

## The Shifting Landscape of Indigenous Knowledge of Play: How Games Influence Children's Subjectivity and Cultural Transmission in Duggar/Jammu

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### Abstract

*This study investigates children's subjectivity through the lens of Cultural Studies, focusing on the traditional and contemporary games of the Duggar region. It digitally archives various indigenous games from Duggar in English and situates them within the broader framework of the Indigenous Knowledge System. By examining these games as cultural texts, the research explores how children's subjectivities are shaped through play and highlights the diverse physical, cognitive, and social skills cultivated through traditional Duggar games. To analyse the transformation of this process in the digital age, the study employs the Cultural Constructivist perspective alongside the Frankfurt School's framework to interrogate online games as ideological sites where capitalist logics reconfigure the meaning and purpose of play. Within this commodified landscape, children's subjectivity is no longer shaped through collective folklife, but rather it is structured by the cultivation of consumer desire. The discourse of games thus becomes a powerful apparatus of interpellation, through which children are positioned as consumers from early childhood, internalising market-driven values that infiltrate their consciousness and everyday practices. As a result, the Indigenous knowledge once actively transmitted through play now survives largely as nostalgic memory; a trace of a richer, collective past overshadowed by the forces of commodification.*

**Keywords:** Indigenous knowledge, Consumerism, Traditional games, Online games, Duggar, Jammu.

### Introduction

This research examines the Indigenous Knowledge System of the Duggar region in Jammu and Kashmir, India, focusing on its rich folk traditions sustained across generations. It traces the trajectory of Duggar folk games as a crucial lens for understanding the region's cultural dynamics, exploring how traditional and contemporary online forms of play function as cultural texts that reflect and reshape indigenous knowledge and identity.

Studies demonstrate the importance of indigenous games in developing skills and shaping children's subjectivity. According to Joseph et al., in folk storytelling, children use

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their imagination to conceptualise the unfamiliar, new, or strange, thereby developing abstract thinking. They develop the cognitive and conative skills to make meaning of strange stories and relate them to real-life situations at the pre-literary stage of development (113). Sifuna states that Indigenous education provides an everyday form of instruction that prepares young people for adulthood. Although some refer to it as non-formal education, indigenous knowledge systems consider youth interaction as a vital component of education (Sifuna 2008). According to Warren, through these practices, they gain knowledge and skills across a broad range of topics, including food production, processing, preservation, resource management from nature, marriage, relationships, leadership, and dispute resolution. They acquire knowledge through practice, imitation, listening to elders' stories, and observation (25). In recent years, efforts have been made to preserve and revive Duggar traditions and culture. Building on this, the paper foregrounds the Duggars' indigenous games as enduring cultural practices that encapsulate and transmit the region's traditional knowledge across generations. By engaging in these forms of play, children are not merely participants in recreation but function as active agents in the intergenerational transmission of cultural meanings and values.

The subjectivity of a child is shaped through cultural symbols and practices, as Nick Mansfield states, "the problem of interior life is best understood in terms of culture and politics, rather than nature and science" (12). Building on this position, Gagnier defines a subject as "the subject of knowledge, most familiarly perhaps of the discourse of social institutions that circumscribe its terms of being" (8). Consequently, subjectivity and identity are fundamental aspects of human experience, moulded by various socio-cultural factors. In critical theory, these aspects are regarded as core elements influenced by multiple socio-cultural forces. Moreover, Pratha Basu describes culture as a "Dynamic Field" composed of intersecting layers of practices, beliefs, and daily life (29). This theoretical framework supports the argument that children in Jammu have traditionally engaged in a wide variety of games. Accordingly, the research examines how Jammu's cultural landscape influences children's subjectivity through gameplay, highlighting the material reality of their interactions. As children's environments evolve with socio-economic transitions from rural to urban contexts in Jammu, their experiences and perceptions are also changing. These environmental interactions significantly impact their decision-making, preferences, and desires.

The study highlights and maps different types of games in Duggar/Jammu and discusses the physical, cognitive, and social skills they cultivate in children. It further explores the shift from indigenous play traditions to the culture industry, showing how consumer culture shapes subjectivity through everyday leisure practices. However, the study does not

categorically describe specific types of contemporary online games but identifies them as a critical area for further cultural inquiry into children's evolving subjectivity. It does not deny the importance of contemporary online games and their role in modern digital culture; rather, it emphasises the need to study them critically, as a substantial field of popular games is driven by consumerism at the expense of tradition and indigenous knowledge systems. It also examines how, against the backdrop of these online games, continuous efforts have been made to shape children's desires and needs through a one-dimensional consumerist worldview.

