graffitis but seldom in literature. Literary pieces of evidence of regional literature remain untraced. No specific research has happened in literature in this era in the context to board games and thus the paper tries to throw light on evidence of board game mentions in medieval Marathi

language literature. During the same time, the game board graffiti's shows its existence in Karnataka, Rajasthan until the 17th century. So what happened to the board game culture in Maharashtra? Where did the games go? Did it acquire a different form?

The paper tries to inquire about the presence/absence of board games in the 13th - 17th century Marathi literature and architecture.

Keywords: Board games, Maharashtra, Marathi literature, Temple spaces, Crafts, Culture, Graffiti, Abhāng

1. Introduction

The spread and evolution of board games in India have seen an interesting journey of various cultural blends. Many scholars have shown their research interests in this topic. Out of many such board games, some games originated in India, some were transmitted to India, and some got transformed. As concluded by many scholars, it is very difficult to find the origins of a particular board game. The questions like, how a particular game must have originated? Why was it invented? Cannot be answered clearly because of a lack of archaeological and/or literary pieces of evidence. But it is still possible to track the transmission of a particular board game and build a hypothesis about the same. In all this discussion, it is interesting to note, that some board games vanished from a particular geographical area for some unknown reasons, and they reappeared in the same area after a time interval. What can be the reasons for the same? What must have triggered such an exit or a re-entry of board games? The paper tries to look into one such geographical area in India, the state of Maharashtra – culturally the Marathi speaking territory in India in the medieval period (13th century AD to 17th century AD).

The paper is not a historic discovery; neither is an archaeological exploration. Rather the paper looks at it from a design process – to be particular – from a system design viewpoint. It analyses the literary, social, political, cultural, and architectural evidence to find an approach of investigation to find – "where did the games go!" in medieval Marathi speaking territories. It is thought-provoking to note here that during the same period, the neighbouring cultural regions of Karnataka, Andhra, and Rajasthan did show the uninterrupted existence of similar board games. So, what happened to the culture of playing sedentary games in Maharashtra?

The paper thus follows an exploratory research methodology with critical discussion in the end.

2. Context of research - Medieval Maharashtra

2.1. Evolution of cultural boundaries

Let us look at the evolution of Maharashtra historically and politically first to understand the context of the inquiry. The first reference of 'Maharashtra' as a region starts appearing in the 12th-century inscriptions. Shaha (2009) quotes Panse (Panse 1960, p. 52) for early definitions/interpretations of 'Maharashtra' in 1st century CE, where Vararucī mentions 'Mahārāṣṭrī' as one of the Prākṛta languages. Further references appear in Thosar, in the Buddhist texts Dipavamsa and Mahavamsa (Thosar 2004, p. 2) & the famous Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang (635 CE). It was during the Yadav period that Maharashtra's resent boundaries emerged. Shaha quotes Feldhaus (Feldhaus 1986, p. 539) to highlight mention of this in the Mahanubhava literature. He further refers to Panase (Panse 1963, pp. 212-213) mentioning the reason for this regional identity was due to the development of the Marathi language (Shah, 2009). The transition of powers in later centuries through different dynasties lead to the Islamic conquest with the fall of the Sevuna Yadav empire in the hands of Alladin khilji (13th Century). For a further two hundred and fifty years, the rulers in Maharashtra were alien to the land in terms of race as well as the region (Doshi, 1981) (Marg Volume 34).
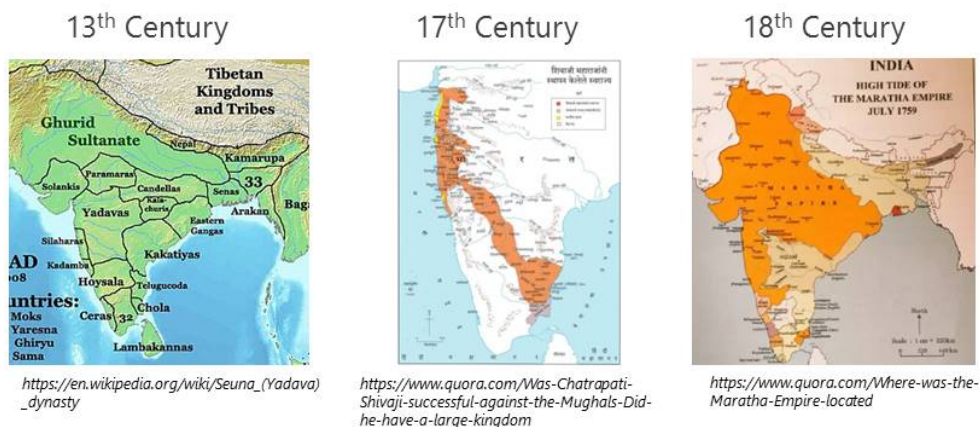

13th Century 17th Century 18th Century

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seuna_(Yadava)_dynasty

https://www.quora.com/Was-Chatrapati-Shivaji-successful-against-the-Mughals-Did-he-have-a-large-kingdom

https://www.quora.com/Where-was-the-Maratha-Empire-located

Figure 1: Maharashtra Context

The rise of Maratha power was seen with the emergence of Shivaji (1630-80) who carved a geographical definition to an independent sovereign Maratha State from the then-dominant Islamic rules. The cultural significance of his rule lies in imparting a feeling of identity and self-esteem to his subjects that saw the Maratha power dominating the next century in the history of India. In the 18th century, the Maratha power was in its zenith with the Peshwa rule exceeding from Atok (in Pakistan) to the Sothern states of Tanjore and from Gujarat to Orissa in the east (Gazetteers Department, 2003). The Marathi culture thus witnessed an influence of many cultures on it.

2.2 Evolution of Marathi language

The evolution of the Marathi language date backs to the 7th Century as mentioned by *Hiuen Tsang*, the famous traveller. The roots of the Marathi language lie in *Sanskrit, Prākṛta, Mahārāṣṭrī and Apabhraṃśa* languages (Bhanap, 2020; CIIL-India Mysore, n.d.; Kale, 2012). Christian Lee Novetzek (Novetzke, 2016)mentions that the Marathi language got royal patronage of the *Sevuna Yadav* regime in their later phase since they wanted to distinguish themselves from the Kannada speaking *Hoysalas*[2]. Thus, even though the language existed from the 7th century, the literature flourished in the 12th and 13th centuries. This gave rise to a Marathi culture, which is deeply rooted in the grass root levels and not superimposed by a regime. Khansir, Mozafari (Khansir and Mozafari, 2014) quote Safavi (2006) to mention the impact of the Persian language on Indian languages including Marathi, which contain many Persian words and phrases which are unique. This is due to the Mughal influence on the intellectual and socio-cultural life of India.

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[1] Novetzke, C. (2016). The Yadava Century. In <i>The Quotidian Revolution: Vernacularization, Religion, and the Premodern Public Sphere in India</i> (pp. 39-73). New York: Columbia University Press. Retrieved August 8, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/nove17580.7

2.3 Political Structure

The political history of Maharashtra shows distinctive three phases. The first is the pre-Islamic phase where the *Satvahan − Rastskuta − Sevuna Yadav* are the three are the three prominent rulers (2ⁿᵈ Century CE – 13ᵗʰ Century CE). The second part of the Islamic phase starts with the invasion of *Khilji − Tughlak* invasions to the formation of the *Bahamani sultanate*, which finally disintegrated into the five *shahi's* out of which *Nijam Shahi - Adil Shahi* held a major part of Marathi territories (the 13ᵗʰ Century CE – 17ᵗʰ Century CE). The third phase is the rise of the Maratha Empire with *Shivaji*, his struggle with Mughals and eventually, the Peshwas controlling a major part of India in the 18th century (17ᵗʰ Century CE – 18ᵗʰ Century) (*Gazetteers Department*, 2003; Purandare, 1993). The medieval phase thus shows a major part of political unrest with patches of peace and prosperity in between.

