CHAPTER: I
INTRODUCTION

The lives of all organisms on this planet, especially those of the higher order, are spent struggling for the most basic necessity, food. Gathering or producing food and making itself and those dependent on it survive hunger, is something every creature does instinctively, no matter how developed is its brain. But after this drudgery and after the stomach is filled, when it finds some leisure time it needs to indulge itself in certain recreational activities. In simple words, it needs to relax, have fun and amuse itself and also needs some company to enjoy those activities better before having to prepare for another day of the same routine. It plays all by itself or with its fellow-beings or with natural objects like pebbles, sticks, etc. The dancing of the birds, the rolling of the puppies on the ground, the playing of hide and seek of the squirrels are all examples of such activities, the list of which is endless.

Same was the situation with man’s earliest ancestors, the apes. Amongst all the animals, they are the most industrious and enterprising in almost all respects. And they are also famous as the most playful animals, running and jumping around all the time, swinging from branch to branch.

Slowly the primitive human beings evolved, who must have had almost the same activities as their previous forms. But they also must have improvised on those activities as the brain was developing and they could achieve their requirement of procuring food faster. The extra time was spent in various other activities like making the hunting and gathering tools more efficient, finding or making better shelters and entertaining themselves in better ways. Primitive man made some quality additions like dance, music and other arts to his amusements. He also harnessed and trained other animals to use them as his playthings. He often lived in natural caves. We still find the traces of his lifestyle in such caves and rock shelters in the elaborate drawings and paintings.
which he has left on their walls. The dancing and playing scenes depicted very clearly there tell us about the pastime activities of the occupants. Painting was also one of the ways to pass their time. Many more such things might have been invented during this period, especially indoor games, which have not survived the hazards of time.

Man evolved progressively and caused the evolution of everything associated with him, starting from the ways of obtaining food to changing his whole way of life. He started producing his own food instead of wandering and collecting it randomly. Domestication of plants and animals, i.e., agriculture and animal husbandry, gave him this privilege. It enabled him to produce food that could be stored for very long periods of time. He harnessed more and more animals and engaged them to do his work which helped him finish his daily routine sooner than ever before. And this, in turn, increased his leisure time more than ever.

Man’s cultural and intellectual senses were highly developed by now. Instead of playing with just natural objects, he started creating his playing objects from various natural raw materials. Man is the only being who invented material commodities to play with, just for his entertainment. He had started with using seeds, stones, etc. and he ended up making toys from clay, wood, stone and other materials. Gradually, ways of playing with those natural and artificial objects changed too. He invented rules to regulate them and gave them names like ‘game’, ‘sport’ and ‘play’.

**Definition of Game**

The playing of games forms a very significant part of the period of growing-up in every being’s life. In human beings, however, it is as important in the adult life as it is during childhood. And because of this reason a lot of creative and physical energy goes into devising them. This makes game playing a very vital aspect of the cultural life of man.
The Oxford dictionary defines a ‘game’ as ‘a form of play or sport, especially one with rules’ (Oxford 2009).

Definitions:

The philosophy of ‘game’ has been studied too. Below are some of the major works on the explanation of the term.

Ludwig Wittgenstein: The first one to define ‘games’ was apparently Ludwig Wittgenstein. In his work, ‘Philosophical Investigations’ (Wittgenstein 1953), he argued that the elements of ‘game’, such as play, rule and competition, all fail to define adequately what games are. His conclusion was that people use the term for a range of disparate human activities that bear family resemblances to each other. But, like all opinions, this was also refuted later on by many other philosophers.

Roger Caillois: This French sociologist, in his book ‘Les Jeux et les Hommes’ (Games and Men) (Caillois 1957), calls an activity a ‘game’ when it possesses the following characteristics:

i. Fun: the activity is chosen for its light-hearted characteristic.
ii. Separate: it is circumscribed in time and place.
iii. Uncertain: the outcome of it is unforeseeable.
iv. Non-productive: participation does not accomplish anything useful.
v. Governed by rules: the activity has rules that are different from everyday life.
vi. Fictitious: it is accompanied by the awareness of a different reality.

Some more definitions:

- “A game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome” (Salen and Zimmerman 2003:80).
• “A game is a form of art in which participants, termed players, make decisions in order to manage resources through game tokens in the pursuit of a goal” (Costikyan 1994).

According to this definition, some "games" that do not involve choices, such as Chutes and Ladders, Candy Land, and War are not technically games any more than a slot machine is.

• “A game is an activity among two or more independent decision-makers seeking to achieve their objectives in some limiting context” (Abt 1970:3).

• “At its most elementary level ... we can define game as an exercise of voluntary control systems in which there is an opposition between forces, confined by a procedure and rules in order to produce a disequilibrial outcome” (Avedon and Sutton-Smith 1971:405).

• “A game is a form of play with goals and structure” (Maroney 2001).

• “To play a game is to engage in activity directed toward bringing about a specific state of affairs, using only means permitted by specific rules, where the means permitted by the rules are more limited in scope than they would be in the absence of the rules, and where the sole reason for accepting such limitation is to make possible such activity” (Suits 1967).

Terms used in association and, many a time, to explain the term ‘game’ itself are ‘play’, ‘sport’, etc. These terms again have their meanings and explanations.

Johan Huizinga defines ‘play’ in this way - “Summing up the formal characteristic of play, we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings that tend to surround themselves
with secrecy and to stress the difference from the common world by disguise or other means.”

