

Rituals and Festivals: The Tools of Social Control

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Abstract : Rituals and festivals are tools of social control that were engineered long ago through different aspects of games and play to achieve specific social goals. Games, which are leisure time activities are also made part of some rituals which signify a planned sanction of relaxation from the social control which again has specific social goals. Rituals are energized with legends that are connected to the aspects of divinity religiously to add the dimension of sanctity and are practiced across generations by connecting them to cosmic schedules. The need to institutionalize the desired social rules was perhaps recognized quite long ago when the cultures began to emerge and solidify in terms of customs and traditions. Systems of control that could have both intrinsic and extrinsic influences on the individuals through guilt and shame attributes are analyzed in this paper in the context of rituals, festivals and the related cultural aspects.

IndexTerms -Rituals, Games, Social Control, South India, Socialization, Guilt and Shame Culture.

I. INTRODUCTION

Games have become integral parts of rituals at the time of festivals as they serve as a means of entertainment activity in religious procedures reflecting various aspects of the religion, spirituality and social solidarity. These games are often intensely used as tools for predicting future to serve as the advisory for decision making and are some times also understood as the ways in which the devotees could access the answers of the Gods to their questions through the games. Alongside of prediction, games are also used as sources of uniting people irrespective of social and cultural differences and through who the social values and norms are recollected and restored which helps in the smooth functioning of the society. There is a lot of resemblance between sacred rites and games as both obey and follow strict and definite rules by creating an order of life. Both games and sacred rites follow strict and definite rules. They both have commonalities in terms of selection of the places to conduct them, the time or season during which they are conducted and the common human concepts they reflect. They both are conducted at prefixed locations with scope for the spectators to watch the event and become engaged in either cheering up the players of the game or chanting the Gods names in devotion. The places that are used for games like arena, gambling table, the magical circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tribunal, playing grounds, are all specially made, consecrated with sanctity and governed by specific rules which are special to the activities and the places or means of games like chessboard, tennis court which are used to play are not different from the sacred places or spaces like temples which carry spiritual destination (Huizinga 1951). The symbolic representation of games and sacred rites in terms of the ideas and believes in the minds of the people are similar as they carry the elements of cosmos and nature which enable humans to understand the good and evil periods or fortunes and misfortunes, and there by predict them. The movement of the universe, the renewal of seasons, calculation of celestial objects are all used in the prediction of human fortunes. The societies and cultures which appear to be based on the certainty and uncertainty of the fate and which remain more near to nature and environment and where there is no significant procedure for decision making, are the ones which observe similarities between sacred rites and games. This uncertainty is observed profoundly among agrarian societies which depend on the unpredictable climatic conditions for their sustenance and living. Thus, the games carry sacredness along with the ritual rites among these societies.

When the societies become increasingly complex and civilized, the importance given to the sacred rites and sanctity attached to the rituals and religious activities decline. The ritual activities also loose the perception of attributed nobility in the society, their mysterious and sacred attributes get revealed and activities then become normal everyday activities with a little amount of sanctity in the form of stories still connected to the games which then are generally perceived as elements which are parts of the culture since long and not as sacred activities in particular. The games that confirm this scenario are chance games where the whole game is based on permutations and predictions. Both, the games and sacred rites were present in the minds of the people who conceive the universe by remaining near to the nature which deals with fortunes and misfortunes of human beings. 'When the game moves out of the religious environment, it strips itself more and more of its mystery, its secret, and enters the everyday world; it still preserves some degree of symbolism but it is no longer reserved exclusively to the priesthood and to those who are in touch with the sacred mysteries; it is still practiced by adults, who do so in a deeply serious spirit characteristic of the real and spontaneous spirit of the game.' (Jeannine Auboyer 1955, 125). The understanding of the cosmological meaning attached to the game helps in understanding the purpose of games and their significance in human societies. Thus, the games are viewed as activities that carry sacred and consecrated purpose which are used in the understanding of the relation between nature and destiny or fate of mankind.

1. RITUALS AND ASTROLOGY: AGENTS OF SOCIAL ORDER.

Cultural elements in every society have various hidden functional aspects which influence the existence and continuum of societies with their own distinct values, traditions and rules. Often, these functional aspects are hidden to preserve their consecrated and mystical nature to install a compulsion in the minds of the followers to earnestly follow all the traditions. It is a way of institutionalization of the values and rules that are desired in society. Rituals are extensively used by every culture in this context to

institutionalize various sound principles. Ritualization, though is a much debated term on account of the multiplicity of its meanings, in the current context, let the meaning of doing something repeatedly be considered. It is important to periodically rekindle, reprophecize and reinforce various values and traditions to ensure the effective continuum and perpetuation of cultural elements across generations. Hence, periodical implementation of certain procedures in the form of rituals is observable in almost all the societies. Generally, the periodic repetition of such rituals is attributed to a specific calendar date annually. In India, for the purpose of repetition and to further add sanctity to the rituals, it is linked to the astrological cycles and religious events.

