

Globalising Kho Kho

From Mud To App, Mittal Is Game For A Change

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Kho Kho, once written off as a rural or forgotten sport, has re-emerged with vitality, passion, and international appeal under the leadership of politician Sudhanshu Mittal, currently president of the Kho Kho Federation of India and vice-president of the Indian Olympic Association. In a virtual chat with GT reporters, he shared his dream of making Kho Kho a part of international sporting events and transforming it into a sport that proudly represents India on the international front.

Dreaming big

When I became president of the International Kho Kho Federation, my biggest challenge was to believe in our dream. Our goal is to make it a demo sport at the 2032 Olympics and a competitive sport in the 2030 Asian and Commonwealth Games. Over the last 20 years, the game has grown from being only Indian to being played in more than 50 countries. Our focus is on making the locals in each country play it, not just the In-



GT interviews Mittal in the presence of Dr (Mrs) Amita Chauhan

dian community living there. Now, we have players from the US, Brazil, South Africa, Germany, South Korea, and many more countries. A big step forward towards our aim was when the Commonwealth Games Federation officially recognised Kho Kho.

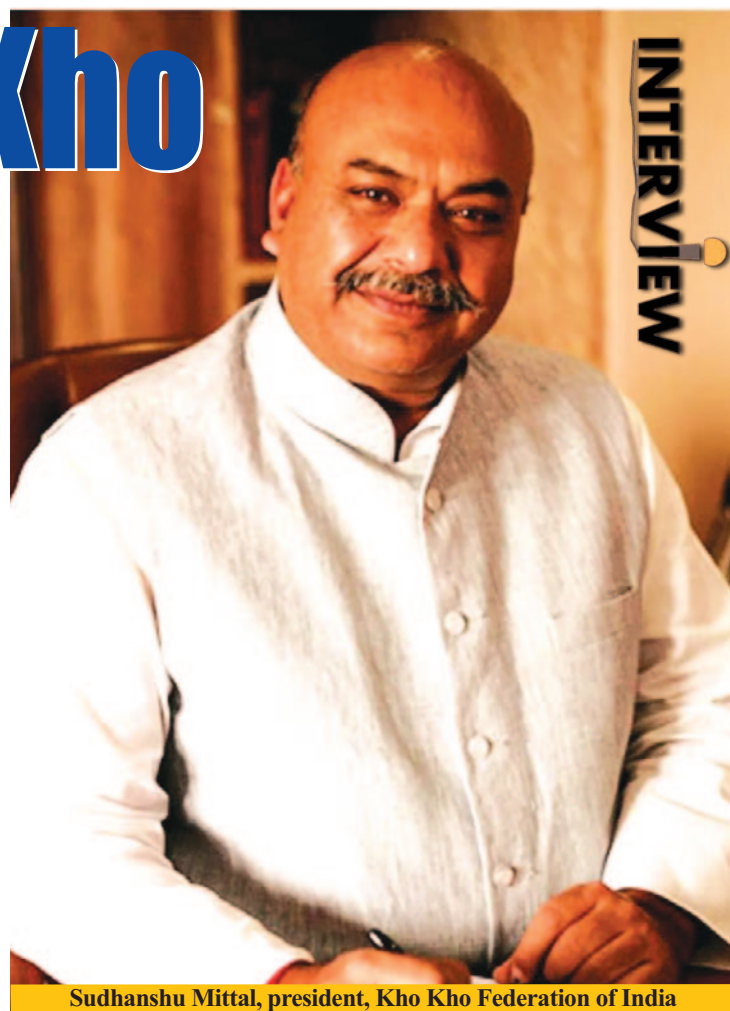
Modernising the game

At the time of the 57th National Championships, Kho Kho was still played on mitti (mud). For the world stage, we needed to modernise it. So, it was decided that the game be moved to a mat surface, one we had to create ourselves. We tried 25-30 versions until we found the right mat. It's still not perfect, but we've made progress. Also, to add more excitement, we changed the format for television with Ultimate Kho Kho, where we reduced the time of each inning, increased the pace - improving the viewing experience. The league became a huge success and helped attract young audiences. Today, more than

4,000 Kho Kho players have government jobs because of their success in the game.

Nurturing talent

To make Kho Kho more visible, we introduced it in top schools across major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Bengaluru. Now, several states, including Arunachal Pradesh, have made Kho Kho part of their school curriculum. More children are playing it, and more people are watching it. In fact, a league broadcast on national TV has given the sport energy and visibility. We also use sports science to train our players better. They wear smart suits that record their movements, and we track nutrition, hydration, and fitness. Mental strength is essential as well - we work with sports psychologists and train players to speak confidently with the media. This helps them grow not just as athletes but also as individuals.



Sudhanshu Mittal, president, Kho Kho Federation of India

Innovation for growth

Our upcoming Kho Kho app will serve as a unified platform for everyone connected to the sport. It will also feature customised training programmes for coaches and players. This system - based on GPS and advanced technology - can organise tournaments at any scale, from district to global. Technology today is a facilitator as it bridges people, streamlines processes, and increases productivity.

However, it can never be a substitute for the human spirit. The flame that burns within the athlete, the push to excel, will ever be the real driving force for success and victory, on and off mat.

Message for Amitians

Kho Kho is a fantastic game. It tests your speed, teamwork, and strategy. If you want to prove yourself, if you want to be a winner - play Kho Kho! 🇮🇳

Book Review

Hidden treasures of the epic

Synopsis: The book is a lively collection of tales from the Mahabharata. It goes beyond the familiar stories of battles and heroes, shining a light on forgotten women, wise sages, and even mystical creatures. Sudha Murty has written in a simple and friendly manner that lets young readers enjoy them. These stories delve into the Pandavas' exile, the strange blessings and curses of the gods, and the unexpected wise lessons learned from animals - like a little mongoose. The book is filled with excitement and drama - from a king who gets cursed for his actions, to a queen trapped in a magical garden. The book is a great means of discovering the secrets and adventures hidden in the Mahabharata.

Book: The Serpent's Revenge: Unusual Tales from the Mahabharata

Author: Sudha Murty
Published in: January 1, 2016
Genre: Mythology

Why is it worth reading: This collection is incredibly engaging because it gathers both famous and surprising stories from the Mahabharata, letting people dive into new adventures while enjoying old classics, like Shakuntala. Sudha Murty adds a special touch by adding notes about real places and explains the meanings behind objects and actions, helping everyone connect myth with reality, and understand why these

stories matter even today. Presented in a chronological order, it guides the readers through various key events - the Mahabharata war, the Pandavas' descendants, making it a well travelled journey. Touching upon exaggerations, boons, and curses in a gentle light, the book offers meaningful insights and encourages readers of all ages to reflect on life, culture, and choices - all while enjoying wonderful storytelling.

Iconic quote: "What is life's biggest irony? It is the desire to live eternally. Every day, we encounter people dying but we always think that death will never come to us."

Rating: 4/5

Review by: Vatsalya Yadav
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