Structured play has well-specified goals and rules and that is called a ‘game’. Structured or unstructured, play promotes adaptive behaviour and a mental state of happiness.

Then the word ‘sport’ comes from ‘disport’ which is an Old French word meaning ‘leisure’. There is no single universal definition for this word but the SportAccord (the association of all the largest international sports federations) has defined the word and this has been accepted as the de facto explanation of the term. They prescribe the following criteria for an activity to be called as a sport.

It should-  
- have an element of competition  
- be in no way harmful to any living creature  
- not rely on equipment provided by a single supplier (excluding proprietary games such as arena football)  
- not rely on any ‘luck’ element specifically designed into the sport

This term has almost the same meaning as ‘game’, only that it can be considered a little narrow in its compass, mainly meaning the activities involving physical vigour whereas game encompasses almost everything that gives recreational pleasure to any creature.

With the objects and rules and small changes in the rules the number of games also kept going up. Also, from one game many other games developed. The same objects were used with many different sets of rules and formed separate games; the complexities and the types expanded. Even some of the daily activities like hunting, fishing, boating, running, martial arts, etc., which were necessities earlier were turned into activities for fun. So, naturally, the next step was categorisation of the games into various types based on different criteria, be it the place where they were played, viz., indoor and outdoor games,
the objects they are played with, e.g., cards, dice, gamesmen and the type of the energy used to play them, viz., mental and physical games.

Games, after ages of evolution of mankind and his brains and his lifestyle, were no longer limited to the status of stress-busters. They started encroaching upon the share of time of other work too and slowly acquired a more important place than entertainment ever meant to have or man ever meant to give them. They were considered ‘beyond recreation’ and started taking a front seat in the daily life of man. They became objects of passion for men. Some of those games even started being designated as professions and those practising such professions had the job to entertain people with their performances. Games and players started being followed by fans with almost religious fervour. And thus came into existence tournaments of almost all kinds of games at every level of the state and beyond. The Olympics are the biggest amongst such tournaments developed by the ancient Greeks in their civilisation. Many war-time activities like throwing of javelin, discus, shot-put, etc were transformed to peace-time games.

**The Game of Cards**

Amongst all types of games some of the most interesting and, therefore, the most popular are the ones that are played using playing cards. Card-games and playing cards are not two separate things to be studied - they are interdependent. The type of set decides the game to be played and the type of game to be played decides which type of set should be chosen. The reason is that the players knowing the game should be able to recognise the cards they are playing with instantly instead of fumbling and playing the wrong cards and spoiling the game. The games are generally fashioned based on the type of set of cards used. So the history of card games will obviously start from the history of cards themselves.

Card games are the kind of games that are usually played at a local level and so slowly develop local variations of the original rules (Leyden 1982).
Quite often the rules are almost entirely altered from the original version. As in the case of languages, the rules of card games too vary from place to place. As the distance increases so do the differences but they can always be linked to a common root. In this way, the card games travel readily from region to region, from country to country and even from continent to continent. As card games bear this trait, playing cards too do share it.

Again, cards are the most artistic playing objects among all the devices of games. They have provided limitless opportunities to the artists to improvise and beautify them with their creative imagination. So the study of the history of playing cards also encompasses the study of the evolution of different kinds of art styles and also the cultural background of various suits and sets, be it the cheaper packs made by unskilled artists for the common people or the luxurious sets prepared by the experts for the elite.

**Hypotheses of Origin of Cards**

The very first appearance of anything that seemed like the first stage of the game of cards is difficult to place for sure. In an only three-century old literature on playing cards countries like France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Egypt, India and China have independently been the place of birth of this pride-worthy invention (Leyden 1982). There is no ancient literature or notable evidence just about this game and its evolution for which many countries claim credit. There are two to three beliefs about its place of origin. The earliest cards, in the generic sense, were probably Chinese (Leyden 1982). This is quite believable too as the birthplace of the inventions of both paper and printing is China. It was an achievement of the imperial China, perhaps (Wilkinson 1895). Cards were found there as early as the 9th century during the Tang dynasty (618-907A.D.) and the first reference to them is by the Tang dynasty writer Su E who described Princess Tongchang, daughter of emperor Yizong of Tang, playing the ‘leaf game’ with the people of the Wei clan, her in-laws’ family (Zhou 1997).
The first ever playing cards would have been narrow slips of paper designed after a Chinese dominoes set where all the 21 combinations possible with the throw of two dice were printed with dots. Ancient Chinese money cards had four suits, viz., Coins (or cash), strings of coins (which may have been misinterpreted as sticks from the crude drawings), myriads (of coins or of strings) and tens of myriads (a myriad is 10,000). There is also an additional suggestion that these cards may have been used as paper currency too, which were both the tools of gaming and the stakes being played for (Wilkinson 1895) in trading games. Apparently, the tiles of Mahjong, another very popular oriental game, also evolved from these cards.

![Fig. 1.1 Dominoes Cards](http://www.wopc.co.uk/china/)

This hypothesis can be extended to the speculation that the Chinese money cards migrated to the West in the 13th century when communications for trade between China, Central and Western Asia and the Mediterranean were opened up due to the Mongol conquest (Leyden 1982).