Various legends of the Gods are connected to every ritual to add sanctity, pious and fear of sin or misfortune in case of abusing or not following the traditions. Even astrological events have various legends connected to them to reinforce the concepts and institutionalize various principles. On one hand, these traditions and rituals are to be analyzed while on the other we have the games that are part of almost all the societies. From Halloween in the West to various festivals in Indian culture like Holi, Diwali, Dussehra etc there are many elements of play and games attached to the festivals. Rituals that are components of almost every festival, especially in India have strict rules energized by the legends, Gods and various sanctity aspects. Hence, ritual procedures are restrictive and severe in nature. Play and games are activities of relaxation and recreation and are almost opposite to the restrictive pattern emphasized by rituals. Now, it could be identified that in many festivals, rituals and games coexist. The functional aspects of such a combination have to be deeply analyzed to understand the purpose of such a cohesion. The iterative aspect of the rituals signifies the functional aspect of bringing the necessity and cultural compulsion of implementation of a sequence of consecrated activities. Each of the rituals strengthen a social concept. Often rituals are complex set of procedures sequentially implemented which could result in the installation, reaffirmation, perpetuation and preservation of a social order, control, norms, values, restrictions and sanctions. Here, the iterative aspect is linked to the cosmos, as the resolution of the planets follows an equal schedule every year. Almost in every culture legends are observed which strengthen the cosmic positions of the planets, their meanings and their devotional connections. All of these result in the combined effect on the society. In almost all the cultures, it is observable that people believe Gods operate from the skies. Hence, it may have added an additional layer of sanctity when the cosmic activity is connected to the rituals.

In the view of preserving the social institutions, norms and values, every culture has a multiplicity of tools. As we spoke about the cosmic cycles and their connected meanings and their iterative aspect, we should also consider the purpose of predictive subjects like astrology which are based on the cosmic positions. Whether the predictions become true or not, it is observable that the principles of Karma, sin and pious activities, and their reflections are all parts of the astrological predictions. An astrologer referring to the horoscope chart of an individual seeking advice, mentions about various possible mishaps and advices on ways in which his 'bad' Karma could be nullified for good results. Often, we could observe astrologers sinisterring about the 'bad' Karma an individual could incur if the person happens to do deeds which are deviating the prescribed social norms. Such deviated activities are not only bad in terms of astrology but are also considered bad according to the existing social and cultural norms. The nullification of 'bad' Karma could happen by implementing some remedies. Such remedies actually are activities which are considered as noble by the society. For example, helping the poor and destitute or beggars at a temple, lending blankets or clothes, helping old people, feeding animals and so on. Hence, comics are again in this contest being used for the subject of predictions. But all predictions again indicate a socially acceptable or appreciable set of activities to gain better results in each of their personal lives. Hence, all this is again being utilized as a tool to install, reinforce, ensure continuance and perpetuation of the social values, order and control.

The entire canvas of rituals, Gods, cosmic connections, legends is so tightly complexly woven that each of the threads support the existence of the other and no single thread is independent of the other in its existence, constitution and purpose. For the preservation of the whole of the set up of the social values and norms, it may have been understood by the societies long ago that a multitude of tools in various demissions is necessary. Social control could be executed by constantly steering the societies on the socially acceptable paths and restricting the deviations. But such restrictions could strongly operate only when the restrictions have an impact at both the individual and social levels. At an individual level, it is further more important to program the internal psyche of the individuals to behave within the boundaries of restriction. When it comes to the external influences, the perception, titling of an individual as a sinner or the effect on the person's reputation will have to be considered. Ruth Benedict, 1946 perceived two types of cultures that are contrast to one another exist in different societies. Shame and Guilt cultures are emphasized based on the psychological setup of the people in the societies. She tried to explain the concept of culture based on the cultural values and patterns of behavior. In the process of explanation of these concepts, she compared Japanese culture as 'Shame' culture to American culture as 'Guilt' culture. But the titling of 'Shame culture' was strongly objected by the people of Japan saying that the writings were derogatory and offensive which were written by an 'ethnocentric' Western scholar (Creighton, Millie R 1990). Besides all the controversy, the dichotomy of 'Shame' and 'Guilt' cultures is still a much debated topic with respect to anthropological study of culture. Benedict's shame and guilt culture concepts rooted the belief that 'shame' is associated with lower level of development and 'guilt' with higher level of development. Benedict's works have been perceived as a symbol of western thought which was biased in considering guilt as of a higher culture and shame as belonging to a lower culture. Setting a side the status of guilt and shame, Benedict was assumed to be failed in recognizing both guilt and shame as two entities related to each other and are intertwined. (Doi 1973, Lebra 1976). Though there are several criticisms on the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects related to the origins of the guilt and shame cultures, our current context has no relevance with their origins. An attempt is being made to analyze how various elements of control and relaxation are embedded in the cultures through rituals and games and how guided sanctions during the rituals and festivals influence the society. A study of various functional aspects involved in the games and rituals in relation to their cultural implications is being attempted in this paper.

