

Bridging Tradition and Education: Integrating Indigenous Games into School and Higher Education Curricula Under NEP 2020

Tanveer Ahmed Dar¹, Archana S. Giri²

Research Scholar, Department of Physical Education, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Chh. Sambhajinagar,

Email: dtanveer789@gmail.com, Mob. 9149644486

Associate Professor, M.S.M's. College of Physical Education, Chh. Sambhajinagar.

Received : 01 October 2025

Published : 17 January 2026

Revised : 15 October 2025

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.54443/ijebas.v5i6.5032>

Accepted : 16 November 2025

Link Publish : <https://radjapublika.com/index.php/IJEVASI>

Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative shift toward holistic, experiential, and culturally rooted education in India. It explicitly advocates integrating indigenous and traditional games into school and higher education curricula to foster physical fitness, cognitive growth, social skills, teamwork, cultural identity, and lifelong health and well-being (Para 4.8 on sports-integration). Games such as Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Mallakhamb, Gilli-Danda, Seven Stones, Gatka, Kalaripayattu, and various tribal and regional variants carry profound historical and cultural significance. However, rapid urbanization, digital distractions, and standardized academic priorities have marginalized their inclusion in formal education. This study examines the alignment of indigenous games with NEP 2020's key pillars, including sports-integrated learning, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), and multimodal pedagogy. It highlights multifaceted benefits: enhanced motor skills, emotional resilience, environmental awareness, intergenerational bonding, and national unity through cultural preservation. Drawing on policy analysis, case studies of post-NEP initiatives (e.g., NCERT's Khel Yatra textbook series for Classes 6–8 incorporating state-specific games, Odisha's revival of 75 traditional games, and Fit India Movement efforts), and stakeholder perspectives, the paper proposes practical integration models across school stages and higher education. These include teacher training programs, infrastructure enhancements, and context-sensitive assessment frameworks. Findings indicate that indigenous games revitalize cultural heritage while creating inclusive, engaging, and sustainable learning environments. Recommendations emphasize mandatory inclusion policies, community participation, and longitudinal evaluations to assess student outcomes. This approach advances NEP 2020's vision of an education system deeply rooted in Indian heritage, equipping learners to address contemporary challenges effectively.

Keywords: Indigenous games, Traditional sports, NEP 2020, Curriculum integration, Sports-integrated learning, Holistic education, Cultural preservation, Experiential learning, Indian Knowledge Systems, Physical education, Khel Yatra, Kabaddi, Kho-Kho.

Introduction

India has one of the finest histories of native games and traditional sports in the world. These games and sports have been a part of its culture, society, and education for thousands of years. Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Mallakhamb, Gilli-Danda, Seven Stones (Lagori), and regional martial arts like Kalaripayattu and Gatka have always been more than just fun. They have also been ways to stay fit, learn discipline, think strategically, work as a team, and pass on knowledge from one generation to the next. These activities, which were based on old texts and community customs, encouraged holistic development by teaching values like teamwork, resilience, and cultural pride. They didn't need much equipment and could be done on a variety of terrains (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020; Wikipedia, 2025). But in the last several decades, the rapid growth of cities, globalization, and the rise of digital entertainment have all led to a big drop in the number of people who play these native games. Modern lifestyles dominated by screen-based activities, Western sports, and structured urban environments have distanced younger generations from these traditional forms of play, resulting in diminished physical activity, loss of cultural identity, and erosion of community bonding (Reviving Traditional Indian Games,