### **Games as Knowledge Systems and Critical Text**

India's traditional games, rooted in its cultural and regional diversity, are more than recreational pastimes, they are living continuities of ancient rituals that embody collective customs and beliefs. Serving as tools of informal education, these games develop strategic thinking, emotional balance, and motor coordination while fostering community bonds. Their accessibility and sustainability, requiring minimal resources, make them deeply tied to local life. Yet, despite their cultural and pedagogical value, they remain marginalised in policy frameworks. The contrast between the communal wisdom of traditional play and the commodified nature of modern gaming underscores how indigenous games sustain ecological awareness, historical memory, and intergenerational connection (Gulai 1252).

Indigenous knowledge of the Duggar is derived from its rich traditional everyday practices, which embody the meanings and truths of its people. Williams describes these as "structures of feelings" within his framework of cultural materialism. These practices contain knowledge systems that have been explored empirically over the ages and passed on to successive generations. Local, non-formal, or traditional knowledge is another term for indigenous knowledge, which Greiner defines as the distinct, traditional, local knowledge that exists within and is created around the special conditions of men and women who are indigenous to a given geographic area (1). According to Warren, it serves as the foundation for local decision-making in rural communities regarding a wide range of issues, including agriculture, healthcare, food preparation, education, and natural resource management (83). Occiti states that through the games and songs, kids learnt how to build houses, hunt, fish, prepare food, and take care of a household (12). Erny emphasises that the play served as a non-formal educational tool in which kids acted out adult roles, and that customary games represent the knowledge and customs of several indigenous cultures (112).

Recognising the importance of these games, a plethora of research has examined their psychological and physical effects. Games play a deep psychological and neurological role in

children's development as they are engaged in them from a young age. Psychomotor activities that connect brain regions to specific muscles, prompting the body to move, allowing the brain to direct and coordinate the necessary body movements. This understanding places games at the core of developmental activities. *Teerandaji, Kabbadi, Kho Kho, Polo, Shatranj, martial arts*, and many more are examples of traditional sports having Indian roots. These games call for technical and tactical skills in addition to physical attributes like strength, speed, endurance, agility, and coordination. Masuku and Ndawi contend that children's traditional games function as vital instruments for the transmission and preservation of indigenous knowledge, customs, and cultural values. Embedded within everyday life, these games operated as informal pedagogical practices that cultivated cognitive and practical skills such as counting, comparison, and problem-solving. Through role-playing activities like *House-House*, children enacted adult responsibilities, internalising communal roles and social hierarchies. In doing so, traditional games not only facilitated early education but also sustained the intergenerational continuity of cultural structures and collective memory (60).

Lavega, in his study, explores how traditional games play a key role in relation to the emotional facets of physical education: "Apart from development of Physical skills for social purpose, the exercise in games improves physical health and fitness, which is also important for cerebral progress" (4). Games also foster a sense of brotherhood and discipline among children. The body is involved in stretching and running, which leads to physical strength and also mental stability. Charles et al, asserts in his study on Indigenous games of Malasia that study demonstrated that traditional games that apply standard rules and regulations of the game, the size of the box, the court size and certain timing in *a Ketinting, Galah Panjang, Tor Duduk and Tok Harimau* game is very effective in improving the level of achievement of fitness motors that is in reaction time, agility, balance and speed (414). The stimulation in traditional games motivates players through hard work, challenges, relaxation, satisfaction, willpower, and dedication. You will learn things from the game about executive techniques, problem-solving skills, focus and attention span, abstract reasoning, physical balance, teamwork, and, most importantly, the development of the mind-body connection. In the past, kids used to play outside with all their friends and family, sometimes even their parents. However, in contemporary times, traditional games are becoming less popular among the younger generation, despite the fact that numerous studies have demonstrated their numerous benefits, including the improvement of coarse and delicate motor skills (Akbari, Abdoli, Shafizadehkenari, Khalaji, Hajihosseini, & Ziaee, 2009; Borhannudin, Saidon, Kok & Bahaman, 2013) and cardiovascular health (Rauber, Boullosa, Carvalho, Moraes, Sousa, Simoes, & Campbell, 2014). The younger generation is less interested in playing traditional games these days due to rapid industrial development. Instead of caring about the time they

waste, young people prefer to watch television and play computer and video games at home (Akbari et al., 2009; Ekunsanmi, 2012).

