

## History and Development of Kabbadi Sports in Karnataka

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### ABSTRACT:

The evolution of Kabbadi sports in Karnataka has been intricately linked to the cultural, social, and historical fabric of the region. Emerging as a traditional form of entertainment, Kabbadi has withstood the test of time, adapting to contemporary preferences while retaining its core essence. Kabbadi sports, deeply rooted in the cultural landscape of Karnataka, represent a unique form of traditional wrestling that emphasizes strength, skill, and strategy. This sport is not merely a physical contest; it embodies communal values and social identity, fostering a sense of belonging among participants. Karnataka's rich cultural tapestry is deeply entwined with its ancient references, which illuminate the historical roots of its traditional sports, including Kabbadi. The current status of Kabbadi in Karnataka reflects a complex interplay of cultural recognition and evolving societal contexts. Traditionally hailed as a grassroots sport, Kabbadi has seen a revival in interest due, in part, to organizational efforts aimed at promoting indigenous sports as vital components of Karnataka's cultural heritage.

### KEYWORDS:

Social cohesion, Cultural Heritage, Societal dynamics, Foundational values.

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### Introduction:

The evolution of Kabbadi sports in Karnataka has been intricately linked to the cultural, social, and historical fabric of the region. Emerging as a traditional form of entertainment, Kabbadi has withstood the test of time, adapting to contemporary preferences while retaining its core essence. As the sport transitioned into various modern formats, its inclusion in professional leagues, such as the Pro Kabaddi League (PKL), has heightened its visibility and popularity beyond local confines, thus drawing a diverse audience across India and internationally (Milan P Patel

et al., 2025). This transformation has not only stimulated public interest but has also fostered a deeper appreciation for the sport as a representation of regional identity. Furthermore, the interplay of community involvement and traditional values underscores the significance of Kabbadi in promoting social cohesion and cultural heritage within Karnataka (Fahad S et al., 2025). This introductory exploration aims to set the stage for a comprehensive examination of Kabbadi historical trajectory and its ongoing development in contemporary society.

### **Definition and significance of Kabbadi sports**

Kabbadi sports, deeply rooted in the cultural landscape of Karnataka, represent a unique form of traditional wrestling that emphasizes strength, skill, and strategy. This sport is not merely a physical contest; it embodies communal values and social identity, fostering a sense of belonging among participants. Historically, Kabbadi has provided a platform for local youth to showcase their talents and engage in healthy competition, reinforcing societal bonds through shared experiences. Additionally, the significance of Kabbadi extends beyond athleticism, as it serves as a medium for imparting life skills such as discipline, perseverance, and teamwork. Moreover, the sports evolution reflects broader trends in society, highlighting issues of modernization and globalization that influence traditional practices. As educational institutions increasingly recognize the importance of integrating sports into curricula, understanding Kabbadi's role could enhance initiatives aimed at preserving cultural heritage amidst changing societal dynamics (M V Reddy L, 2023)(Patil AM et al., 2020).

### **Overview of the historical context in Karnataka**

The historical context of Karnataka has been shaped by a variety of influences that have laid the groundwork for its rich cultural and sporting traditions. Dating back to ancient times, the region was part of significant empires such as the Mauryas, Satavahanas, and the Vijayanagara Empire, each contributing to the sociopolitical fabric that nurtured local sports, including Kabbadi. This traditional game reflects the valor and competitive spirit heralded by historical narratives and festivals celebrated across the state. Furthermore, the colonial period introduced Western sports and educational reforms, which, while altering some local practices, also provided a platform for Kabbadi to evolve amidst emerging modern influences. Ultimately, this blend of historical legacies and

adaptive resilience has played a crucial role in promoting and preserving Kabbadi, ensuring its status as a beloved sport within Karnatakas cultural heritage (1990).