2.4 Social Structure

The social structure forms the basis of the cultural identity of a region. The social structure of medieval Maharashtra was similar to the feudal-peasant based structure in other parts of India. The caste system was dominant in social behaviours. The religious laws were supreme. The hard times of natural calamities and wars were sustained by devotion to God. After the rise of Maratha power, the military structure and feudal system dominated social life. Society was exposed to other cultures after the military campaigns of Marathas (Bhave, 1935, 1946, 1957).

2.5 Religious structure

The original Hindu culture accepted the Buddhist and Jain thought processes in the first political phase till the Sevuna Yadava regime. The first jolt to the religious system was felt during the invasion of Khiljies in the last decade of the 13th Century. After that, the Marathi region experienced big religious turmoil due to Islamic invaders and rulers. The society stabilized once the rulers understood the importance of the local population. The Bhakti movement prevalent in other parts of India during the same time also flourished and kept the religious belief thriving through their literature.

The European colonisers were restricted to the coastal parts of the region concerning their religious ambitions (Bhave, 1946).

2.6 Evolution of Marathi Culture

The summary of the cultural, linguistic, political, social, and religious structure indicates the exposure, blend and superimposition of many cultures in the region contextual to this research. With the distinct political, religious, and linguistic identity, the Maharashtrian region developed a distinct culture. As defined in Oxford Dictionary, "culture is a way of life of a people, including their attitudes, values, beliefs, arts, and habits of thought and activity". The Marathi culture thus is visible through the language, attire, food, beliefs, and rituals (Figure 2). The topographical variations created sub traits in the Marathi culture. The expression of this culture is
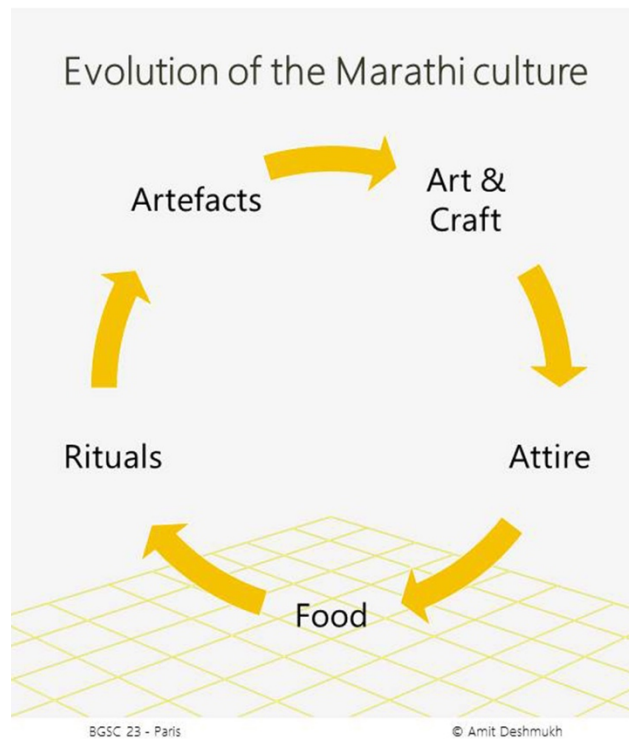
Figure 2: Marathi Culture

through art, architecture, and crafts. Thus, as Prof. Vyas (2009) mentions traditional products which have emerged through an evolved design process become a reflection of that culture (Vyas, 2009).

2.7 Board games – a reflection of culture

In continuation to the above discussion, where does traditional board games fit in? Norman (2012) in his argument differentiates between craft products and mass-produced products. He says, Crafts reflect centuries or millennia of customs and behaviour, and as a result, items produced by craftspeople are apt to be close fits to the demands of the culture (Norman, 2012). Thus, in context to a culture like India, not only the game hardware but also the rules, rituals and beliefs associated with it reflect the depth of penetration of board games as a product in cultural society. Balambal (2005) mentions the many cultural rituals associated with the Indian games (Balambal, 2005). In the Anthropological surveys of board games of Vijaynagara, Vasantha also suggests the unwritten rules of who will play the game and who will not (Vasantha, 2003).

3. Finding board game references in the medieval period - Maharashtra

With this contextual understanding, when we start investigating the traditional board games references in medieval Maharashtra, it leaves us with three options: (Figure 3)

1. Analysing the board game inscriptions in architectural sites
2. Assessing the actual board game pieces, which are difficult to access is in the private collections.
3. Examining literary pieces of evidence contextual to the period and geography, which has been sample, investigated here for this paper.
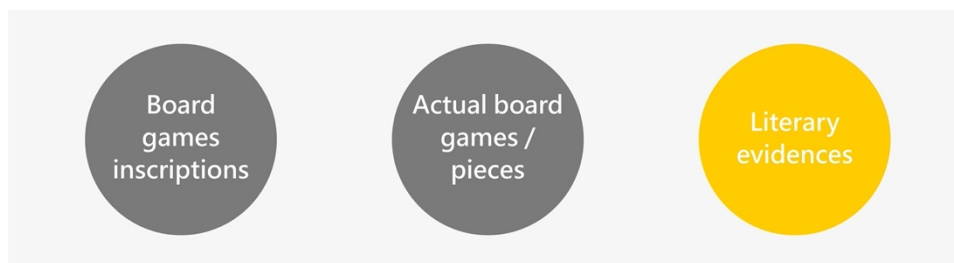
Let's consider them one by one:

Figure 3: Finding References

3.1 Mentions of board games – cave paintings, sculptures, and cave inscriptions in Maharashtra

The earliest sources of evidence of board games are the sculptures, cave paintings in the pre-Islamic period. Examples of board games in the caves of *Ajantha* and *Elora* in wall paintings and sculptures are seen (Soar, 2006; Thatte, 2004). However, these examples date to the 2nd century - 8th century AD in the *Satvahan* and *Rashtrakuta* periods. It is also to be noted that the board games in those illustrations are different from the existing ones.

As documented by the INSTUCEN trust researchers (Dalal, 2019; Kamath, 2019), there are numerous examples of board game inscriptions in many Buddhist caves across the Western Ghats in Maharashtra. The inscriptions in pre-Islamic temples, caves and signify the presence of board games but their dating cannot be established and thus need more contextual evidence to be considered as an authentic source of reference.

The later phases of the medieval period surprisingly show an absence of board game inscriptions in Maharashtra. However, we notice examples of the presence of board game inscriptions in other regions of India during the same period.

3.2 Examples of the presence of board games in other regions during the same period

The notable documentation of board game inscriptions in India has been done by Vasantha (2003), Rogersdotter (2015), Balambal (2005), Singh et. al (2016), Reddy (2015). All these documentations are from the Sothern states of Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The Indian board game survey and the Asiatic Society of India also documented the games in other parts of India. Surprisingly it consisted of only one mention from Maharashtra.

The scholarship on board games of Maharashtra includes the work of Dr. Wakankar on specific rules of Chaturanga / Budhhibala, Mokshpat

primarily from the Sanskrit text[3] & that of Schmidt-Madsen (2019) in an inquiry of evolution of Mokshpat in India.