Published by Radja Publika



IJESR, n.d.; Common Indigenous Games of Northeast India, Martin Luther Christian University, 2025). This change is a big threat to India's intangible cultural heritage because many games only persist through oral traditions or occasional play in rural areas, which might make them completely disappear among urban youngsters. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a major step forward in this area. It calls for a revolutionary, all-encompassing, and culturally anchored education system for India. NEP 2020 clearly says that sports and physical activities, including traditional games, should be part of regular schoolwork. It stresses the need of learning from many fields, hands-on teaching, and promoting Indian values. Paragraph 4.8 proposes "sports-integration" as a cross-curricular teaching method that uses physical activities, like indigenous sports, to help students learn important life values like teamwork, self-discipline, responsibility, and citizenship. It connects these initiatives to the Fit India Movement to promote fitness as a lifetime attitude (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020; Shiksha Saptah Sports Day Activities, GSR INFO, 2024). NEP 2020 also says that Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), such as tribal knowledge and traditional ways of learning, should be used in subjects like sports, games, yoga, and arts. This will make education more relevant, relatable, and based on local culture (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020). After this policy change, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2023 and NCERT's introduction of the *Khel Yatra* textbook series for Classes 6–8 (launched in 2024–2025) support it. These books include state-specific indigenous games, yoga, and team sports like Kabaddi to promote motor skills, cultural awareness, and well-being (The Hindu, 2025; NCERT, 2024). States like Odisha have responded by bringing back 75 traditional games in schools. National efforts like Khelo India and the proposed National Sports Policy 2025 also stress the need to bring back indigenous sports (Times of India, 2024; PWOnlyIAS, 2025).

Even if these progressive measures are in place, the systematic incorporation of indigenous games into school and higher education curricula is still not well understood. This is because there are problems like not enough teacher training, not enough infrastructure, and opposition to changing from standardized academic standards. This research paper fills this gap by looking at how indigenous games fit with the goals of NEP 2020, looking at their many benefits (physical, cognitive, social, and cultural) and suggesting ways to put them into practice at all levels of education. The primary research question of this study is: How can indigenous games be efficiently included into curriculum in accordance with NEP 2020? What are the educational, cultural, and health benefits of this kind of integration? What problems need to be solved for long-term use? This method not only brings India's cultural legacy back to life, but it also helps create inclusive, happy, and long-lasting learning environments that recognize students' roots while getting them ready for the problems of today. The study continues with a review of the literature, a description of the methods used, the results, a discussion, and suggestions to help policymakers, educators, and communities make the most of NEP 2020's potential for change.

Review of the Literature

Mehta, V., & Kumar, A. (2025). This conceptual study examines the educational potential of traditional Indian games within the framework of 21st-century learning, emphasizing its role in fostering holistic cognitive, social, and emotional development. Based on India's rich cultural history, these games are great ways to teach kids about values, culture, and character. The authors correlate the advantages with recognized educational theories, such as Piaget's phases of cognitive development, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (emphasizing social connection via play), and Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (including bodily-kinesthetic and interpersonal intelligences). The study incorporates recent empirical findings, including quantitative data on particular learning outcomes such as enhanced problem-solving and collaboration. It talks about problems like modernity and digital diversions, as well as chances like cross-cultural applications and digital adaptations (like app-based versions) that keep cultural integrity. The report supports balanced curriculum that include these games to promote inclusive, culturally rich education. It also urges for more long-term empirical research to see how these games affect organized academic environments over time.

Kumar, S., Pant, M., Thomas, K. M., & Yadav, H. (2025). This research offers an extensive analysis of the ways in which indigenous games improve children's physical literacy, emphasizing the development of motor skills, coordination, agility, endurance, and general community involvement. The authors contend that these culturally embedded practices provide a comprehensive alternative to contemporary physical education, fostering not only individual physical skills but also social qualities such as collaboration and cultural pride. The report uses a lot of information to show how things like bad infrastructure, not enough teacher training, and differences between cities and rural areas make it harder to integrate. It suggests best practices, such as adding the curriculum in stages, having community-led demonstrations, and making sure that the program fits with national efforts like the Fit India

Movement. The study underscores the significance of indigenous games as essential instruments for athletic excellence and enduring fitness, highlighting their role in equipping students for competitive sports while safeguarding India's intangible heritage, thereby advocating for their compulsory inclusion in conventional physical education curricula.

Tripathi, R. C. (2024). This review consolidates information regarding the influence of traditional games such as Kabaddi and Kho-Kho, which are strongly rooted in cultural history, on fostering social behavior, character development, and experiential learning in children. It compares the loss caused by colonial powers (which favored Western sports) with modern initiatives to bring sports back, highlighting the benefits in areas like emotional resilience, interpersonal skills, ethical principles, and forming a national identity. The study talks on how play can help young people grow in many areas of their lives, including their physical health, mental health, and social connections. It pushes for further integration of policy into physical education classes, pointing out how these games teach responsibility, discipline, and how to get along with others. The analysis advocates for additional empirical investigations to measure influences on character traits, emphasizing indigenous sports as vital for combating contemporary sedentary lifestyles and enhancing cultural continuity.

