



## The Study of “Chikki Kabaddi,” an Indian Folk Game from Psychological and Physiological Perspective

**Amit Kumar & Abhishek Prasad**

Assistant Professor, Arunachal Institute of Tribal Studies, Rajiv Gandhi University

(A Central University), Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh

Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Rajiv Gandhi University

(A Central University), Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh

Corresponding author E-mail: [amit.kumar@rgu.ac.in](mailto:amit.kumar@rgu.ac.in)/ [abhishek.prasad@rgu.ac.in](mailto:abhishek.prasad@rgu.ac.in)

**Abstract:** Chikki Kabaddi, also referred to as *Budhiya Kabaddi*, is a prominent traditional folk game widely played among children, youths, and adolescents in the rural villages of northern India. This game embodies ancient Indian wisdom and practices through play, contributing to the psychological and physiological well-being of adolescents and youth. These benefits are achieved through the game's unique characteristics and requirements. The game necessitates high levels of attentiveness and alertness, requiring participants to focus on breathing activities while maintaining awareness of their teammates. It is a strategic game that demands conscious effort to achieve victory. This combination of strategy and effort aligns with the broader characteristics of traditional Indian folk games. Such folk games emphasize teamwork and involve sharp-minded individuals. Chikki Kabaddi resonates with the essence of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). Given its deep roots in Indian culture and its multifaceted benefits, this article explores the folkloristic background of Chikki Kabaddi and elucidates its psychological and physiological significance within the framework of the IKS. To provide a comprehensive understanding of the game and its impact, the study is primarily based on firsthand experience and field data.

**Keywords:** *Chikki Kabaddi*, Physiological, Psychological, Folk Game, IKS

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### Introduction

Chikki Kabaddi, also known as *Budhiya Kabaddi*, is a traditional folk game deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of northern India. Predominantly played in rural villages,

this game has garnered popularity earlier among children, youths, and adolescents. The significance of Chikki Kabaddi extends beyond mere entertainment, as it encapsulates ancient Indian wisdom and practices that contribute to the holistic well-being of its participants. This study aims to explore the multifaceted nature of Chikki Kabaddi, focusing on its folkloristic background and its psychological and physiological implications within the framework of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). The game's unique characteristics, such as the requirement for high levels of attentiveness, strategic thinking, and conscious breathing, align with broader traditional Indian folk game principles that emphasize teamwork and mental acuity. While this study focuses on Chikki Kabaddi specifically, it is important to contextualize the game within the broader landscape of folk games and their significance in Indian culture. By examining Chikki Kabaddi through the lens of the IKS, this research seeks to highlight the game's role in promoting physical and mental well-being among its players. The study draws primarily from firsthand experiences and field data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the game's cultural significance and its potential benefits for adolescents and youth in rural India.

Chikki Kabaddi exemplifies many of the characteristics common to traditional folk games, particularly in its ability to foster community bonds and promote cultural values. Folk games play a significant role in fostering harmonious relationships both within and between groups or communities by providing opportunities for collective enjoyment and celebration. These traditional games, transmitted through generations, often carry cultural, social, and educational importance, reflecting the values, beliefs, and practices of the community. Typically, informal, and unwritten, folk games are enjoyed by both children and adults. Unlike modern sports or organized games, they are deeply embedded in the traditions and daily life of a community. Folk games can be regarded as leisure activities that individuals engage in during their free time, rooted in their cultural heritage. They represent the cultural identity of the people within their locality. As per Norbeck (1974) such play has been defined as common human behavior that develops from a genetically inherited stimulus or proclivity and is characterized by a combination of characteristics such as being voluntary, somewhat enjoyable, temporally distinct from other behavior, and unique in having a make-believe or psychically transcendental quality (Norbeck, 1974). Games or Play might not be productive but there are some special psychological and physiological impacts over the players on their health. It is also true that a few of anthropologists and folklorists took the study of play and games with extreme seriousness in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early

20<sup>th</sup> century. Many academics contributed papers to the early American Anthropologist issues, motivated by Tylor’s ideas regarding the spread of games like pachisi throughout the Americas (Tylor, 1896). The enormous game collections of Alice Bertha Gomme (1964), Stewart Culin (1895), and Newell (1883) were also released around this period. However, the anthropological study of play did not go much past the early studies of Tylor and Culin until the late 1950s, with the exception of Best’s *Games and Pastimes of the Maori* (1925) and Lesser’s *the Pawnee Ghost Dancing Hand Game* (1933). Roberts, Arth, and Bush (again drawing inspiration from Tylor) attempted to create a theoretical framework for the study of games in 1959’s “*Games in Culture*,” attempting to account for both the games’ social relevance and geographic spread (John M. Roberts, 1959).

