

Locating the Cultural Transmission in Games: An Analysis of Select Folk games and Digital games

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Abstract

Cultural Studies is a distinctive interdisciplinary field in academia which investigates the political processes of modern culture as well as its historical roots. In general, cultural studies experts delve at how cultural practises interact with larger systems of power that are linked to or working via sociological phenomenon. It emphasizes on how beliefs, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic class, caste, race, and gender interact with cultural manifestations in general. This eclectic area of study, which developed in the second part of the twentieth century, has spanned time and place, culminating in the development of a diversity of perspectives through which culture may be perceived. One prism that looks at culture as a local development is the regional turn in cultural studies. Regional culture is an amalgamation of regionally distinct activities, customs, rituals, food culture, games, behavioural tendencies and so on. It is a collection of written, oral, and performative traditions of numerous ethno-linguistic groups in various locales and communities that, although extensive intrinsic mobility, may nevertheless be described as having unique geographical contexts or identities. The regional paradigm to culture analyses regional narratives as distinct cultural manifestations. Cultural Studies has radically turned its attention to regionality, prompting a reconsideration of culture as a way of life derived from localised actions, rather than as a globally generated uniform concept. Local voices in games, literature, films, theatre, folklore, oral traditions, and other forms of cultural expression should be elevated to the forefront. Children are always being interested in games as they belong to the concerned age group. While today's children play more complex games as well as online games, children in the past played more localised or regional basic games that we now refer to as folk games. A significant proportion of most cultures' traditional games or folk games, including Kerala's, has perished over ages. The 'Game' can be regarded as a multifaceted social and cultural entity. The salient features of folk games are the ways in they are transferred and passed down from generation to generation. There are usually no official instructions based on the strategy of folk games, but children themselves teach other children how to play these games, including the rules and other requirements. These games are transmitted down through generations, with the majority of them being passed down by children. These games are deeply ingrained in local culture as a result of this informal transmission, and they are actually part of that social group's legacy. As a direct result of this learning process, almost all of these games will have many versions, sometimes even inside a single location. This paper entitled *Locating the Cultural Transmission in Games: An Analysis of Select Folk games and Digital games* examines selected Kerala folk games from distinguished categories which have receded its significance or are in the merge of extinction. It also analyses the contemporary cultural transmission within the context of folk games in comparison with the globalisation.

Key words: Cultural Studies, Folk Games, Cultural Transmission, Globalisation, Regional Culture

Regional culture is an amalgamation of distinct activities, customs, rituals, culinary culture, games, and behavioural features found in the area. It is a corpus of written, oral, and performative traditions from a vast scope of ethno-linguistic groups in a broader spectrum of locales and communities that, despite their intrinsic mobility, may be considered to have unique geographical contexts or identities. In

the regional paradigm of culture, regional narratives are evaluated as distinct cultural forms. Cultural Studies has switched its emphasis to regionality, forcing a reassessment of culture as a way of life shaped by localised activities rather than a globally imposed homogeneous notion. In games, novels, movies, theatre, folklore, oral traditions, and

other kinds of cultural expression, local voices should be prioritised.

As they belong to the concerned age group, children are constantly interested in games. Children currently play progressively complicated games, including internet games, whereas children in the past played more localised or regional basic games, which we now refer to as folk games. Over the centuries, a large percentage of most cultures' traditional or folk games, including Kerala's, has disappeared.

Folk games can primarily be classified based on oral skills, memory skills, rational thinking, sportsman spirit, physical strength and so on. Based on the locale that children choose to play, they can be categorized into three types such as Indoor folk games, Outdoor folk games and some games which can be played either indoor or outdoor. Those games which are played inside the house or other buildings can be referred to as Indoor folk games. And those kinds of games which are played outside the house or other buildings can be termed as Outdoor folk games. The difference between a conventional indoor game and an outside game is undeniable. The majority of indoor activities, such as board games and word games, are immobile or passive in nature. The majority of outdoor games necessitate physical activity, such as a lot of running and other strenuous mobility. Many outdoor games may be played by large groups, although indoor sports may have a smaller number of participants. '*Pallamkuzhi*' is a hole-in-the-wooden-frame game that is frequently played on household furniture. As a result, they are almost always played inside the home. '*Kottakali*' or Fort Game, on the other hand, is an outdoor game played on a huge field. Significant population of outdoor games listed in this present collection of folk games reflects the culture of the generation of children who played them. In stark contrast, many modern youngsters confine themselves to screen-based games and have slight opportunities for active and raucous play. Those who do engage in outdoor activities are confined to a few sports such as basketball, soccer, and cricket. Children of a previous generation had many possibilities and extensive regions to indulge in vigorous outdoor play, as well as a large selection of activities to choose from.

