CHAPTER VI

GAMES AND PASTIMES

Ever since the beginning of creation, man has sought and found out means of amusing himself. Man is a social being, so it is one of his aims to have the company of his fellow creatures to share his pleasure as well as his sorrows. The people of ancient times were delighted by the beauty of nature, seasonal changes, a good harvest etc. And they wanted to enjoy these in company of those whom they loved or liked. That is perhaps why the seasonal and pastoral festivities developed. Out of these social gatherings men discovered sports and games as means of recreation and amusement.

Before we proceed to deal with the sports and games as prevalent in the then Bengal, we may give a short description of the various sports and amusement as described in Vedic, Epic and Buddhist literatures.

In the Vedic age there was a festival called Samana in the RgVeda\textsuperscript{1} and Atharvaveda,\textsuperscript{2} and the Vājasaneyd Sākhā of Yajurveda.\textsuperscript{3}

\begin{itemize}
\item[1] R.V. I. 48.6 ; II. 16.7 ; IV. 58.8 ; VI. 75, 3-5, VII 2,4,5,9 ; VIII 62, 9 ; IX. 96.9.97 ; X. 55, 5, 69.
\item[2] A.V. II 36. 1 ; VI. 92.2.
\end{itemize}
In the so called festival the archers tried to show their skill; chariot racing and horse racing, were also held, the women amused themselves in sports and recreations, the poets tried to earn reputation by reciting the poetical composition, the young damsels dressed themselves in fine clothes and ornaments to appear agreeable to the Suitors and so on.

The festival went on for days together. It also continued during the whole night upto the morning.

In the later period we find from Kāśikā commenting on the Sutra, "Nityaṃ-krīḍā jīvikayoḥ" of the great grammarian Pāṇini mentions the names of two festivals in respect of sports e.g., 'uddalaka puspabhañjikā' and 'vīraṇa-puṣpapracaṇyikā'. From the commentary Kāśikā on another sutra, "Prācāṃ krīḍāyāḥ", we get the name of another festival, 'Jīvaputra-pracaṇyikā'. Jīvaputra is a kind of oily fruit called Íngudī, from which a kind of oil was extracted and it was used by the hermits of ancient India. These, plays served two purposes viz., amusement and performance of some household duty.

1 R.V. VI. 75, 3-5.
2 R.V. IX. 96, 9 ; A.V. VI. 92.2 ; Vaj Sam. 9.9.
3 R.V. 1.124.8, IV. 56.8 ; VI 75, 4 ; VII. 2.3, X. 6.10.
4 R.V. 11.16.7, ; IX. 97.47.
5 R.V. VII. 2.5.
6 R.V. X. 69.11.
7 R.V. 1. 48.6.
8 2.2.17.
We also find some interesting data regarding sports and festival in the Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana. In the Kāmasūtra, Vātsyāyana refers to a list of festivals. These are:

(a) Yakṣa-rātri
(b) Kaumudī jāgara
(c) Suvasantaka
(d) Sahakāra-chāṇjikā
(e) Abhyuṣakhādikā
(f) Bīsa Kāḍikā
(g) Navapatrikā
(h) udaka-kṣvedikā
(i) Pāncalānuyāna
(j) Ekaṣālmalī
(k) yavacaturthī
(l) Ālolo-caturthī
(m) Madanotasava
(n) Damanaḥaṇjikā
(o) Holākā
(p) Aśokottam-sikā
(q) Puṣpāvacāyikā
(r) cūtalatikā
(s) Ikṣu-bhaṇjikā
(t) Kadamba yuddha.

The first three festivals are called Māhimanī, the rest are Desya or provincial. In the Māhimanī festival, as mentioned by Vātsyāyana in his Kāmasūtra, gambling with dice was one of the main games played during the night of New moon of Kārttika.
In the Vedic time people gambled using the bibhitaka fruits as dice. In the later Vedic literature there is mention of golden dice.\(^1\) It might be probably used by the kings during sacrifices. In the great epic the Mahābhārata we also come across the terms such as Dyūta and Dūrodara. The cunning gamblers like Sakuni\(^2\) used hollow dice plugged with lead.