The advent of 5G has significantly increased the accessibility and engagement of online gaming in India (*Rising Online Gaming Industry in India*). Nick Yee suggests that emotionally unstable or low-self-esteem gamers are more likely to become hardcore players and prone to addiction (772). Kimberly Young observes that players often construct alternative identities within games, blurring the boundary between reality and virtuality (370). Louis Leung's regression analysis further indicates that adolescent internet addicts are predominantly male, technologically literate, and active on social networking and gaming platforms despite low confidence and socioeconomic constraints (403). In contrast to such virtual modes of play, the following section examines the traditional games of the Duggar region, which foster physical, cognitive, and social development rooted in communal and cultural interaction.

### **Landscape of Indigenous games of Duggar**

Prof Sashi Pathania, in her work *Dogri Lok-Sahitya teh Dogri Lok-Sanskriti*, has documented various traditional games of Duggar in the Dogri language, including *Kodi-Kodi*, *Attar-Pattar*, *Dido*, *Gol-Gatta*, *Bante*, *Santoliya*, *Kodi-Dich*, *Dand Plaa*, *Guli-Danda*, *Kikli*, *Khinua-Kheed*, *Thaal*, *Tapu*, *Kho-Kho*, *Uthak-Bethak*, and *Banda-Bandaru* (108-118). Building on her foundational documentation, this study extends her archival effort by digitally recording and translating these traditional games into English for wider academic access. Along with her documented games, it also includes *Karaat*, *Kokla Chapaki*, and *Bata Sawari*, which the authors observed and recalled from their regional experience, thereby enriching the archive with lived cultural knowledge from the Duggar community. This digital archiving not only preserves Duggar's indigenous play heritage but also situates it within contemporary discourse on childhood, culture, and subjectivity. The following section discusses these games in detail, highlighting the diverse physical, cognitive, and social skills they cultivate and their continuing relevance as expressions of indigenous knowledge and cultural learning.

#### **I-Physical and Psychomotor skills (Gross Motor Skills, Strength, Endurance, Coordination)**

1. **Dido**- It is played between two participants, where one carries the other on their back while being asked a question. If the carrier answers correctly, the roles are reversed. The game encourages brainstorming and cognitive engagement, fostering critical thinking, decision-making, endurance, balance, and coordination. It also nurtures emotional regulation, a sense of responsibility toward others, and composure under both physical and mental pressure.

2. Gol-Gatta- It is a game in which two teams compete against each other. In this game, there is a single hole in the ground. One team circles the hole and tries to prevent players from the opposing team from placing the ball inside the hole. If they are successful, they score one goal. It teaches teamwork, speed, and agility.
3. Uthak Bethak- This game involves two or more participants who compete in performing sit-ups, each challenging the other to exceed their count. It serves as both a recreational activity and a physical exercise that strengthens the thighs and pelvic muscles. The game enhances endurance, muscle coordination, self-discipline, and perseverance while promoting overall physical fitness and resilience.
4. Kho-Kho- It is a traditional Indian sport that involves two teams of twelve players each, with nine players from the chasing team and three from the defending team on the field. The game is played on a rectangular court, where the chasers sit in a line, alternately facing opposite directions. The objective is for the chasers to tag the defenders, who try to avoid being caught by dodging and sprinting. Kho Kho requires agility, strategy, and teamwork and is popular in schools and competitive sports.

## II-Coordination, Flexibility and Reflex Development

1. Rasa-Trapana—This game is played between three players or more. In this game, two players hold the rope at both ends and move it in a circular pattern. The third player tries to jump on it without getting tangled in the rope. If he sticks, he has to hold the rope until the other player comes. This game helps with leg muscle strength, focus, and agility.
2. Shu-Sapai- In this game, one player who has a turn will catch others, and others will run away from him, if the catcher tags anyone, that person will become the catcher. This game is handy for children's speed and overall body health. This game enhances speed and stamina.
3. Kodi-Kodi– It is also known as Kabaddi in most of the northern regions of India. The basic rules of the game remain the same across these variations. However, the additional rules may vary according to local preferences. It is a game in which two teams compete. With seven players on each side, it is a sport played for forty minutes with a five-minute break. The game's object is to raid the opponent's court and touch as many defence players as possible without being detected for even a breath to score points. One player chants "Kodi, Kodi, Kodi" and charges onto the opposing team's court, attempting to touch the player nearest to him as the other seven opponents move to trap the assailant. This is also referred to as the struggle game, which pits one player

against seven. It fosters teamwork and discipline as players must follow the game rules. It is a reflection of indigenous knowledge on breathing exercises and how they are helpful in psychological and physical health.

