INTRODUCTION
**Introduction**

**Play** is an integral part in child's development. By playing, the child learns everyday chores, picks up behavior patterns and adapts roles. People play because it provides an interactive social experience that helps to learn. It is both fun and challenging. For children, it is an immersive process through which they have the ability to demonstrate skills and establish their identity resulting in fantastic fulfillment. Brain Sutensmith in his book 'The Ambiguity of Play' says “When play is structured and goal orientated it is often done as a game. Play can also be seen as the activity of rehearsing life events”. Play is usually associated with children, some examples of children’s play are jumping, hide and seek, hop scotch, playing with a ball and playacting the roles of elders they see around them.

Games are loosely defined as an activity that is a fundamental part of human existence. A **game** may be defined as ‘a form of play in which two or more participants vie either as individuals or as groups or teams, under the limitation of rules either tacitly or explicitly understood by the contestants, for the purpose of determining who or which is better or best at that particular form of play’ (Maria Leach 1949: 432). Games have been defined as competitive activities that have rules, goals, feedback, interaction and outcomes. Games motivate students via fun, and this is a part of the natural learning process in human development. Games are part of our social and cultural environment. The main characteristic of games that support learning is that they challenge and support children to approach, explore, identify and overcome increasingly complex problems and in the process learn better how to tackle those problems in similar contexts in future. In ‘Classroom Games and Simulations: Theory into Practice’ by
Cruickshank D. R. and Telfer, Ross define games as “contests in which both players and opponents operate under rules to gain a specified objective”.

‘Children’s games constitute admirable social institutions’ (Piaget, 1932). Games can inform, teach, persuade and provoke thought. They can confirm existing values and practices, they can bring about change. They can reproduce and reinforce existing ideas and values, challenge them, or offer new ways of thinking and feeling. The traditional children’s games and songs lead to and provide a rich environment or social context that sustains the flowering of children’s curiosity and exploration of their immediate world as they play. The children explore the social context of games through guided apprenticeship that is greatly rewarding and motivational. The virtues and values learnt are varied and practical. Some of them are good behavior, hard work, competition, handling success and failure and leadership which will become useful later in life. Overall, games instill a sense of discipline in children. They later carry this virtue into adulthood with them.

Many traditional games require physical activity. These games help develop children’s physical agility and strength, foster perseverance and concentration, and develop balance without them even knowing it. In addition, traditional games can be enjoyed across generations, allowing people of different ages to interact. Adults and children, men and women can be invited to join in, thereby fostering a sense of local community. In traditional culture: socialization, cooperation, and self-confidence are developed in children through games played in teams. Moving together, paying attention to one another, and adapting themselves to one another are skills that are developed by games. And most of the traditional games are transformed into new games and new games are also evolved according to the overall development in the society.
Even many games entered into different contexts in the society outside its original context with different appropriations.

Some of the productive and most intense learning occurs during activities and games. This approach to teaching and learning is known as experiential learning. Research and our own experience show that this approach to learning is both a powerful motivator and form of instruction for students of all ages and abilities. It is not difficult to find a well designed game to use to teach language, mathematic concepts and explore environmental issues. Projects can be woven into a game-based curriculum. Games can be used within any schedule, though like any piece of quality curriculum they need time. A game can be used an hour or two, once per week, or it can be played in a regular class period over an entire week or more. Teachers have used games for millennia, but we usually call them simulations. Transforming an entertaining game into an effective piece of education often involves only a few changes.

Furthermore, games are inherently experiential. Those who play games engage their multiple senses. For each action, there is a reaction. Children create, interpret, develop, explore and communicate thoughts through the games. Education is the organized effort of society to enrich and develop and consolidate itself by conserving and developing and teaching all that can be known of both the inner and outer worlds. What kind of changes in instructional practices and management of educational institutions are needed to take advantages of the power that games could bring to teaching and learning? However, before venturing into that, some concentrated efforts are needed to explore the domain of traditional games for identifying and focusing on the utility value of these games in the present day context, for the benefit of children.
Games have many functions in society; from entertaining to conveying cultures and values, to provide opportunities for creativity and reflection. To celebrate, it provides ceremony and ritual. Children will understand how games have the potential to both confirm values and bring about social changes. Through the games, children gain a sense of potential identity and their own place in society.

On the other hand ‘Theatre engages the audience, focusing their attention and actively involving them in an experience. Active involvement means that the audience’s emotions, not just intellectual or cognitive skills, are affected. It is this ability to touch emotions that allows theatre to influence attitudes in ways that traditional instruction cannot. However, in order for theatre to change the behavior of young people, it must do more than simply create an emotional response. It must deliver its messages in a way that people can understand and act upon’(Y-PEER, 2005: 9).

Theatre games are enjoyable and interactive activities that can stimulate imagination and energy and provide a safe place for social interaction, personal and social skill development, release of energy and imaginative exploration. Theatre has always been a bridge between education and entertainment. From the earliest time, theatre has been used to spread news, share history, or educate people about events outside of their communities. Recently, the use of drama and theatre arts for educational purposes has undergone a remarkable resurgence. The term ‘theatre in education’ refers to using theatre for a purpose beyond entertaining an audience. Using theatre as a creative educational tool provides an opportunity to debunk myths, present a balanced view, and influence behavior. If used effectively, it is an excellent way to present sensitive topics not usually discussed in public, particularly in educational settings.