Chinese colonies flourished in Persian towns like Tabriz and they used to mint paper money for the Ilkhans when the latter became bankrupt in 1294 A.D. So, apparently during this time, Chinese card games were taken up by the locals and were modified. Perhaps games like chess provided the idea of the court cards being named after the king (Mir) and minister (Wazir) (Leyden 1982). Leyden’s hypothesis further assumes that the local military and administrative class moulded the pack to fit their hierarchy and it was passed on
to the *Mamluk Egypt* and Syria in this form through the territory of Golden Horde in southern Russia from where the Mamluks were being recruited. From there the Venetians took over charge, taking the card games from the European Muslims and spreading them across Europe. By the 14\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. it had arrived in Europe, probably coming via Mamluk Egypt.

Leyden also speculates that the other forms of the early pack of cards may have been developed during the troubled *Timurid* period of the 14\textsuperscript{th} century in *Iran* and *Samarkand*. The basic feature of money suits was retained. Like Timur used to play chess with a board of a hundred squares (Sander 1936 as cited by Leyden), it will not be too farfetched to presume that the four suits were also doubled to eight to increase the pack size and hence the complexity of the game. This 96-cards’ pack made its first appearance in Iran and India around 1500 A.D. and was patronised by the early *Safavids* and the *Moghul* emperors respectively.

**Ganjifā and its Brief History**

These cards are popularly known as *Ganjifā, Ganjafeh, Ganjafah, Kanjafeh, Kanjifāh, Kanjapā or Kanjafāh*. In Odisha it is called *Ganjapā or Ganjappā*. ‘Ganjifā’ is the most used term. It is a generic word signifying Playing Cards or Card Games in *India, Nepal, Iran*, some *Arab Countries* and *Turkey*. The origin of the word *Ganjifā* is obscure. Some scholars believe “*Ganj*” is a Persian word, meaning treasure, treasury or minted money (Gordhandas 2007), hoard or granary (Chopra 1999). Some others say that it is neither of Persian nor Turkish nor Arabic origin but is an adapted or corrupted version of some other foreign word whose antecedents are unknown (Leyden 1982). According to Siddharth Y. Wakankar, it is derived from the Sanskrit verb ‘*ganj*’ which means making noise, loud sounds. His logic behind this is that while playing the game the winners always shout with the excitement of victory over the others (Wakankar 1980). There is a red-and-black seed, known as *gunja* or *rati* which very attractive. This used to be used as a standard for the
measurement of precious metals like gold, silver and copper. The Chinese money cards might have got transformed to this form when they were introduced in India.

The Ganjifā name is used for a set of cards always with even number of sets. They are divided into two groups with equal number of sets. Every suit has a king, a minister and ten numeral cards. In one group of suits the numeral cards have an ascending order from 1 to 10 and in the other the order is descending from 10 to 1. The former group is called Biśbar (Strong) and the latter as Kambar (Weak). The list of the strong and weak suits is given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biśbar</th>
<th>Kambar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safed</td>
<td>Surkh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tāj</td>
<td>Caṅg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samšer</td>
<td>Qimaṣ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghulām</td>
<td>Barāt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relation between the Persian word Ganj and Ganjifā cannot be overlooked, however. All the more, because of the presence of money suits in both the Persian and the Mughal sets. For example, the words Safed and Surkh in the Mughal pack and Ṭankā and Asrafi in that of the Persian one mean silver and gold coins respectively (Chopra 1999).

The earliest reference in the world to a game named Kanjafā is found in Yusuf-ibn-Tigri Birdī’s Annals of Egypt and Syria dealing with the history of 820 A.H. (1417/1418 A.D.) and refers to the four-suited set with thirteen cards each (Ettinghausen 1974 as cited by Leyden). A set of Mamluk playing cards preserved in Topakapi Saray Museum of Istanbul, Turkey has the word Kanjafā or Kanjifā inscribed on the card of the ‘king of Swords’ (Malik al Suyuf).
Before that fragments of these Mamluk kanjafā cards are found in Egypt (Ettinhaughsen 1974 as cited by Leyden 1982).

In 920 A.H. (1514/1515 A.D.) the poet Ahli Širāzi wrote 96 verses for the 96 cards of Ganjifā. For the first time we find references to the eight-suited set and the names of the eight suits of the classic Ganjifā set of Iran, viz., Ghulām (Slave), Tāj (Crown), Šamšer (Sword), Aśrafi (Gold coins), Cang (Harp), Barāt (Document), Ṭankā (Silver coins) and Qimaś (Stores), in the Rubaiyat-i-Ganjifā (Loghat-nama 1960), a 96-quatrain composition composed by Ahli Širāzī in 1514-15 A.D. The 96 quatrains represent the number of cards in an eight-suited Ganjifā pack. However, in the poem there is nothing regarding the significance of the cards or the rules of play. This was perhaps composed for Širāzī’s patron Ismail, the first šāh of the Safavid dynasty who was supposedly fond of the game (Leyden 1982).

**Creative Cultural Activity in India**

There are rich evidences of recreational activities in India starting from the prehistoric era. Here the drawings and paintings on the walls of the cave shelters from Mesolithic period still survive (Neumayer 1993).