In the Vedic literature there is also a scanty account in respect of this dice as for instance RgVeda refers to the use of four dices in gambling.\(^3\) There are reference to gambling with many dices.\(^4\) In the Taittiriya Bāhmana\(^5\) we get a passage where there is a reference to paying with five dice.

In Vedic times dice used to be thrown on a soft surface or in a hole on the earth, which was called Adhidevana, devana or Irīna. It is also stated that the vessel which contained the aksas was called aksavāpama and the men who was in charge of it was called aksavāpa.

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1 (a) Sathapatha Brāhmaṇa 5.4.46.
   (b) Taittiriya Sāṁhitā 8.16.

3 R.V. 1.41.9.
4 R.V. 10.54.8 and 12.
5 T.B. 1.7.10.
The commentator of the Mahābhārata Nīlakaṇṭha clears his viewpoint in respect of the name of dice. A passage in the Mahābhārata clearly proves that at the time when it was written people used to play dice with the help of a board and sāris, i.e., pieces or man. Nīlakaṇṭha in his commentary explains this passage clearly.

In the Jātakas there are also references to gambling with dice, a gambling song names of the throws of dice and also to a magic dice.

Vātsyāyana in his Kāmasūtra, at the time of describing the 64 Kalās has referred to two different kinds of Kalās such as Dyūta Viṣeṣa and Ākṣa-Kridā. Dyūta Viṣeṣa denotes to Muṣṭi, Kṣullaka etc. Ākarṣa Kridā has been explained as Pāsaka Kridā.

Vātsyāyana has also mentioned Dyūtaphalaka and Ākaraṇaphalaka which mean boards for playing dice and Ākarṣa respectively. In the classical and later literature there are innumerable passages describing gambling with dice.

1 Mahābhārata 4.50.24.
2 Mahābhārata 4.1.24.
3 Jātaka I, 151, 221; III 61, 131; VI. 171, 133, 137.
4 " I, 137, 151.
5 " VI. 137.
6 " II. 175.
7 Kāmasūtra – 1.3.16.
8 Tridīp Nath Roy = Aksa Kridā in Vengiya Mahākosa.
In some of the Pāli texts there are references to indoor and outdoor games. The indoor games are Atthapāda, Dasapāda, Ākāsa, Khalikā, Salākahattha, Akkharikā, Manesikā and Yathāvajja.

**ATTHAPĀDA:** It is a game, which is known as Caturāṅga or Satāranji i.e., Indian chess. This game is nothing but gambling. Buddhaghosa, the famous Buddhist scholar in his commentary Sumaṅgala-Vilāsinī of Dīghanikāya, has explained it as games on boards with eight rows having eight squares in each row. It may be said that the modern game of chess has developed through it.

**DASAPĀDA:** This game has got similarity to Atthapāda. It is also played with a board of 8 lines having 10 squares in each line.

**ĀKĀSA:** Buddhaghosa, the famous Buddhist author explains this game. He says that this is a game similar to the two previous ones, but it is played on imaginary boards like these in the air. It is like the modern game Gaivi or blind-fold chess.

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1 (a) Tevijjasutta Majjhimsīla 2.3.4.
   (b) Suttaṭīṭṭhāṇa 13.1.2.
   ( Brahmagālasutta of Dīghanikāya )
   (c) Chulla-vagga 1.13.2.
The famous Buddhist author Buddhaghosa states that this game is nothing but gambling with dice.

As it has been explained by Buddhaghosa, is a game of dipping the hand with the fingers stretched out in lac or red dye or flour water and striking the wet hand on the ground or on a wall and showing the various forms required elephants, horses etc. During the Dipali festival in Bengal or certain parts of India cattle are marked with impressions of palms coloured red or yellow.

Buddhaghosa states that this game is nothing but the guessing of letters traced in the air or on a play-fellow's back. In this play somebody writes quickly and whoever can guess it becomes the writer or the writer guessor.

Buddhaghosa has explained it as manasa chintita-janana Kilā, i.e. guessing the play-fellow's thought.

Buddhaghosa has explained this as mimicry of the deformities of the blind, the deaf the lame etc.

