

Promotion of Tribal Indigenous Games: A Study on the Indigenous Games of the Zeliangrong (Luangdimai) Community

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Abstract

The Zeliangrong (Luangdimai) community of the North East India has a rich tradition of indigenous games and sports along with varieties of festivals, which are deeply rooted in their social and cultural practices. These traditional and indigenous games play a crucial role in preserving and promoting their identity and values of the community. This paper explores the various indigenous games played by the Zeliangrong people of the North East India, their significance and the need for their preservation and promotion. In olden days indigenous games are played in different occasions. It not only serves as a source of recreation but also foster unity, sportsmanship and physical fitness of the people. Given the increasing global focus in indigenous cultures and traditions, it is also imperative to document and promote these games and sports to ensure their survival and transmission to future generations.

Keywords: Indigenous Games, Zeliangrong Community, Traditional Sports, Cultural Heritage, Sports Promotion

Introduction

Games and sports have always been playing a significant role in shaping the community's spirit and also forms an integral part of the Zeliangrong (Luangdimai) community, forming a significant aspect of their cultural heritage. Indigenous games are considered not only merely recreational activities but also serve as a medium for social cohesion, identity preservation, and physical well-being for the people. The indigenous communities of the world, including those in Northeast region of India, have long been recognized the importance of traditional sports and act as an engine of promoting unity, economy, tourism and cultural pride. The Zeliangrong people are lovers of games and sports where various games and sports are played by both young and old during festivals and other occasion for recreation. However, in the present contemporary society, part due to western influence and partly with modernization and the influence of contemporary sports, traditional games and sports were gradually diminishing. Therefore, it is crucial to study and document to promote these indigenous games and also to preserve their legacy as well as to ensure their continuity and transmission to the future generation. The objective of this paper is to explore and capture the various traditional games of the Zeliangrong people of the North East India, find out their significance and the need to preserve and promote these games in the growing globalized world. The present paper is based on both primary as well as secondary sources. Primary source consist of direct interviews with the village elders and observations of the events held during festivals. Secondary data were collected from journals, books and souvenirs.

Indigenous Games of the Zeliangrong (Luangdimai) Community

The Zeliangrong people have a wide variety of traditional games that are played during their festivals, recreational gatherings on special occasion like New Year day and community gathering days. These games include physical contests, strategy-based games and skill-based activities where both men and women folk took part in the events. Some of the popular traditional games of the Zeliangrong (Luangdimai) are:

1. **Kammanubo or Hepo** – Wrestling
2. **Tatuan Kamatuan or Haramramchu** – High Jump
3. **Tajung Kajung or Hezo** – Long Jump (Played twice a year, during New Year and ChagaGadi/Hega Festival)
4. **Tetu Thuanbo or Nchuting Thau** – Shot Put
5. **Chaniu Phin or Hayia Thua** – Javelin Throw
6. **Marui Kamachua** – Cock Fight
7. **Chariang Jukakarian or Bumriang** – Tug-of-War
8. **Chapi Kamajat (Kou) or Pijap** – Catching and naming his father's or grandfather's name aloud (performed during marriage ceremonies)
9. **Chapaipum Kamnajokbo** – Bamboo Pole Climbing (this is also performed during marriage ceremonies)
10. **Chamaimalairak or Pitat** – Bamboo Stilt Race
11. **Chami Kamalatbo** – Traditional Fire Making (Performed during rituals for new village establishment and sometimes competitions among the clans or individual level)
12. **Chapieketbo or Baipi** – Catapult Shooting
13. **Chaurip or Haret (Asharet)** – Traditional Indigenous Chess
14. **Masungthai (Tachambo) or Nchim** – Close two Foot and Jump
15. **Haupi** – A traditional game similar to Kabaddi, where opponents are eliminated by head or leg touches.
16. **Chagamatnbo/ GoahTarime/ Hagahanitaira**: This is one of the most popular traditional games played by both boys and girls among the Zeliangrong community is Chagamatnbo or Goah Tarime or Hagahanitaira, which is played using Chaga (circular shaped seeds of the *Costus speciosus* creeper). This game is played by involving two teams using these Chaga to strike the opponent's pieces through a variety of techniques and strategy. The game is played in different styles among various Naga tribes but remains a significant recreational activity during festivals.

Some of the ways in which Chaga is played include:

- Throwing off the Chaga with one or both hands;
- Rolling the Chaga on the ground;
- Holding of Chaga in between the Toes and then hopping one step to begin the play;
- Throwing with the head, from near the eyes, ears, or lips;
- Throwing of the Chaga holding holding it with the flexion of the knee;
- Releasing the Chaga to roll down from the arm;
- Pushing or flicking the Chaga strategically.

Chagamatnbo is a popular game usually played as a part of post-festival recreation.

Significance and Promotion of Indigenous Games

The indigenous games and sports of the Zeliang Nagas hold immense cultural and social significance. These traditional games and sports are played as not merely pastimes or leisure but also forms an integral part of the community's identity, transcending from centuries and passed down to the present generation. Traditional events such as games and sports serve as a medium for social bonding, physical fitness, and the transmission of indigenous knowledge systems to the people. The preservation and promotion of these games are crucial in this rapidly globalized world so as to not only preserve it but also popularize and merge with the diversity of global sports platform. Games and sports also play a vital role in fostering unity, discipline, teamwork and strengthen traditional values.

Moreover, being hardly tapped, indigenous sports of the region can become a potential tool for tourism and economic development. Many traditional games, such as wrestling, bamboo stilt racing and indigenous chess etc have the potential to attract cultural enthusiasts and promote sustainable heritage tourism. The documentation and promotion of these sports can also provide avenues for youth employment and income generation. As the process of globalization accelerates, preserving Zeliang Naga indigenous games and sports are equally imperative to be preserve and to maintain its distinct identity and to ensure that future generations inherit and celebrate this rich cultural legacy.

Indigenous games and sports also strengthen social bonds, instill discipline, and reflect the wisdom of our forefathers and ancestors. In order to ensure their survival, the following steps should be undertaken:

Research and Documentation: Researchers and academicians should be encouraged to conduct in-depth studies and publish their works.

Educational Integration: Indigenous games and sports can be accommodated and integrate with the regular courses in schools and colleges in the region. Communities should be encourage to popularize these games through programs at inter village meets and state level.

Government and Institutional Support: The State should provide institutional support and financial assistance for organizing indigenous sports meet at different stage and level.

Community Participation: Community leaders should encourage and give emotional support and necessary guidance for the youngsters to actively engage in traditional sports.

Conclusion

The traditional games and sports of the Zeliangrong community represent a rich heritage that needs to be preserved and promoted so as to transmit it to the future generation as well. These indigenous games are not merely an embodiment of cultural identity. They signifies rich traditional ethos and also provide numerous benefits in terms of health, social cohesion, and economic opportunities. By integrating these games and sports into modern sports initiatives and instilling its utility, we can ensure their continuity among future generations. Promoting indigenous games in the present world is a step towards sustaining cultural diversity and celebrating traditional wisdom.

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