

CHAPTER V

GAMES AND AMUSEMENTS

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Introduction

Games and amusements of the period reveal the standard of culture and social harmony. They were not merely a source of personal enjoyment but also a medium of social and communal contact for the development of good will and individual skills. They sharpen the skill, intelligence and interest of the individuals.

5.1 Dice

A sculptural scene from Somanathapura temple represents a great Sabha of Hastinapura when Yudhishtira plays a dice with the kauravas. There is a board in front of them which provided with a gradation arrangement of five squares in six lines or rows and cubes with marks on their sides. **P1 No. 1.**

5.2 Kolata

This is a game of sticks generally practiced by females. Kolata scenes are depicted in the Somanathapur temple. Players are shown with a pair of sticks and performing acrobatics such as touching their hair buns with their toes while playing kolata.

5.3 Anekal

We get inscriptional evidence of this game played by the girls¹. The game Anekal consists of tossing up pebbles from one hand to the other, so as to keep one always in the air, the

second, of picking one up from the ground while another is in the action.

5.4 Hunting

Hunting was a very popular pastime among the royal people as well as commoners. We get scenes of hunting from the temple sculptures. Inscriptions also give evidence about hunting. An inscription from Maddur registers the death of Asagara Gorava of Biraya Yudranahalli while hunting a boar²

.Pl. No. 2.

5.5 Fight with Animals

Men who fought with animals either for pleasure or to control the ferocious, one had a prestigious position in society. Memorial stones were set up for the hero who died while staying a tiger. An inscription mention a Kadanemalla a wrestler of wild elephant. Ram fight was very popular. **Pl. No. 3.**

5.6 Sports

Okali sport was an attractive feature of Holi festival. An inscription of 1281³ A.D. Mentions a deposit fund created by Sovanna for the oakli springing of the god Hoysalesvara. One of the female figures is shown with a syringe, a male attendant is helping her game by filling the syringe with the coloured water of Holi.

5.7 Archery

Archery was one of the pet themes of the Hoysala Sculptures. A glance of these sculptures gives fairly a good idea of their pastime. A five example of archery can be seen in the panel depicting Arjuna's Matsyayantra – Bheeli. The Manasollasa⁴ calls it Matsyavedu or piercing a Matsya (fish) by looking its reflection in the water pet placed below. **Pl. No. 4**

The nobility and the archers were proficient in archery and this could be known from battle scene depicted in the Hoysala sculptures. Different modes such a Samasandhana Urdhasandhana can be discerned from the sculptural representations. While aiming arrow, the archers adopted various poses like Vikata, Vishaka, Samapada, Pratyalidha etc. The bows like selfbow composite bow, and compound bow were invariably used by the archers of the day. In the battle scene the bow men invariably used the chariots.

Both men and women were specialized in archery in order to build up the body and develop concentration of mind. The Agnipurana says that the one who has made the vision both of his mental and physical eyes steady, can conquer even the god of death.⁵

5.8 Jalakrida

The Hoysalas seemed to have loved bathing. They spent their leisure in aquatic sports (Jala-Kridas). In one of the panels illustrating Krishnacarita reveals Gopikas engaged in Jalakrida in literature Yasastilaka⁵ mentions shower housed (dharagriha). It is said of king Yasodhara that he spent the hot summer days in amorous water sports with his palace ladies in the hall of mechanical showers. Bilhana ⁶ wrote that Vikramaditya spent the summer noons in specially constructed houses filled with mechanical showers and having glass tiles.

5.9 Snake-Charming

That the people of the Hoysala period also knew amusements like snake charming can be known from the sculpture depicting musicians on the Arkesvara temple wall at Hale-Alur. A snake charmer is depicted. He is shown blowing a snake bean. This would reveal that certain section of the people like snake charmers earned their livelihood by snake charming, besides giving amusements to the people. Even to this day, snake charmers earn their livelihood by snake which is a common sight in this country. **P1. No. 5.**

5.10 Vishakanye

Another amusement of the Hoysala was drinking. An interesting piece of sculpture depicting Vishakanya gives an

idea of the Nagnitude of intoxication of the people during the period under review. The sculpture of Vishakanya is presently housed in Halebid Museum. In that a young nude lady is showing standing in between the veno snake and scorpion she had been made immune to the toxic effects of poison by making her drink poison in small doses. But, whoever comes into contact with her, he eventually meets death. The effort of the sculptor to depict a Vishakanya, indicates the existence of such ladies who were habituated for drinking poison. Vishakanya were used by ancient rulers for destroying their enemies. **Pl. No. 6.**