1 Salakahatta on flour water as colouring matter, vide - Jātaka I.220.
The Buddhist Suttas also refer to horse racing, chariot racing, elephant racing, archery, fencing with swords, sticks etc. including wrestling and boxing.

Vātsyāyana in his Kāmasūtra has given a list of indoor games for women and boys:

i) Puṣpagraṇthana
ii) Grhaka
iii) Duhitṛka
iv) Bhakta Pāka - Karana
v) Ākṣa Kriḍā
vi) Pattikā Kriḍā
vii) Mustī Dyūta
viii) Ksullaka Dyūta
ix) Madhyamāṅguli grahana
x) Saṭpāsana
xi) Godhūma-Pūṇjangī.

Vātsyāyana also mentions some of the outdoor games of women and boys:

1 i) Suttavibhaṅga Sanghadidesa XIII. 1.1.
   ii) Cullavagga 1.13.2
   iii) Majjhimaśila - S. 107.
   iv) Milinda III 541, IV. 390.
   v) Vinaya III 180 ; II 10 ; IV 107.
SUNIMILATAKA: This is a game of hide and seek. In ancient Kāvyas we get references to this game of young men and women.

ARABDHika: In this game the girl claps her hand with that of another and runs away. The other person then follows her.

LAVANA VITHIKA: In Bengal it is called Nunchuri or Gaji in Calcutta. In Murshidabad it is called Gadi and in Nadia Hingi.

ANILATADITIKA: It is a game in which the girls clasp one another's stretched hands and turn round and round like a top. In Bengal it is "ání pāni jāni nā Parer chele māni nā" etc.

i.e. move away from this place. I shall not be responsible if some other body is hurt.

Some of the Buddhist and Jain texts also refer to the Samāja where religious, social, economic discussion as well as music, dancing, gambling and various kinds of sports and games were performed. In this connection it may well be remembered that Vātsyāyana refers to Gośthis or clubs in this period.¹

¹ H.C. Chakladar - Social Life in Ancient India, PP. 114.


Vātsyāyana while discussing about the bed room of Nāgaraka states that besides all articles to make oneself comfortable, there are boards for playing chess and dice,¹ and outside the room of Nāgaraka there hung cages of birds for games and sports.²

Birds were kept in cages to imitate the human voice. As stated in Buddhacarita the birds in the household aviaries in the city of Kapilāvastu were disturbed by the hurried movement of ladies hastening to catch a glimpse of the young prince Siddhārtha as he passed along the street.³

In the Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana, it is stated that after the mid-day meal the Nāgaraka listens to the talk of the parrots, observes the fight between cocks, quails or rams or is engaged in various kinds of artistic enjoyment. Sometime ferocious animals like tigers and lions are kept in cages for sports.⁴

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¹ K.S. I IV Sūtra 5, 43.
² K.S. I IV Sūtra 6-13 (P. 43-45).
³ Buddhacaritam III - 15.
⁴ K.S. I IV Sūtra 21
   I IV Sūtra 33
   V V Sūtra 17
   VI (i) Sūtra 25.
In ancient times large number of people both male and female assembled in social gatherings in connection with various competitions relating to literature connected with versification, fine arts, singing, painting but sometimes the assembled people indulged in humour and sports.¹

It must be mentioned in this connection that these outdoor games were mostly played in the courtyards, woods, gardens, fields, tanks and rivers. In the public club houses the indoor games particularly games like chess and dice were played in the house of individual citizens. From Vedic period to Smṛti literature we get a clear picture of games and sports but the gambling houses in particular were properly managed under the supervision of state.

Apart from the above mentioned description in respect of sports and games in Vedic and post-Vedic periods there are simple materials scattered in early Bengali literature and Inscriptions of Bengal, which give us a fair idea about games and pastimes as prevalent in ancient Bengal.

The early Inscriptions of Bengal are virtually silent about indoor-games sports and pastimes. A little bit of stray information however is available in respect of this same. Relatively

¹ H.C. Chakladar, Social Life of Ancient India, PP. 164-167.
earlier literature like Caryāpadas contains a fair amount of information. In the terracotta plaques of Fāhārpur or Maināmati, there is also some valuable information in respect of this topic.

