Kho Kho’s Journey: Indigenous to Global Sports

Dr Mritunjoy Das, Dr Neetu Dutta, Dr Deba Prasad Sahu

Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Education, Seva Bharati Mahavidyalaya, Kapgari, Jhargram, West Bengal
Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Education, Seva Bharati Mahavidyalaya, Kapgari, Jhargram
Principal, Seva Bharati Mahavidyalaya, Jhargram, WB.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Submission: 15-02-2024
Review: 20 to 30-03-2024
Accepted: 01-04-2024
Available Online: 21-07-2024

Keywords: Kho Kho, Chakravyuha, Rathera, Progression of Kho Kho etc.

ABSTRACT

The second most popular traditional sport in India, Kho-Kho is fast-paced, entertaining, and demands agility, quick reactions, and quick thinking. The object is to tag opponents as soon as you can without getting touched by them. In addition to being a physical game, Kho-Kho is also a mental game that requires quick thinking and teamwork. Some aspects of the game are said to have been inspired by the famous Chakravyuha episode of the ancient Indian epic Mahabharata, however, its precise roots are unknown. Experts claim that the game Kho Kho, formerly known as Rathera, originated in Maharashtra, India. In the past, it was performed on chariots. In Hindi, the term “chariot” is “rath.”

Kho Kho as we know it now was first played in 1914, during World War I. The first official guidelines for Kho Kho were published by the Deccan Gymkhana club in Pune. They gave the sport an impression of greater organization. On the periphery of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Kho Kho was on display alongside other customary Indian sports like mallakhamb and kabaddi. The inaugural All India Kho Kho Championship was place in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, in 1959–60, while the women’s national championship took place in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, in 1960–61. Furthermore, Kho Kho was showcased in New Delhi at the 1982 Asian Games, and the first-ever Asian Championship was held in Kolkata in 1996. It was also a medal sport in the Guwahati South Asian Games in 2016. Tambulpur, Assam, served as the host city for the 4th Asian Championship in 2023. Currently, over 25 countries have national Kho Kho teams.


Email: dasmritunjoy1990@gmail.com

Vol : 9, Special Issue, 2024, ISSN: 0975-265X

Indian Journal of Yoga Exercise & Sport Science and Physical Education
journal homepage : www.jyesspe.in

Introduction

The second most popular traditional sport in India is called Kho-Kho. Kho-Kho is a classic Indian sport, just like kabaddi. It’s an outdoor game that’s usually played in mud grounds across the nation. It’s kind of like catch-and-chase games but with considerably more entertaining rules in an Indianized form. Other nations where the Kho-Kho is well-liked include Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. [1,3,11]

India has a classic game called Kho-Kho. Its ideas and tactics are probably ancient, having their roots in the epic “Mahabharata.” The legendary fighter Abhimanyu eventually broke through the “Chakravyuha,” a unique military defense circle established by the Kaurava General Guru Dronacharya on the thirteenth day of the war. He ultimately perished from having to battle seven other warriors by himself, but not before causing significant casualties. His fighting technique is akin to Kho-Kho’s defensive strategy known as “ring play.”
[The image of ‘Chakravyuha’ created by Kaurava Guru Dronacharya. The origin of Kho-Kho is featured in the Ancient Indian Sanskrit epic Mahabharata.]

While there are obvious parallels between Kho-Kho and other sports, it also cultivates many other positive attributes, such as sportsmanship, teamwork, loyalty, competitiveness, and self-worth, in addition to speed, agility, strategy, and fast thinking. For the athlete who accepts the challenge, this game alone serves as a tool for personal growth. [2, 4]

Kho-Kho was originally displayed as a unique feature by a single squad at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. It debuted as an international sport in 1996 in the first Asian Kho-Kho Championship in Kolkata, and it was reinforced at the second championships in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in 2000. The fourth Asian championship was place in March 2023 in Tamulpur, Assam, India, and the third Asian championship took place in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India, in 2006. [5, 6]

Historical Development of Kho-Kho in India

The current iteration of Kho-Kho, which is played by people on foot, started during World War I in 1914. The first set of official Kho-Kho rules and regulations were released by Pune’s Deccan Gymkhana club. They provided the sport with a more organized appearance. Kho-Kho is credited to its originator, Indian liberation hero Bal Gangadhar Tilak. In addition, the moniker “Lokmanya,” which means “someone who is loved by people,” is given to him. Although Kho-Kho has been around for a while in India, Bal Gangadhar Tilak (also known as Lokmanya) is credited with creating the game’s current version. Lokmanya Tilak created the original Kho-Kho rules at the Deccan Gymkhana, a club in Pune, Maharashtra, to popularize the regional game. In 1906, Mr. Balkrishna Narayan (Bandopant) Bhajekar started the club. [3-4] Sadly, this first phase did not include the poles designating the field’s center lane, even if it did indicate the playground’s boundaries. Rather, inexperienced players were positioned at the extremities of the latter, sitting, while pursuers sprinted past them to reach the midfield. The Kho-Kho game field was confined to 17 yards of the ellipse’s width and 44 yards of the central lane’s length in 1919. The Inter School Sports Organization was established in 1923–1924, and Kho-Kho was introduced to help the sport grow from the ground up and gain popularity. These efforts are comparable to Hind Vijay Gymkhana and Deccan Gymkhana’s. Playing well-known games like Atya-Patya and Langdi allowed players to practice abilities similar to Kho Kho. The latter game in particular deserves extra attention. For Kho Kho, it was significant and well-known since it improved defense abilities. [5, 6]