3.3 Marathi Architecture – search of board games Marathi Architecture was investigated in search of board games.

Figure 4: Marathi Architecture – search of board games Marathi Architecture was investigated in search of board games.

The next stage of investigation leads us to the architecture of the later medieval period. Marathi architecture is predominantly the 18th and 19th-century temple and public construction during the Peshwa regime. Sample architectural monuments, temples were investigated (Figure 4). Interestingly no board game inscriptions were observed in these architectural sites.

Monument	Period of construction & reconstruction
The temples of Kshetra Mahabaleshwar, Satara District	13th – 18th Century

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[2] The gist work of Dr. Wakankar has been referred from the lectures he had given in "Vyasang" – a series on mention of games in Sanskrit literature in Marathi.(Dhanashree Lele, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d)

Temples & river ghats of Wai, Satara District	12th – 18th Century
Temples & river ghats of Mahuli, Satara District	16th – 18th Century
Temples & river ghats of Pune City	15th – 19th Century

The table above lists the architectural areas investigated. Some of these areas are up to 4 km in stretch & have been constructed – demolished & reconstructed in the stated period.

So what was happening to board games in Maharashtra? We do see some examples of existing game boards and pieces in museums in Pune that date from the 18th century. On the other hand, many actual game pieces are found preserved in Rajasthan and mention board games in non-Marathi literature. Games like Chausar, Astachima, Tiger-goat hunt games, Navkankari, Solah-gutti are seen appearing in architectural inscriptions/literature / anthropological documents outside Maharashtra during the medieval period.

3.4 Cultural transmission – possible influences for board games in Maharashtra

The western coastline along the Arabian Sea in Maharashtra experienced interactions with many foreign cultures. Greek, Roman, Parsee, Bohri, Portuguese, Mughals, Turkey, Habshi (Abasynian), French, Dutch and finally the British are to name a few. Political turmoil has left the region of Maharashtra struggling for basic existence in the earlier period (14th-17th Century) and found prosperity in the later Peshwa period (18th Century). Thus the medieval period experienced many cultural influences that transmitted and transformed daily objects.

Figure 5 shows the cultural influences on Maharashtra during the medieval period. The ones marked in green are the influences, which are incoming influences like the Persian, Mughal, Rajasthani, Kannada, Telugu influences that came into Maharashtra with the respective political regimens. The blue ones are the European influences that prominently are

British the *Siddhis*[4] from Africa and the Portuguese. The ones marked in orange, are the cultural influences during the prosperity period of the Maratha empire when the Marathas went into different regions and came back with cultural influences. The expeditions till Afghan border, expeditions in Rajputana, Gujrat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Orissa are considered here.

These cultural influences can be seen in the Marathi language the most than in other domains of influence. For example, many words in Marathi are similar to Persian and Portuguese languages.
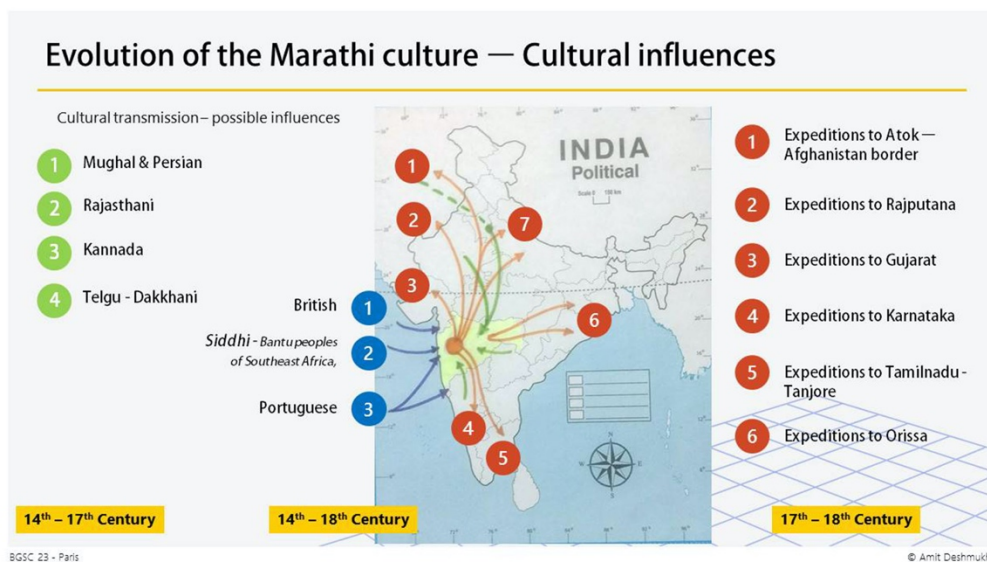

Figure 5: Cultural transmission – possible influences for board games in Maharashtra

4. Literary pieces of evidence of the existence of board games in Medieval Maharashtra

The examination of Marathi literature of the medieval period is prominently the investigation of Bhakti movement literature of the period.

4.1 Bhakti movement in Maharashtra

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[3] The Siddi, also known as Sidi, Siddhi, Sheedi or Habshi, are an ethnic group inhabiting India and Pakistan. Members are mostly descended from the Bantu peoples of Southeast Africa, along with Habesha immigrants. Some were merchants, sailors, indentured servants, slaves and mercenaries.

With its religious roots, the bhakti movement in Maharashtra emerged as a social movement, which challenged the caste hierarchy. The possibility of a direct connection to God through simple living was the key point that made it popular (Khangai, 2018). The Marathi literature culture starts with the bhakti moment in Maharashtra. The devotional poetry flourished the language further as the poets came from all segments of the society (Dutta, 2011). *Saint Jnaneshwar and Tukārāma* are considered the foundation and pinnacle of the bhakti movement respectively. Certain traditions of the Bhakti movement continue today as well.

4.2 Mentions in Marathi literature

With this contextual understanding let us look into the chronological listing of various writers in the Marathi language. Figure 6 shows three distinct phases of Marathi literature and the famous poets of the same. The figure also shows the sample literature examined for mentions of board games with the number indicating the century the poet and the literature belong to.
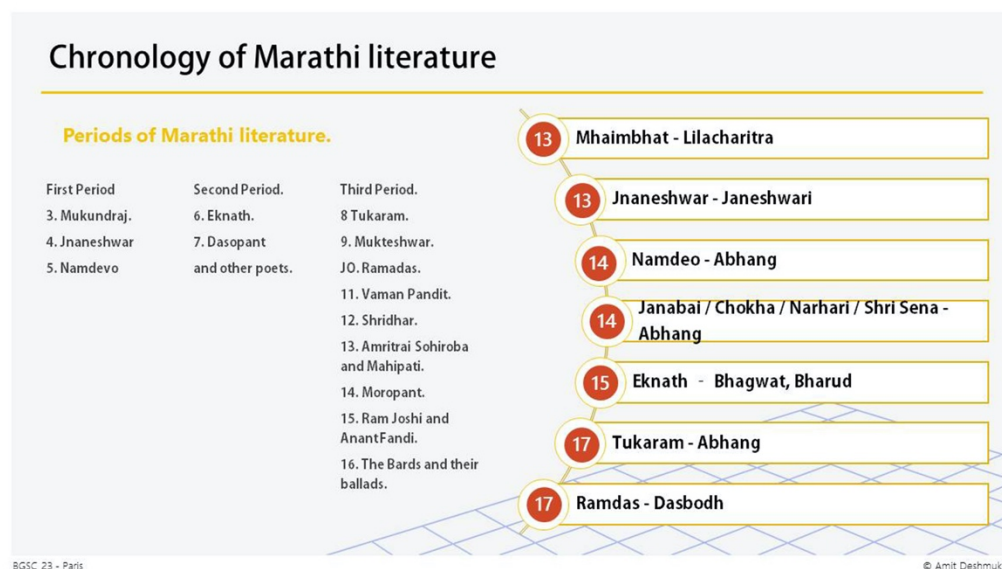