Ns, S. (2025). The paper provides a comprehensive examination of indigenous sports (e.g., Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Kalarippayattu, Mallakhamb) as fundamental components of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), establishing links to ancient texts such as Dhanurveda and Natyashastra that delineate principles of physical conditioning, self-defense, holistic health, and spiritual well-being. It looks at how the sport fell out of favor during colonial control and how it has come back in a big way thanks to professional leagues like the Pro Kabaddi League and Ultimate Kho-Kho League, which have made it more visible, financially viable, and popular around the world. The study suggests that systematic integration into school curricula is necessary for cultural preservation, fitness promotion, and professionalism. It also stresses the importance of aligning with NEP 2020's focus on IKS. It sees these sports as links between the past and the present and calls for teacher training, research funding, and community involvement to keep their educational and social significance.

Bandyopadhyay, N., & Das, T. (2025). This article presents traditional games as essential intangible cultural heritage that fosters comprehensive child development physical (motor skills and coordination), cognitive (strategy and problem-solving), social-emotional (cooperation and empathy), and creative (imagination via play). The authors contend that, in the context of swift urbanization, digital distractions, and sedentary lifestyles, these low-cost, accessible, and minimally equipped activities function as vehicles for intergenerational knowledge transfer and as responses to contemporary health challenges. The research examines their function in enhancing general well-being, cultural identity, and enjoyable learning, advocating for their prioritizing in school curricula to facilitate comprehensive development. It emphasizes how games such as Gilli-Danda and Seven Stones foster resilience and community connections, advocating for their reintegration as vital elements of child-centered education by policymakers and educators.

Matsekoleng, T. K. (2022). This conceptual study examines the potential of indigenous games to enhance Technology Education (TE) and Environmental Education (EE) curricula, with larger relevance to Indian contexts through analogies in the incorporation of indigenous knowledge. It stresses how important they are for developing critical thinking, problem-solving, cultural relevance, and environmental awareness through learning by doing and playing. The paper looks at research that shows how these games exhibit local morals, values, and beliefs while also teaching players about sustainable practices and their cultural history. It suggests putting them in classrooms to make learning more meaningful, especially for children from indigenous or culturally diverse backgrounds, and to bring back traditions that are dying. The analysis supports the enhancement of teacher competencies and community involvement to strengthen connections between home and school, ensuring that games function as instruments for contextualized, inclusive pedagogy.

Gul, S. B. A. (2023). This exploratory research, also applicable to Indian contexts, investigates the significant influence of traditional games on early childhood development, encompassing physical coordination, fine and gross motor skills, social interaction, emotional regulation, and cognitive advancement through enjoyable, unstructured play. The study emphasizes how these culturally rooted activities foster inclusion, creativity, and resilience in preschool and primary educational environments. It suggests that they be used on purpose in early education

curricula to provide experiential, child-centered learning that fits with NEP 2020's focus on play-based and inclusive teaching. The paper talks about problems including too much content and the effects of technology. It suggests that teachers should be trained, games should be documented, and communities should be involved to keep the advantages going and improve the connection between home and school.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand how indigenous and traditional games support the goals of NEP 2020 and contribute to students' physical, social, cultural, and overall learning development in schools and higher education.
2. To identify the main challenges and practical solutions for including indigenous games in regular teaching and learning such as teacher preparation, facilities, and community involvement so that these games can be effectively used in education.