4. Bante (*Kanche/ Marbles*)- It is one of the most popular Indian games played all over the country, primarily by boys. Various marble games are played all around the country, whereas in Jammu, marbles are played between two teams. It can be a single-player or multiplayer game; this game develops precision, as handling and flicking marbles require precise finger movements and control. Aiming and shooting marbles helps improve coordination between what they see and how they move their hands. It also helps understand space and distance while effectively estimating distances and angles to hit targets. Basic arithmetic skills, such as counting marbles, keeping score, and understanding angles, develop mathematical skills in players.
5. Gitte- It is played with 5 stones, between two or more players. It involves tossing, catching, and picking up stones in increasingly difficult steps (e.g., picking up one at a time, then two, etc.) to improve dexterity, hand-eye coordination, and focus. At the early stage of a child's development, it is gender neutral, but after puberty, it is considered a feminine indoor activity.
6. Dand-Plaa- This game is played in a single group, in this game the player is given the turn to catch others and it starts when he takes one stick and moves it below his leg and throws it far, and then he goes to catch this stick and bring back to the spot during that process, other players have to get on the trees. The catching player then touches the hanging player; the one touched first has the turn to do the same. Flexibility, agility, and speed are the essential features of this game.

### III-Creative and Cognitive Development

1. Khinua-Kheed- This game is played with Khinu inside indoor spaces. Khinu is a ball made with cuttings of used or rejected clothes. It helps in creative development, hand flexibility and coordination.
2. Thaal- It is also called “Khinu e da thaal”. This game includes different tricks to play with Khinu while sitting in a circle. This type of game with Thaal (steel Tray) reflects the social structure of Dogra society, where girls are prepared for future domestic work, as their play is confined to indoor spaces and objects. It helps in creative development and also hand flexibility and coordination.

### IV-Strategic Thinking and Problem-Solving

1. Santaliya- For this game, you will need a playground, seven flat marbles, or Thikkriya (flat, little wood pieces), and a ball made of stuffed garments (Khinu). Two teams are formed from the players. The group that breaks up the Thikkriya pile must likewise stack them similarly. As they complete the mission, the opposing team's members attempt to halt and capture them. It develops team coordination, strategising together, and communicating effectively, accuracy and precision while hitting the stack of stones. Agility and speed are essential for dodging the ball and stacking the stones. Throwing the ball requires hand-eye coordination, and children develop these skills naturally as they play more games.
2. Gulli-Danda- This is an Indian game where players dig a single hole in the ground and place a little stick known as a Gilli on it. Every player tries to hit a Gilli, a little stick, with a Danda, a longer stick. One team utilises the Danda to forcefully strike one of Gilli's tapered ends in order to play this game. Gilli flips through the air as a result. The other team tries to smack the Gilli while it's in the air. The winner is the one who strikes Gilli the furthest. It is based on eye-hand coordination and helps develop focus, aim, and spatial skills.
3. Attar-Pattar- This game involves the entire group of participants. It starts with a song, and one person points a finger at each player in turn. Whoever is pointing at the song's final word has the opportunity to go gather the pattar (leaves). This provides insight into the Duggars' indigenous knowledge, in which collecting different leaves makes children familiar with different tree species and their leaves.

#### V-Social and Psychological skills

1. Banda-Bandarua- It is played between girls. A girl sits down, and the other girls put their fists on her head in a pile and ask her whose fist it is. This activity involves hand movement and agility.
2. Kikli- It is a game played between girls. In this game, both girls cross their hands, interlock them firmly, and twirl each other in a circle. While playing it, they try to twirl as fast as they can to make the game more playful. Maintaining grip requires precise coordination, reflexes, and balance while spinning rapidly. Continuous twirling also builds strength in the arms and legs.
3. Tappu- Girls play by making different patterns on the ground. In this game, girls throw one marble or a flat wooden piece inside the Tappu. The marker must be thrown in sequential numerical order entirely within the square without touching the line, and players must hop on one foot and throw the marker in the right square. Ensuring

the marker lands in the correct square without touching lines requires precision and spatial awareness. Helps in one-leg balance and leg strength.