5.11 Domestic Pets

People gave special attention to pets and derived amusements. This can be seen in a bracket figure in the Chennakesava temple at Belur. A voluptuous women is seen standing easily at rest holding in her left hand betel leaves. While on her pet parrot. To her left is a woman attendant with a betal bag on her shoulder, while to her right, is another holding fruit. The atmosphere is one of peace and affection and it is possible to imagine that the lady finds solace in the company of the parrot in the absence of her lover. Such description of lady talking to the parrot (sukhabha-Shini) is a common theme in the early Indian art and also persisted in the subsequent period. **Pl. No. 7.**

In another instance of 'Beauty and the Pet Parrot', a beautiful lady of high rank stands in front with a pet parrot perched on her left elbow. It is perhaps hungry and has caught in its beak a jeweled necklace worn by the lady. She appears to be cajoling it to give up the necklace by offering it a bunch of fruits hanging from a tree branch which she is holding in her right hand. **Pl. No. 8.**

Monkeys during the said period were tames, it can be known from bracket figure from the chennakesava temple at Belur. The bracket figure revealing Madanika looking into a mirror depicts few attendants around her one of the female attendants is shown carrying a monkey on her waist in similar way like human child is carried. **Pl. No. 9.**

That at times such monkeys played pranks with its masters can be known from the bracket figure from the Chennakesava temple at Belur. A beautiful lady is molested by an admiring monkey who has pulled dress off her body and is looking up at her grinning in solicitation. The lady whose shorts are also displaced has crossed her legs in modesty. With her left hand, she grips firmly her breasts while in her right. She has lifted up a flowery tree sapling with which she would strike the monkey. To her left, stands a lady attendant with flowers and fruits. The piece combines the spirit of the modesty and beauty while the monkey's behaviour gives it a

lively humour. The whole scene envisages an atmosphere of amusement. **Pl. No. 10.**

5.12 Wrestling

Wrestling was implied as a matter of royal and public entertainment and to some extent as fight against the equal opponents. Wrestlers were appointed by the kings to take part in the Mallayuddha or duel combat. Wrestlers were given training in the wrestling schools or maidens to learn various grips or pattns. A sculptural scene from Somanathpur temple represents a wrestling maidan where the youngsters were taught methods of various grips, exercise of body building and weight lifting by holding bars in hand. The four different postures of wrestling are found in small toner of the Keshava temple at Belur.

Wrestling match was witnessed by the king, queen and other officials along with the public. A sculptural representation from the Kesava temple Belur, in the rail of the third row to the right of the north doorway depicts the king and queen seated, witnessing a wrestling match along with the six saiva devotees⁷. **Pl. No. 11.**

A special provision was made to give special food to them. They should practice once in every alternative days. The Hoysala kings were experts in wrestling. Kings assumed titles

as “Tribhuvanamalla” (wrestler of three worlds) kings like Hoysaladeva Vishnuvardhana, Narasimha II and Ballala II were named after that title.

An epigraph from Honnali taluk states that one Raymalla was an unequalled wrestler⁸. Another record of Vishnuvardhana mentions a Wrestler, Manijetti who assumed the title called Kesarikali⁹.

It is informed in the Manasollasa such exercises of wrestling involving samasthanas, if hanakas, Vijnanas took interest in wrestling schools each in the morning.

The literature refers to the words like ‘Malla’ or ‘Jatti’ to mean a wrestler. Three categories of wrestlers namely jayeshthaka, antarjayeshthaka and govala are mentioned¹⁰. The kannada poet Janna, a sports man by himself refers to Jattis govalas, jaga”¹¹. It is said that wrestlers were in fact fed and looked after by the state.

The Manasollasa¹² informs that wrestling matches were conducted in specially constructed arenas called akkadakas. The dress of the wrestlers include tight drawer, tight breeches, or tight cloth. Pampa refers to Mallakalaga witnessed by the king virata¹³.

5.13 Acrobata

Dombar are acrobats. In social strata they rank above the Madigas. They were skillful Jugglers. Both men and women were clever tuneblers and tight rope dancers¹⁴. They were moving from place to place entertaining people and collecting money for their livelihood. They were described as people who exhibit different shows such as ascending high poles¹⁵. vaddaradhane refers to Acrobats as Langiga¹⁶.

