



# **Traditional Indian Indoor Games Guide**

Ancient Strategies for  
Modern Living Rooms





# INTRODUCTION

Before iPads became summer companions, Indian homes stayed lively with cowrie shells and cloth boards. These games didn't need charging—they needed players willing to sit, think, and laugh together.

I remember my first attempt at Pachisi on a sticky afternoon. My grandmother tossed four cowrie shells onto worn silk. I lost badly. But somewhere between counting and groaning, I forgot to miss my phone.

That afternoon changed something. Traditional games aren't relics. They are tools for patience, probability, and presence—without a single notification.





# How Living Room Play Differs From Screen Isolation

Around a Cloth Board	On a Glowing Screen
Eye contact replaces emojis	Faces hidden behind devices
Rules negotiated aloud	Algorithms dictate everything
Grandparents join easily	Older generations feel excluded

## What actually unfolds:

- A child learns to wait for three other turns.
- Someone accuses them of cheating—then laughs and admits they miscounted.
- The game slows because the heat makes everyone move gently.
- These are not old habits. They are emotional rehearsals for real life.



# Why Ancient Strategy Beats Modern Simplicity

What Parents Assume	What Traditional Play Delivers
New board games teach more	Chaupar requires managing four pieces at once
Bright colors hold attention	Cowrie shells create a calming click
Winning keeps kids interested	Losing gracefully builds real resilience

A game played for a thousand years on this subcontinent understands heat, boredom, and family arguments better than any import.



# 3 Undiscovered Classics Your Family Can Start Tonight

## 1. Pachisi – The Original Cross-and-Circle

Seven squares per arm. Four pieces per player. Cowrie shells determine moves—two shells mean two spaces, four shells give an extra turn.

**What it builds:** Mental math without worksheets. Risk assessment without lectures.

## 2. Adu Puli Attam – Goats Versus the Tiger

One tiger. Three goats are placed per turn. The tiger eats by jumping. Goats win by trapping the tiger completely.

**Indoor adaptation:** Draw a grid on paper. Use black and white buttons. No board needed.





### 3. Pallanguzhi – The Sowing Logic Puzzle

Fourteen shallow pits. Tamarind seeds distributed. Players scoop and sow clockwise, capturing from opposite pits.



# Small Shifts That Bring Traditional Games Back

**Mistake to avoid:** Buying expensive hand-painted sets before knowing whether anyone will sit.

**Better approach:**

- Draw Pachisi squares on a bedsheet with a marker.
- Use buttons, pebbles, and old Ludo dice.
- Play fifteen minutes after lunch—not two hours before dinner.

A little improvisation removes the “this feels like museum duty” resistance.





# What Happens When Cowrie Shells Replace Keyboards

Expectation	Reality
Kids will protest immediately	Kids ask “one more game” three times
Adults feel bored within ten minutes	Adults get competitive and forget phones

**What truly worked:** keeping a cloth chaupar board on the low shelf—no setup friction. Letting the youngest go first every time. Playing without a formal score.





# When the Game Ends in a Fight

It will happen. Someone flips a board.  
This is not failure. This is an emotional  
practice.

**Instead of fixing it immediately,  
pause:**

Who suggests a rematch first?  
Who quietly resets the pieces?

Over time, children learn negotiation  
because the stakes are low—a lost turn,  
not a lost friendship.





# A Gentle Reminder for Today's Families

You are not rejecting technology. You are offering a second option—one that worked for generations before Wi-Fi.

## **Your child learns from your posture:**

- Putting your phone facedown models presence.
- Laughing when you miscount teaches self-compassion.
- You need one cleared coffee table and fifteen willing minutes.



# Building a Weekly Rhythm That Survives Summer



**Start simple:**

**Tuesday:** Pallanguzhi after the hottest hour

**Thursday:** Adu Puli Attam with button pieces

**Saturday:** Pachisi with grandparents on video call

Rotate three games. Never add a fourth until the first three feel automatic.





# The Real Goal of Rediscovering Traditional Games



The real goal is watching a teenager voluntarily put down a phone to roll cowrie shells with a younger cousin—and hearing unfiltered laughter fill a silent room.



Keep rules flexible, materials humble, and expectations low. A game that ends with everyone smiling always matters more than one played perfectly but forgotten by morning.



# Thank You



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