Dice and chess were very popular among indoor-games in ancient Bengal. At Maināmati in the district of Tipperah in the Eastern Bengal a miniature diagram of chess board has been discovered.\(^1\) In the Caryāpada there is a reference to a chess board in a Caryā song.\(^2\) The chess board is said to contain sixty-four square compartments. Again small wooden figures i.e. elephants, boats, horses etc are mentioned at the time of playing chess.

Though this play of dice is not mentioned in the Inscriptions of Bengal, Vātsyāyana, however, in his Kāmasūtra mentions it in connection with the Kaumudi Jāgara festival\(^3\) which was observed on the occasion of the full-moon night in the month of Āśvina. The people on this festive occasion kept awake by playing at dice or such other indoor games. During this festival the women also from cities and towns, entered the harem of the king and sported with the royal ladies. Even at the present time the old custom of the game of dice is observed on the night of the full-moon in the month of Āśvina and it is so prescribed in the Hindu Alamanac.

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\(^1\) Cf. B.C. Law Volume - Part II, PP. 213.  
\(^2\) Karunā Pihāikhelahun naa bala, saadguru bonghe jitele bhavabala II bhanai kahnuahme bheli dāha dehuncausaththi koṭhā guniyā Ienhu II  
H.P. Sastri Caryācaryavaniscayāh (P. 22).  
\(^3\) Kāmasūtra - Sūtras 11 and 42.
The inscriptions and literature of Bengal deal with indoor-games, physical exercises, riding, wrestling, hunting etc. In the Mainamati and Paharpur terracotta plaques many sculptural traits are found to prove their existence. Again warriors equipped with different weapons of war, archers and men fighting with tigers are represented in the plaques of Mainamati.

It is stated in the Kailan Inscription of Śridharana-Rāta that Śridharana king of Samatata had muscular physique as a result of regular physical exercises. He was also handsome and smart as he kept himself engaged in outdoor games including riding on the back of a galloping horse or swiftly moving elephant.

So horse or elephant riding was evidently an item of out-door exercise among some male members of royal families and of other well-to-do families of ancient Bengal. Thus it may be assumed that riding was the common practice of some people in ancient Bengal.

So Sarvānanda, the son of Vandyaghaṭiya Brāhmaṇa named Ārthihara, mentions in his Tikāsarasva that riding was common in ancient Bengal. He also refers to five different types of horse-races such as

1 Gajaturaga satata - Piḍanakramocitaśrama balitatanuvibhāga - ramyadarśana
   Kailan Inscription of Śridharanarāta. ṢHIQ. XXIII, F.221.
2 Tikāsarasva - Sarvānanda.
(a) Para is a kind of horse race, which is swift and uniform in the nature of movement.

(b) Virava is a sort of bridled movement with steadiness in motion.

(c) Hredu indicates a kind of circular motion in a curved or round about way.

(d) Paulina indicates flight to a distance in a straight way.

(e) Marjā indicates a huddle race where galloping horses run with long jumps.

Riding on buffaloes was also a common practice with the people of Bengal. In the Fāmacaritām of Sandhyākarnandi, it is stated that some of the followers or soldiers of Kaivarta leader Bhīma used to fight against the soldiers of Rāmpāla by riding on buffaloes.

1 Tvaraya Sāmyena gatiḥ Ibid.
2 Viṣṭabadhā Samā ca gatiḥ Ibid.
3 Maṇḍalikālayena ganaṇam Ibid.
4 Rājuddūragamanam Ibid.
5 Vegenā Vikṣiptopari caraṇam Ibid.
6 R.C. Majumdar & R.G. Basak Ed.

Chap. II Verse - 42.
In the Rāmcarita it is found that the Pāla Emperor Kampala had acquired wonderful efficiency in the use of all weapons - as weapon training was looked upon as a game. So it was found that Pāla Emperor Rāmpāla was expert in archery. He was so efficient that he could cut asunder Palmyra trees by discharging his dashinā arrows. Having seen the various physical efforts of his son Rājyapāla Rāmapāla was highly pleased.