By understanding the general role and importance of folk games in Indian society, we can better appreciate the unique contributions of *Chikki Kabaddi* to physical and mental well-being, as well as its place within the Indian Knowledge System. The informal nature of folk games like *Chikki Kabaddi* allows for their seamless integration into daily life, enhancing their potential to promote physical and mental well-being among participants of all ages. The deep cultural roots of these games, including *Chikki Kabaddi*, make them valuable subjects for study within the framework of the Indian Knowledge System, offering insights into traditional approaches to health, education, and community building.

### Objectives

The primary objective of the study is to study the psychological and physiological impact on the players of the *Chikki Kabaddi* played by the children and adults in two districts Palamu (Jharkhand) and Aurangabad (Bihar) touching the various aspects of folkloristic study especially IKS. The objectives which can further be seen into following important sub categories:

1. To explore the folkloristic background of *Chikki Kabaddi* and its connection to the Indian Knowledge System.
2. To elucidate the psychological and physiological benefits of *Chikki Kabaddi* for adolescents and youth.
3. To investigate the relationship between *Chikki Kabaddi* and traditional Indian wisdom and practices.
4. To assess the impact of *Chikki Kabaddi* on attentiveness, alertness, and breathing awareness in participants.

5. To document the rules, techniques, and variations of Chikki Kabaddi based on firsthand experience and field data.

### Methodology

This paper has been written based on a week-long fieldwork conducted in the 06 revenue villages of Palamu District, Jharkhand, and Aurangabad District, Bihar, India. The methodology employed to gather primary data concerning this folk game involved interviews and observations during gameplay with the inhabitants of various villages in Palamu, Jharkhand, and Aurangabad, Bihar. Regarding secondary information related to the theoretical and other aspects of this folk game, the researcher consulted published journals, books, internet sources, YouTube, and newspapers.

### Chikki Kabaddi and IKS: A Folkloristic Background

From the perspective of IKS, engaging with games that incorporate Indigenous folklore can have profound psychological significance, especially in terms of cultural identity and spiritual connection. The inclusion of culturally relevant stories, characters, and environments fosters a sense of belonging and personal meaning, allowing players to connect deeply with their heritage. Integrating folkloristic elements from Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into games not only enriches the narrative but also has significant psychological and physiological effects. Games that draw upon cultural heritage can provide players with a sense of identity, community, and connection to nature, enhancing mental health and well-being. They offer both psychological benefits, such as emotional healing and stress reduction, and physiological benefits, including improved relaxation and a sense of balance. By engaging with folklore-based games, players can experience a form of cultural therapy that fosters cognitive, emotional, and physical health, rooted in the wisdom of Indigenous traditions and practices. This integration of Indigenous folklore into gaming experiences extends beyond mere entertainment, offering tangible benefits to players' overall well-being. While digital games incorporating Indigenous elements can provide these benefits, traditional physical games rooted in Indigenous cultures also offer similar advantages. One such example is *Chikki Kabaddi*, a sport that exemplifies the intersection of physical activity and cultural heritage

*Chikki Kabaddi*, akin to Kabaddi, is a traditional contact sport with origins in ancient India, intricately linked to the Indian Knowledge System. This indigenous sport, distinguished by its combination of physical prowess and strategic acumen,

embodies various elements of Indian culture, philosophy, and traditional wisdom. Like the psychological and physiological benefits observed in folklore-based digital games, traditional physical games such as Chikki Kabaddi also contribute to holistic well-being through their connection to cultural heritage and Indigenous wisdom. Although played similarly to Kabaddi, with certain variations, its origins can be traced back to prehistoric times. Evidence suggests it was practiced as a means of cultivating physical strength, mental agility, and self-defense skills among young men in rural India.

The game of *Chikki Kabaddi* encapsulates several principles central to Indian knowledge systems, including mind-body coordination, breath control, and tactical decision-making. Its gameplay, which necessitates players to hold their breath while raiding the opponent’s territory, parallels certain yogic practices and underscores the significance of *Pranayama* (breath control) in Indian philosophy. Moreover, the sport’s focus on teamwork, strategy, and quick thinking aligns with ancient Indian texts on warfare and leadership, illustrating how traditional knowledge has been preserved and transmitted through physical activities. The cultural importance of Kabaddi extends beyond its role as a sport, serving as a medium for social bonding, character development, and the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems in contemporary India. Chikki Kabaddi, also known as Budhiya Kabaddi, is a traditional Indian game that showcases the rich cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge systems of the country. This variant of Kabaddi incorporates unique elements that set it apart from the standard version, reflecting the diverse sporting traditions found across different regions of India.