Since the beginning of the Indian civilisation, recreation, especially of the elite class, has been a subject of great interest. The huge amount of bones of wild animals unearthed from the Indus civilisation sites suggests that hunting was a kind of sport. Later, along with hunting, dice, gamesmen, racing and many more games were gradually added. The dice finds mention in the Rigveda itself with rules and chants associated with it (Ṛg Veda, X). They were not the dice that we know now but small, hard nuts. In the archaeological context too gamesman and dice have been found right from the Harappan times (Marshall 1931, Mackay 1938) through the early historic times (Deo and Joshi 1972, Deo and Gupte 1974) till the mediaeval period (Chapekar 1969).

Many of the ancient legists have been prescribing regulations regarding entertainment from time to time. Among the most pernicious ones of Manu’s defined ten-fold vices, dice (gambling) is one (Manu, IX). Gambling is the
most condemned vice among other lawgivers like Ṭruṇu, Brhaspati, Nārada, etc. But later on, it seems that, in the times of Kautilya, gambling was transformed into a department under the government with proper laws prescribed for the activity and proper revenue collected from it (Kangale 1972, Saletore 1985).

**Cards in India**

The arrival of playing cards in India is a subject which is still very unclear and there is little hope of clearing of doubts for the lack of concrete evidences explaining this mystery. There are traces but none authentic enough to base conclusions on.

The start of the cards is generally traced to the popular card game of Ganjifā by the scholars, that probably survives only in India and that has material evidences left behind. Most researchers believe this game was brought to India by the Mughals from Persia. However, traces of similar and much earlier (pre-Mughal) cards may be found in the local oral tradition. They were called Ṛṛdāpatram, whose meaning is more or less "(painted) leaves/rags for playing". It is believed that the composition of the deck was apparently done by the ancient sages of India who took 12 as the basis and made a set of 12 kings. Every king was followed by 11 cards. In fact, this was the number of suits, each of which was made of the same number of subjects, and used signs such as horses, elephants, men, and the like. It is believed that, basically, they were an early version of the Daśāvatāra pattern. It is locally said that by the time of the Mughals these cards had already been in use for several centuries (Saletore 1985). Many details about the Ṛṛdāpatram cards, though, remain a mystery, even their existence not being mentioned by any written source prior to the 16th century when the Ganjifā had already come into vogue. So, whether the Ganjifā cards had their roots in India or outside is uncertain. As it is believed that the Chinese cards came to Persia, similarly it can be hypothesised that they came down directly to India too and did not have to pass through Persia to reach here. India and China also had trade relations along the eastern coast of
India. Chinese ceramics, coins are found in port sites like Maṇikapatanā and Arikameṇḍu (Pradhan, et al. 1996, Mohanty and Joglekar 2010). So the money cards of the Chinese might have come along with the traders directly to India.

Conjectures about the arrival of Ganjifā in India are many. The Persian theory is widely accepted but there are some more too. To Dr. K.M. Ashraf it appears as if Ganjiiifā was first introduced by Babur (Saletore 1985). Another theory that Leyden used to believe is that Ganjifā cards are actually simple chessmen transferred to paper and both these games were based on military exploits and manoeuvres (Leyden 1982). There are even amusing stories woven around this. It is said that cards were invented by the wife of an Indian Maharaja to wheedle him out of his habit of always fiddling with his beard. This story about the origin of cards seems rather incredible (Saletore 1985). A story is told by artist Late Appana Mohapatra of Chikiti in Ganjam district, Odisha - There was a very old king who did not leave his throne for his son, the heir apparent. Waiting in the hope for the throne the prince became very depressed. The king summoned many doctors but no one could cure him. A Citrakāra got interested in this problem. He could know the cause of the condition. So he drew some playing cards with objects related to kingship like crown, sword, turban and rose. The prince became very happy and was one-fourth cured. Since the playing cards could cure pāe (meaning 1/4\textsuperscript{th} in Odia) ganj (sorrow or anxiety), it was called Ganjapā. So he used to claim that this game actually originated from Odisha (Das 1982).

**Ganjifā in India**

The eight-suited Ganjifā game was popular in Persia during the 16\textsuperscript{th} century but vanished under the conservative Shah Abbas II in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century. No specimens of that set have been found except some lacquer paintings and ivory cards of around 1820 A.D. Subsequently, Ganjifā’s main development both in the game and the cards was seen in India (Leyden 1982).
There is very little evidence to establish the exact course of arrival and spread of Ganjifā in India. Many accounts are there regarding this subject. In some places the tradition takes it back to the 8th century when the king of Bishnupur in Bengal by the name of Mallaraja (Malla kings) invented this game (Ministry of Education and Social Welfare 1978). Going by the most convincing and popular opinion, if Babur introduced this card game it must have been popular with him and his courtiers. Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty in India, has made a reference to Ganjifā-in his diary, the Baburnama in 1527 A.D., “The night we left Agra, Mir Ali, the armourer, was sent to Shah Hasan (Arghan) in Tatta to take him playing cards (Ganjifā) he much liked and had asked for” (Beveridge 1969). Nothing further is known of these cards. Later in 1545 A.D. Babur’s daughter Begum Gulbadan has mentioned about a certain 240-card card game with stakes, the details of which are unclear (Beveridge 1902).

The oldest form of game cards in India has been supposed to be the Ganjapā (a variation of the original name) cards of Sonepur in Odisha (Saletore 1985) where twelve suits have been divided into two groups based on the theme of Rāmāyaṇa’s final battle. The cards depicted the characters on horseback or instances from the mythologies while the numeral cards depicted the forces of monkeys and demons (Beveridge 1969). From such a type of pack it has been surmised that Mughal Ganjifā came into existence in course of time.