In those days male members of the royal families and especially those of the warrior class were engaged in various kinds of physical exercises. So physical exercises with swords, daggers and bows and arrows were not unknown. In the terracotta plaques at Maināmati there are the figures of male warriors holding shield and weapons, daggers, bow, arrows etc.

The use of Laguḍa or Yaṣṭi as an instrument of attack is not mentioned in the early Inscriptions of Bengal, but the skilful use of Laguḍa or Yaṣṭi was however resorted to for self defence. Bengal is even now noted for her skill in the use of lāṭhi or stick. So Lāṭhi play or demonstration in the use of lāṭhi or stick normally made of wood or bamboo is now a favourite pastime. It is also referred to in the folk lore of Bengal in a big way.

1 Ranjītavidvāmitrān mahaujasousya viditāstravidyasaya: jagadabhirakṣādakā saktāḥ saradīrṇatādā(ka)syābhūt  
2 R.C. Chap. I. V. 23.
Hunting was a common and most favourite game among the kings, vassal prices, chieftains, nobles and landlords. In Manu-smṛti\(^1\) hunting, excursions, dice etc are said to be pastimes of passion. Manu warns against these pastimes possibly as a safeguard against gross addiction to them. Tribes of ancient Bengal such as Pulinda, Sahara and Niṣāda Cāṇḍāla were hunters by profession. Hunting was the only means of livelihood to them. Generally they used to live either in forests or in caves far from the villages. As they were good archers so in the Cāryā song it is normally found that men of those tribes would naturally shoot birds and animals and live on their flesh. Sahara as a class of hunters for birds and beasts is mentioned in Bāṇabhaṭṭas Kādambari.\(^2\) In the Cāryāpada also there is the reference to chasing the wild deer by Pulinda, Sahara tribes.

In a Cāryā Song\(^3\) attributed to Bhusuku a male deer is described in a veritable state of consternation. The deer frightened by the approaching hunters does not touch a blade of grass or drink a drop of water. The male deer is then persuaded by his female partner to leave that forest as soon as possible.

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1 Manu VII Verse 47.
3 Tiṇa na chupai hariṇā pibai na pāṇī 1
   Hariṇā hariṇira nilaa na jānī 11
   Hariṇī bolsa hariṇā suna hariṇato 1
   Evaṇa eehādi hohu bhāñto 11
   Taraṅgante hariṇāra khura na disaa 1
   Bhusuku bhānaī núḍhā hia hi na paisāl 11
Cāryācāryya viniścayatha edited by H.P. Sāstṛī ( PP. 12 - 13 ).
Hunting of wild animals like elephant by using clever traps was a well-known pastime from early days in Bengal. It is stated that wild elephants in herds ravaged Kāmarūpa or the surrounding areas so trapping was essential.

Fishing also seems to be one of the pastimes of ancient Bengal. A Cāryā song written in favour of Kāhnupāda indicates that people used to go on fishing in the middle of the rough river to catch the fish with the help of a fishing net. Fisherman used to go even to the sea for fishing.

Though there is no direct evidence that Rowing was practised, it may be assumed that it was one of the physical exercises among some men and woman in ancient Bengal, who knew the art of rowing boats in rivers and other waterways. Boats were used then, as at present as a kind of transport in river and other waterways and sometime these were used for naval warfare by kings and princes.

In the Kamauli Copper-Plate Inscription of Vaidyadeva it is stated that the boatmen or marriners of Vaidyadeva were in a pleasurable mood after conquering the Southern Bengal by naval war.

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1 Watters On Yuan Chwang II P. 186.
We find also in the Tejpur Copper-Plate Inscription of king Vanamāla¹ that a large number of boats have adorned both the sides of the river Lauhitya.

In the Deopāra Inscription of Vijayasena it is stated that his fleet in his sport of conquest of western dominion advanced along the course of the Ganges. So naval fleet was used in ancient days for conquering countries.²

Sri Padmanath Bhattacharja³ states that these boats were kept ready for Naval warfare by the ancient kings. Sometime boats were being used for pleasure trip also.