Methodology of the study

This research used a mixed-methods exploratory sequential design to examine the incorporation of indigenous games into the curricula of school and higher education under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, specifically focusing on the Jammu and Kashmir (Union Territory) region. The researcher chose this area because it has a lot of different cultures and landscapes, including the beautiful Kashmir Valley, the Jammu plains and hills, and the high-altitude Ladakh region. Every division has its own traditional games that are based on the area's history, community customs, and how people have adapted to the environment. For example, in the Valley, people play games indoors and in the winter that are impacted by snow, whereas in Ladakh, people play games outside that are tough. The varied landscape, which includes snow-covered mountains, valleys, and high plateaus, is a great setting for looking at how these games can connect cultural traditions with modern education. This fits well with NEP 2020's focus on Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), experiential learning, holistic development, and cultural preservation. The study is based on a pragmatic approach that focuses on practical, context-specific solutions while also taking into account the cultural sensitivities and diversity of Jammu and Kashmir's communities, which include Kashmiri, Dogra, Ladakhi, and tribal tribes. It relies on new research that shows how urbanization, digital influences, and historical disruptions are making traditional games less popular. It also looks at how NEP-aligned programs like Khelo India, Fit India Movement, and state-level programs are trying to bring them back.

A variety of Jammu and Kashmir stakeholders provided primary data on their experiences and implementation of indigenous games in education under NEP 2020. The sources include semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with 45 school teachers, 20 physical education instructors, 15 higher education professors, and 30 students from selected institutions. Additionally, 250 indigenous and tribal educators, students, and community members were surveyed. Direct observations during game-based sessions in genuine classroom or extracurricular settings assessed engagement and pedagogical application. Case studies focused on schools actively implementing or reviving indigenous games post-NEP 2020, particularly Kashmiri Valley-specific games like Saz Loung (a local variant of hopscotch involving a rectangular court with numbered boxes like Awal, Doum, Soum, Jaanat, Samandar, and Jehnum), Lakinj Lotte (the Kashmiri version of gilli-danda), and Santooli/Garam. Polo and archery, two traditional sports in Ladakh, were featured in case studies. Polo is a rugged, high-altitude equestrian game played on arid grounds with six players per team, accompanied by surna and daman music. These initiatives were compared to NCERT's Khel Yatra textbook series, which encourages state-specific indigenous games for experiential learning. NEP 2020, the National Curriculum Framework 2023, academic publications, government papers on the Khelo India and Fit India Movements, and regional studies on Kashmiri and Ladakhi games are secondary data sources. This multi-source approach provides a comprehensive, grounded understanding of how these culturally significant games many of which are low-equipment, community-oriented, and adapted to the region's diverse terrains and seasons can be revitalized in education to support holistic development, cultural preservation, and NEP 2020's goals.

Analysis and results

**Table 1: Quantitative Summary of Stakeholder Perceptions
(Survey Results, N=250)**

Perceived Aspect	Strongly Agree / Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree / Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean Score (1-5 Likert Scale)	Significant Regional Difference (Chi-Square p-value)
Indigenous games enhance physical fitness	88	8	4	4.42	p < 0.05 (Higher in Ladakh)
Games support cultural identity & pride	91	6	3	4.51	p < 0.01 (Strongest in Valley)
Ready to integrate into curriculum	72	18	10	3.98	p = 0.08 (No major difference)
Need for more teacher training	69	22	9	4.12	p < 0.05 (Higher need in remote Ladakh)
Seasonal/environmental barriers major issue	76	15	9	4.21	p < 0.001 (Strongest in Valley & Ladakh)

Source: computed from primary data

Table 1 shows that most of the people who were surveyed had very good views on indigenous games. A high mean score of 4.42 shows that a significant majority (88%) strongly agree or agree that Indian traditional games are a good way to improve physical fitness. Cultural relevance is much stronger, with 91% believing that indigenous games help people feel proud of their identity and group. This feeling is especially high in the Kashmir Valley ($p < 0.01$). A substantial percentage (72%) of people are open to include traditional games in school curriculum. However, a significant percentage (18%) are neutral, which suggests that they are unsure or haven't been exposed to them. As 69% of people think that teachers need additional training, the necessity for capacity-building becomes evident. This is especially true in Ladakh ($p < 0.05$), where teachers are far away and have few resources. A lot of people (76%) are worried about environmental and seasonal constraints, especially in the Valley and Ladakh ($p < 0.001$). These issues are caused by harsh winters, not many open places, and geographic limitations. The table shows that stakeholders enjoy traditional games and see their educational and cultural benefits, but for them to work well, teachers need to be ready and the right solutions need to be found in the right places.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Indigenous Games Integration Across Divisions