The game’s structure involves two teams of seven players each, with one player designated as the “*Chikki*” or “*Budhiya*.” The playing area consists of two circular boxes: a larger one with a diameter of 5-6 meters for the main team members, and a smaller one with a diameter of 2-3 meters for the *Chikki* or *Budhiya*. The strategic placement of these boxes, with the smaller one positioned 10-15 meters away from the larger circle, adds an interesting dynamic to the gameplay. This spatial arrangement requires players to develop specific tactics and skills, emphasizing teamwork, agility, and strategic thinking. The game’s rules and setup demonstrate how traditional Indian sports have evolved to incorporate complex strategies while maintaining their cultural significance and promoting physical fitness among participants. The unique structure of Chikki Kabaddi encourages players to develop specialized skills, such as long-distance raiding and defensive coordination between the main team and the Chikki. This adaptation of the traditional Kabaddi format showcases the innovative spirit of Indian sports, blending ancient practices with modern gameplay elements. The game’s emphasis on

both individual prowess and team strategy reflects the holistic approach to physical and mental development inherent in many Indian knowledge systems.

### Why Chikki Kabaddi is Folk Game?

As folk games are defined as traditional recreational activities that are part of the cultural heritage of a community. Chikki Kabaddi, with its roots deeply embedded in Indian culture, perfectly fits this description. It has been passed down through generations, evolving from a simple pastime to a structured game that reflects the values and traditions of the communities that play it. The game's popularity in rural areas and its ability to bring people together for social interaction and physical activity further solidify its status as a folk game. The rules and regulations related to such games are typically transmitted orally and are often associated with specific cultural rituals, festivals, or daily life activities. According to Sutton-Smith (1972), "folk games are those games which have evolved informally among the common people and are passed from generation to generation through oral tradition" (Sutton-Smith, 1972). These traditional games often serve as a means of preserving cultural heritage and fostering social connections within communities. They can vary significantly from one region to another, reflecting the unique customs, values, and environmental conditions of each locale. Moreover, folk games frequently incorporate elements of local mythology, history, or practical skills, making them valuable tools for education and cultural transmission.

Folk games possess several distinctive characteristics that differentiate them from other forms of play:

1. **Oral Tradition:** Information and playing rules of folk games are usually transmitted orally from one generation to the next. This oral transmission ensures the preservation and continuity of the games within the community.
2. **Simplicity and Accessibility:** Folk games are typically simple and require minimal equipment. They are accessible to everyone in the community, regardless of age, gender, or socio-economic status.
3. **Social Interaction:** Folk games promote social interaction and community bonding. They are often played in groups, fostering a sense of camaraderie and cooperation among participants.
4. **Adaptability:** These games are highly adaptable and can change over time to suit the needs and preferences of the players. Variations of the same game can be found in different regions or communities.

The Chikki Kabaddi incorporates all the characteristics above mentioned, which makes this game as folk game. Folk games can be systematically classified into several categories based on their inherent characteristics and the skills they necessitate physical exertion and are typically conducted outdoors, demand mental skills such as memory, strategic thinking, and problem-solving abilities, require specific skills or dexterity and finally involve role-playing and imaginative engagement.

### Case Studies and Research Evidence of Chikki Kabaddi

*Chikki* or *Budhiya* Kabaddi includes the two team. As for example, let Team players are divided into two teams [let Team 1 (T1) and Team 2 (T2)], each team contain 7 members, including one *Chikki* or *Budhiya* in each team. Team will be having their captain. Both captain from the team toss the coin and accordingly decide the toss winning team first to play by keeping their team member in a box (Let T1 team won the toss). There are two boxes drawn on the ground in using marker or indicator, one is larger circular box having diameter of 5-6 meter and another box is having diameter of 2-3 meter. As T1 has won the toss, so, in first box, all the members of Team T1 enters except the *Chikki* or *Budhiya*, as *Chikki* will go to the second box. Second circular box in which *Chikki* or *Budhiya* is kept are generally away from the first box i.e., approximately 10–15-meter from their teammate circle (see figure 1).

