

# PLAYTIMES OF THE PAST

**TAHMEED CHAUDHURY**

Remember those days when we used to come back from school, eat lunch and run off to streets/rooftops to meet our buddies and play fun games and you're a 90s' kid who grew Bangladesh, you'd surely embrace the digital world. They are more likely to remain indoors and play video games, surf the internet and have their eyes glued to the television screens as opposed to what children of previous eras were involved in. Personally, I was thrilled to take part in outdoor games that were popular at that time. Redwan B Rokon, a master's student at the London School of Economics (LSE), says, "The excitement of getting out to play with the kids in my neighbourhood was the best part – may it be street cricket, or football in the monsoon rain, or just running around or cycling. The joy of outdoor activities in my childhood is second to none and I miss that part the most."

I remember how I prioritised play time over other important events and regardless of what was on my schedule, I'd always get back to my place and meet my friends by 4 pm. Let me take you through some of the

games that I loved and which I'm sure every kid of the pre-technological advancement era can relate to.

## Rooftop Cricket

This was a favourite, especially for little boys. I remember how I would rush off to the small grass field adjacent to my house, meet up my friends, and we would decide whose rooftop would be the best choice for that

day. One of us would bring a tennis ball and another would bring along his bat; we'd use spare bricks as stumps and then indulge in the game till the sun went down. There were no teams; everyone would be on the fielding side apart from the solitary batsman and a game of rock, paper, and scissor would decide who'd bat first and who would follow in. We would use the standard rules of the game and set up boundaries. However, hitting sixes were restricted as the batsman would be declared out if the ball left the roof and fell outside.

## Street Football

Nothing beat the thrill that came with playing street football. Goal posts would be made by using sandals or abandoned bricks and teams of 4-6 players would take to the "field" and an intense battle would follow. We would set up our own rules, however, and there were no fixed positions – everyone would chase after the ball, nasty tackles would result in penalties, and there would be a flurry of goals. On rainy days, we'd get soaking wet and send mud and water flying everywhere. As the sound of Maghrib *azaan* was heard, we would decide on a last goal rule where the team scoring next would win. At the end of the day we returned home with huge smiles on our faces.

## Kite Flying

Kite flying is another sport children were fond of back then. I can still vividly remember those days when I would meet up my best friend/neighbour and the two of us would embark on a complicated mission to set up a kite and get it flying. He would hold the spool and give me the string, and I would hold, twist and turn the string to control the flight of the kite. Other children would often join us, littering the sky into a beautiful and mesmerising mess of colourful kites.

## Tag

Otherwise known as "chhowachhuwi" in Bangladesh, tag was a favourite activity of mine, especially when there was nothing else to do or we did not have the required equipments to play other sports. It was also called "chor (thief)-police". A few of us would play the game by initially doing a sort of lottery to determine the police and the rest were thieves. The thieves had to run away from the police and evade them. If the police was able to chase someone down, that person would then become the police.

We used to play tag for hours until we were short of breath or were called by our parents. Nothing can get your adrenaline rushing like tag.

## Hide and Seek

Another equipment-free game I loved to indulge in was hide and seek. It was more of an indoor game and more often than not it took place on rainy days. There was one (at times more than one) person who would close his/her eyes and count to ten as the rest of the group would look for places to hide in and as soon as the counting stopped