Such an interesting game like Ganjifā could not stay from spreading. Soon it became popular with Hindu rulers and noblemen and then gradually with the common people especially in Rajasthan, Odisha, Maharashṭra and West-Bengal regions. These places also became the major centres of card crafting. The village artisans mainly started making them. The Ganjifā cards were generally round, ranging from one to five inches in diameter and were invariably handmade from either paper, cloth, thin wood, animal skins, ivory, metal or fish scales. They used to be delicately and ornately painted and heavily lacquered to last long for they were constantly handled by many hands. Due to the regional crafting the cards assumed local variations and characteristics,
designs, motifs and symbols depending on the whims and fancies of the craftsmen, especially in the numeral cards. The name also changed in some places, e.g., in Odisha it was called Ganjapā. Influence of the phonetic limitations of the local language can be clearly seen here. The honour cards or court cards were lavishly painted to suit the artist’s imagination. Sometimes they also managed to paint series of miniature paintings depicting various incidents from folklores or mythologies. The number of cards varied from thirty-six to three hundred and sixty in different regions. Suit signs varied in various packs as the themes varied. Each pack was unique. The suits could be easily detected with their background colours which usually remained same for the same-themed suits.

**Themes on the Cards**

The themes the cards are based on are divided into four main topics.

*i. Court-life:*

Cards pertaining to court life depicted the images of the King and the prime-minister on the respective cards. The suits were divided into the strong and the weak groups. The following suits can stand as examples:

- *Surkh* represented the treasury
- *Safed* stood for the silver mint
- *Tāj* meant the Crown
- *Cang* denoted Regal Music
- *Ghulām* connoted servants of the King

*ii. Military activities:*

Themes pertaining to this subject also deal with the lives of the rulers. The conflict of Rāma and Rāvaṇa formed the main theme. The pack that is played in Sonepur, Odisha is a detailed example.

*iii. Religious themes:*

Almost all the themes of the Hindu Ganjifās are religious. Every one of them depicts the images of Hindu deities and many a time even
the suits are named after them. The most popular one is the Daśāvatāra Ganjifā showing all the ten incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu as well as some other deities when it was required to increase the number of suits.

iv. Mythological subjects:

The numerous stories stored in the volumes of Hindu mythology have always been the source of art for this community. The stories of Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Bhāgavata, etc. have been some of the oldest themes of Ganjifā painting. The Rāmāyaṇa sets of Paralakhemundi which show episodes from the epic on the cards and the Kṛṣṇāṣṭamalla cards which show one feat of the deity in each suit are perfect examples of this category of themes.

The Card Game at the Advent of Akbar

When Akbar took over the empire and its cultural elements, this game was already widely popular. As in almost all the other things, Akbar introduced changes even in the game of Ganjifā too (Abu’l Fazl, Ain-i-Akbari. p. 318-19). Fazl gives detailed accounts of two different kinds of Ganjifā sets. One, he mentions, was created by the ancient sages of India who took the number ‘twelve’ and made the suit to consist of twelve cards, all with Sanskrit names. Mr S. Mokashi Punekar relates this to the famous Vedic battle of ten kings and suggests that the game originated during and because of the long battle (Chopra 1999). In his words, it is a game of war involving kings, queens, ministers, platoon leaders (from ten to one soldiers). But they are alleged to have forgotten that the 12 kings have to be of 12 different kinds. This version appears close to Krīḍāpatram from the oral traditions. So, it is possible that the card game had already arrived and prevailed in India before the Mughals, when the Turkman princes immigrated to the Deccan in the late 15th century (Saletore 1985). This was a strange view of Abu’l Fazl for, to him, the ancients had only one idea of a king with certain attributes. Akbar played the following suits of cards as can be known from Ain-i-Akbari (Blochmann 1873):
i.  *Aśvapati* (the Lord of the Horses): This represented the cavalry. The highest card in this suit represented the king on horseback resembling the king of *Delhi* with the umbrella (*chatra*), the standard (*ālam*) and other imperial ensigns. The second highest card represented the Wazir on horseback and after it came the ten numeral cards of the same suit with pictures of horses from one to ten.

ii. *Gajapati* (the Lord of the Elephants): His power lay in the number of his elephants like the ruler of *Odisha*. The Wazir was also on an elephant and the numeral cards showed as many elephants as their number.

iii. *Narapati* (the Lord of Men): This lord’s power lay in his infantry as the ruler of *Bijāpur*. The King card shows a king sitting on his throne in imperial glory, the Wazir sitting on a foot-stool (*sandali*) and the other cards had foot-soldiers numbering from one to ten.

iv. *Gaḍapati* (the Lord of the Forts): Here the king was sitting on a throne over a fort and the Wazir was on a *sandali* over a fort. The remaining ten have forts drawn on them.

v. *Dhanapati* (the Lord of Treasures): In this suit the king sits on a throne with gold and silver heaps, the *Wazir* sits on a *sandali* as if he took an account of the treasury and the remaining cards show jars full of gold and silver from one to ten.

vi. *Dalapati* (the Leader of the Unit): The king here is shown wearing an armour, sitting on his throne and is surrounded by his warriors in armours. The Wazir is shown on a *sandali* wearing a *jayba* (breast armour) and the other ten cards show soldiers clad in coats of mail.