Figure 6: Mentions in Marathi literature

Following literature was examined for mention of board games:

Saint Poet	Dated
Mention of a game in Kṛṣṇamunī ḍiṃbha Mahānubhāva Paṃtha - Riddhipuracaritra	1280 − 1300 AD
Mention of a game in Nāmadeva's verses	1290 − 1350 AD
Mention of chess in Janābāī's verses	1300 − 1350 AD
Mention of games in Senā Mahārāja's verses	1320 − 1370 AD* (Sant Senā Mahārāja was a barber by the cast. His exact period is debated. He was widely known even outside Maharashtra.)
Mention of games in Ēkanātha Mahārāja 's verses	1533 − 1599 AD
Mention of games in Tukārāma's verses	1635 − 1650 AD
Mention of a game in Rāmadāsa 's verses	1654 AD
Mention of a game in Rāmadāsa's verses	1650 − 1681 AD

The actual verses, their meaning and notes are added to the Appendix of this paper.[5]

4.3 Inferences from the study of Marathi medieval literature

A careful investigation of the above-mentioned literature gives us a list of games, which find its mentions in these texts. The games are listed below:

- Sāripata = Chausar and similar games played on the plus sign grid game board.
- Ēkibēkī = A guessing game using tamarind seeds (also mentioned in Marāṭhī Khēḷāñcē Pustaka[6]

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[4] Referencing of religious text has been given in appendix.

[5] Devdhar, A. B. (1905). मराठी खेळांचें पुस्तक | Maraathii Khelaanchen Pustaka (first). Times of India Press. https://epustakalay.com/book/184714-maraathii-khelaanchen-pustaka-by-anant-babaji-devdhar

- Okībokī = A game with soṃgaṭī + cowrie shells (also mentioned in Marāṭhī Khēḷāncē Pustaka)
- Budhdibaḷa = Chess

Boardgame hardware mentioned include:

　　　Kavaḍī = cowrie shells

　　　Soṃgaṭī = (turn-wood) game pieces[7]

It is to be noted here that, not all games that appear in these textual references are sedentary. Many of the poetic verses describe the play of *Lord Krishna* in his childhood at *Vṛṃdāvana* or *Gōkuḷa* and thus are non-sedentary. The other games which appear in these texts are –

　Hamāmā = is a form of modern-day *Kabaddi* game

　Huṃbarī = is a group game

　Viṭī dāṇḍū = is a game popular in the subcontinent by name of *‘gillī daṃḍā’* which is the game of *tipcat*

　Ceṃḍu phalī = is the Marathi name of cricket, but in medieval times it must have been played differently.

　Jaṅgībhōnvarē = playing of tops

　Lagōṟyā = game of seven stones

　Vāghōḍīṃ = ?

　Chumbāchumbī = ?

　Campē pēṇḍa =?

　Sēlaḍērā = ? probably *suī dorā* ie. Needle thread, a running and catching game

　Nisarabhōnvaḍī =?

Some of these games probably seem lost now.

However, as the focus of the paper is on board games, only probable board games are being considered here. To understand the evolution, a comparison with modern documentation is essential to find the missing link. *Marāṭhī Khēḷāncē Pustaka* (a book of Marathi games)(Devdhar, 1905)

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[6] https://www.transliteral.org/pages/z71130220107/view#google_vignette

मुकुंदराज. (2019). In मराठी विश्वकोश प्रथमावृत्ती. https://vishwakosh.marathi.gov.in/30238

published at the start of 20th century is an exhaustive listing of games played in Maharashtra during that period. It includes sedentary as well as non-sedentary games classified as games played by boys and games played by girls. When we compare the list of games mentioned in the sample medieval Marathi literature with the games in *'Marāṭhī Khēḷāñcē Pustaka'*, we find the following games missing their mention in medieval Marathi Literature:

- Navkankari = Mention in *'Marāṭhī Khēḷāñcē Pustaka'* by name of '*Phare Mare'* 'फरे – मरे'
- Solah Gutti = Mention in *'Marāṭhī Khēḷāñcē Pustaka'* and Indian board game survey - Nagpur
- Mancala = Floor inscriptions are seen on Maratha fort (17th Century)[8]
- Tiger goat hunt games = only cave and some old temple floor inscriptions can be observed.
- Tabala = though it is made in the southern Maharashtra town of Sawantwadi, its mention in literature is missing (Kamath, 2019).
- Mokshpat = Most of the terms of squares appear in the literature. The actual game boards though date from the later medieval period (Schmidt-Madsen, 2019)

5. Where did the games go?

The examination thus brings us to the main inquiry as 'where did the games go?' what factors triggered some games missing their mention in the popular literature? The games in the cave paintings or the sculptures are also not present in medieval literature. Some games though have shown their presence in other parts of India, directly appear in the 19th-century literature in Maharashtra.

One can put forward a hypothesis of two possibilities of where did the games go?

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[7] The inscription example of Mancala by Bhosale (2019) on fort Raigad – few of these forts were under the Siddhi occupancy for a period and these are the people with originally from Southeast Africa. So, this transmission possibility needs to be considered.

1. The first possibility is that - the games were there, as they are in the Buddhist / Jain cave floor inscriptions then for some reason they disappeared and then they again re-enter and that's how they find their existence in the 19th-century documentation, Marāṭhī Khēḷāṅcē Pustaka

2. The second possibility is that some of these games never existed in Maharashtra, slowly they had an entry into the culture, they gained popularity and that is how they reached into the 19th-century documentation, Marāṭhī Khēḷāṅcē Pustaka.

5.1 Analyzing the missing link

While examining the existence of a board game in a culture, consideration of cultural transmissions is inevitable. However, cultural transmission as an examination tool does not take into account all factors of the period (de Voogt et al., 2013). Thus, it proposed here that it should be used along with and the entire context has to be looked at through system thinking. System thinking is a tool used in design and other fields to map and analyse complex data situations. System thinking looks into connections of the components rather than the component themselves and thus gives us a picture of inter-connectedness and inter-relationships (BKCASE, 2018; Burge, 2015).

The system analysis can be done at various levels to understand the interrelationships of the factors affecting board game transmission or disappearance. A system mapping of the approaches to board game studies with the understanding of the social structure of India can give us a holistic picture. The cultural complexity in Indian traditional board game studies shows its dependency on the social, cultural, religious, and craft related domains. Therefore, when we map it accordingly, we see the domain of culture and the factors of caste and religion as two major factors affecting the design evolution of board games within the medieval period in India.