The present paper is based on the ethnographic study of traditional games and rituals in rural India. The study was conducted for thirteen months between 2015 and 2016 in the villages of West Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh, India. The research was conducted by using a combination of ethnographic tools like observation, interviews, conversations, and field notes among the

individuals and groups of men and women in the villages. The field study was primarily focused on the village Marteru along with its surrounding villages which are in proximity geographically. Marteru is an agrarian society where majority of the occupation of the people is involved in agriculture. The Hindus celebrate festivals in which games play a significant role and are observed in every year at particular seasons at attributed time cycles. Among them Dussehra, Atla Taddi, Sankranthi are some of the major festivals that are celebrated with rituals and games.

2.1 ATLA TADDI

Atla Taddi is an important festival in Andhra Pradesh, India which has a profound connection with games. This festival is celebrated on Ashwayuja bahula tadiya or Krishna paksha tadiya, that is, on the third day of the waning of the moon in the Aswayuja month of Telugu calendar. In the Gregorian calendar, this period comes in the month of either September or October. The word Atla Taddi consists of two words, Atla or Atlu means dosas, a south indian dish and Taddi or Tadiya means third day (of Ashwayuja). The festival is celebrated by young single women, girls of ages five and above and also the married women in the pursuit of auspicious marital phase in their lives. Single women celebrate the festival, perform the rituals of the festival and observe fasting praying Goddess Gauri Devi to bless them with a handsome, good hearted and capable husband. Married women perform the same rituals, observe fasting and pray Goddess Gauri Devi in pursuit of a good fortune and longevity, health and prosperity to their husbands. Pregnant women and widows keep away from the rituals of the festival. Nomu (a ritualistic religious vow), is taken by the women during this festival as a part of celebration of the festival. The women who take nomu should undergo a day long fasting without drinking water and in the evening they break the fast after watching moon in the sky and pray Gowri devi by performing pooja. The legend explains that Goddess Gauri Devi herself was advised by Naarada sage to perform the rituals, observe fasting and celebrate the festival of Atla Taddi to get Lord Shiva as her husband. Atla Taddi is often compared to festival Karva Chauth which is celebrated as one of the important festivals of women who pray for a fortunate married life in northern part of India. The festival Atla Taddi has a deep connection with the astrological believes that are given prominence in all aspects of life. The festival, the rituals and the fasting, all of them are believed to safeguard the girls and single women from having to marry an old person. From the past to the present, early marriages of girls is evident and existed in most parts of the country. The early marriages of girls is considered as one of the several social evils or social problems. Young girls are given in marriage to an old aged person, often a widower in exchange of money or as a repayment of debt taken by the parents of the girl. To the girls, such a situation is definitely like a curse they had to suffer out of the inevitable social and economic conditions. The long age gap, the mismatch of thoughts, emotions and desires, physical inactiveness and the risk of becoming a widow early in life are all indicative of a very unhappy and dissatisfied life. Hence, the festival and the rituals are believed to offer the blessings to the natives to escape such a situation. Pregnant women are not allowed to take part in the celebration of the festival as they are considered to be polluted to participate in the festival.

Atla Taddi festival is also called as Uyyala panduga (cradle ceremony or festival) or gorintaku panduga (gorintaku means the art of applying temporary henna tattoos and panduga means ceremony or festival). The women observe this festival for ten years to have a great married life and family. A Woman descends it as a tradition from her mother's maiden family. It is a tradition continued in the maternal lineage. Regardless of the nomu or ritual, every women can celebrate the festival by avoiding nomu and engaging in the rest of the celebration. The tradition in the lineage is observed much among the Brahmins and Vyshyas or Komati caste in the field village. The Reddy women of the village do not observe nomu on Atla Taddi but they observe nomu on Undralla Taddi, which comes on Bhadrpadha bahula tadiya, the third day of the waning of the moon in Bhadrpadha month.