Division	Prominent Games	Alignment with NEP 2020 Pillars (Sports-Integrated / IKS / Experiential)	Strengths in Integration	Challenges (Ranked 1-3)
Kashmir Valley	Saz Loung, Lakinj Lotte, Santooli/Garam, Teekan/Truppan	High (Play-based ECCE, cultural relevance)	Low-cost, indoor winter adaptations, high engagement	1. Winter seasonality 2. Urbanization 3. Space limits
Jammu Region	Gilli-danda variants, broader Indian games	Moderate (Multidisciplinary, accessible)	Easier infrastructure, community familiarity	1. Digital distractions 2. Teacher readiness
Ladakh	Polo, Archery	High (IKS, endurance & discipline focus)	Festival-linked cultural events, high pride	1. High-altitude access 2. Remote locations 3. Seasonal (summer only)

Source: computed from primary data

Table 2 shows how the status and feasibility of incorporating indigenous games differ across three main divisions. The Kashmir Valley is the best fit for the NEP 2020 mandate since it has indoor and outdoor games that are based on its culture and can be played all year round. But winter seasonality, smaller play areas in cities, and changes in how people live are all big problems. Jammu shows moderate alignment, with a good understanding of Indian rural games and more places to play. Digital distractions and poor teacher training are the key problems here that keep students from being engaged. Ladakh is known for its culturally significant activities like polo and archery, which are very much in line with Indian Knowledge Systems. Community festivals help keep people involved, but the area has big structural problems: it's far away, the playing seasons are short, and it's hard to get to from high altitudes. In short, the chart indicates that each of the three regions has its own strengths in traditional games, but they also have their own problems that need to be solved using methods that are focused on the situation rather than one-size-fits-all solutions.

Table 3: Benefits vs. Challenges Matrix (Derived from Mixed-Methods Synthesis)

Dimension	Key Benefits (Evidence-Based)	Key Challenges (Evidence-Based)	Mitigation Strategies (Proposed from Data)
Physical & Health	Improved motor skills, endurance (esp. Polo in Ladakh) – 88% agreement	Seasonal limitations (snow/high altitude) – 76% cited	Indoor adaptations & winter variants; infrastructure grants
Cognitive & Social	Enhanced strategy, teamwork, resilience – 82% agreement	Lack of structured integration – 69% need training	Teacher workshops on NEP-aligned game modules
Cultural & Identity	Strong preservation & pride – 91% agreement	Modern/digital influences eroding play – observed in urban areas	Community-led sessions; Khel Yatra textbook alignment
Educational Alignment	Supports experiential, holistic learning – high thematic frequency	Resource & policy implementation gaps	Mandatory inclusion in curriculum; monitoring via school

Source: computed from primary data

Table 3 combines qualitative and quantitative results to illustrate that indigenous games help people grow in many areas of their lives, including physical, mental, cultural, and educational. Respondents emphasize significant physical advantages particularly in areas such as Ladakh, where endurance sports like polo are prevalent with 88% recognizing enhancements in fitness and motor skills. But harsh winters still make it hard to use the facilities year-round, so imaginative adaptations like indoor changes and facility enhancements are needed. Indigenous games help kids learn how to solve problems, cooperate together, and be strong (82% agreement), but they aren't used very often because teachers aren't trained well enough (69% agreement). Structured skill development programs that follow NEP 2020 are suggested. Indigenous games are very important for identity and legacy, as shown by the fact that 91% of people recognize their cultural worth. But modern things, including people moving to cities and the rise of digital entertainment, make it less likely that people will participate, especially young people. Community-hosted activities and curricular integration (e.g., Khel Yatra) could help stop this drop. The research demonstrates significant congruence with experiential and child-centered learning methodologies; yet, deficiencies remain in policies, resource distribution, and school-level oversight. The table says that conventional gaming modules should be made a permanent part of mainstream integration. In general, Table 3 shows that everyone agrees that there are benefits, but real changes to the structure and teaching methods are needed to solve real-world problems.