The analysis of the system mapping starts with answering the basic questions - Where were they played with? Which games were popularly played? What hardware was used to play these games? When were these

games played?[9] The mapping of answers to these questions as keywords was noted and mapped as a system mapping to understand the context of traditional board games of India (Figure 7). The keywords were derived
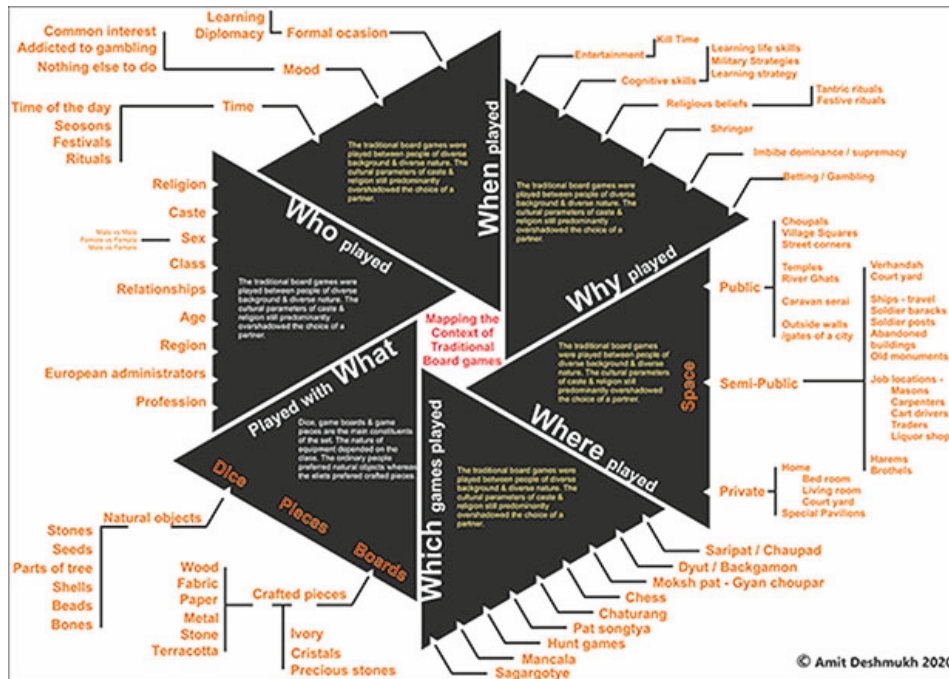

Figure 7: B G System Mapping - 5W

from the review of literature mentioned in the bibliographic text.(Topsfield 2006; Finkel 2006; Jaffer 2006) (Bhattacharya, Finkel, and Soni 2011; Balambal 2005; Baindur 2016)[10]

5.2 Contextual hindrances for playing the games

With the same understanding, if we look at the purpose of playing games and the context of Maharashtra, we can state the main reasons for playing

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[8] The Five Ws are questions whose answers are considered basic in information gathering or problem solving. Knop, K., & Mielczarek, K. (2018).

[9] This is the bigger system mapping to understand the context of board games I had presented at 'Playing With Memories: A Journey of Games' an International conference, in a paper presentation titled 'Not Just Games- Analysing factors affecting cultural transmission of traditional board games in India' by India Study Centre and State Directorate of Archaeology and Museums Maharashtra in Dec 2020.

as – generating social interaction, gambling, as religious rituals and spending spare time. However, looking at the contextual social and political scenario of medieval Maharashtra, some hindrances can be understood for these playing reasons as:

- The social interaction primarily depends on caste and religion. People with different religions and people with different cast hierarchies will seldom play together. The annexation of the *Yadava* empire created a period of turmoil in Maharashtra. The establishment of the *Bhamani sultanate* and adverse social acts by the sultans, and by the Portuguese in the coastal areas reduced social interactions (Karmarkar, 2011) and thus further, a purpose to play games for social interactions. The strict social rules reduced the interactions further. During the same time, regions of Tamilnadu & Karnataka were reclaimed by the Vijaynagar empire within a few decades & it is evident how the board games flourished in that region.

- Playing games for gambling is popular when the society is prosperous and the political situation is stable. Due to invasions from northern sultanates, prosperity and stability were affected in the 15th century. Gambling as one of the prominent reasons for board game popularity was forbidden by many bhakti movement religious texts. The constant political turmoil reduced the economic condition of the region, which may have resulted in abandoning gambling as a reason for play. This reduced the use of board games for gambling and affected its popularity in Maharashtra.

- The medieval popularity of the *Bhakti Cult* in Maharashtra provided a different route to attain spiritual goals. This created a fresh look at rituals and challenged the conventions of *Brahmanical* orthodoxy in many religious matters (Novetzke, 2008). Many saint-poets of the Bhakti movement rejected all forms of ritualism and thus it may have affected the popularity of board games for religious rituals. A similar approach was observed in most of the Indian states.

- These sedentary games were looked at as a 'means to pass time' and thus were popular with the adults. These objectives allowed these products to be present in varied spatial contexts. These objectives also established the omnipresence of these games irrespective of

social status, sex, caste and religion. The political unrest in Maharashtra during the medieval period had hardly left any spare time for the peasant population. the constant wars to retain territories and to get maximum revenue left the region in complete turmoil. the only spare time that that can be visualized is of soldiers who are involved in guarding duties or stationed at a military post.

5.3 Possible causes of rejection of board games

Based on these a hypothesis for reasons for the possible causes of rejection of board games can be stated as –

- Lack of spare time - the constant political unrest and worse hardly left any spare time for masses to play with.
- Superstitions - forbiddances of playing board games in religious text attracted some superstitious such as playing *Sāripata* in the evening or playing with cowrie shells would affect your prosperity[11].
- Lost rules - many game rules were lost in the social turmoil in the medieval period.
- Some board games that were not originally from Maharashtra were considered alien and rejected, as the political regime that brought them to Maharashtra was considered foreign.

The unrest of the region emerges as one of the prominent reasons. It affected the social, economic and psychological state of the population. Playing board games mostly for entertainment was side-lined by other emerging means of entertainment as the devotional *kīrtanas* in the early medieval period and L*āvaṇī, Povāḍe* in the later medieval period. With the establishment of Maratha supremacy in the Peshwa period over two-third of India, prosperity reappeared with the luxury of time. This is the phase when most of the existing pieces of board games are seen.

The rejection of playing board games in much of medieval *vārakarī* literature led to a reduction in the popularity of board games. The only board games that survived were the ones used for educating the spiritual concepts through the play – *Mokshapat.*

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[10] A belief even today prevalent in few parts of Maharashtra.

Another important domain of consideration in system analysis is where the games were played. The sample architectural analysis of medieval Marathi architecture showed temples, river ghats, village *choupals[12]*, forts and private residences as the places where board games would be played. Boardgame inscriptions were not found in the Marathi phase temples of the 18th century. Incidentally, inscriptions will not be done on temple floors when the temple is actually in its prime use. Most of the temple inscriptions are seen where the temples have been abandoned or in the adjoining spaces of temples. Marathi temples are not as elaborate as the South Indian temples and do not have subsidiary spaces along with them so it is very difficult to find these inscriptions in Marathi temples. Most of the river ghats were done or redone in the Peshwa phase in the 18th century. As discussed earlier, many factors have acted as hindrances to gameplay in public spaces. Village *caupāla* are the town squares which due to political unrest would be rarely used as a public space in that period. Forts were the military outpost and would not be used as gameplay stations due to military discipline and political unrest. The nature of gameplay would change the games boards in private residences to lifestyle products. The decorative and crafted pieces that we see in the museums or private collections are such products from the 17th-18th century.
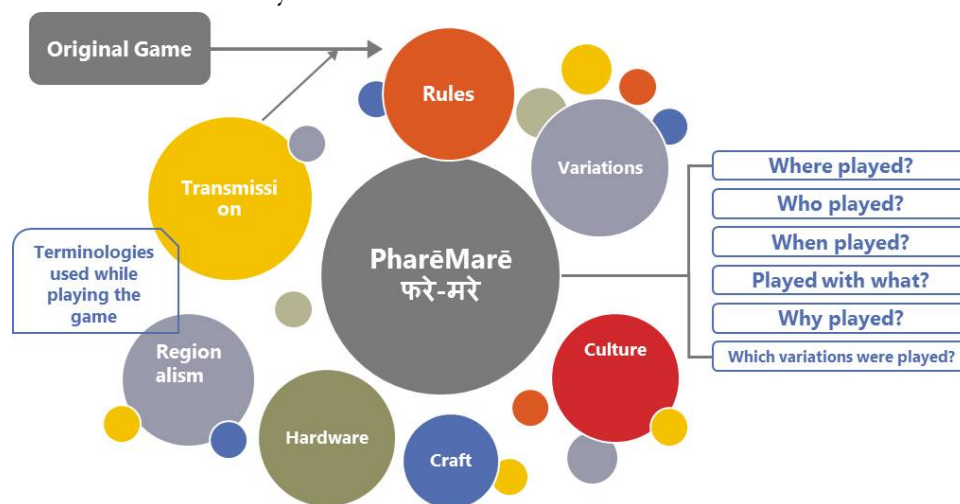
System Mapping of *'Phare Mare'* to understand the possible lacunae of research