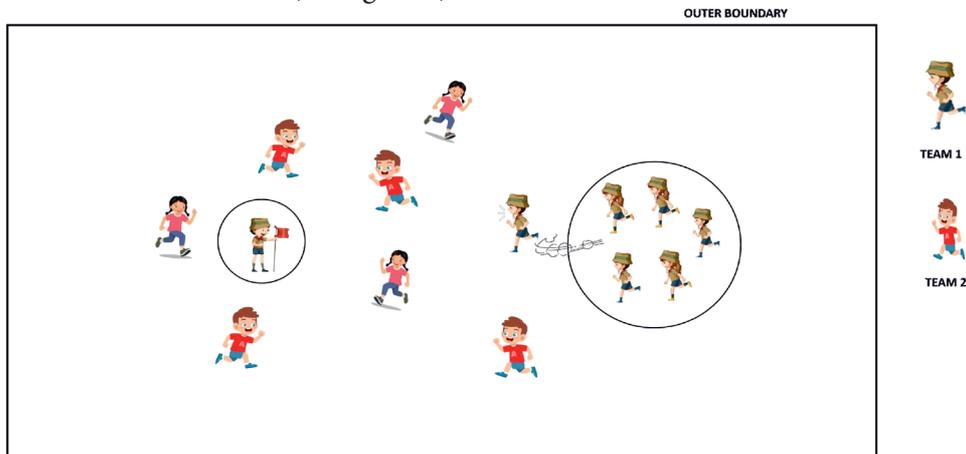


Figure 1: *Chikki Kabaddi* Game Model Map (Picture Credit: Authors)

### Playing Rules

1. T1 team target will be to make move their *chikki* from the second box to first box, while T2 team target will be to touch the *chikki* if he/she comes out of the box;

2. Since T1 has won toss, they play from inside of the boxes and T2 play from outside the box;
3. T1 members (one member each time) must chase away the players from T2 members coming in between the path of *chikki* and first box with singing *kabbadi* or *biti* without breaking the breath in normal audible sound;
4. If T1 member touches anybody without breaking breath, and comes back into the box 1, the members of T2 gets out.
5. If T1 from first box break the breath outside the box 1, then he/she will have to return into their box 1 safely, otherwise, then he can be out by the touch of T2 members;
6. T2 members must run away from the T1 (but must not cross the outer boundary) and should not be touched by T1 who is singing kabaddi by coming out of the first box;
7. To win the game *Chikki* or *Budhiya* must go their teammate circle without getting touch by T2 player;
8. *Budhiya* must run from the one circle to another circle by protecting himself/herself from T2 members to be touched;
9. There are generally 6-10 chances given by the T2 to T1 to move their *Chikki* in to the first box. In each chance players from T1 sings the kabaddi or *Biti* , so that, *Chikki* or *Budhiya* come to the box 1 easily;
10. If *Chikki* or *Budhiya* reaches the teammate box i.e., first box, then points are counted in favor of T1 and if *Chikki* or *Budhiya* is touched by T2 members points are counted in favor of T2 till the first round of 7-10 chances get completes.
11. After 7-10 rounds, T1 would come out of the box and the same chances are given to the T2; and
12. It continues for hours. Then it counts the point who won the game.

### **Psychological Impact of *Chikki Kabaddi***

Psychologically, such games, focuses on the mental processes involved in playing games. It includes aspects such as motivation, emotions, decision-making, attention, and problem-solving. Another psychological concept is flow, which is a state of deep immersion and focus. In *Overwatch*, players might experience flow during intense

gameplay where they feel in sync with the game’s rhythm, balancing challenges with their skill level. Psychologically, the game taps into creativity and exploration, allowing players to build their own worlds, which can lead to a sense of mastery and satisfaction. The open-ended nature of the game offers autonomy and encourages self-expression.

- **Enhancing Cognitive Abilities:** Chikki Kabaddi often require strategic thinking, problem-solving, and memory. It is designed to challenge players’ mental faculties. Engaging in these games helps improve cognitive abilities.
- **Memory and Concentration:** This game require players to remember sequences, rules, or strategies, thereby enhancing memory and concentration. For instance, traditional memory games where players must remember the order of objects or movements improve both short-term and long-term memory (Sutton-Smith, 1972).
- **Problem-Solving Skills:** This involves strategy and planning, encourage players to think critically and develop problem-solving skills. These skills are transferable to real-life situations, improving overall cognitive function (Smith, 1998).

### Emotional Regulation

Playing Chikki Kabaddi can have a profound impact on emotional well-being. The nature of this game often involves social interaction, cooperation, and competition, all of which contribute to emotional regulation.

- **Stress Reduction:** Engaging in this play helps reduce stress and anxiety. The playful nature of *Chikki Kabaddi* provides a mental break from daily stresses, allowing individuals to relax and unwind (Whitaker, 2005).
- **Emotional Expression:** It also provides a safe environment for expressing emotions. Whether it is the excitement of winning or the frustration of losing, players learn to manage and express their emotions constructively (Schwartzman, 1978).

