

## Duezaley Pebble Game



The games of Bhutan required no sophisticated materials or equipment. Bhutanese made do with what was available to them. Bhutan is an agrarian country and still majorities of the population depend on agriculture and farm produce. In a typical Bhutanese family, sons (and sometimes even daughters in the absence of sons) were always bestowed with the responsibility of herding cows. They would spend days in the pastureland letting their cows graze among the rich grasses. During those idle times, herders would spend their time together playing different games. Some say that this pocket pebble game was invented by the cow herders when they had nothing much to do, but to engage their minds and innovate something to pass their time.

The pocket pebble game popularly known as *duezaley* (འཕྲུལ་ཐའེ) is a simple game played by teenagers and children outside their homes. Nine small pockets are dug out in the ground in a strategic manner so that there are two rows of four pockets facing each other. A main pocket called Apai Gutoh (ཨ་པའི་གུཏོམ་) is centered at the top away from the rest of the pockets.

All the pockets are filled with five pebbles each except the main pocket which is kept empty. Two players are involved in the game. The first player can pick a bunch of pebbles from any pocket and drop each pebble in the consecutive holes in a clockwise direction. The player keeps filling the pocket until a point, where she drops the last pebble in one pocket. If the next one is empty, she makes a swiping gesture at the empty pocket and whatever number of pebbles collected inside the following pocket is won. A player cannot make the run if the last pebble is dropped just before

the Apai Gutoh (ཇ་པའི་མགུ་རྟོག) pocket, provided the Apai Gutoh (ཇ་པའི་མགུ་རྟོག) is filled. The turn goes to next person. The next player can start by choosing any pocket filled with pebbles, except the main one Apai Gutoh (ཇ་པའི་མགུ་རྟོག).

The final winner is the one who collects the highest number of pebbles. Getting a chance to empty the main pocket Apai Gutoh (ཇ་པའི་མགུ་རྟོག) earns a lot of pebbles since that pocket is the toughest one to empty.

Today modern technologies have made things easier and viable. Some traditional games have started to disappear in the face of modern entertainment and sports. The only remaining popular games are archery (མདའ), *khuru* dart (ལུ་ཅུ) and *degor* (རྗོ་རྗོར) stone game. The influences of modern games have overwhelmingly taken the attention of youth these days, though efforts are being made to promote indigenous games and sports.

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