### **Historical Origins of Kabbadi**

The historical origins of Kabbadi can be traced back to ancient times, reflecting a rich tapestry of cultural influences that have shaped its evolution in Karnataka. This traditional game is believed to have evolved from several indigenous sports that were prevalent in the region, significantly influenced by local customs and the agrarian lifestyle of its early players. Historical texts and folklore suggest that Kabbadi was not only a form of physical competition but also served as a medium for social connection and community bonding, particularly during festivals and gatherings. As the game transitioned through various dynasties, it absorbed regional nuances, making it a unique expression of Karnataka's cultural heritage (Tripathi A, 2022-02-10). The continued practice of Kabbadi today underscores its historical significance, showcasing how traditional sports can adapt and thrive amidst changing socio-cultural landscapes while retaining their foundational values.

### **Ancient references and cultural roots in Karnataka**

Karnataka's rich cultural tapestry is deeply entwined with its ancient references, which illuminate the historical roots of its traditional sports, including Kabbadi. The early Vedic period, spanning approximately 1500 BCE to 500 BCE, serves as a foundational era where physical activities were not merely recreational but intricately linked to daily life and spiritual practices, establishing a precedent for future sporting traditions (Nigam D, 2024). This integration of physical prowess and socio-religious ethos continued through the Classical Period, marked by significant contributions from various dynasties, including the Mauryas and Guptas, which fostered an environment conducive to the flourishing of sports and physical education (Nigam D, 2024). These historical influences have shaped Karnatakas sporting culture, underscoring the regions commitment to physicality as a core component of societal identity, resonating well into contemporary practices, illustrating the provinces enduring legacy as a center of cultural and athletic heritage.

### **Evolution of Kabbadi through different dynasties**

The evolution of Kabbadi, a traditional sport rooted in Karnatakas

cultural fabric, reflects the influence of various dynasties that have ruled the region. From the early Kadamba dynasty, which laid the groundwork for organized games, to the flourishing of Kabbadi under the Hoysala and Vijayanagara empires, each era contributed significantly to the sport's development. The Hoysalas, known for their patronage of arts and culture, incorporated these games into their royal festivities, thereby enhancing their popularity and competitive nature among the populace. During the Vijayanagara period, Kabbadi experienced further refinement, with standardized rules and competitive structures emerging that allowed for organized tournaments. This evolution not only fostered a sense of community but also solidified Kabbadi's place as a vibrant part of Karnataka's athletic heritage. As each dynasty left its mark, Kabbadi transformed into a symbol of regional pride, reflecting the cultural continuity of Karnataka.

### **Traditional Practices and Rules**

In the context of Kabbadi sports in Karnataka, traditional practices and rules play a pivotal role in maintaining the authenticity and cultural heritage of the game. These regulations, which often stem from local customs, dictate not only the gameplay but also the ceremonial aspects surrounding the sport, such as rituals prior to matches and community gatherings that foster unity among participants. Adherence to these practices has ensured that Kabbadi remains a vibrant part of Karnataka's cultural tapestry, reflecting the values and social structures of the communities involved. Moreover, as contemporary influences permeate traditional sports, the juxtaposition of established rules with modern adaptations raises pertinent questions about the sport's integrity and its future direction. The discussion around such transformations must acknowledge the delicate balance between preserving heritage and embracing change, thereby facilitating a richer understanding of Kabbadi's evolving identity within the cultural landscape of Karnataka. (N/A) (M V Reddy L, 2023)

### **Description of traditional gameplay and rules**

In the traditional sport of Kabbadi, gameplay is characterized by its dynamic and strategic nature, embodying elements of agility, strength, and teamwork. Played predominantly in open fields, the game involves two opposing teams, typically comprising seven players each. The objective is for the offensive team, known as the raiders, to infiltrate the opposing

half, touch as many defenders as possible, and return to their side while chanting Kabbadi to signify their breath control. Defenders aim to tag raiders without crossing the midline, emphasizing the need for precise coordination and quick reflexes. Notably, players are allowed to engage in physical contact, which adds an element of risk and excitement to the game. The intricate rules governing player interactions and scoring are deeply rooted in traditional practices, highlighting the cultural significance of Kabbadi as a reflection of community values in Karnataka (Wren S, 2024-08-21).