vii. *Navapati* (the Lord of the Fleet): Here the king sits on a throne in a ship and the Wazir sits on a *sandali* placed on a ship. The ten cards show boats from one to ten.

viii. *Tipati* (*Strīpati?*) (the Lady of the women): This suit is female-based for a change. This shows a Queen on a throne surrounded by her
maids. The second card has a woman as her Wazir sitting on a sandali and the rest of the ten cards have women from one to ten.

ix. *Surapati/Indrapati* (the Lord of the Divinities): It simply makes the king sit on a throne, the Wazir on a sandali and the number cards have different divinities drawn on them.

x. *Asrapati/Asurapati* (the Lord of the Demons): This suit has some real connections. The King card represented Suleiman, son of Daud, on a throne. The Wazir, as usual, sat on a sandali and the ten cards have demons on them.

xi. *Vanapati* (the Lord of the Forest or Wild Beasts): The depictions in this suit are pretty different. The king is represented by a tiger with some other animals, the Wazir is shown as a leopard and the other ten cards have wild beasts from one to ten.

xii. *Ahipati* (the Lord of the Snakes): In this the king is a snake mounted on a dragon and the Wazir is a serpent riding on another snake of the same kind. The numeral cards have snakes from one to ten in number.

**Changes by Akbar**

The eight-suited set that was played by Akbar has been described in Ain-i-Akbari (Blochmann 1873)

i. *Padishah-i-surukh*, king of gold coins, is represented as a man distributing money, the Wazir on a sandali (Foot-stool) inspecting the treasury and the ten cards show ten classes of workers like jewellers, melters, piece-cutters, weigh-men, coiners, coin counters, etc., in the Treasury.

ii. *Padishah-i-barat*, king of documents is inspecting various papers seated on his throne. The Wazir sits on sandali. Numeral cards have on them employees of the imperial office like paper-makers, clerks, book-binders, etc.

iii. *Padishah-i-Qimash*, king of manufacturers, is shown inspecting objects like Tibetan yaks, silk and fine silken stuff. The Wazir sits
enquiring into proceedings. Ten cards represent beasts of burden and people sorting out the storing goods.

iv. In *Padshah-i-Chang* (the Lord of the Lyre), the king sits on a throne listening to music with the Wazir sitting in front of him, enquiring into the condition of the performers whose pictures are shown in the remaining ten cards.

v. *Padshah-i-zar-i-Safid* (the Lord of Silver) is shown distributing silver coins, the Wazir sits on a *sandali* looking into donations and the other cards contain the silver minting workers.

vi. *Padshah-i-Shamsher*, lord of the sword, is depicted trying the steel of a sword. The Wazir is inspecting the arsenal sitting on a stool. Numeral cards contain pictures of armourers, polishers, etc.

vii. *Padshah-i-Taj*, king of the diadem, is shown conferring the royal insignia. The Wazir on a *chandali* is last of the insignias and others show workmen like tailors, quilters and so forth.

viii. The *Padshah-i-Ghulaman* (the King of Slaves) sits on an elephant, the Wazir on a cart and the other cards representing servants show some sitting, some lying on the ground, some drunk and some sober.

Akbar’s main object in playing this game (also chess) was to test the worth of men and to establish harmony and good fellow-feeling at court.

**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:**

Looking at the state of information coming from such a cultural element of our past, it is necessary to record all the available data for posterity. Below are the details regarding the aims and objectives of the present research.

(i) To document the rules and regulations and the procedures of practical playing of the game at different places of Odisha.

(ii) To document the significance of each and every card played.

(iii) To record the methods of manufacturing of the cards at different centres of playing.
To observe the differences between the various versions.

To note all the minor details of the game like its history, people who make it, popularity, the classes of people playing it, the significance of the figures and symbols painted, origin of the patterns, names of various kinds of sets, etc., separately, if they vary.

To write down the changes that are found in the game depending on the change in the type of pack of cards, the number of cards and even the time of the day.

To study the cultural element in the cards. As a game this has become a tradition of the people who play it and the places where it is played.

To study the evolution of the game and the cards.

To analyse the themes of paintings of the cards.

To study the iconography of the deities in different kinds of sets of cards.

To analyse the influence of religion on this game and the influence on religion by this game on regional basis.

To study how society and this game are affected by each other.

To find out the major reasons for the declining popularity of this game and to propose ways to save it.

To conduct a short, comparative study of the game of Ganjifā in Odisha and its variations played in other states.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Nature of data collected:**

(i) For the above study data is mainly acquired through visits to the playing and production centres. The candidate has taken trips to the areas proposed to be studied.

(ii) This study is mainly based on direct interviews with the people related to this game or the cards, directly or indirectly, like the artists.
and players. For the documentation the candidate has collected some cards and photographs.

(iii) Some information has also been collected from indirect sources such as different books, previous research reports, articles by scholars and from newspapers, internet, etc.

(iv) The rules and regulations are documented while the game is played to provide the practical aspect of the game played.

**Method of analysis of the Data:**

The research is mainly based on the study of primary data as very little earlier work is available. The primary data mainly includes the analysis of the cards. The candidate has observed every detail of the cards carefully and has drawn inferences about the game and the painted figures and symbols and has established their relation with the society of the period. The shapes and sizes of the cards are also of particular importance.

The interviews with the people associated with the game have helped to furnish the minute details about the game. Interviews with the artists shed light on the procedure of making the cards. The players answered the queries about the rules and regulations and the playing style of the game.