Figure 8: *Phare Mare* System Mapping

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[11] The main village square, a town square, a public space.

Figure 8 illustrates an exemplary system mapping of the game 'Phare Mare'. The mapping can grow further with the diversification of the respective factors. System analysis also looks at how the games were played. This mainly happens through board game hardware and board game mechanics. From the list of surviving games in the 19th century, it may be claimed that only board games with less hardware survived and games that could be played in transit maybe survived amongst the general population in the Marathi territories. Secondly, it is evident from the surviving pieces in museums and private collectors that hardware, which included crafts from outside Maharashtra were, used as exclusive pieces. The board game mechanics was the component that experienced cultural transmission. New rules were included some were excluded and most importantly many vernacular and foreign terms were mixed in the gameplay.

5.4 Inference and way ahead

The extent of examination of sudden disappearance and appearance of board games from a cultural community for this paper has surfaced some areas of future investigations. This is still just the tip of the iceberg

A deeper research in medieval Marathi literature is necessary to arrive at a consolidated conclusion. Apart from the Bhakti movement literature, the later medieval Marathi literature types should be examined for board game references that include

- Bakhara - a form of historical narrative written in Marathi prose.
- Povāḍe - a kind of ballad written in an exciting style that narrates historical events in an inspiring way.
- Āryā – Rhyming couplets in Marathi, mainly moral perception oriented.

Another point noted during the investigation of Marathi texts is that there are many vernacular terms seen in use during the playing activity of a board game. Along with the rules, the '*Marāṭhī Khēḷāñcē Pustaka*' also exhibits Marathi playing terminologies. The etymology of these terms needs to be analysed. This will give evidence of the cultural transmission of the game from another culture.

Example:
- सारि - Saari = something that is to be moved
- पाट - paat = a board (that can be used for multiple purposes including gaming surface)
- सोंगट्या - songtya = originated from the Sanskrit word sārikāṣṭa (सारिकाष्ट) = wooden pieces that can be moved

Further examples indicate non-Marathi language influences; these terms are listed here should be investigated for their original language influence. Whether these words come from other Indian languages like *Sanskrit, Kannada, or Gujarati*; or the origins lie in Persian, Portuguese, Arabic or Dutch dialect.

फरे	Pharē
मरे	Marē [13]
फर्जीत	Pharjīta
घुला	Ghulā
हुला	Hulā

When we relook at the main research question of where the games went in medieval Maharashtra, the question can be approached from a design process point of view and redefined as - Why did variations happen in a board game? What were the parameters that triggered some games to vanish and some games to survive? These inquiries would be questioning the regional influences on board games within a culture. This approach may lead us to understand the entry – disappearance and re-entry of a board game in regional culture. Thus, selecting one board game, mapping its variations in board game hardware and board game mechanics and arriving at a conclusion is the way ahead to this research.

Lastly, it is like a puzzle or joining pieces of a puzzle together. This comprises of collecting references or ludemes (Browne, 2017) from sources like religious storytelling to understanding semantic and semiotic perceptions of the same. Then using an approach like system thinking to connect the ludemes and co-relate it and then put forward the factors

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[12] Phare Mare is the game of navkankari, nine men moris. The word Mare resembles its latin name Merels.

affecting or being a catalyst in cultural transmission. The way we have seen in terms of Marathi / Indian cultural context two factors that have to be considered are religion and caste. This kind of holistic approach will give us the concluding picture of 'where did the games go' in this or many other contexts.

Appendix

The documentation below are of board games in Marathi medieval literature. It is to be noted that, the verses selected here are on the criteria of mentions of different types of games in Marathi Bhakti Literature. Many of them are part of a larger *abhāng* verses & thus may look out of context in the translation. Thus in some cases, paraphrasing as found in the literature study is also added herewith.

1. Mention of a game in Krishnamuni Dimbh, Mahanubhav panth -Riddhipuracharitra, dated 1280 -1300AD ('मुकुंदराज', 2019)

तवे रेणुका आनि जमदग्नि।
सारीपाट खेळत असती दोन्ही।
रावो लागला चरणी।
दोघंचिया।

Tavē rēṇukā āni jamadagni.
Sārīpāṭa khēḷata asatī dōnhī.
Rāvō lāgalā caraṇī.
Dōghañciyā.

Then Renuka and Jamadagni.
Who both were playing Sāripata;
Rao bowed at the feet of
Both

2. Mention of a game in Namdeo's verses – dated 1290 – 1350 AD[14]

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[13] संत नामदेव गाथा उपदेश—Sant Sahitya—संत नामदेव महाराज. (2021, March 18). Sant Sahitya. https://www.santsahitya.in/sant-namdev/updesh/

एकादशी दिनी खाईलजो अन्न ।
सूकर होऊनियेईल जन्मा ॥१ ॥
एकदिशी दिनी करील जो भोग ।
त्यासी मतासंग घडतसे ॥२॥
एकदिशी दिनी खेळेल सोंगटी ।
काळ हाणील खुंटी गुदस्थानी ॥३।
रजस्त्रीशोणितसेविल्यासमान ।
तांबुल चर्वणकरील जो ॥४ ॥
नामाम्हणे नाही माझ्याकडे दोष ।
पुराणी हे व्यासवाक्य आहे ॥५ ॥

Ēkādaśī dinī khā'īlajō anna. Sūkara hō'ūniyē'īla janmā.1. Ēkadiśī dinī karīla jō bhōga. Tyāsī matāsaṅga ghaḍatasē..2.. Ēkadiśī dinī khēḷēla sōṅgaṭī. Kāḷa hāṇīla khuṇṭī gudasthānī..3. Rajastrīśōṇitasēvilyāsamāna. Tāmbula carvaṇakarīla jō.4. Nāmāmhaṇē nāhī mājhyākaḍē dōṣa. Purāṇī hē vyāsavākya āhē.5.

The one who eats food on the day of Ēkādaśī (eleventh day of the Hindu calendar)|Will be born as a pig.1.
The one who will have sex on the day of Ēkādaśī |
He will have an attachment to ….. (himself ?).2.
The one who will play game pieces (board games ~ chousar) on the day of Ēkādaśī |Time will hit a wooden pole on the buttocks .3.
Similar to a woman-undergoing menstrual period (will be the condition of)
The one who will have a betel leaf (on the day of Ēkādaśī).4.
Nama (Namdeo) says, this is not on to me (but ..)
This is a statement (a verse by sage Vyas) from the Puranas .5.