From the references as found in the Caryāpadas, it may be observed that boats were used for transport in rivers or lakes. In one of the Caryā songs⁴ attributed to Dombipāda there is a description of a low-born woman belonging to the inferior domba community who plies the boats on rivers like the Ganges and the Yamuna for carrying passengers in her boat.

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¹ naubhiralāṅkrtobhayatiropāntadesena Lauhityabhaṭṭārakena
Tejpur Copper-Plate Inscription of King Vanamāla - Kāmrūpāśasanāvali - P. 192.

² ... Yabadgaṅgāprabhāhamadhhabatī nauvitāne .... Verse 22

³ Padmanth Bhattacharya - Kāmrūpāśasanāvali - P. 192.

⁴ Gāhga Jaunā Manṣhhere bahai nāi, tanhi vuñīli matsāgi poiā līle pāra karei ll Vāhatu dombi vāhalo dombi baṭata bhaila uchāra sadguru pāapatrejaiva puṇu jinayrā ll
H.P. Sāstrī - Caryā-Caryaviniścāyaḥ - P. 25.
In the Khālimpur Copper-Plate Inscription of Dharmapāla it is stated that the most illustrious Mahārājadhīrāja Dharmapāla, the Pala Emperor of Bengal used to hear his own praises from the lips of the parrot kept in cages in pleasurable gardens. As in ancient Bengal the kings or wealthy persons used to keep parrots or other birds which could reproduce human voice, so in some of the terracotta plaques at Maināmati we find the representations of parrots on ant hills.

In this Inscription it is also stated that the playful children used to sing in the courtyard in favour of king Dharmapāla at the time of playing. So it seems that children took active parts in games and sports.

Among manly sports Vātsyāyana refers to wrestling matches. So in the Mahābodhi Inscription the word 'Malla' indicates a Boxer. It may refer to Buddhists also who led monastic life, as they had to wage constant war against sense organs.

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1 Līlā Veśmanī Pāñjarodaraśukai rudgitamāṁ
mastavam yasyākarnayetastrapā Vivalī
namrāṁ sādāvānanāṁ
Verse - 13 C.B.I.
Khālimpur Copper-Plate of Dharmapāla, P. 98.

2 Kridatbhiḥpraticattvaram sisuganaih
Verse 13, Khālimpur Copper-Plate of Dharmapāla Ibid.

3 Sreṣṭhānāmeba mallaṁ mahābodhi
niśasānaṁ
Line - 3
Mohābodhi Inscription of the time of Dharmapāla. C.B.I. P. 112.
Sonetime battle is represented as nothing but sports in the inscriptions. Thus in the Belāva Copper-Plate of Bhojavarman it is stated by Jātavarman that battle is nothing but a sport to him. This inscription further informs that Lord Kṛṣṇa sported with hundreds of milk maids.

Betting in a game was also prevalent in Bengal as stated by Sarvānanda in his Tikāsarvasva. It is one of the pastimes, so while witnessing a contest between two rams or a fight between two cocks people promised to offer a bet in those days in favour of the prospective winner.

Snake charming was also a type of game. Sarvānanda in his Tikāsarvasva states that people watched with interest and pleasure the snake charming feats displayed by snake charmers who were known as Vādiyā (i.e. bede). They used to beg money by displaying their games with snakes.

The poet Umāpatidhara in his Saḍuktikarnāmrta gives a detailed description about the way of living of 'Vedes' and states that the people of that age would watch the feat of the snake charmers, who would make serpents stoop down their unpraised hoods by throwing at them some powdered grains purified by uttered charms.