The analysis of the paintings of the deities tells about the iconography of that period and the changes they have undergone. The frequency of appearance of the deities speaks about their popularity and their positions in the pantheon. These details have also shown how the cards have influenced the contemporary beliefs and vice-versa.

The data obtained from indirect sources, i.e., the secondary data, answers enquiries regarding the history and nature of the cards, origin of the name and other details. Apart from this, the present research work gives an in depth idea about the game which were missed by the earlier scholars. The earlier works are generally on a national level and give a wider view and do not take into considerations the aims and objectives of the present researcher.
Moreover, they rarely talk about the rules and regulations of the game when they are played.

**STUDY AREA:**

In the whole of India, the states where these were extensively crafted and played are Gujarat, Maharashtra, Mysore in Karnataka, Odisha, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Kashmir. Today only a handful of places are left where we get to see this game played. They are Sawantwadi in Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra, Nirmal in Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh, Bishnupur in Bankura district of West Bengal, Mysore in Karnataka and some centres in Odisha. Even these places just have only traces left of it. Some of them only produce the cards and most of them have nothing left except stories. Odisha is counted among those states which have still kept the tradition surviving through a few playing areas. Puri and Raghurajpur in Puri district, Sonepur in Sonepur district, Bhawanipatna in Kalahandii district, Paralakhemundi in Gajapati district and Chikiti in Ganjam district are some of the known playing centres in the state. All the places have different types of cards and different rules for playing the game. Amongst these places, in a few, like Raghurajpur and Sonepur, the tradition of preparation of these cards still survives with some enthusiasm. These places do not have many players left and those who remain are experts of this game but are in their ripe old age. However, the new generation hardly seems interested in carrying forward the tradition or even in playing the game.

**THE PAST RECORDS:**

The study of Ganjifā cards of India has not been touched by many scholars. The number of people who have worked on it can be counted on one’s fingers. Even among the works which have been done, most of them are not very recent and do not deal with all the aspects of the game.
The suit names mentioned for the first time by Ahli Shirazi can be considered important (Leyden 1982). *Agha Muhammad Tahir Wasli*, the elder brother of the Wazir of Jahangir, describes the cards of an eight-suited Ganjifā in *Diwan-i-wasli*. The term Naqsh was used for the winning combinations of cards (Gupta 1979 as cited in Chopra 1999). Another employee of the above Mughal emperor named *Mirza M. Sadiq* (1609-51 A.D.) gives the history and description of the Ganjifā game for two and four players in the 64th chapter of *Shahi-i-Sadiq* (Storey 1927-39 as cited in Chopra 1999).

Some years ago a Sanskrit scholar from the Oriental Institute, Vadodara, *Siddharth Y. Wakankar*, has written a few papers on the Sanskrit works that talk about games in general and Ganjifā in particular. Those works mainly describe Mughal Ganjifā and though they are in Sanskrit, they are not very old. A list of such documents is given below.

(i) *Ganjaphākhelanamparākramah*: It is a manuscript written at *Jurnapura* (i.e. modern Junnar in Mahārāṣṭra) by a physician called *Vireshvara of Ahmednagar*. He gives the invention of this game, name of the suits and its rules of playing in 9 verses. He ascribes the invention of these cards to the beautiful daughter of *Shah Tamaj* and the aunt of *Shah Bāz*. He had written it on the orders of his master *Sajawar Khan*, a Mughal noble. This proves that this must have been composed in the middle of the seventeenth century.

This work, however, is in the Anup Sanskrit Library, Bikaner, which was patronised by *Maharaja Anup Singh* (1638-1698A.D.). He was posted at Aurangabad as a regent of Aurangabad in 1677-78. That is how many works of Maharashtra are in Bikaner now.

(ii) *Ganjiphākhelanam*: It was composed by a man named *Giridhara*. It was printed in the *Kāvyamālā* Series, Part XIII in Bombay, 1916. It has 31 verses which give details of the set and suits. The suit names Surkh and Sufed in the previous manuscript have been changed to *Mohar* and *Rupā* here. He also describes the rules.
One interesting thing about this document is that, unlike some other Sanskrit scholars, Giridhara does not find anything wrong in doing something that gives pleasure at the end. So for him it is perfectly all right to play games.

(iii) Śrītattvanīḍhi: This work is by the great king of Mysore, Krṣṇaraja Wodeyar III (1794-1868 A.D.). It has nine chapters known as Nīdhis (Treasures). The commentary in the last chapter, Kautukanīḍhi, is in Kannāḍa. He gives the details of 13 kinds of packs of Ganjifā or Caḍa in the local language and all of them have different names and numbers of cards. He has also explained the game here which suggests that even that time the game had very few followers because of which it needed to be explained. He specifically mentions that this game is to be played in the pattern of the Mughal Ganjifā.

(iv) Krīḍākauśalyam: This is the twentieth chapter of the Miśraskandha of Brhajjyotiśarṇava composed by a man named Harikrishna a resident of Aurangabad. The speciality of this book is that this is the only Sanskrit description of the Daśāvatārī Ganjifā, so popular in Maharashtra. He describes three types of this game: Mughal Ganjifā (Cangakāncan) (8-suited, 96-cards), Foreign, i.e., European card-game (Huṇadeśapatrakrīḍā) (4-suited, 52-cards) and Daśāvatari Ganjifā (10-suited, 120-cards).