Folk games can also be played individually, in team and in guided-play mode. *Vadamvalior* Tug of War is a best example for the team play mode. In the individual mode play, each child competes or participates on his or her own. For instance, *Appam Kadi* or Bread biting is played individually; where each child has to try his level best to get a bite on the *Appam* or bread attached in a string. This last category of games termed as guided-play mode consists primarily of activities designed for extremely young children. Parents in many families participate in a range of spontaneous activities to entertain their toddlers, which vary from family to family. '*Eekoottilthatha undo?*' or 'Is the parrot in the cage?' is a perfect example for this play-mode. In this category, a senior child or a grown-up person amuses a younger kid. When older people were asked to recall their experiences with folk games, virtually all of them emphasised the relationship grooming they acquired via play. On the field, they learnt the nuances of friendship, how to create and operate successfully as a team, and how to resolve problems. As a result, the dimension of traditional games is vital.

Folk games are ingrained in a place's culture and are played informally by children in every community. They lacked complexity and generally used materials that were readily accessible. Many of them may be played without the use of any particular equipment. Examining the materials utilised in these traditional games is remarkably intriguing. Pebbles, clay pieces, sand, wood, different types of leaves, nuts, seashells, paper bits, and other materials are usually locally accessible.

Even when balls are used in some of these sports, they are produced locally from wastepaper, textile scraps, or tree sap. Even the playing board is engraved in the sand for board games, with the exception of a few. The majority of the time, children used any accessible item to play with. This was especially true in the absence of ready-to-play toys and other prefabricated play items. The majority of the folk games were played outside, and the play materials were derived from natural things. As a result, the children became more aware of the items and circumstances around them, and they became more reliant on them for play. They were instinctively looking for play materials in the area, which made them more aware and vigilant. Children in this

environment developed a habit of gathering play materials such as various types of nuts, seeds, leaves, well-shaped branches, broken pot pieces, and so on. This not only taught children the need of recycling and reusing, but it also put them in a natural state of connectedness with the ecosystem, making them healthier and happier as a result.

Folk games of physical skills or physical strength encompass the following games:

- *Kattayadi*
Kattayadiis played using coconuts in team spirit among the children.
- *Kaarakali* or *Kaarathallu*
Kaarakali or *Kaarathallu* played in fields primarily during the Onam season in Kerala.
- *Chattiyarachukali*
Chattiyarachukali is played using the natural materials like stick and pot among the children.
- *Kuttipanthukali*
Kuttipanthukaliis played using a small ball made out of grass and hay among the children.
Word games or Verbal games incorporate the following games:
- *Aksharapoorani*
It emphasises on children to fill out the missing letters in a word. It also serves as a game to improve the knowledge of children.
- *Aksharasloka*
It is similar to that of the *Aksharapoorani*.
- *Naavuvazhakkam*

This game focuses on the resonance in pronunciation of different lines.

- *Poo parikkanporano*
It is also a verbal game reciting the names among the group of children.

There are different guess folk games such as

Achumthalayumkali, AndakkaMundakka, AaanaMayilOttakam kali, KanjiyumKunjiyum, Kannaampothe, Kannupothikali, Chembezhukka kali, Thaaramkali, Pullikunju, Mothiram kali, Viral kali, Soochiyittukali and so on. And the counting games include *Ennalkali, Adichukali, Paathukali, Pathaanakali, Saattukali* etc. Games of touch comprises *Akkunikuthu, Achuthottukali, Andachundakkali, Athakapithal akka kali,*

Athalapithalathavalaachi, Arippothirippo kali, Aachukali, Eerkkili kali.

Cheska, a prominent scholar proposed a seven-fold taxonomy of folk games, based on her research mostly on games and other comparable activities on the African continent in 1987. They are as follow: i) games of physical skill, ii) games of strategy, iii) games of chance, iv) games of memory, v) rhythm games, vi) simulation games and vii) verbal games. In his seminal work "Man, Play, and Games," Roger Caillois suggests yet another way to categorise games. This simple four-fold classification is based on which of the four traits is more prominent in a certain game. He recommends categorising games "into four broad rubrics, according on whether the role of competition, chance, simulation, or vertigo is dominating in the games under study."

- Games of competition: There will be a winner or a winning side in a competitive game. According to Caillois, there is a question of rivalry based on a particular attribute in general analysis of these folk games. Physical strength, talent in shooting a ball, throwing a stick or marble, quickness in doing an activity, ability to identify a colour quickly, or any other skill are examples of single qualities. Such tough games need a higher level of incentive to succeed, which fosters a competitive spirit in the player.
- Simulation Games: In games, mimicry or imitation enables a youngster to explore an imaginative world and imitate specific situations or behaviours from adult life. In practically all games, there may be some element of make believe, but in Simulation Games, the emphasis is on imitation. Children re-enact most everyday home chores, including as marketing and cooking, in games like "*kanjim Kareem vachu kali*." They simulate travel and transportation operations in "*Bus kali*." While these imitation games demonstrate the children's excellent observation of ordinary social events, they also train them for responsible communal life.
- Games of chance: In a conventional sense, this category includes games where the outcome is completely unexpected and the participants have no influence over it. In the regular order of things, if no gimmicks are used, you have no clue what the outcome will be when you toss a dice. As a result, no amount of instruction or practise can help a person

become proficient in these games. To a greater or lesser extent, the game "Even or Odd" and related "counting out" games are games of chance.