### **Role of community and local festivals in promoting Kabbadi**

The promotion of Kabbadi, a traditional sport deeply rooted in Karnataka, is significantly enhanced through community engagement and local festivals, which serve as vital platforms for its practice and appreciation. These festivals, often organized around religious or cultural occasions, provide a communal space where residents can gather to participate in and witness Kabbadi matches, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and cultural identity. The enthusiastic participation of locals not only amplifies the visibility of the sport but also encourages younger generations to engage with Kabbadi, ensuring its continuity and evolution over time. Furthermore, local festivals often feature competitions that attract spectators, thereby cultivating a supportive environment that celebrates regional heritage and athleticism. Such community involvement not only enhances the social fabric of the region but also contributes to the broader recognition and institutional support for Kabbadi, further solidifying its place in Karnataka's cultural landscape (Thompson A et al., 2025-01-14).

### **Modernization and Popularization**

The modernization and popularization of Kabbadi sports in Karnataka have been deeply influenced by various socio-economic factors that reflect broader cultural shifts within Indian society. As traditional sports increasingly find their place within contemporary frameworks, initiatives such as events organized by local educational institutions have provided vital platforms for enhancing visibility and engagement. For instance, the One Day National Multidisciplinary National Seminar on Emerging Trends and Issues in Social Sciences organized by The New Miraj Education Society's Kanya Mahavidyalaya aimed to foster dialogue

around regional sports, emphasizing their significance in social cohesion and community identity (Prof. Sargar B et al., 2020). Additionally, with the establishment of institutions like Davangere University, which has embraced educational offerings that promote local arts and sports, the revival of Kabbadi is intertwined with a commitment to social justice and development, particularly for marginalized communities (Prof. Kaliwal B). This dynamic interplay of modernization and cultural heritage continues to shape the future landscape of Kabbadi in Karnataka.

### **Influence of modernization on Kabbadi sports**

The influence of modernization on Kabbadi sports in Karnataka reflects broader societal transformations that have emerged over the past few decades. As India transitioned towards a market-oriented economy post-1980s, cultural and social paradigms began shifting, impacting traditional sports like Kabbadi. The influx of media exposure and the global sports industrys rise have introduced new training methods, equipment, and a competitive mindset that diverges from the sports grassroots origins. While modernization has facilitated increased visibility and opportunities for Kabbadi players, it also poses challenges that threaten the sports authenticity and community-centric values. Scholars underline this duality, noting that modernization can lead both to the revitalization of cultural practices and the dilution of their original significance (Knut A Jacobsen, 2018). Furthermore, historical contexts such as those presented in documents discussing Indias evolving political landscape during the early 2000s emphasize the intersection of sport and national identity, further underscoring the complexities introduced by modernization (Laddha D et al. ).

### **Current status and recognition of Kabbadi in Karnataka**

The current status of Kabbadi in Karnataka reflects a complex interplay of cultural recognition and evolving societal contexts. Traditionally hailed as a grassroots sport, Kabbadi has seen a revival in interest due, in part, to organizational efforts aimed at promoting indigenous sports as vital components of Karnatakas cultural heritage. Local sporting events have gained prominence, drawing participants from various age groups and fostering community engagement. Additionally, the increasing visibility of Kabbadi through state-sponsored tournaments and initiatives contributes to its legitimization within the wider sporting

landscape. However, challenges remain, particularly concerning the financial sustainability and infrastructural support required to maintain its momentum. The recognition of Kabbadi not only underscores the cultural significance of traditional sports in Karnataka but also highlights the need for continued advocacy to ensure that such sports are respected and funded appropriately, allowing them to thrive alongside modern sporting trends (N/A)(N/A, 2020).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the rich history and development of Kabbadi sports in Karnataka reflect not only a traditional sporting culture but also the socio-economic dynamics within the region. The evolution of Kabbadi, from its grassroots origins to its recognition as a competitive sport, exemplifies the intricate interplay between local customs and contemporary sporting practices. This trajectory has been shaped by various factors, including community engagement, modernization efforts, and the influence of regional festivals, which serve as platforms for the sports promotion and sustenance. As Kabbadi continues to adapt to changing societal norms and the advent of technology, it remains essential for stakeholders to prioritize the preservation of its unique heritage while fostering its growth. Future research into its impacts on social cohesion and identity will be crucial in understanding Kabbadi's role within both local and national contexts.

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