There is a growing body of evidence on the utility of theatre in education. Increasingly, it is seen as a powerful tool for social change. Theatre can strengthen the
emotional and psychological appeal of messages and provide a believable and interesting way to explore sensitive issue. Theatre games speak the languages that children understand and relish. It is vital and dynamic, transacted by doing tasks and having experiences that engage children physically, cognitively and emotionally. They also play an important role in reinforcing and furthering the learning of other academic subjects that are taught in conventional ways. Students would be exposed to, and have learning experiences of, customs and practices of their immediate cultural region, but also of larger national and international contexts. Traditional sports and games are nowadays regarded as a particular cultural heritage and as elements of regional identity. Games and festivity are often linked together. One of the pioneers of theatre game concept ‘Viola Spolin’ in her book ‘Theatre games for the classroom’ says, “playing theatre games brings refreshment, vitality and more and theatre game workshops are designed not as diversions from the curriculum, but rather as supplements, increasing student awareness of problems and ideas fundamental to their intellectual development”. She further states, theatre game workshops useful in improving students ability to communicate through speech and writing and in nonverbal ways as well and are energy sources helping students develop skills in concentration, problem solving and group interaction.

In formal and informal theatre training contexts, games are frequently used to expose the actors to different live contexts in which his/her body and mind are involved, in order to control his/her body to get an ease to his/her art of expression. In a theatre curriculum the classes on acting starts with the basic physical training which are neutral and later to the field of theatre games. There the games used are with a sense of maturity and aimed to generate certain skills in the body without a direct consciousness. The game practices in the sessions make the actors concentrate, observe precisely in
terms of the objective task of the game, use of body as a game tool and controlling the body as demanded by the game situation. This research project is to explore the possibilities of folk games in order to shape it for another context of children’s theatre. Children enjoy physical games more than the adults and they frequently participate in it during their childhood days. There are diverse traditional games in India practiced in different cultures. Some of them are seen across the country with variations according to the culture and region. But majority of the theatre games practiced as part of the children’s theatre practice are either adapted from another context or imported from the west along with the concept of children’s theatre. The effort carried out in this research work is to identify a group of games with multiple functions from the rural folk context and to transform it for a new context. This has multiple functions. One is to explore the training potential of our games to children’s theatre. The other is to bring a native cultural platform with moderate appropriations to contemporary children for theatre training which can create a better environment of community interaction through the game. It is needless to say the community or group feeling of theatre and these games can serve as a warm up session. The games from the rural contexts give more possibilities for working as a group.

This study seeks to highlight the role of traditional games of children as means of learning the medium of children theatre. The motivation to carry out such a study comes from a noticeable growing interest in building new practice structures for children’s theatre in the backdrop of native culture and to start up a new method of teaching and learning systems in the field of children’s theatre. Eventually it can spread to the practices of creative drama, theatre in education, theatre therapy etc. The researcher is encouraged by the interest shown by the children for these traditional games when introduced as methods and tools of teaching and learning especially in
rural primary schools as well as in urban schools during workshops and fieldtrips over a period of time and by the complementary results seen in the development of the cognitive, physical and social skills of the children.

In order to employ traditional games by children in a transformed manner as part of curriculum in contemporary children’s theatre practice in formal and informal contexts, utmost care has been taken in the process of research to make these games applicable to all children irrespective of their social, cultural and economic background. Children can relate well to theatre as the audience is as much a part of theatre as the performers. Theatre has the capacity to transform reality, to create new worlds. It is a powerful artistic channel to elicit feelings of fear and pity, laughter, anger and happiness. Games have a role in creating these functions of theatre among children in the training process.

As traditional children's games are closely connected to the life styles of the children, it is a great challenge to preserve traditional games in the modern society, especially since traditional games are handed over from generations to generations. The tendency of children of today to play only with the same age group and to play in-doors will make the challenge greater. Under these circumstances, it is worthwhile to consider the possibilities for the educational employment of the traditional games.

The aim of the researcher is to demonstrate a selected number of the popular indigenous traditional games that can be transformed into children’s theatre games for practice, thereby serving the twin purpose of bringing the forgotten traditional games back into circulation with a new function and introducing new devices to involve in the concept of theatre to the children. The overall aim of the project is to investigate how traditional children’s games can be reshaped for use in classrooms and in doing so build knowledge related to children theatre.
Though children’s theatre is practiced in India in different contexts in different regions there are no works relating traditional children’s games to children’s theatre practice. There are several explorations in terms of putting in different traditional stories including folk stories as a devise to take the children to an environment of performing with creating an interest to avoid an imposed environment among the children. As disclaimer for practice many games are introduced to children but there are no efforts happened in the field to identify the potential of folk games of our country as a designed project. In terms of literature also there are no written works connecting traditional games and children’s theatre with a practice outlook. There are many works in Indian vernacular languages discussing the folk games with folkloristic perspective.