In his *abhanga*, Namdeo mentions *Tulsivrat and Ekadashivrat* which were prevalent in the social life of that time. Since Namdeo's pind belongs to Warakari, Tulas and Ekadashi are very revered by him. Therefore, he has glorified these two vratas. The writing of this vrata reaches an extreme level.

In this way, Namdeo has insisted on Ekadashi. There must be some monotheistic reason for the rules stated on the occasion of this Ekadashi. (Hanuman Prasadik bhajn mandal, 2018)

3. Mention of chess in Janābāī's verses – dated 1300 – 1350 AD

जनाबाईंच्या अभंगातसुद्धा एके ठिकाणी एका बैठ्या खेळाचा उल्लेख येतो त्या म्हणतात

She says that even in Janābāī's abhanga, a sitting game is mentioned in one place:

मांडियेला खेळ । रंग बुद्धिबळ ॥१॥
कैंचा शह आला । प्याद्याखाली फर्जीं आला ॥२॥
शहबाजू आली । जनी म्हणे मात केली ॥३॥(482)

Māṇḍiyēlā khēḷa. Raṅga bud'dhibaḷa.1.
Kaincā śaha ālā. Pyādyākhālī phajīṁ ālā.2.
Śahabājū ālī. Janī mhaṇē māta kēlī.3.

The game has been laid |colourful chess (chaturanga ?)||1||
A check has been given| queen (?) has come under (captured by?) pawn||2||
It's the turn of checked player | Janī (Janabai) says it's a checkmate||3||

Even in Janābāī's *abhanga*, a sitting game is mentioned in one place.

Bud'dhibaḷa is a game of Chadurang or Chaturanga and is a game of chess that has got an appendage over time (Bhosale, 2018).

Janābāī has devised a Kut abhanga (which is something that has to be interpreted) with a metaphor for the game of chess (Irlekar, 2002).

4. Mention of a game in Senā Mahārāja's verses – dated 1320 – 1370 AD[15]

३९. तुज ऐसें वाटे देह व्यर्थ जावा ।
द्यूतकर्में खेळावा सारीपाट ॥१॥
मग नाहीं नाम निजल्य जागा राम।
जन्मोनि अधम दुःख पावे ॥२॥

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[14] सेना महाराज—Sant Sahitya—सेना महाराज. (2018). Sant Sahitya. https://www.santsahitya.in/sant-sena/

दासीगमनीं धीट विषयीं लंपट ।
जावया वाट अधोगती ॥३॥
नर्का जावयासी धरसील चाड ।
तरी निंदा गोड वैष्णवांची ॥४॥
सेना म्हणे नामाचें लावीं करि पिसें ।
जन्माल्या सायासें व्यर्थ जासी ॥५॥

39. Tuja aisēṁ vāṭē dēha vyartha jāvā. Dyūtakarma khēḷāvā sārīpāṭa.1. Maga nāhīṁ nāma nijalya jāgā rāma. Janmōni adhama duḥkha pāvē.2. Dāsīgamanīṁ dhīṭa viṣayīṁ lampaṭa. Jāvayā vāṭa adhōgatī.3. Narkā jāvayāsī dharasīla cāḍa. Tarī nindā gōḍa vaiṣṇavāncī.4. Sēnā mhaṇē nāmācēṁ lāvīṁ kari pisēṁ. Janmālyā sāyāsēṁ vyartha jāsī.5.

39. If You think your body is useless, (you should) Play gambling Sāripata. Then there is no place for Ram's name in you. And your life will bear to be miserable.
One involved in misdeeds of lust towards women will lead to deterioration. If you wish to go to hell, still condemnation of Vaishnavism is sweet (?)
Sena says (if you) do not put feathers of *hari-nam* in your hand (interpreted as 'devote yourself in *Hari-nam*'), your life would go in vain.

5.   Mention of games in Ēkanātha Mahārāja's verses – dated 1533 – 1599 AD[16]

नानापरी विटीदांडु चेंडु । हमामा हुमरी लगोऱ्या मांडुं ।
नव लक्ष मिळावे सवंगडु । यमुनेथडी कळंबातळीं ॥३॥

Nānāparī viṭīdāṇḍu cēṇḍu. Hamāmā humarī lagōryā māṇḍuṁ. Nava lakṣa miḷāvē savaṅgaḍu. Yamunēthaḍī kaḷambātaḷīṁ.3.

In different ways (let's play) viṭīdāṇḍu, ball\Hamāmā, humarī, laying lagōryā |
Let's get nine lac players | along the banks of Yamuna, (&) Kalamba lake||3||

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[15] Hanuman Prasadik bhajn mandal. (2018). अभंगवाणी: संत एकनाथ महाराज. अभंगवाणी. http://abhangwaani.blogspot.com/p/ekn.html

२०६
हमामा पोरा हमामा । घुंबरींवाजे घमामा ॥१॥
हमाम्यांचे नादानी । घुंबरी वाजली रानीं ॥२॥
हमाम्यांची शीतळ शाई । पोरा मेली तुझी आई ॥३॥
काम क्रोध पोरा नाशी । अहंकार तोंड वासी ॥४॥
एका जनार्दनांशीं । पोरा वहिल्या गांवा जाशीं ॥५॥

206
Hamāmā pōrā hamāmā. Ghumbarīnvājē ghamāmā.1.
Hamāmyān̄cē nādānī. Ghumbarī vājalī rānīṁ.2.
Hamāmyān̄cī śītaḷa śā'ī. Pōrā mēlī tujhī ā'ī.3.
Kāma krōdha pōrā nāśī. Ahaṅkāra tōṇḍa vāsī.4.
Ēkā janārdanānśīṁ. Pōrā vahilyā gānvā jāśīṁ.5.

206
Hamāmā boys hamāmā. Ghumbarī sounds ghamāmā ||1||
In fancy of Hamāmā, Ghumbarī is played on field ||2||
The calm ink of Hamāmā | Boy, your mother is no more ||3||
Boy (if you) destroy lust & anger | Ego opens its mouth wide ||4||
To Eknath Janardan | Boy (you) will go to the original place ||5||
Hamāmā & humarī | play brothers Hamāmā, humarī ||1||

२१८
माडियेला डाव पोरा हुतुतुतुतु । नको घालुं फेरा पोरा हुतुतुतुतु ॥१॥
लक्ष चौऱ्याशींचा डाव खेळ मांडियेला । लक्ष जाणे तोचि तेंथोनि सुटला ॥२॥
सहा चार अठरा यांचे पडों नको । एका जनार्दनी संता शरण जाई ॥३॥

218
Māḍiyēlā ḍāva pōrā hutututututu. Nakō ghāluṁ phērā pōrā hutututututu.1.
Lakṣa cauryāśīn̄cā ḍāva khēḷa māṇḍiyēlā. Lakṣa jāṇē tōci tēnthōni suṭalā.2.
Sahā cāra aṭharā yān̄cē paḍōṁ nakō. Ēkā janārdanī santā śaraṇa jā'ī.3.