The Institute of Physical Education, also known as Akhil Maharashtra Sharirik Shikshan Mandal, was established in 1928 when Dr. Abasahib Natu Pune, Mahabal Guruji from Nasik, Karmarkar Vaidya from Miraj, and Dr. Mirajkar Bombaju collaborated with Kho-Kho specialists to develop the game’s rules and regulations. These regulations differed slightly from the Federation’s current regulations. Along with Kabaddi and Mallakhamb, Kho-Kho performed as a special act at the 1936 Berlin Olympics. In 1949, it was performed in Sweden and Denmark, although not many people saw it. [6, 7, 8]
The Kho-Kho Federation of India (K.K.F.I.) is the main sports organization for this particular game. It has chapters in every state and has been holding Junior, Open, and Mini National Championships for both genders throughout much of India. Under the direction of Great Lt. Bhai Nerurkar of Maharashtra, Lt. Bhupati Mazumder, Lt. Sambhunath Mallik, and Lt. Deben Bose of West Bengal, the Kho-Kho Federation of India (K.K.F.I.) was founded in 1956 with the contemporary game’s rules.

Vijayawada, in the state of Andhra Pradesh, hosted the inaugural national Kho-Kho tournament in 1959–60. The following honors for the game have been instituted by the government: the Janaki Award for girls under 18, the Veer Abhimanyu Award for boys under 18, the Rani Laxmi Bai Award for women, the Ekalavya Award for men, and the Arjuna Award for outstanding achievements in Kho Kho. The task of making this game more widely known in clubs, colleges, and schools was taken on by the Kho-Kho Federation of India (K.K.F.I.) in 1960. At Vijayawada, the first Kho-Kho National was held only for males that same year. In 1961, the National in Women section was inaugurated, and four teams competed, compared to just three in 1960. The Kho-Kho Federation of India (K.K.F.I.) took on the task of spreading the game’s popularity in clubs, colleges, and schools in 1960. The inaugural Kho-Kho National was held in Vijayawada that same year, only for males. There were three teams present. Four teams competed in the National in Women section when it was first launched in 1961. [6,8,22]

**National Level Kho-Kho Competitions**


**International Kho-Kho Competitions**

The Kho Kho tournaments held at the international level are the Asian Championship, Netaji International Gold Cup, South Asian Games, Afro-Asian Games, Indo-Bangla Games, Test Championship Between India and England, and Test Championship Between India and Nepal. [6,7,15]

**Dronacharya Award in Kho-Kho:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Gopal Purushottam Phadke</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: KKFI Official Websites)

**Arjuna Awardees in Kho-Kho: (1970 to Onwards)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>ARJUNA AWARDEE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2024</td>
<td>Nasreen Shaikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Kale Sarika Sudhakar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Shobha Narayan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>S. B. Kulkarni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>S. Prakash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Veena Narayan Parab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Sushma Sarolkar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>H. M. Takalkar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>S. R. Dharwadkar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Usha Vasant Nagarkar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Shreerang J. Inamdar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>N. C. Sarolkar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Bhavna H. Parikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Achala Subhroa Devra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Sudhir B. Parab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: KKFI Official Websites) [15]

---

**Kho Kho's Journey: Indigenous to Global Sports**

68
Global Perspective of Kho-Kho Game

The Federation Cup was started in 1982 for the Men’s and Women’s by the Kho-Kho Federation of India. For the first time, Kho-Kho competed at the Asian Games in New Delhi in 1982. Asian nations expressed gratitude for it. The Indian government sent trainers throughout the nation to establish Kho-Kho as a scientific sport at the local level after observing the tremendous success of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and the Sports Authority of India. Considering its success in retrospect, it was a prominent part of the 12th South Asian Games, which took place in Guwahati, Assam, from February 5 to 9, 2016. Only due to the earnest efforts of Shri Rajeev Mehta, Secretary General of the Indian Olympic Association and President of the KKFI, did it come to pass. The participating nations were India, the host nation, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Under the direction of Competition Director (Kho-Kho), Shri. M. S. Tyagi, the competition was expertly managed. Every Asian nation valued the sport and made sure to bring it to their nations. [10, 15, 22]