The methodology researcher have used for this work is in three levels. First researcher has gone through the literature available in the field of folk games as an academic area and theatre games in general. The works on theatre games especially by the experts Viola Spolin and Clive Barker were the main resources to carve out a model for transforming the folk games to theatre games for children. Along with it researcher have gone through different works on game theory, games and children’s theatre, theoretical and practical aspects of children’s theatre and actor training and child psychology in connection with children’s theatre. The second level was the field work to collect the games from villages and observation of children’s theatre practice with different contexts involving different age groups of children. While the data collection researcher have adapted the participant observation during the game session in the villages where researcher have involved with the games in its practice along with the children and continued the interview method to collect more information on the games from children as well as elders who are bearers of the tradition.
The data collected from the field were organized in terms of its function on the ground of general practice principles of theatre and children’s theatre respectively to identify the games more relevant to the theatre practice and adaptable for practice context. Through this exercise the researcher could filter out number of games which have more affiliation to the regional cultures and difficult to standardize according to the principles of children’s theatre. Later the identified games were taken to children’s theatre workshops and tried to play these games with the children and took feedback from the participants.

Researcher could realize that some games cannot be applied to children as it is collected from the field in the different context. But there were good responses towards the game frame of the all games but many situations they were not able to understand environment in which the game is progressing. Based on the first stage of practice with the collected games the researcher started analyzing the games and explored the possibilities of new ways to adapt these games for a neutral context. Keeping in view of the basic game rule of each game and the physical task, a new frame for each game has been evolved to work with the children in the second stage. Here children’s reception and understandings were considered through discussions with them and through different interactive practice session in the manner of a trial and error method. After the second stage again there were home work to shape the games on the ground of the practice and responses from the children with a game plan for each game appropriate to the context. The finally shaped games have been further trialed with children and modified in minor level. At the end the total games became 20 and again the same games were been applied with different other groups, taking a period of three months. During this final stage also there were several changes based upon the problems raised in different occasions and suggestions from teachers and students.
The thesis is divided into four chapters and all these chapters outline a different but relevant aspect of children theatre and traditional games. The first chapter deals with the main concept of children theatre and its significance. It explains the terms and concepts of children theatre, different stages in the age of children, important conceptual distinctions of various terms of drama and theatre, differences between adult and children theatre, history and theories of children theatre, the concept of child psychology and play and evolution of children theatre in India and Andhra Pradesh.

Chapter 2 highlights the definition of games and their significance, the concept of game theory, traditional and folk games, their features and significance, various categories of games, traditional games in India, classification of games, different types of games and their functions, specific indigenous games and their features and methodology followed for the selection of traditional games. In order to develop specific children’s games typology, an extensive study of the appropriate literature was undertaken from English and local languages: First, an inventory was made of the different criteria used to classify children's games. Then, through a comparative content analysis the criteria identified were reduced further. Finally these were brought back to ten categories of traditional children's games.

The third chapter describes a group of selected traditional games mainly played in south India, particularly in Andhra Pradesh. These games were collected from various sources with children and adults as informers. Our experience shows that elderly people are generally a richer source than younger people, and that richer repertoire of games can be found in village and small-town settings where there haven't been any sudden changes i.e., due to industrialization and urbanization. Within these places, certain cultures and social groups are better at safekeeping traditional children’s games than others; it seems that female informers are better than male ones; that certain...
professional groups: school-teachers, workers in areas of children's culture, etc. are more likely to safe-keep and collect children's games on their own. Perspectives from children, adults and teachers were taken into account, before arriving at a final set of 20 games. Each game so collected is briefly explained on how to play, the rules and procedure, the requirements for playing, the age group of children who can play etc, the benefits of playing the game and carry appropriate illustrations wherever necessary.

Finally, the fourth chapter illustrates the transformation of games, i.e., applicability of the collected material for training purposes and the approach employed in transforming the games. The world in which traditional children's games came into existence is significantly different from today's world: the games are a reflection of that world and the way of life in times past i.e., their contents, terminology, the space and circumstances under which they were played cannot be transferred easily to the present. Of course, that does not apply to all games, and some could probably be offered to today's children, too, with certain transformations and adaptations. This chapter presents a set of 20 transformed traditional games into appropriate theatre games for children’s theatre practice. At the end of the chapter in conclusion the analysis of the contents of the four chapters and the research findings, the interpretation and the utility and application and usefulness of the transformed games of theatre are provided and discussed.

The appendix is divided into two sections as appendix 1 which has the details of place of field work and research, names of people met and interacted with and their addresses and contact numbers and appendix 2 contains exclusive photographs of children playing the games, taken during the field trips.

The core objective of this thesis is to evolve a set of theatre games for children from the rural folk games practiced currently in the state of Andhra Pradesh focusing on
the geographical area of ‘Rayalaseema’. The traditional children's games have qualities which are capable of satisfying to a great extent the norms of the contemporary children’s theatre practice. These games hold rich possibilities for the stimulation of various activities in children’s physical, motor, sensory, social, affective, intellectual and linguistic abilities. Therefore, it is possible to find a basis for the introduction of traditional children's games as theatre games into the lives of contemporary children.
End notes