218

Oh boy, the game of Hututu has been started | Do not keep taking rounds (of) Hututu ||1||

The game has been aimed for eighty-four (score) | One who knows the aim will be released from game ||2||

Six, four, eighteen should not be played | Ēkā janārdanī (Eknath) bows to the saints ||3||

२२५

बहु खेळतं खेळ । कळों आले सकळ । शेवटीं तें निर्फळ । जालें बाळकृष्ण ॥१॥

कान्होबा पुरे पुरे आतां खेळा । येता जातां श्रम जाला रे कान्होबा ॥धृ ॥

आम्हीं न खेळु विटिदांडुं । भोवरं लागोऱ्या रे चेंडु ।

एकीबेकीतें सांडुं । मीतूपण अवघें खंडुं रे कान्होबा ॥२॥

225

Bahu khēḷataṁ khēḷa. Kaḷoṁ ālē sakaḷa. Śēvaṭīṁ tēṁ nirphaḷa. Jālēṁ bāḷakṛṣṇa.1.

Kānhōbā purē purē ātāṁ khēḷā. Yētā jātāṁ śrama jālā rē kānhōbā.Dhṛ .

Āmhīṁ na khēḷu viṭidāṇḍuṁ. Bhōvaraṁ lāgōryā rē cēṇḍu. Ēkībēkītēṁ sāṇḍuṁ. Mītūpaṇa avaghēṁ khaṇḍuṁ rē kānhōbā.2.

225

(We) play many games| everyone came to know about them| at the end that was fruitless | for BalaKrishna||1||

Kānhōbā, it's enough of play now| its tiring O Kānhōbā ||DHRU||

We (may) not play viṭidāṇḍuṁ| Bhōvaraṁ lāgōryā and cēṇḍu|

Ēkībēkī as well| (but) we will shred our ego O Kānhōbā ||2||

२३७

मिळोनि गोपाळ सकळीं । यमुनेतटीं खेळे चेंडुफळीं ।

गाई बैसविल्या कळंबातळीं । जाहली दुपारीं खेळतां ॥१॥

237

Miḷōni gōpāḷa sakaḷīṁ. Yamunētaṭīṁ khēḷē cēṇḍuphaḷīṁ.
Gā'ī baisavilyā kaḷambātaḷīṁ. Jāhalī dupārīṁ khēḷatāṁ.1.

237

Gathering all the gōpāḷa| play bat-ball on the banks of Yamuna|

Cows are grazing along lake kaḷambā| its afternoon while playing||1||

6. Mention of games in Tukārāma's verses – dated 1635 – 1650 AD[17]

बाळपणें ऐसीं वरुषें गेलीं बारा । खेळतां या पोरा नानामतें ॥१॥

विटू दांडू चेंडू लगोऱ्या वाघोडीं । चंपे पेंड खडी एकीबेकी ॥ध्रु॥.

हमामा हुंबरी पकव्याच्या बारे । खेळे जंगीभोंवरे चुंबाचुंबी ॥२॥

सेलडेरा आणि निसरभोंवडी । उचली बाले धोंडी अंगबळें ॥३॥

तुका ह्मणे ऐसें बाळपण गेलें । मग तारुण्य आलें गर्वमूळ ॥४॥

Bāḷapaṇēṁ aisīṁ varuṣēṁ gēlīṁ bārā. Khēḷatāṁ yā pōrā nānāmatēṁ.1.
Viṭū dāṇḍū cēṇḍū lagōṟyā vāghōḍīṁ. Campē pēṇḍa khaḍī ēkībēkī.Dhru..
Hamāmā humbarī pakavyācyā bārē. Khēḷē jaṅgībhōnvarē cumbācumbī.2.
Sēlaḍērā āṇi nisarabhōnvaḍī. Ucalī bālē dhōṇḍī aṅgabaḷēṁ.3. Tukā hmaṇē
aisēṁ bāḷapaṇa gēlēṁ. Maga tāruṇya ālēṁ garvamūḷa.4.

Twelve years of childhood years were spent | Playing such various games||1||
Viṭū dāṇḍū cēṇḍū lagōṟyā vāghōḍīṁ | Campē pēṇḍa khaḍī ēkībēkī ||Dhru||
Hamāmā humbarī pakavyācyā bārē | Playing jaṅgībhōnvarē cumbācumbī ||2||

Sēlaḍērā āṇi nisarabhōnvaḍī | Children lifting each other through their physical power ||3|| Tuka (Tukaram) says, the childhood went like that | Then comes adulthood (carrying) the root of pride ||4||

Meaning: Tukobarai, while writing sermons, says that twelve years of your childhood were spent playing such various games. Tukobarai gives a list of the games that were played as a child. Along with Viti Dandu, Chendu Lagori, Champe Pend, Ēkibēkī, Hamama, Humbari and Bhovare were also played. Tukobarai further writes that while Celedera and Nisarbhovandi,

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[16] TransLiteral Foundation. (2007, December 9). तुकाराम गाथा—अभंग संग्रह ३००१ ते ३१०० [Compilation]. TransLiteral Foundation.

the game of lifting each other, were also played. (TransLiteral Foundation, 2007)

7. Mention of games in Rāmadāsa's verses – dated 1654 AD

आळस उठे प्रबळ| कर्मणुकेचा नाना खेळ |कां उपभोगाचे गोंधळ| तो रजोगुण ||२६||

Āḷasa uṭhē prabaḷa| karmaṇukēcā nānā khēla |kāṁ upabhōgācē gōndhaḷa| tō rajōguṇa ||26||

Laziness rises strong | (there are) Many games of entertainment |Why confusion of(/about) pleasure | that is luxuriousness ||26||

कळावंत बहुरूपी| नटावलोकी साक्षेपी |नाना खेळी दान अर्पी| तो रजोगुण ||२७||

Kaḷāvanta bahurūpī| naṭāvalōkī sākṣēpī |nānā khēḷī dāna arpī| tō rajōguṇa ||27||[18]

(Relationship with) Courtesans, One who takes multiple characters (magicians) | actors, people with bad character |One who plays dice in various games |contributes to Rajogun (luxuriousness)

Establishing an organization also required establishing a relationship between them and clarifying the concept of friendship. Who can be friends with? How can that be? Who should be kept away? All these questions have been answered by Samarth in these verses:

उगीच वेळ घालाया । नासके मित्र पाहिले ।
कुबुद्धी कुकर्मी दोषी । त्याचे फळ भोगावया ॥९॥
सारीचे मित्र नारीचे । चोरीचे चोरटे खवी ।
मस्तीचे चोर गस्तीचे । कोडगे लात पावती ॥१०॥

Ugīca vēḷa ghālāyā. Nāsakē mitra pāhilē. Kubud'dhī kukarmī dōṣī. Tyācē phaḷa bhōgāvayā..9.. Sārīcē mitra nārīcē. Cōrīcē cōraṭē khavī. Mastīcē cōra gastīcē. Kōḍagē lāta pāvatī..10..

To waste your time | you need spoilt friends |

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[17] Dasbodh, Dashak 2, Samas 5

Bad intellect, bad deed's guilt | gives its (bad) fruits ||9||
A friend in a gambling game, a friend who likes to enjoy with other women
| a friend in stealing is a thief and a friend in evil |
Friends in merrymaking | (are) shameless & to be kicked away ||10||

"This is our experience today. Samarth knew what could happen 350 years ago. Some of the words in this poem are not in our usual usage. Their meaning must be taken into account. "*Sari's friend Nari*" is a friend in a game like Sāripataa, a friend in a gambling game like cards, a friend who likes to enjoy with other women, "*Khavi*" is a friend in evil and a thief is a friend in stealing. Friends, who help in all this forbidden work. Of course, the question of whether to call them friends is different! What effect does seeing such different types of friends have on your life and who should be close and who should be far away (Dev, 2010)".[19]

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