Atla Taddi is a two day festival. The first day of Atla Taddi is called Bhogi Pallu Roju. On this day, girls and women apply gorintaku or henna a dye that is applied on hands which is prepared from the leaf of the plant Lawsonia inermis. Traditionally, it is believed among the married women that the brighter the color of gorintaku imprints on the hands of the women, the more intensely their husbands will love them and among the unmarried, the brighter the color, the more intense lovers will come as husbands. So, with this belief, all the women apply gorintaku on their hands and feet. On this day, eleven married women are invited by the woman who is observing the vratham (ritual) to her house. This process of invitation is called peyrantam which is a social gathering for a ritual. The women start making preparations for celebrating the festival. In the evening, the women become busy in preparing rice flour by grinding rice and there by making dosa batter for making eleven dosas to each of the eleven muthaiduvulu (married women), that is, 121 small or miniature dosas which will be offered to the women during the ceremony the next day. The dosas are made of rice flour and ghee in small size. The women also get involved in making paalataalikulu, a sweet dish made of rice flour, milk and jagger which will be consumed after breaking the fast in the evening. The men will make arrangements for the women to swing on uyyalalu and tie swings at their houses or at verandas or near temples where there will be trees. On the day of Atla Taddi, women and children wake up at wee hours, that is, at two'o clock, an auspicious time which is called as Brahma muhurtham and wash their heads with soap nuts and sunni pindi (bath powder). The house has to be decorated with mango leaves and flowers called thoranam. They eat rice which is cooked the night before called chaddi annam with mudda pappu (plain dal), gongura pickle, ghee (a type of clarified butter) and curd. After eating rice, women along with children go to streets to play games. They go out to play before the sun rise by gathering friends and neighbors. They play all the day till the evening. In the evening, women and children come back to their houses, take bath at the near by canal and offer prayers to Goddess Gowri Devi at the canal and see moon. They return to their homes and conduct the sacred ritual by tying auspicious thread called 'Sankalpam' to their right hand with eleven knots. The Sankalpam signifies the person who did and participated in the sacred ritual. They offer all the 121 atlu (dosas) as naivedyam (offering) to Goddess Gowri Devi and read Atla Taddi story.

2.2. THE STORY

In olden days, there was a princess named Sunama. She is the youngest of all. She has elder brothers who loved and taken care of her so much. She was very fragile. In order to have a good husband, she took the vow of conducting Atla Taddi vratham. The vratham requires complete fasting and as she was fragile, she became weak while observing fasting. She fainted with dizziness and nausea. Her brothers loved her so much. Blinded by their mad love for their sister, her brothers wanted her sister to eat the food. They made a reflection of the moon in the sky by showing a shining object or light with fire and told her sister that the moon has come. Sunama saw the moon and prayed Goddess Gowri Devi and offered dosas to her. After the prayer, Sunama broke the fast by eating the dosas. The days have passed and the time for Sunama's marriage has come. Instead of getting handsome and young husband, Sunama started getting old men as her bridegrooms during the bridegroom selection. Her brother's waited for good and young bridegrooms for their sister but all the wait was in vain. Vexed and with hope lost, Sunama wanted to commit suicide and went into the forest. Seeing the pathetic condition of her devotee, Goddess Gowri Devi, incarnation of Goddess Parvathi along with lord Shiva decided to help her as she was misled by her brothers and it was not her intentional mistake. Gowri Devi explained Sunama about what happened during the nomu and asked her to do the vratham with sincerity and devotion with out missing any procedure. By doing so, she was granted a handsome and young husband by the Goddess. The Goddess also suggested her to conduct this vratham for ten years for having a healthy husband and children. The legend also says that, Goddess Gowri Devi, on the suggestion of sage Naarada, has observed Atla Taddi nomu and got lord shiva as her husband.

After the story, the eleven women who are invited to the vratam are given eleven miniature dosas each along with a fruit, vermilion, turmeric powder, a blouse piece, betel leaf and areca nut. This offering is called vayanam. The woman gives the vayanam by holding her saree pallu (the loose end of the saree) says 'isthinamma vayanam' (I give you (her) the vayanam); the other woman receives the vayanam with her saree pallu by saying 'puchukuntinamma vayanam' (I have taken the vayanam). The host again says, 'mummatiki isthinamma vayanam' (I give you (her) the vayanam), the woman says 'mummatiki puchukuntinamma vayanam' (I received the vayanam); the host says, 'vayanam puchukuntundi yevaroo?' (Who is taking the vayanam), the woman says 'neyyamma Gowri Parvathi' (it is me Gowri Parvathi). After giving the vayanam to all the eleven members, the woman sits with her family members and breaks her fasting by eating the dosas (eleven) and other dishes like paalataaleekalu, rice, gongura pickle, mudda pappu (plain dal), stew with eleven varieties of vegetables and curd. A married women is believed to be leading a happy and auspicious life when her husband is leading a healthy and prosperous life. The healthy longevity and prosperity of the husband are considered as the real fortune of a married woman's life which is called Sowbhagyam in Telugu. Children as well become part of the overall auspiciousness of the women. The festival of Atla Taddi is believed to bless married woman with Sowbhagyam. Children or the birth of children, fecundity is treated as one of the most important auspicious aspects of women's life. This is reflected in the festivals connection with the aspects that deal with the blessings of the divinity for the enhancement of sexual strength of the husband and the fertility of the native as well.