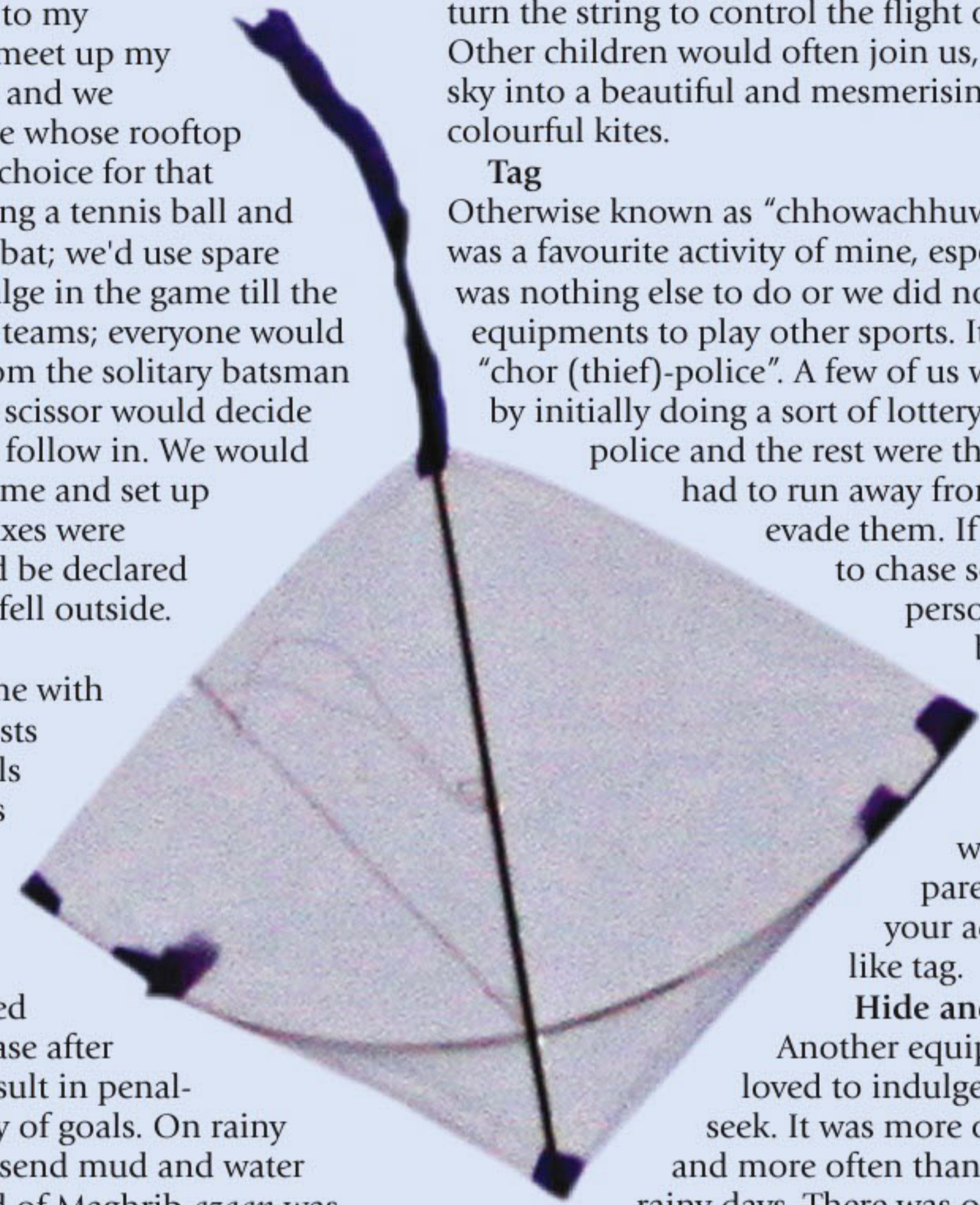
he/she would start off on a mission to locate the others. At times we would turn off the lights to create a spooky atmosphere and it would make the game much more fun, thrilling and exciting.

## Cycling

A cycle meant as much to a 90s' kid as an iPad does to kids now. day, the best present I have ever received was the two wheeler I got for my eighth birthday. It was my companion in strode across the neighbourhood flaunting my newly developed "skills" and would often return home with cuts and bruises. Cycling was a sport that many children loved and it was an activity that was not only fun, but also a good exercise.

"Nowadays, I see kids using iPads and tablets as means of entertainment. Back when I was their age, my favourite time of the day was when I used to run off to the local field to meet up my buddies and indulge in outdoor activities until the sun went down. It's not the kids' fault though. The advancement of technology has left its mark and the shortage of open spaces also deprives most kids of playgrounds," says Fatin Anjum Khan, a computer science student of North South University.

As the years pass and hardships of life increases, it's only normal that one would look back and reminisce the good old stress-free days. Likewise, I think of my childhood and how life was so much more enjoyable back then. A mammoth part of the childhood was being able to play with my friends, neighbours and playmates and to be able to get my heart racing by taking part in such amusing games. Nothing will ever be able to replace the thrill of street football, the joy of rooftop cricket, the pleasure of cycling or the adrenaline rush of hide and seek or tag.



PHOTOS: DARSHAN CHAKMA, MASHROOR NITOL & THAHNAN FERDOUS