1 'Rañā(ḥ) Kṛḍ(ā) - Verse - 7
Belāva Copper-Plate of Bhojavarmana. C.B.I, P. 236.
2 ... gopīṣatakālikārah kṛṣṇo Mahābhārata sūtradhārāḥ - Verse - 4
Belāva Copper Plate of Bhojavarmana. Ibid.
3 Bhiksārtham sarpadhārini vādiyā iti khvayate Tikāsarvasva - Sarbānanda.
4 Kṣudrāste bhujagāh āyramsi namayatyaḍāya yeṣāmidaṁ bhrāṭaratjāṅgalike(4.25.5) Saḍuktikarnāmrta - Edited by Pandit Ramavtar Garm.
Govardhana Āchārya in his Āryasaptasati gives an interesting description of the snakes charmer making a display of his control over snakes in the presence of house-hold ladies in the lawn of wealthy persons. From this description it is quite clear that Hindu household ladies used to come out from the inner apartment of the house to this lawn to witness the snake charmer feats with intent eyes. So in Bengal this was one of the pastimes.

Vatsyāyana also describes some of the sports enjoyed by girls in his Kāmasūtra. They sometime played games of chance with dice or cards. They sometime built small houses of earth and of wood. Some physical exercises for girls are also mentioned in this book which are the games of hide and seek, spinning round holding each other's outstretched arms, blindman's buff etc. In this connection it may be stated that these games which were prevalent in ancient Bengal are even now found among boys and girls.

Kandukā play is an old game referred to by Bhāsa in his Svapnavāsava-Dattā. In the Daśakumaracarita written by Dandī there is also a reference to such a game. It was play with a ball. This is nothing but dancing and playing with balls in a temple of the God Siva.

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1 Kim parajivairdivyasa vismayamadhurakṣi gaccha sakhi dūrāṁ
   Ahimadhatvaramuragagrāhi khelayatunirvighnah
Āryasaptasati - by Govardhana Ācārya.
2 Kāmasūtra III. (iii) Sutra 5-7 P. 201.
3 H.C. Chakladar, Social Life in Ancient India, 1954, P. 120.
4 Svapnavaśavadatta Act. II.
5 Daśakumaracaritam Dandī - Vol. II. 6th Uccvāsa.
in the ancient Damalipta in the Suhma Country (i.e., Western Bengal) by a princess of that country named Kandukavati. Kandukavati showed a great skill in this play so that the enlightened spectators used to enjoy her pleasant surprising sport.

The commentator of the Kāmasūtra illustrates the pastime of Kadamba Yuddha.¹ In the commentary it is mentioned that instead of soft balls of Kadamba flowers, the people of northern Bengal (Paundras) used sticks and stones. It may be assumed that something like modern hockey game might have been played by the people in ancient Bengal with sticks and stones.

The games of swings or Dolākridā was another favourite game of the ladies of ancient Bengal. Dhoyi in his Pavanadūta states² that in the capital city of Laksamana Sena there were pleasant parks, where young women used to amuse themselves by swinging to and fro in swinging Boxes.

Picnic in the garden is one of the favourite pastimes of ancient Bengal. Every great city in those days was surrounded by extensive gardens where the inhabitants of the city could find some relief from the congested street of the town. In this connection reference may be made to the Lalitavistara where it is stated that five hundred gardens sprang up for diversions of Boddhisattava.³

1 H.C. Chakladar, Studies in the Kāmasūtra, p. 77.
2 ... Dolāh Kelivyasanarasikāh sundarīnām samūhāḥ .... Verse 42, Pavanadūta - Dhoyi Ed. C.H. Chakravarti.
3 Lalitavistara - Edited by Lefmann (vii) 95, (xiv) 183-192.
In the Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana it is stated that early in the morning a party of well-dressed Nāgarakas would go out of the town mounted on horses and accompanied by Gānikas and followed by servants. A whole day was spent in the picnic there. At this time they would spend their time with pleasant games of chance or diverting themselves with the fights of cocks, quails, or rams, and in the afternoon they returned.

Some of the members of this picnic party enjoyed sports in water which took place in artificial lakes or tanks from which all mischievous water animals had first been removed. It was a popular pastime referred to by Vātsyāyana again and again. Unmarried girls and even married women participated in this picnic. Sometimes a virgin was snatched away from her friends or guardian for marriage.

The festival of Suvasantaka reminds us of Dule-Vasantiya of the Sitabëiga cave-inscription which tells us that at this "swing festival of the vernal full-moon ; people tie around their necks garlands thick with Jasmine flowers".