2.3. ATLA TADDI AND INDIAN ASTROLOGY

The festival itself is celebrated on the Aswayuja bahula Thadiya lunar day, which is the third day of the Telugu calendar month. Tiritiya (Third day) is ruled by planet Mars. Mars in Hindu astrology is called as angarakudu or kujudu. Mars signifies the male's capacity to impregnate a woman. A man with a debilitated Mars in his horoscope is predicted to have a weakness of the reproductive organs, his impregnating strength, sperm strength etc according to Vedic astrology. Mars is the energy that blesses the woman with proper menstrual cycles as well. Offerings to the Mars is believed to nullify the bad effects of the inauspicious placement of Mars in the horoscope. In Telugu or Sanskrit language, the inauspicious placement of the Mars planet is called Kuja Dosha, which means fault or bad effect of the Mars. According to Vedic astrology, it is also believed that Kuja Dosha in a person's horoscope may signify sudden death of the Native. Hence offerings are done to Mars in pursuit of blessings to avoid such mishaps. The third lunar day is categorized under Jaya thithis group in astrology which signifies Akash which means space or sky and the third day is ruled by Mars. Akash is signified by Jupiter also called as Sukrudu in Vedic astrology. Akash is a period (Mahadasha) that is considered as the planet signifying children and the planet that brings two people together as Akash again is the binding force that keeps Jeeva (life) in the body. Traditionally, fasting on a full moon day is believed to give the truth as it removes the negative effects of the planet Saturn. Moon rules the fourth house in astrology which signifies 'mother' in the horoscope. It is believed that Para sakthi the extremely auspicious Goddess resides in 'Chandra kala', which may mean the beauty of the moon. Fasting all day without even drinking water and breaking the fast after the rise of the moon in the sky after watching the moon is in pursuit of Sowbhagya through blessings of Para sakthi. Offerings are done to the shadow planet, Rahu as well. Rahu, the imaginary point or shadow planet or north node or ascending node, is the lord of illusions, sudden mishaps and is the eclipse planet that is believed to have the capacity to swallow the moon and the sun. Hence, Rahu is given the offering to ensure unhindered, uninterrupted grace and blessings of the moon. As part of the festival eleven happily married woman called mutthaiduvulu are offered atlu made with lentils and rice flour. The number eleven and the thithi of eleventh day is ruled by Mars again according to the ancient knowledge. Rice flour is the moon's favorite, while lentils are Rahu's favorite, urad dal (split black gram) is favorite food of Mars and hence offerings are made by making atlu with all the ingredients and are given to the eleven invited women, who represent the Goddess Gowri Devi. Thus, with the knowledge and belief in astrology, necessary care is taken to see that the procreation is possible through fertility among men and women with the help different food sources and actives like games.

2.4. ATLA TADDI AND GAMES

All the girls gather at a place and start playing games like swinging, hide and seek, song games like uppula kuppa, chemma chekka, tappatloy taalalay, etc. The games that are played during this festival are mostly physical games. It is believed among the people that the Goddess Gowri Devi likes to play games and thus, they are played as a symbol of her celebration during the festival. Of all the games played by the women and children on this day, swinging is the most important and auspicious game to play. It is said that the women has to swing three hundred times before they break their fast in the evening. Thus, they swing taking turns one after the other. The children continue to play various other games till the night. The men and young boys help the women in playing these games. They help them to swing by holding the swings and pushing them forward for the swing to move and participate in the play too. This activity of swinging in is called Dholotsavam. The swing is made of a wooden plank, some times two or three planks are used to sit, which are tied together with coir ropes or iron chains and is suspended from the ceiling or between two poles or from the branches of a tree. The swing, some times, is simply a coir rope tied to the branch of a tree which is seen among the people who could not pay much for the expenditure. Among the rich and higher status people, the halls or courtyards in the mansions are furnished with swings made up of beautifully designed wooden planks suspended to poles that are hung from the roof for recreation. The swings are also decorated with thoranams on the top of the seat to which the ropes or chains are attached. The swings which are furnished with carvings and decorations in mansions symbolizes higher status and represents royal position. Generally, these swings are only for the heads of the families as a symbol of honor and everyone is not allowed sit on them. But on this day, the women and children are given the chance to swing on these swings as a part of celebrations. Not every house in the village has a swing in their house. So, women and children from the neighboring houses gather at a place and go to the house of the girl who has a swing. Most of the times, wooden swings are available at the houses of higher status people as swings represent royalty and richness. The swings are of different sizes and shapes, some with decorations carved and some with no decoration made with different woods which are strong and durable like teak wood, redwood etc. The seats of the swings are made of thick planks so that they could hold the weight of the people when they swing. The young woman sits on the plank or the rope of the swing, two other women, one from the front and the other from behind push the swing backwards and forwards like a pendulum and the rest of the women wait for their turn. There are different ways in which the women swing. One to four people may attempt to swing at the same time as they play. Two women swing by one sitting on the plank and the other standing at the back of the one sitting on the plank and swing. Some times, two women stand on either side of the plank and a women sits in the middle and swing. Four people swing when the women stand on all the three sides of the swing while one sits in the middle and swing. The balance required to stand on the plank of the swing is practiced every time by the women when ever they swing.