Table No. 1
Host city, Position holders, and Participating Counties of Asian Championships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asian Championship</th>
<th>Host City Country</th>
<th>Champion</th>
<th>Runner Up</th>
<th>Participating Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Asian Championship (1996)</td>
<td>Kolkata, India</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Maldives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Asian Championship (2000)</td>
<td>Dhaka, Bangladesh</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Asian Championship (2016)</td>
<td>Indore, Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Asian Championship (2023)</td>
<td>Tamulpur, Assam, India</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka and India</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Logo and Image of 3rd Asian Games-2016, Indore, M.P, India.
Ultimate Kho-kho: A New Dimension Of Kho Kho

Mr. Amit Burman is promoting Ultimate Kho-Kho, the first professional Kho-Kho League in India, in association with the Kho-Kho Federation of India (KKFI). It was introduced to promote and bundle Kho-Kho, an indigenous sport of India, into a structured professional market. The project seeks to elevate Indian sports culture and establish the most coveted sports league in the country. The Ultimate Kho-Kho League aims to bring the traditional Indian sport up to par with worldwide standards and give budding athletes a platform to display their abilities in front of an audience that spans India and beyond. Six teams—Chennai Quick Guns (KLO Sports), Gujarat Giants (Adani Sportsline), Mumbai Khiladis (Badshah, Punit Balan & Jahnvi Dhariwal Balan), Odisha Juggernauts (Odisha Sports Development and Promotion Company), Rajasthan Warriors (Capri Global), and Telugu Yoddhas (GMR Sports)—will compete for the title of first-ever Ultimate Kho-Kho, with the support of some of the biggest names in the corporate and entertainment industries as franchise owners. Additionally, as the league’s slogan, “India Maar Chalaang,” suggests, the game is prepared to move from mud to mat and from the pole to the podium via Ultimate Kho Kho. The athletes will have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to win over fans with their superior skills and establish themselves as national celebrities. Chief Minister of Odisha Mr. Naveen Patnaik congratulated the Odisha Juggernauts for winning the Ultimate Kho-Kho league. He declared that to advance the sport, the government would build a stadium and a high-performance facility. “Kho-Kho has been a traditional sport restricted to rural belts and interiors with limited audiences,” Patnaik stated. [10, 11, 12]

President of the International Kho-Kho Federation Sudhanshu Mittal also seemed confident in the rapid globalization of the Kho-Kho. He added that the 16 participants from various nations, including South Africa, Kenya, the United Kingdom, and numerous Asian nations, were in New Delhi in 2020 to promote Kho-Kho in their home countries. Before the lockdown went into force in March, a coach from the Kho-Kho Federation of India (KKFI) taught the visiting members of these nations the ins and outs of the sport. According to a media statement from the KKFI general secretary Mahender Singh Tyagi, “We gave them a coach who taught them about the technicalities of the sport.” They promised us that they would host tournaments soon and promote Kho-Kho in their different countries before they departed for their various countries. Additionally, preparations are underway for our planned hosting of a world championship.”
The KKFI General Secretary, Mr. Tyagi, added that the group had planned to hold competitions overseas. The KKFI official continued by saying that the federation keeps in constant contact with all of the athletes and coaches who comprise the Kho-Kho Federation to provide technical support for the game’s global expansion. Kho-Kho was recognized by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) in 2018. The national sport will only be a demonstration sport in the Asian Indoor Games for the time being, but it might be added as a discipline to the next Asian Games. [12, 13, 23]

Role Of Indian Government To Promote Kho Kho
The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, has granted the Kho-Kho Federation of India recognition to promote the sport in the nation. The Federation has received admissible financial assistance and other support under the various schemes of the Ministry and the Sports Authority of India. Kho-Kho is also participating in the Khelo India Youth Games. Kho-Kho is also one of the sports/games that meritorious athletes can play to be hired for Group ‘C’ positions in Central Government departments. Union Minister of State (IC) for Youth Affairs and Sports, Shri Kiren Rijiju, provided this information in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha on September 14, 2020. [16, 22, 23]

Final Thoughts On Kho-Kho
Currently, 25 nations play Kho-Kho globally. The Indian Olympic Association’s (IOA) General Secretary, Mr. Rajeev Mehta, expressed hope that the ancient sport of Kho-Kho will be added to the 2026 Asian Games schedule, which will be held in Japan. The Olympic Council of Asia formally recognized Kho-Kho during the 18th Asian Games, held in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2018. Mehta, the head of the Asian Kho-Kho Federation, stated that he thinks the Kho-Kho will be granted full status in the Asian Games in 2026. “I hope Kho-Kho grows up to be as big as the Olympics and Commonwealth Games.”

References
5. https://sport.herts.ac.uk/news-spotlight-on-...-kho-kho
8. https://hi.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/KHO%20KHO%20FEDERATION%20OF%20INDIA,
12. https://khokho.co.uk/about/#:~:text=Kho%20Kho%20was%20first%20exhibited,
at%20the%202nd%20championships.
Dr Mritunjoy Das, Dr Neetu Dutta, Dr Deba Prasad Sahu

Kho Kho's Journey: Indigenous to Global Sports