Results/Findings

The mixed-methods study done in Jammu and Kashmir (Union Territory) illustrates a great match between indigenous games and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 goal, while also emphasizing significant advantages and context-specific implementation obstacles. Data from 250 survey respondents, 110 qualitative stakeholders (interviews, FGDs, observations), and 12 case-study institutions across the Kashmir Valley, Jammu

region, and Ladakh indicate a distinct trend: indigenous games are regarded as effective instruments for comprehensive development, cultural rejuvenation, and enjoyable learning; however, their systematic incorporation encounters seasonal, infrastructural, and training-related obstacles. The vast majority of stakeholders agreed that including games that are distinctive to the region would be beneficial. Quantitative survey results indicated substantial consensus on the promotion of physical fitness (88%, mean 4.42), cultural identification and pride (91%, mean 4.51), cognitive and social-emotional development (82%), and the pedagogical usefulness of experience play (high thematic frequency). Ladakhi games like Polo (a rough equestrian team sport with summer festival significance) and Archery (a precision-based sport with cultural etiquette) were especially praised for building endurance and discipline in high-altitude environments. Kashmir Valley games like Saz Loung (a hopscotch variant with symbolic boxes), Lakinj Lotte (a local gilli-danda), Santooli/Garam (a team stone/pot rebuilding game that ends with “Garam!” chants), and Teekan/Truppan (a pebble-based coordination game) were valued for being low-cost, easy to play indoors in the winter, helping kids develop motor skills, and passing on knowledge from one generation to the next. Case studies and observations validated effective post-NEP 2020 implementations in various schools: rural Valley institutions adapted games for indoor play during winter, urban Jammu schools employed broader variants to foster familiarity and teamwork, and Ladakh schools associated Polo/Archery demonstrations with cultural festivals. Many of them were in line with NCERT's Khel Yatra textbook series, which encourages indigenous games from different states to help with motor skills, cultural awareness, and health. Qualitative themes highlighted that these activities promote inclusivity, community cohesion, and alignment with the fundamental principles of NEP 2020 sports-integrated learning (Para 4.8), Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), experiential pedagogy, and the Fit India Movement. But there are still big problems. 76% of respondents (mean 4.21) said that seasonal limitations (hard winters in the Valley, limited summer play in Ladakh) were a serious problem. 69% said that infrastructural inadequacies (space, equipment) and poor teacher training were also important problems. Seventy-two percent said they were somewhat ready for curricular integration, but the statistics show that full-scale adoption needs focused capacity-building, low-cost play space creation, and techniques for adapting (for example, indoor versions and events tied to festivals). The results show that indigenous games in Jammu and Kashmir are a culturally relevant and low-cost strategy to reach the aims of NEP 2020, which are to provide inclusive, holistic, and enjoyable education. With strategic support, such as teacher workshops, community involvement, and rules that require each school to have 3 to 5 local games, these traditional activities can effectively connect heritage and modern schooling. This is especially true in a region where the terrain, climate, and ethnic diversity make them especially useful and strong.

Conclusion

The mixed-methods study done in Jammu and Kashmir (Union Territory) illustrates a great match between indigenous games and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 goal, while also emphasizing significant advantages and context-specific implementation obstacles. Data from 250 survey respondents, 110 qualitative stakeholders (interviews, FGDs, observations), and 12 case-study institutions across the Kashmir Valley, Jammu region, and Ladakh indicate a distinct trend: indigenous games are regarded as effective instruments for comprehensive development, cultural rejuvenation, and enjoyable learning; however, their systematic incorporation encounters seasonal, infrastructural, and training-related obstacles. The vast majority of stakeholders agreed that including games that are distinctive to the region would be beneficial. Quantitative survey results indicated substantial consensus on the promotion of physical fitness (88%, mean 4.42), cultural identification and pride (91%, mean 4.51), cognitive and social-emotional development (82%), and the pedagogical usefulness of experience play (high thematic frequency). Ladakhi games like Polo (a rough equestrian team sport with summer festival significance) and Archery (a precision-based sport with cultural etiquette) were especially praised for building endurance and discipline in high-altitude environments. Kashmir Valley games like Saz Loung (a hopscotch variant with symbolic boxes), Lakinj Lotte (a local gilli-danda), Santooli/Garam (a team stone/pot rebuilding game that ends with “Garam!” chants), and Teekan/Truppan (a pebble-based coordination game) were valued for being low-cost, easy to play indoors in the winter, helping kids develop motor skills, and passing on knowledge from one generation to the next. Case studies and observations validated effective post-NEP 2020 implementations in various schools: rural Valley institutions adapted games for indoor play during winter, urban Jammu schools employed broader variants to foster familiarity and teamwork, and Ladakh schools associated Polo/Archery demonstrations with cultural festivals. Many of them were in line with NCERT's Khel Yatra textbook series, which encourages indigenous games from different states to help with motor skills, cultural awareness, and health. Qualitative themes highlighted that these activities promote inclusivity, community cohesion, and alignment with the fundamental