Of all the games, swinging is the most important game that girls or women play on this festival. Girls and women swing and play singing the song 'Atla Thaddoi Aaratloi, Mudda Pappoi Moodatloi'. Younger boys in some regions are found to help the girls in swinging, though this is not a common trait across all the regions. It is believed that Goddess Gowri Devi loves to play with the swing and that the play itself has a divine ritual connection. Swinging is one of the most important activities done by the natives till they reach home after the play, take bath again and perform puja (worship) and break the fast after seeing the moon in the sky. Girls, as they swing, help each other to swing and play in all laughter and joy, though the over all idea of worshipping in pursuit of an able, healthy, young husband of choice is always the bottomline. It is a widely accepted aspect of games that they are played for acquiring physical strength, increasing immunity, growth and development. This aspect has been prominent among the functionalists who believe that games are a part of exercise and recreation that strengthens the body and mind. Psychologists and other cognitive scientists believe that games give mental relaxation, increases learning capacities, increases ability to interpret giving rise to long term benefits like language learning. Along with the physical and cognitive benefits, games carry information that has to be interpreted in relation to its cultural significance.

Swings in India have a story that is deeply connected to the cultural, historic and lifestyle aspects of the societies. The structure of the swing, the material, the shape and the way these swings are ornamented have profound and meaningful connections with the legends and believes that may have now faded with time but their existence is however undeniable. The sexual union, the togetherness of the couples, the love that they celebrate in their lives, the children, fecundity are no simple unthoughtful progression of the lives. They are culturally connected to various rites, legends and the natives actually are driven to a lifestyle where the relationships are valued as sacred connections as they refer themselves to as the blessings and representations of those divine sources. Lord Krishna himself is found in various artistic representations playing the swing game with his love Radha. The relationship of Krishna and Radha itself is treated as the symbol of sacred and lustful love across the country. In India, may be lust itself is not a sin when such desire is the outcome of a story of love towards the partner. The desires are referred with the word Kaama and there is a God of love, Manmadha sacredly attached to all the matters of love and desires. Through the swing game, it is observable that the physical activity of the sexual union as well is subtly represented though not openly announced or debated. The game has a dual nature, one representing the amusement part of it through vertigo, which is the resultant of the perceived effect of the loss of

gravity as the players swing into the air and back, while the other nature is its sacred connection with the rites and culture of the societies. Swings are seen even today in many temples where the devotees in all devotion gently swing a small plank on which the effigies of the Gods are placed. In some cases this is referred to as Pavalimpu Seva (service during sleep time), especially a ritual in temples that is done in the nights. Devotees render the service to the God by gently swinging him to sleep after a strenuous day of administering the various aspects of the world. It is not only the players who swing, but also the ones who push, pull and control the fly, a part of the game. It is observed that these swing facilitators also actively involved in the game sometimes responding to the excited shouts of the ones who are on swing to either speed up or slowdown the motion. Most often as the ones who push are friends

of the natives swinging, do just the opposite of what the swingers want which translates into a continued surprise and excitement. In the question of the festival Atla Taddi, it may also be understood that the young girls are all excited to wake up so early in the morning out of the excitement to play on swings and even forget the hunger of the fasting as they play with these swings all through the day. The legends and some historic writings represent a cosmic connection to these swings as well. Even the life's philosophy itself could be represented through the swing game.

2.5. SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GAMES IN ATLA TADDI: RESTRICTIONS AND RELAXATIONS ON WOMEN

A trend of conservatism is profoundly visible in the village with the role of girls attached to consecrated activities such as offering prayers to Gods, refraining from active involvement in any form of play with males after puberty, cooking and helping mother in all the household activities which are a subset of all the acceptable and desired activities that are akin to the role of a woman in the society. A contrast could be observed in between the conservative and restricted routine role of the females in the village and the sanction of freedom to go out and play on the day of Atla Taddi festival. In some cases, we witness the involvement of boys in the swing games the girls play on the day of the festival. It signifies a momentary sanction of freedom and relaxation of the restricted pattern of rules that are in force during the rest of the year. The functional importance of such planned sanction of certain level of freedom has to be carefully examined to analyze on its purpose and implications. In this context, the popular terms of guilt culture and shame culture which were first discussed by Ruth Benedict in anthropology will have to be considered.

