

Chakcha Stone Game



The chakcha (ཆག་ཆག་) stone game is a simple game mostly played by children in the eastern parts of Bhutan. The game requires five small round pebbles which can fit in the palm. Children play the game with their friends at home while their parents are at work, or during their free time in school. The stone game has five levels, each bearing a specific name.

The first level is called *ek dupa* (ཞིག་བཟུང་བ་). The player holds all five stones in his or her palm and throws them upwards in the air. S/he turns the palm to face the ground, and stretch out the fingers to let the pebbles land on the back of the hand while falling back to the ground. The player then throws the pebbles and catches it with the hand facing down. Then, the player throws collects those on the ground, throws them to the air and have them land on the back of the hand palm. If the player fails to catch the pebbles which has landed on the back of the hand, the other player takes the turn.

The next level, *dho dupa* (རྩ་བཟུང་པ་), requires throwing the stones on the ground while keeping one stone clasped in between the index finger and the thumb. This time, the player has to pick up two stones at a time while the one in the hand is thrown in the air. The player should successfully pick two and also catch the one falling from the air. On the third level, *teen dupa* (ཉིན་བཟུང་པ་), the four stones are thrown on the ground. The player has to pick up three stones at once while also catching the one which has been thrown in the air. On the fourth level, *char dupa* (ཅར་བཟུང་པ་), the player throws one stone in the air and four remaining stones to the ground and catch the one in the air. The fourth level is however quite hard, as the player has to throw one stone in the air and pick up all four stones on the ground on time to catch the one in the air. The player has to successfully repeat this five times to advance to the final level. Before advancing to the final level, a player has to finish one more stage, called *jili guto* (བྱི་ལེ་གུ་ཏོ) or cat's head, where the player has to manage to hold the stones on the back of the hand with palm facing down and fingers making a fist like a shape of cat's head.

The final level is called *ama tsukpé* (ཨ་མ་བཟུང་པ་) or 'placing the mother.' The player uses both hands. This level is the most difficult part of the game. The player has to stretch the fingers of the left hand to form an arch or a cave with the index finger and thumb. The player then gently releases four stones on the ground near the mouth of the cave. The opponent chooses one particular stone, which is located at a strategically difficult point for the player to push the other stones past it into the cave. This chosen stone is called the *ama* (ཨ་མ་) or mother, hence the name *ama tsukpé*. The *ama* has to be pushed into the cave after all the other stones have been put inside. The player gets only two chances to put each stone into the cave without touching the mother stone. The player gets only one chance to push the mother stone at the end. When all the stones are inside the cave, the player has one final move, that is, to collect all the stones like in the fourth level. After this, the player successfully completes one round of the game. However, if the player fails in one of the levels, the turn goes to the opponent. The player can pick up from where the game was left off in the next round.

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