(v) Cetovinodanakahavya: This was composed by Dāji Jyotirvid, the great-great-grandson of Chatrapati Śivājī. He has described many indoor games and in one part of the work Ganjifā also finds a significant place.

Ganjifā is mentioned as Kanjapā in Prastāba Cintāmaṇi, an Oḍiā text of the 18th century. Ganjaphā Gāndharvi, meaning heavenly Ganjaphā, is a Hindi poem of 18th century describing a foreign Ganjifā (Phirangi Ganjaphā) with 40 cards called ‘ākṛti’ which is synonymous with naqṣ.
When we start talking about Ganjifā, especially in India, the first name that comes up is Rudolf von Leyden. His books-cum-catalogues show the amount of research he has done tracing the origin and spread of Ganjifā cards. Leyden was originally a geologist. He had arrived in India for geological purposes. But his artistic weakness attracted him towards these art-rich cards and it became the main reason for him to extend his stay in India.

It started as a hobby of collection of Ganjifā. The collection began by fluke when he purchased a pack of such cards in Chor Bazaar, Bombay in 1939. The desire to know more about this hobby led him to study and write many essays and articles for popular publications. His first comprehensive survey on various kinds of Indian cards was published in the art historical journal *Marg* in 1949. He stayed on in India for forty years since his arrival and all that time was used in studying these cards both in Indian and European contexts. The Indian artist-craftsmen were also of his interest. He extended his studies even to the level of the uncertain grounds of the origin of playing cards in general which hardly has any solid evidence to make an authentic history and, because of that, is full of stories and hypotheses. Leyden’s studies, along with those of some others who have worked outside India, point significantly towards the East to be the place of origin.

From 1976 Leyden started his main work of cataloguing important European collections of Indian playing cards. They are on the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Deutsches Spielkarten Museum of Leinfelden (1977), the collection of Sylvia Mann of Rye (1978) and of the Museum of fur Volkerkunde of Vienna (1981). Apparently he was also preparing the catalogue for the British Museum collection but it remained unfinished.

Late Kishor N. Gordhandas used to work as a mining engineer in Goa for seven years. Later he started his own stationery and printing business in Mumbai. His hobby of collecting playing cards started when he was around forty years’ old. He bought his first sets from a handicraft exhibition at the Cross Maidan in Mumbai. Then he started publishing articles. The editor of the
UK-based *Games and Puzzle* magazine, David Parlett, suggested that he (Mr. Gordhandas) should take the membership of the International Playing Cards Society, situated in London. And, after that, there was no stopping of the pouring in of various kinds of playing cards. The first time he contacted a fellow member, he received 250 sets of cards. Leyden was the one who actually introduced him to the game and the cards.

Gordhandas went on to collect Ganjifās of different states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal, etc. Most of the sets of his collection have been designed and commissioned by himself. In some interviews of his, he had said that he had even stayed up nights with the artists to direct them in designing the cards and even their boxes with innovations, prompting them to make packs of absolutely original themes. Gordhandas has written numerous articles about playing cards in English and Gujarati for magazines and periodicals in India and abroad.

Gordhandas is considered the greatest collector of cards (of various kinds) in India. He, in fact, is recognised to having one of the largest collections in the world with over 5000 packs.

K.K. Maheshwari, another established industrialist from Mumbai and a close friend of Late Mr. Gordhandas, is another art connoisseur. He is also the founder of the famous Indian Institute of Research in Numismatic Studies in Anjineri, about 20 kms from the city of Nashik. Along with many traditional craft items and art objects from all over India, he has more than a hundred Ganjifā cards’ sets in his personal collection. Out of them forty-three are just from the state of Odisha. He started his collection sometime around 1980s. He has also come into contact with Late Shivram Raje Bhosale, Raja of Sawantwadi, who, with Rani of Sawantwadi was trying to revive the handicraft industry including the Ganjifās of Sawantwadi. He has also published a few papers in felicitation volumes. The candidate was given a chance to look into all those sets and the books in his collection.
On the local level in Odisha some people who are proud of their local traditions have taken a keen interest in the game and cards of Ganjapā. They may not have learnt the game but they have noted the history and rules of the game. Out of the four places where Ganjapā is still played, more or less, in two of them, viz., in Sonepur and Kalahandi, the rules of their versions of the game have been documented by local scholars. In Sonepur Harishankar Sarap and Gorekhnath Sahu have recorded the playing regulations of the game in a small book and in an article respectively. In Kalahandi district Dasharathi Acharjya, who himself belongs to a family who have still kept the game alive in their small village, has written an article in an Odia magazine which deals with the art and culture of the game describing the playing method in detail.

Scholars dealing with arts and crafts and cultural materials have also taken passing interest in this game in the course of studying related arts. The great painter and author Dinanath Pathy, in the course of studying the great traditional painting Pāṭacitra, has made passing references to this game which adopts the same painting method.

These unique and lesser known cards have been a subject of awe to whoever has encountered them but the chances of coming across these packs are remote. The reason is the extinction of this game from all over the country. Some of the painting traditions that had adopted the manufacturing of the cards have kept making them to some extent as an art object mainly. The game is so rarely played and that too in such remote areas that researchers do not commonly get to hear about this tradition. These are the reasons for which the games and cards of Ganjifā have not been worked on a lot. This is a humble attempt mainly to give a complete picture of the present condition of these cards and the versions of the games played in Odisha.