### Social Skills Development

This game involves inherently social activities that promote interaction among participants, fostering essential social skills.

- **Communication:** It requires players to communicate effectively, whether it is to coordinate actions in a team game or to explain rules. This enhances verbal and non-verbal communication skills (Ginsburg, 2007).

- **Teamwork and Cooperation:** *Chikki Kabaddi* teach players the importance of working together towards a common goal. They learn to negotiate, share, and cooperate, which are vital skills for social interaction (Smith, 1998).
- **Conflict Resolution:** Through playing games, individuals often encounter conflicts or disagreements. Learning to resolve these conflicts amicably is a valuable skill that such games help develop (Ginsburg, 2007).

### Physiological Benefits of *Chikki Kabaddi*

Physiologically, this game, focuses on the physical responses and changes that occur in the player's body while playing. These could include Breathing control, heart rate, stress levels, adrenaline, or even physical strain (such as hand fatigue in long gaming sessions). The player may experience stress during survival mode, where they must avoid monsters and manage health and resources. This stress can lead to physical responses like a faster heartbeat, especially during evening, in the game when the environment becomes more hostile.

### Physical Fitness

*Chikki Kabaddi* involve physical activity, which is crucial for maintaining physical fitness and overall health.

- **Cardiovascular Health:** It provides cardiovascular exercise, ultimately helps in improving heart health and endurance (Whitaker, 2005).
- **Strength and Flexibility:** Games that involve running, jumping, throwing, and other physical activities help build muscular strength and flexibility. This game involves running that can enhance muscle strength and flexibility (W.B. Strong, 2005).
- **Coordination and Balance:** Such games require precise movements and coordination within the boundary by to and from movements from the boxes. These activities improve motor skills, coordination, and balance (Smith, 1998).

### Development of Motor Skills

Engaging in folk games from a young age contributes significantly to the development of fine and gross motor skills.

- **Fine Motor Skills:** Games that involve small, precise movements, help develop fine motor skills (Ginsburg, 2007). *Chikki Kabaddi* is fine example of such movements with greater accuracy.

- **Gross Motor Skills:** Chikki Kabaddi requires running and singing. Activities that require larger body movements, such as running, jumping, and climbing, enhance gross motor skills (W.B. Strong, 2005). This game is excellent for developing these skills.

### Healthier Lifestyle Habits

Games promote an active lifestyle, which is crucial for preventing various health issues related to a sedentary lifestyle. This game also includes physical and mental activity, that enhances healthier lifestyle.

- **Obesity Prevention:** Regular physical activity through folk games helps in maintaining a healthy weight and preventing obesity. Children who engage in active play are less likely to develop obesity-related health (Whitaker, 2005). This game also includes physical and mental activity, that enhances healthier lifestyle.
- **Bone Health:** Weight-bearing activities involved in many folk games strengthen bones and reduce the risk of osteoporosis later in life. Activities like jumping and running are particularly beneficial for bone health (W.B. Strong, 2005). This game also includes such activities, that enhances healthier lifestyle

### Conclusion

Chikki Kabaddi stands as a testament to the rich cultural heritage and profound wisdom embedded in traditional Indian folk games. Its significance extends far beyond mere entertainment, offering substantial psychological and physiological benefits to its participants, particularly adolescents and youth. The game’s unique blend of physical exertion, strategic thinking, and teamwork aligns seamlessly with the principles of the Indian Knowledge System, showcasing the intrinsic value of indigenous practices. As this study, grounded in firsthand experience and field data, demonstrates, Chikki Kabaddi not only preserves a vital aspect of rural Indian culture but also serves as a powerful tool for holistic development. Further research and promotion of such traditional games could contribute significantly to the well-being of future generations while maintaining a strong connection to India’s cultural roots. In India, traditional games like Chikki kabaddi have been part of the cultural heritage for centuries. Research indicates that these games have significant health benefits. Despite the numerous benefits, the prevalence of such folk games is declining due to modernization and the increasing

popularity of digital entertainment. Preserving these traditional games is crucial for maintaining cultural heritage and promoting the associated benefits. Efforts should be made to document folk games and promote them through educational programs and community events. Schools can play a pivotal role by including traditional games in their physical education curriculum. Engaging communities in the preservation of folk games through festivals, competitions, and workshops can help revive interest in these traditional activities. Community leaders and elders can be instrumental in teaching and promoting these games. Integrating folk games with modern lifestyle practices, such as incorporating them into fitness programs or using digital platforms to teach and promote them, can help in making these games relevant to the younger generation.

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