CONCLUSIONS

Having thus discussed in detail the various sports and pastimes in ancient India from prehistoric times up to circa 650 A.D., it is worth while now to draw the different lines of arguments to a finale. An overall view of the history of sports and pastimes makes it clear that they were quite popular with the masses. Rich or poor, young or old, all were attracted to them. Even in the prehistoric period people indulged in recreations despite the activities of daily routine that kept them busy for their sustenance.

It is observed that most of the sports and pastimes prevalent till the seventh century owe their genesis to the prehistoric period. Sports and pastimes like hunting, dicing, bull-leaping, animal-riding, taming of birds and animals, painting, dancing and games of the children were also prevalent during the prehistoric and protohistoric period.

However, we cannot deny the fact that in the prehistoric and protohistoric period, hunting was not merely a sport, but a necessity also, it were the main source of livelihood of the people. Even some mudras in dancing like 'mukula' mentioned in the Nātya Sastra seem to have been known to the prehistoric dancers. The game of dice that continues to tempt people even today, was also played by the prehistoric people. Men exhibited the courage and prowess through fighting with animals right from the
prehistoric age.

Painting was a well developed art even in such a primitive stage. The prehistoric artist even devised pigments from oxides of Iron and magnesium to provide various colours to their paintings. Dancing, which comes to man naturally, played an important part in the ceremonies of the people in that age. Taming of pets also dates back to prehistoric period.

Like the modern children, prehistoric children also had numerous play things to play with like rattles, whistles, marbles, etc. It is evident that hunting was an established sport from the Rgvedic age. New sports and pastimes that first appeared in the Vedic and later Vedic age and continued to enjoy popularity till the seventh century were archery, chariot-race, wrestling, drinking and picnicking. Acrobating as a sport has been first mentioned by Kautilya in his Arthśāstra. Kautilya also speaks of magicians, sorcerers (mayāgata). Sālabanḍijikā, as a sport of women, is first mentioned by Panini in one of the Sūtras of his Astādhyāyī. Snake-charming as a good means of recreation is first mentioned by Ktesias. Gymnastic scenes first appear in the Barhut sculptures, dated to the Śunga-Kuṣāṇa period. The earliest evidence to confirm that cock fighting existed in ancient India is the copper seal excavated at Taxila dated also to the Śunga-Kuṣāṇa period. The seal clearly depicts a cock-fight.

Participating in gosṭhīs was, yet, another mode of diversion. Vātsyāyana has first made its mention in his Kāmasūtra. The
seventh century is marked by the use of highly advanced magical powers. The art of magic was so much popular in that age that the king Harṣa, named fourth act of his novel, Ratnāvalī, as Aindrajālika. The celebrations of birds and plants and creepers was yet another novel way of amusement in that period. Such a marriage celebration of parrot, Parihasa, to mainā, Kālindī, is alluded to in the classical novel of Bāna, viz., Kādambarī. It is observed that festivals of colours viz., Holi, which is popular even today, dates back to the period of the Guptas.

Despite their popularity, certain sports like hunting and dicing were not universally acclaimed. They were not given social approval. Piśuna declared hunting as a vice. Hunting was also looked down upon in the time of Harṣa as well.

Dicing was outrightly condemned owing to its risky attribute and the severe losses it entailed on a person. The state in a way excercised control over it by collecting tax from the participants. Notwithstanding the condemnation of these sports, their popularity never diminished. People continued to play them without caring for the public opinion.

Drinking was also not given social recognition. Buddha declared it sinful and a bad habit. Nevertheless, drinking continued to attract people and it was difficult for people to resist its temptation in all the ages.

A glance through the fore-going chapters shows that the idea of
recreation is there right from the perhistoric period although its forms have been changing. But the desire to recreate and to have diversion from the activities of daily routine has been always with the man.

Many a time adventure, risk and speculation have also been intermixed with the means of recreation. The diversity, scarcity, rarity and remoteness of the sources and resources of information on the sports and pastimes in ancient India explain the absence of any systematic and comprehensive account. This in a way, brings out emphatically the value and importance of the present project.