- Vertigo or games focused on emotional experience: Even when they are competitive or imitative, most children's games include elements of frenzy, joy, and excitement. However, we classify folk games that are devoid of other characteristics and are solely meant to elicit some intense sensation under this category. Riding a swing, for example, is undertaken for that one-of-a-kind sensation. However, you may use it as a competition among children, measuring the heights to which each one can swing. It is classified as an experience-focused game in the first instance, and competitive in the second.

There are numerous apparent benefits for children in these folk games as a result of closer examination. Folk games play an imperative role in early childhood education. It also imparts problem solving skills among the children and the verbal games or word games boost up language skills or communication skills too at this earliest stage. Another key part of study has been the role of games in assisting as well as encouraging the differentially abled children.

Inner Freedom is an important advantage of these folk games. The ultimate benefit of most of these activities is regarded to be the fact that the child is having a fantastic fun and feeling inner freedom. Almost all of the games were accompanied by a sensation of satisfaction and strong absorption in that particular activity. Many folk games are simple acts that are performed in front of others and are openly praised by them. Clapping, chanting, skipping, tossing, or any other movement can be used in these basic shows. Children quickly grasp these basic abilities and take joy in performing them, resulting in a high level of self-assurance. As we all know, lack of confidence can be a major problem in anyone's life, and active play may help a child overcome this and gain confidence early in life. Folk games are always played in groups, ranging from two to hundreds of people. One of the most significant aspects of these games is that the children initiate them, picking what to play and even establishing specific circumstances or game rules for the day. Frequently, this procedure is accompanied by a great deal of debate and mutual discussion.

All of these youngsters assume command of the situation, launch various game phases, and the group progresses. All of them are crucial formative phases in the development of leadership abilities. Children and their activities are the province of traditional games. As a result, they must prepare, develop rules, understand the numerous processes, and proceed with the play's steps. All of this needs a great deal of speaking, explaining, listening, comprehending, acting, and correcting. As a result, good folk game players turn out to be good communicators. Children, in general, are fascinated by games and will effortlessly participate in any game situation. They enthusiastically study the regulations and other criteria, which are frequently fairly complicated, and attempt to follow them to the letter. During a formal academic session, on the other hand, many youngsters may not exhibit interest, may struggle to understand the dynamics, and as a result, may become poor learners. Folk games can indirectly assist youngsters in grasping the mechanics of learning and assisting them in becoming better learners. Folk games can be called as venues where children were schooled in establishing a feeling of equality as a consequence of accepting one another as playmates, more than anything else, in traditional civilizations where class and caste divisions are rather prominent. Close teamwork and a strong desire to win are the only things that count in competitive games, although in the other categories, such as chance, experience, and imitation, what matters is travelling through these games together. As a result, traditional games serve as effective social levellers for developing youngsters. Dealing with disappointments is an important ability, and it is often noted that today's generation, which has grown up with immediate gratification, is lacking in this area. Play, in general, and traditional games in particular, teach a youngster how to gracefully face failure. One gradually accepts the harsh reality that no one wins in a competition. As a result, these games are ideal ways to teach youngsters how to deal with failure in the future.

Folk games serve children's biological and psychological demands while also promoting their mental, emotional, social, and moral growth. Thus, it acts as a reservoir of social values and cultural education.

In the contemporary scenario, digital games have conquered over the minds of young children such as PUBG, Clash of clans, GTA-V, Need for Speed payback and so on. These so-called digital games can be played using our finger tips devoid of any bodily movements. It leads to many lifestyle diseases such as obesity, eye problems, depression etc. It can also affect the character traits of children adversely which make them more aggressive or violent. There are many key parts in digital game mechanism such as offering points, rewards, badges, leader boards virtually so as to encourage the players to play the games for long run. A limited number of transnational businesses (TNCs) dominate the digital gaming industry, which produce products in multiple locations and then use economies of size and scope to market them internationally. They also design and engage in global systems that are largely independent of national policy and regulatory control. While cultural theorists of globalisation tend to celebrate the global flow of people, products, and symbolic messages, the development of highly concentrated systems of symbolic production may have complex, and not always positive, economic and cultural consequences for small cultures and markets from a political economy of the media perspective.

In our current, digitally driven world, digital games have become a hallmark commodity. They constitute a significant proportion of the intriguing and rapidly changing world of contemporary digital culture. To sum up, a cultural acculturation has taken place in the domain of games; where the

royal kingdom of folk games gets shattered away by the hegemony of digital games.

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