#### IV- Games Documented from authors Personal and Regional Memory

4. Kraat- It's a flour mill in the Duggar region near a water body. Children make miniature versions of flour mills near water bodies using sticks, stones, and other raw materials. This game helps develop artistic and creative abilities and also builds a basic understanding of physics by observing forces and motion.
5. Kokla Chapaki- In this game between two teams, girls are given names of different colours without disclosing them to the opponent team members. While sitting in opposite directions, all other members of one team are asked to close their eyes when a member of the other team comes, pinches a player, pats the player on the back, and returns to his seat. The players then have to open their eyes, and the person who was pinched is asked to guess which player it was; if she guesses correctly, she gets the point. This game helps in memory, focusing on listening, remembering the assigned colours, and using this information strategically during the game.
6. Bata Sawari- It is played between two players. One player hits the opponent's stone with their own stone so that it travels farther after touching the targeted stone. The opponent then carries the other player on their back to the spot where the stone landed, and the same pattern continues with each turn. In this game, children use stones as a play tool. This game helps them build stamina, strength, and concentration.

Many of these games, under other names, are played throughout India; however, some, including Dand Plaa, Bada Bandaru, Khinu Kheed, Kraat Kraat, Diddo, Bata Sawari, Karat, are exclusive to the Jammu region. There is another category of games in the Duggar region known as ritualistic games that are played during festivals alongside folksongs. Most of these games have religious significance, specific to unmarried girls, reflecting how play becomes a means of socialising women into prescribed cultural roles while also offering a space for subtle expressions of agency within patriarchal structures.

#### **Trajectory of changing subjectivity in Traditional and Contemporary Games**

The discourse on subjectivity within cultural studies reveals that the subject is not an autonomous or pre-given entity but a cultural construction shaped through social and historical processes. This understanding positions subjectivity as a site of negotiation between individual agency and the ideological structures that produce it. As Simone de Beauvoir asserts in *The Second Sex*, "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (12), indicating that identity and subjectivity are culturally produced rather than biologically determined. To

call someone a subject, therefore, is to acknowledge their embeddedness within larger systems of meaning such as language, culture, and ideology, rather than to view them as isolated individuals. While the notion of the self emphasises individuality, subjectivity, in contrast, underscores the relational and constructed nature of human experience. In this context, subjectivity may also refer to the inner consciousness of the subject, though, as Sheikh observes, its origin and formation are always mediated through social and cultural frameworks (2).

For children, the courtyard was the ‘communicative space’ where they from different households would spend considerable time. This shared space and time was the source of folk games in a given neighbourhood. While Nasim discusses this phenomenon in a different regional context, his observations on how neighbourhoods shape community games help illuminate similar practices in Jammu. The traditional games examined in this study thus reflect not only the indigenous knowledge system of the Duggar region but also the subjective experiences of its people, formed through cultural meanings and practices transmitted across generations. Games such as Kikli, Bata Sawari, Gol Gatta, and Uthak-Bethak were typically played outdoors with friends and family, often involving parents, thereby strengthening intergenerational bonds. As cultural texts, these games demonstrate that children’s subjectivity in Duggar was collectively constituted through shared physical and emotional experiences of play. In Duggar, Kho Kho, Rasa Trapana, Shu Shapai, Kodi Kodi, Bante, and Dand Plaa, more revolved around community bonding and socialisation. Dand Plaa was played in a location that involved climbing trees, reflecting Duggar's rural lifestyle. It involved dry pieces of tree branches and trees to play. The materiality in these games mirrors the rural lifestyle, where children engage in games amidst natural surroundings, utilising trees, stones, and discarded materials like clothes to create toys such as Khinu, reflecting sustainable engagement with the environment.

Although Matsekoleng et al. analyse the educational and environmental dimensions of indigenous games within an African context, their insights resonate here because such engagements with materiality promote critical thinking, creativity, ergonomic development, and ecological sensitivity (69). Likewise, the Duggar games embody an indigenous pedagogy that cultivates ecological awareness, social cohesion, and collective responsibility through embodied participation. Games such as Bante, Santaliya, and Gulli-Danda enhance attention, concentration, memory, and teamwork while fostering emotional well-being by releasing positive neurochemicals like serotonin and endorphins. As Ekunsanmi (2012) and Sahay (2013) note in their respective studies on traditional play practices, such communal forms of recreation once united people of all ages and served as a medium of informal education. However, their work examines different regions, the underlying idea of collective leisure as

cultural learning finds parallel expression in the Duggar context. However, in contemporary times, a similar global pattern is visible in Jammu as younger generations now gravitate toward digital games and mobile technologies, leading to the decline of traditional play (Addy Putra et al. 2014; Ekunsanmi 2012). Echoing Mandikonzá's argument that communities have historically sustained themselves through tacitly transmitted ecological knowledge (1), this decline in indigenous games signals not only a loss of recreation but also a rupture in the intergenerational transmission of cultural wisdom and sustainable values that once defined the Duggar community's collective life.