Their performances were exhibited on shandy days were a number of people assembled¹⁷.

A sculpture from the Rishyashringa temple at Kigga depicts the three acrobats revolving in a wheel alternatively by hands and legs. **Pl. No. 12.**

Conclusion

Thus, various kinds of games and amusements were in vogue during the said period. Some of them were snake charmer, wrestling, domestic pets vishakanyes, Acrobats, Dice, Kolata, Anekal, Hunting Fight with animals, archery, Jalakrida, etc. The games and amusements were encouraged by the kings and queens of the said period.

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5.14 Hunting

Hunters belong to a tribal folk like Bhillas, Kiratas, Pulindas, Sabaras, Atavichars etc. They were also known as servants of Krishna.¹ The epigraphical sources depict them in a different way. Accordingly, they were made to attempt to acquire animal's wealth and raided cattle's for their livelihood. Robbery and plundering were the other business for them. An epigraph from channagiri taluk records the then Bedars and states that they plundered Billahalli in the year 1200 A.D.² Once Bedars seized the cattle of Amritapura in the year 1287 A.D.³ A reference has been made to Bedars in one of the epigraphs of Davanagere taluk which States that Bedars attacked somaya Dandanayaka at Kanchagere and killed him in the year 1300 A.D.⁴

But one can see a totally different picture altogether with regard to them if we turn the pages of the Kannada literary sources like Harishchandra Kavya and Suktisudharnavam. According to them, the Bedars were very sharp, intelligent, attentive, loyal, faithful and the right hands of the rulers. Once Bedars were sent word by the king Harishchandra who were experts in shooting at wild animals and birds.⁵ At once the leaders of the different tribes along with the force of huntsmen (Bedavade) assembled in the royal court and agreed to extent their services in eradicating the calamities caused by famine and pestilence. Incidentally, it may be taken as the

existing contemporary practice of the 12th century hunting during the Hoysala period.

While going for hunting the hunters were taught Dhanurvedye. Various methods of hunting were adopted by them to hunt animals. Some of them were Parvente,⁶ Kiruvente, Airavente, Gorivente, Sohuvente, Megali,⁷ Kiggali etc. Among the hunting tribes the sabaras and pulindas possessed esteemed proficiency in implementing these methods. The sabara women folk, as depicted in the Harishchandra Kavya, were experts in grouping themselves from Eight directions to kill Bisons.⁸ A reference has been made to Pulindas who were experts in archery as mentioned in the collection of poem of Suktisudharanavam.⁹ It may be gathered from the temple Sculptures at Belur and other places that hunters of both sexes were well – versed in hunting.

Gorivente is one in which the hunters used to hoot and howl at the hidden animals so as to chase them to come out from the place in order to kill them.¹⁰

Tohinavente,¹¹ is another method of hunting in which a pit was made to trap the animals. Sohuvente¹² is used to catch birds like crows, peacocks, doves, owls, parrots, etc.

Varieties of nets and weapons were used by the hunters in catching birds and animals. The nets like Tadike bale,¹³ (bamboo or palm leaf), Tattivale, Bisuvale, Kodativale, Tottivale, Talluvala, Toruvale, Koluvala, Gutavale and the hunting weapons like Tadike,¹⁴ gala, balegana, kuli, billu, bana, kodanada,¹⁵ Eti (lance),¹⁶ bombu,¹⁷ were used not only by the hunters but also by the rulers in the royal games.

Dogs were trained by the hunters. The dogs were active sharp and ready to pounce on the animals and were always waiting for their lords commands to catch the animals right from the rabbits to that of Bisons. A reference has been made in one of the Vachanas of Basavanna about rabbits hunting.¹⁸

Hunters collected all sorts of possible precious materials that were available in the forest during hunting. They showed their mark of respect to their overlords by donating gifts like elephant tusks, skins of tigers, cheetas and boars,¹⁹ Kasthuri, punugu bekku and Kasthuri Mariga.

It may be gathered from the Hoysala epigraphs that the king Vishnuvardhana, Narasimha I, Ballala II being staunch lovers of cosmetics were over joyed in entitling themselves as 'Mrigamadama' (Delighter of Musk).²⁰ Naturally, they might have accepted these gifts given by hunters to adorn

themselves. In addition to it, tender deers, thighs of deers, chamari hairs, honey, lion claws, pig cubs were supplied to their lords.²¹ They lived in the regions of Tarikere, Chitradurga and Belur.