Guilt culture is about a way of social control internalized that refrains the person from doing something wrong or unacceptable in the society. It is more related to the unacceptable deed than to the person who is doing it. Declaration of some deed as wrong, without having to title the person as the doer of it could raise the feelings of guilt in the individual which propels him or her towards correction of such behavior. In guilt culture, institutions, rituals, concepts of sin, pious and God can play a role. Guilt is internal and is the resultant of all the mental setup one develops over years.

While on the contrary, the shame culture is characterized by the members of such a society who actively involve in naming or titling the person as a wrong doer, often discussed publicly among families and peer groups. In such a case, the individual being afraid of the social consequences and the damage that could occur to his or her reputation refrains from all the unacceptable deeds. Further in shame culture, it normally takes more than simple correction to restore the tarnished reputation to positivity. Hence, in the societies characterized by shame culture, individuals consider what others perceive about them as of prime importance as it may be sometimes irrevocably damaging.

Females in the society are more impacted by the traits of shame culture. The way the social restrictions are implemented over females in various situations is characterized by the aspects of shame culture. I witnessed, Lakshmi, one of my key informants in the village refraining from accompanying me to the arena of rooster fights as she was afraid of Perlu Petteyyadam which means 'being titled' as a sinner or a person of poor character if she is seen by the villagers at the location of rooster fights. In the village, females are not allowed to take part in the rooster fights that are conducted during the festival of Sankranthi. Lakshmi left me at the entrance of the street and asked her ten years old son to accompany me to the location of rooster fights. On our way, at the entrance of the street, she was met by her paternal uncle who in a rude voice questioned her about why she was walking towards that street where the rooster fights were conducted and replied that she did not come intentionally or with a liking to watch rooster fights but was asked by me to take her to the place. She left me there on the street a few miles away from the arena. From there, I was taken to place where rooster fights are conducted by her uncle. This situation helped me in understanding how women are controlled in the name of shame and guilt cultures. In the question of women, the shame culture is more adversely impactful if the women deviate from what is acceptable in the society as it can even destroy the good marriage prospects of a woman if titled as a lady of poor character. In the case of married woman, a deviation from the acceptable rules of the society ruins her respect and reputation as a woman of sanctity and pious nature. It could even signal that a woman is of a loose character or is easily accessible in terms of sexual relations as well. Hence, the women are not normally seen deviating from the rules of the society.

The village operates a collective control on certain aspects of the society. This is observable in the question of both males and females. The entire village is so closely knit that it appears like almost everyone knew everyone else in the village. The closeness that is operated among the villagers in the village is explained by the villagers as follows. If a child skips going to school on any day, the news is delivered by the villagers to his or her parents. If an adolescent tries to purchase a cigarette from a shopkeeper in the village, instead of selling the cigarette, the shopkeeper generally questions the kid about why and for who the cigarette is being purchased to make sure that the young are restricted from bad habits. Generally, the news of any deviation from the acceptable behavior among the children is delivered to their parents by the members of the society. In a village, characterized by such strong shame culture traits, passing the news quickly about any deviations is perhaps considered as a responsibility as it is perceived as a corrective measure as well. In the question of females, the resultant fear of deviations is a carefully installed mindset by the society and the socialization processes. Mothers are seen refraining from any deviations to safeguard their own respect. This is learnt and followed by the daughters. Men in the society, fathers, uncles restrict the girl children from falling prey to any bad reputation.

Since, the whole society takes charge of operating a collective corrective control over the children and adolescents, children and adolescents are more afraid of the consequences of deviations than adults. In this context, such highly conservative and restricted culture can totally dismiss the possibility of any essential deviations like the allowance of male-female relationships which are fundamental for marriage, and progress of life. It appears to operate a control over women in particular and promote the possibility of comfortable marriages and family progression. So, a relaxation of rules is necessary to experiment with various essential aspects while still obeying the consecrated aspects. Games during Atla Taddi reflect such guided sanction of relaxation. The word guided is used because there are still some aspects of restriction which are part of the entire set of rituals, procedures and games that are followed on the day of Atla Taddi festival. Such restrictions may have been devised to preserve the sanctity aspect. Food can also be used as a tool of social control which has been discussed by Erik Erikson, 1977 in his attempts to explain concepts like ritualization

and fasting. It is possible to institutionalize any cultural aspect through fasting. This may have been used in the question of Atla Taddi to sanction freedom to play around publicly and in some cases play with boys in the village as well, but systematically connect such sanction of freedom to the original purpose of the ritual, which is to be blessed with an able and young husband. In the village of Marteru, both guilt and shame cultures are visible as a mixture, one complementing the existence of another. Shame culture clearly marks the unacceptable behavior patterns as people talk about what is unacceptable and criticize as it is the basis of the concept of shame culture itself. By repeatedly listening to what is unacceptable, there could be a possibility of the aspect of guilt to be strongly installed in the young minds regarding such unacceptable behavior traits.