1 Kāmasūtra I. iv Sutras 10–41, P. 53.
2 H.C. Chakladar - Social Life in Ancient India, P. 118.
3 Kāmasūtra III V. Sutra 27, P. 222.
It may be remarked in this connection that in Bhāṣas Carudatta (Act I) Kanadevanuyāna and in Bhavabhuti's Mālatīmādhava the Madanadyāna Yātra (Act I) indicate the same incident of Suvasantaka festival. During this festival like Kṣumvādi Jāgara etc, the women of the cities entered the harem of the king and sported with the royal ladies.\(^1\)

Dhoyī in his Pavana Dūta\(^2\) draws the attention of the people to the fact that the playful women of the Suṣma country (i.e. Western Bengal) would amuse themselves by indulging in swimming and some other kinds of aquatic sports.

Gardening was also a favourite pastime of the people of Bengal as mentioned by Dhoyī in his Pavana Dūta.\(^3\) People in those days planted the trees and creepers in the courtyard of every house to beautify the houses. Specially womenfolk of Bengal used to plant the betel-creepers and watered it.

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1 Kāmasūtra: (a) I IV Sūtra 42 P. 54
   V V Sūtra 11 P. 283
   (b) East and West, i PP. 748 off May 1902.

2 Toyakridārasanipatat (?) Suṣma - sīmantinīnāṁ Verse 33

3 Paurastribhīḥ kramukataravo ropitāḥ prāṅgānesu \(^1\)
   Yatrayatnopagatasalilairmaktamāsiktaṁāla
   napeksanteparijanadādhipānivisrāntiṁabhah \(^11\)
   Verse - 38 - Pavana Dūta - Dhoyī - Ibid.
Apart from the above mentioned description of sports and pastimes—singing, dancing and playing on musical instruments seem to have been common pastime among men and women in ancient Bengal and Assam. The early Sanskrit literature and Inscriptions of Bengal and Assam give numerous references to Devadasis in Hindu Temples, who formed a sort of dancing and singing choir.

The Edilpur Copper-Plate Inscription\(^1\) of Kesabasena bears the testimony to the facts that kings and wealthy persons would amuse themselves by watching the dances of the well-dressed courtesans in the evening.

In the Deopara Inscription\(^2\) of Vijayasena, dancing damsels is also mentioned. It is stated that the temple of God Prodyunesvara was provided with 100 beautiful damsels.

The Bhuvaneswar Inscription\(^3\) of Bhattabhadra informs us that king Bhavadeva provided for the temple of God Harimedhas one hundred damsels.

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1. \(\ldots\ldots\text{Sayam Vesvilasini - janaaparamaajjra-me\'\'jusvanai \ldots\ldots}\)  
   Verse - 9, Edilpur Copper-Plate Inscription of Kesavasena. C.B.I. P. 335.
2. \(\ldots\ldots\text{ratna\'la\'mkrtibhirbhis\'sitabapu\'\' sah\'h \sata\'m subhrubah \ldots\ldots}\)  
3. \(\text{Etasmai harimadhase \ldots\ldots\ldots}\)  
   \(\ldots\ldots\text{Sangitakalisriy\'\'}\)  
   Verse - 30  
So Debadasis were engaged in temple to take part in such entertaining festivals. In Kalhana’s Rājatarāṅgini1 (IV. 269) it is affirmed that two dancing girls were employed in the temple for dancing and singing simultaneously.

The poet Jaydeva and his wife Padmavati were noted for their musical talents at the court of Laṅkānāsaṇa the reputed King of the Sena dynasty in Bengal.

There is a line in a cāryā song which seems to indicate that usually womenfolk would dance and male members would sing and play musical instruments in a musical opera party.2

So the games and pastimes in Bengal as we see from the description given above, nothing but the pleasure and amusement of one who had plenty of leisure to enjoy and ample fortune to provide the means of enjoyments. From the above description it is evident that games and other pastimes continued in Bengal from the very remotest time to modern age.

1 ... devagṛhāsrita nartakyaḥ ...... Rājatarāṅgini IV. 269.
2 Nācanti Vājila gāṇti devī
Buddha Nāṭaka Visamāhoi