Hunting has been regarded as a hereditary art i.e., Kulavidya. It imparts skill in piercing an unstable target and sitting steady on a fast galloping horse and the knowledge of different deviations of the earth. Also hunting has been referred as Mrugayavinodam in some of the Hoysala epigraphs. Normally the pleasure hunting was assisted by professional hunters.

A reference has been made to the garments of peacock feathers worn by Pulinda Women in Harishchandra Kavya. The use of skirts and pantees made out of feathers was well known to them. The Pulinda Women folk covered their lower part of the body with skirt of peacock feathers falling up to knees and that of the upper part dressed with natural tender leaves.²²

That the kings were engaged in hunting could be seen from panel depicting 'Rama shooting the golden deer', on the Kedareshvara temple at Halebidu.²³ It is a well known story, that Rama had to go in search of golden deer for fetching it for sit.

Incidentally, this scene reflects the hunting expeditions of the king. **P1 No.1**

Sometimes, people went for hunting for earning their livelihood as can be seen from panel depicting 'hunters carrying an antelope'. On the Chennakesava temple Belur²⁴ two hunters are shown transporting the kill from the forest, the kill was carried by them by tying its legs and passing a pole through them.

An Idea of the dress of the huntress can be gathered from the Sculpture of Kirati on the Hoysalesvara temple, Halebid. Her dress Comprised of a skirt decorated with pearl strings. The thick border of the lower garment is clearly visible. As usual, an elaborate waist band with its tassels slinging on either side, is tied for securing the skirt. **P1 No.3**

Different type of dress can be seen with yet another huntress. It consists of bunch of leaves tied round the waist and secured by means of Mekhala. It is noteworthy that similar type of dresses, i.e., covering the body with bunch of leaves is still prevalent with some of the tribal huntress. Huntress are slender waisted and broad – hipped with legs wide apart. **P1 No.4**

A Sculpture from Somanathapura depicts a female hunting dress in a small panel. The lady holding a bow and an arrow with a dog is wearing an upper garment, which is thin and transparent only the lower garment is beautifully carved. She wears a short skirt which has horizontal stripes. It fits tightly like a sheath on the thighs. **P1 No.5**

Another Sculpture depicts a damsel got hurt during hunting. In such a time she used to get first aid from her hunting partner. **P1 No.6**

In another Sculpture a maiden is shooting an arrow at two birds perching in a tree, which her attendant is suppling her with arrows and holding a pet deer. **P1 No.7**

A beautiful Sculpture depicts in one the whole party is shown returning from a hunt, the lady is dancing in joy at her success, an attendant carrying the prey, an antelope, and another servant, exhausted and weak is resting on a bow allowing herself to be helped by a male member in removing a thorn from her left sole.

The panel depicting Madanika as Kirati (Huntress) illustrates a fine example of hunting scene during the Hoysala

period. A huntress is shown in hunting expedition along with her attendants. To indicate that the hunting is taking place in a forest the Sculptor has depicted one of the attendants in the act of removing a thorn from one of the feet of the other attendant. **P1 No.3**

Regarding the ornaments, the huntress and hunter had a particular fancy for conchs, beads, corals, ivory and Jewels. The hunting women like pulindas covered their breast with kedage flower. They ornamented their head with eagle feathers. The use of a long chain of beads of ivory pearls called Mutina Ekavali was familiar to them. Ivory bangles were common to them. Incidentally, a record from Arasikere Taluk refers to the term like Dantadabale. Tribal women folk were totally different in their aptitude and maintained a peculiar status in the Hoysala society.

Thus Hunting (Dhanurvidye) was very popular during Hoysala period. It was a very famous amusement during the said period. It was encouraged by the Royal family. Hunting was practiced to rescue from enemies and be aware of the wild animals. The Sculptural wealth of Hoysala temples located in the region under consideration reflect intensely the pastimes, be speak the civilized mind and the aesthetic outlook of the people and give an idea of the gay and sportive life they led.

Today, even though Government has banned hunting, if people hunt they if they hunt will be punished and put behind bars and fine them. But huntress in the tribal areas wear same type of dress as mentioned above and they sell honey for their livelihood. Skins of different animals are exported and they are used for medicines also. Even today, hunters use swords, bow and arrows as their weapons for hunting.

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