After looking at contemporary games in Jammu through this approach, it unfolds how contemporary capitalist structures create an illusion of choice for children, exposing them to certain types of toys that treat them as mere consumers, and serving imaginary ideals through games. The material toys produced for children have hidden meanings and symbols that generate a common sense of the passive consumer culture. These toys carry 'connotative meanings,' as do other cultural codes (Barthes 8-9). What an ideal home is, what an ideal car is, the inclusion of certain values and the exclusion of others within these digital structures actively shape the subjectivity of those who engage with them. From an early age, children are interpellated into the realities of a consumer society by only interacting with these materialities, where identity formation becomes intertwined with market-driven ideologies. In contrast, the subjectivity of children who once participated in traditional games was more closely aligned with nature and community, reflecting the socio-economic conditions of that period. The meanings embedded in those forms of play profoundly influenced their behaviour, worldview, and relationship with the environment. In a similar context, Hunt says children's literature is "a powerful literature... such power cannot be neutral or innocent or trivial" (3). Compared to Indigenous games, contemporary games are limited in physical activity, which may lead to a sedentary lifestyle because most playtime is spent on online games due to the easy accessibility of mobile phones. Though motor skills and hand-eye coordination can be improved, they are less comprehensive than traditional games.

### **Problematics in Online Games**

However, with the advent of cell phones and online gaming, there has been a significant shift in children's subjectivity from Jammu. This transformation can be critically understood through the lens of the Frankfurt School, which approaches culture as a subjective, action-oriented phenomenon rather than as an abstract notion or mere ideology that can be studied objectively. For a critical theorist, what matters is how ideology is constantly assimilated into society's daily operations. This approach clears the picture of games as an ideological text in Duggar, as the trajectory of these games from folk to popular culture reflects the shifting

dominant ideologies. Profit is prioritised over sustainability; these shifting ideologies reflect the children's subjectivity as they change in response to the culture's practices. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, industrially generated culture robs people of their imagination and dominates their thought processes. The "goods" are delivered by the cultural industry, leaving people's only responsibility to consume them (2-4). Children have been moving towards video games from an early age. Most of the games are designed to addict the participant from an early stage of their development and get addicted to "Easy Dopamine " which makes them passive consumers without realising its effect.

A psychiatrist from Mumbai's Wockhardt Hospital (Violent Instinct: How Online Games..). Dr Sonal Anand says that when online video gaming goes beyond moderation, it becomes an addiction. On the one hand, some research supports the benefits of video gaming as a source of entertainment and relaxation, as well as how it fosters social interactions and connections among players and improves cognitive skills, creativity, and reflexes. However, it also leads to various online traps, exposure to pornography, and affects the mental and physical health of the child. Popular online games in the Jammu region include a variety of games: Fortnite, Clash of Clans, Apex Legends, League of Legends, Minecraft, Ultimate Teen Patti, Online Rummy, and Poker, as these are the games which are played all over India popularly for leisure and to make money by playing games. An assistant professor of psychiatry at KGMU claims that eight to ten instances a year involve children who are gaming addicts. "The most concerning thing about these games is that they never end," he says. After finishing a level, you're faced with a new obstacle. You are presented with a new challenge after finishing a level. The youth become socially alienated as a result of this constant enthrallment (Online gaming addiction..). As their addiction worsens, players lose interest in past interests and pastimes and grow increasingly enthralled with the virtual world they are immersed in (Young, 361). The side effects of an addiction to online gaming include social withdrawal, games as an escape, psychological withdrawal, loss of interest in other activities, defensiveness, and wrath (Young 361-62). Herbert Marcuse, in *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (1964), contends that the "advanced industrial society" incorporated people into the current system of production and consumption through advertising, mass media, industrial management, and modern ways of thinking. Marcuse claims that this created false needs. This one-dimensional world leads to the formation of ideas and behaviours that weaken aptitude and critical thinking skills (162). In a similar way, children get hostile due to the violent content of video games. Playing violent video games is closely associated with aggressive behaviours, according to a large body of research (Funk 1999; Lynch 2001; Anderson 2005). Researchers have found that teenagers with diagnoses of disruptive behaviour disorder have a higher correlation between exposure