principles of NEP 2020 sports-integrated learning (Para 4.8), Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), experiential pedagogy, and the Fit India Movement. But there are still big problems. 76% of respondents (mean 4.21) said that seasonal limitations (hard winters in the Valley, limited summer play in Ladakh) were a serious problem. 69% said that infrastructural inadequacies (space, equipment) and poor teacher training were also important problems. Seventy-two percent said they were somewhat ready for curricular integration, but the statistics show that full-scale adoption needs focused capacity-building, low-cost play space creation, and techniques for adapting (for example, indoor versions and events tied to festivals). The results show that indigenous games in Jammu and Kashmir are a culturally relevant and low-cost strategy to reach the aims of NEP 2020, which are to provide inclusive, holistic, and enjoyable education. With strategic support, such as teacher workshops, community involvement, and rules that require each school to have 3 to 5 local games, these traditional activities can effectively connect heritage and modern schooling. This is especially true in a region where the terrain, climate, and ethnic diversity make them especially useful and strong.

REFERENCES

- Bandyopadhyay, N., & Das, T. (2025). *Indian traditional games: An intangible cultural heritage to promote good life among children*. *Saudi Journal of Applied Sciences*, 8(3), 36–40. https://saudijournals.com/media/articles/JASPE_83_36-40_Urgent.pdf
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Greater Kashmir. (2023, September 25). *Our traditional games*. <https://www.greaterkashmir.com/todays-paper/op-ed/our-traditional-games/>
- Gul, S. B. A. (2023). *Early childhood care and education (3–6 years) and the role of traditional games: An exploratory study* [Unspecified publication].
- Kashmir Life. (2024, May 30). *Fading fun: Kashmir's timeless games disappear from playgrounds*. <https://kashmirlife.net/kashmirs-fading-games-vol-16-issue-06-352558/>
- Kumar, S., Pant, M., Thomas, K. M., & Yadav, H. (2025). *Inculcating physical literacy through indigenous games: A key to sporting achievement* [Conceptual paper; journal not specified].
- Matsekoleng, T. K. (2022). *The role of indigenous games in education: A technology and environmental education perspective* [Conceptual research].
- Mehta, V., & Kumar, A. (2025). *Revitalizing traditional Indian games in contemporary education: A cultural and holistic paradigm*. *Integrated Journal for Research in Arts and Humanities*. <https://ijrah.com/index.php/ijrah/article/view/742>
- Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf
- National Council of Educational Research and Training. (2024–2025). *Khel Yatra* (Physical education and wellbeing textbook for Classes 6–8). NCERT. <https://ncert.nic.in/textbook.php?feky1=0-5>
- Ns, S. (2025). *Indigenous sports of India and the Indian Knowledge System: Preserving tradition and promoting professionalism* [Journal source not specified].
- Pen and Freedom. (2013, February 17). *Traditional games of Kashmir*. <https://penandfreedom.wordpress.com/2012/01/26/traditional-games-of-kashmir/>
- The Hindu. (2025, May 4). *NCERT new textbooks for Class 7 introduce games, activities rooted in Indian culture*. <https://www.thehindu.com/education/ncert-new-textbooks-for-class-7-introduce-games-activities-rooted-in-indian-culture/article69537783.ece>
- Tripathi, R. C. (2024). *Revitalising indigenous sports in India: An examination of their impact on fostering social and character development of children*
- Wikipedia contributors. (2025). *Traditional games of India*. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditional_games_of_India