In the aspect of guilt culture, rituals and sin play a bigger role. Atla Taddi has many ritual components which symbolize certain desired aspects of the socio-cultural configuration of the village. It is possible to implement social control through rituals. Guilt becomes a consequence of deviation from the acceptable behavior when such acceptable or desired behavior is enforced by rituals systematically. Atla Taddi has the custom of distributing Vayanam which are the offerings of dosa a south Indian dish to the females who attend the ritual. Here, many symbolic aspects of the event and their functional aspects are to be discussed. These aspects could be analyzed from the stand points of guilt and shame cultures as well. A legend connected to Atla Taddi mandates the follow of the rituals every year to ensure the blessing of a young and capable person as a husband to the singles and the longevity and wellbeing of the husband and children in the case of married women. There is a trend of role fixation that is very much visible in this festival rituals as the woman's individualism, her health, her progress in any dimension is subdued or discarded and her wellbeing is equated to the longevity and wellbeing of her spouse, children and family.

As much as the legend related to Atla Taddi raises hopes of receiving blessings to get an able young husband instead of an old man, it also fixes the role of a woman to serve and pray for the man she is married unconditionally after marriage (whosoever is the husband). In the olden days, there was an activity of giving the woman in marriage to old men for exchange of money. Though it is agreeably signifying a hope to escape such a marriage with an old man and be taken by a young and capable partner, the concept of serving whosoever a female gets married to is unconditionally enforced. The symbolism embedded in the rituals of Atla Taddi when analyzed has a similarity to the oaths taken in an army or police parade. Such oaths are taken in front of the higher ranking senior officers in a systematically organized parade. The entire process involves taking an oral pledge to execute the duties as required of an Army or Police officer. To energize the purpose of the oath, a sense of consecration is added with the feelings of nationalism and national duty. Unquestioned subordination to the superior officers as well verbally or gesture wise becomes part of the oath taking process.

Woman who follow the rituals of Atla Taddi symbolically do the gesture of offering Vayanam to the married woman in the society who are considered as auspicious and are comparable symbolically to the senior and fellow officers in a parade. But, what is the oath originally? The purpose of the ritual signifies the oath here. The purpose of the ritual is to get a young and capable husband or in the case of married woman, to ensure longevity and wellbeing of spouse and children. By the ritual, it is being mandated, with the fixture of what a woman wants for life and it is being reemphasized by an oath like gesture symbolizing the desired monogamic, dedicated to husband and family lifestyle among the woman. The ritual now has its implications in both guilt and shame cultural dimensions. Guilt is installed through the rituals, while the publicly taken oath signifies the shame culture aspect of the ritual. The Guilt and Shame cultures are intertwined and depends on one another which mandates a person to follow the rules and regulations of the society.

II. CONCLUSION

Games and rituals have complex connections that lay the foundation to the socio-cultural setup of the rural societies in India. The festival of Atla Taddi is an example of how a festival could have various functional aspects through which the society ensures the continuance of its cultural traits and the strict follow of various social rules. Though the origin of most of the rituals and an explanation of their functional aspects is not witnessed in general in any of the historical writings, owing to the aspect of sanctity and mystical nature attached to these rituals, the implications could be traced and analyzed to connect the various aspects in order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the functional aspects. Rituals are connected to various astrological legends, which mandate the follow of these rituals as the planetary positions repeat in cycles.

The role of a woman is an important aspect of the society which has its implications on the social structure, attributes, distribution of power and responsibilities, sexual selection and various social aspects which constitute the structural and functional dimensions of a society. Thus, in executing a social control, it appears that the fixation of the role of women is pivotal. Hence, the rural societies in India have their cultural aspects designed in such a way that the follow of the cultural aspects is mandated through rituals and intensified through games. It is like a balance of rule and relaxation existing in the forms of rituals and games. While a rule is restrictive in nature, relaxation is a guided sanction purposed towards a specific social and cultural function or to keep the generations away from abstinence and monastic lifestyles which could become derogatory to existence and perpetuation of societies. The rural societies may have recognized the need for initiation of correction of behavior from both intrinsic and extrinsic sources. Intrinsic in this context is sourced from the realization that occurs through guilt and sin. Extrinsic sources are the fear of loss of reputation, image, trust and respect. Reflecting these aspects with the analysis of guilt and shame cultures, it could be summarized that both rituals and games have an interplay of the aspects of guilt and shame cultures which mandate undeviated follow of social rules by programming the behavior both internally and externally.

These aspects that are discussed in Atla Taddi are not unique to Atla Taddi alone. Across India, various festivals have such deep socio-cultural and functional connections. The famous festival of Holi has men and women participating in a play with colors without any restrictions. It may also be analyzed as a guided sanction of such liberty to men and women. Every festival has a legend and several of the festivals have astrological connections too. Rituals and games are hence appropriately embedded into the cultures to protect the socio-cultural values and ensure their continuance across generations.

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