to media violence and executive functioning (Anderson et al., 779). A 16-year-old teen from Pimpri-Chinchwad, Maharashtra, reportedly addicted to online gaming, died by suicide after falling from the 14th floor of his apartment. In the last six months, the boy's mother had noticed a dramatic change in his behaviour, including increased violence and his uncharacteristic extra courage. In another incident gym trainer from Jammu was admitted to the hospital as he started hitting himself with blows and injuring himself (Vartha Bharati 2). Two boys from Lucknow, one boy stole 4.5 lakh from his home to pay for the game, in the second case, the boy killed his mother. And, a 16-year-old boy killed his cousin in Nagpur, Rajasthan, to pay off debts he incurred through online video games (Lucknow: Addicted to Online game..).

According to the World Health Organization, the American Psychological Association defines 'Internet Gaming Disorder' as a syndrome that persists for at least a year and is characterized by the loss of interest in social interactions, relationships, education, or work, with gaming becoming a means to escape feelings of guilt, anxiety, or other negative emotional states (ICD-11 for Mortality and Morbidity Statistics). Nearly 40% of India's population is under the age of 20, making it a primary demographic target of the digital gaming industry. As noted by Deena Dimple Dsouza of the Manipal Department of Occupational Therapy, user engagement in the gaming sector rose dramatically during the pandemic, with platforms such as WinZO Games reporting a threefold increase in user activity and a 30% surge in traffic. Multi-player modes have been observed to attract approximately 35% more users than single-player formats, a trend mirrored across platforms. Similarly, Paytm First Games, another Indian-based online gaming platform, registered nearly seventy-five thousand new users and a two-hundred percent rise in its user base during the same period (Amin 296). The National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences (NIMHANS) in Bengaluru began addressing technology-related mental health issues in 2014. According to their psychologist Hemalata Charu, behavioural issues related to gaming preoccupation are seen in 80% of children who visit NIMHANS (Violent Instinct: How Online Games..).

These emerging patterns reveal how the rapid digitisation of play has begun to reshape children's subjectivity, moving it away from the community-centred and nature-oriented ethos of traditional Duggar games toward one increasingly defined by isolation, virtual simulation, and capitalist consumption. In this light, the present study underscores the urgency of preserving indigenous forms of play as repositories of cultural knowledge and as counter-narratives to the homogenising tendencies of digital modernity.

## Conclusion

While the role of traditional games has declined amid Jammu's changing structures and demography, the study underscores the need to preserve the indigenous games of Jammu and the inherent knowledge they embody. These indigenous games are not merely pastimes but essential tools for the holistic development of children, fostering a wide range of motor skills from an early age. Moreover, children's active engagement with the surrounding material environment, using stones, sticks, soil, and other natural elements, keeps them in constant dialogue with nature, nurturing an embodied awareness of their ecological surroundings and grounding them within the rhythms of the natural world. In contrast, the digital environments of online games replace this sensory materiality with virtual simulations, detaching play from the natural world and reorienting children's experiences toward screen-based, technologically mediated interactions. The findings of this study advocate for the reintegration of traditional games into the daily lives of children and communities. By doing so, we can preserve the rich cultural heritage of Jammu, promote physical health, and enhance the developmental outcomes for future generations. We must recognise and address the impacts of the culture industry of online games and its role in Children's psychology. However, games have served as sources of entertainment and identity for the communities associated with them. They have evolved as cultural, physical, and moral educators for the generations. This study does not take a regressive stance on reverting entirely to traditional games rather than contemporary ones. Instead, it focuses on describing folk. At the same time, contemporary games offer cognitive and social benefits, but they should be consumed in moderation, and the cultural and educational value of indigenous games should be recognised and integrated into modern play to conserve the Duggar culture.

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**Endnote:** Duggar (Dogri pronunciation: [dʊg:əɾ]) is a cultural and historical region in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, comprising the Jammu region of Jammu and Kashmir, northern Punjab, India, the north-eastern part of Punjab, Pakistan and western Himachal Pradesh. It is the historical homeland of the Dogra people.

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