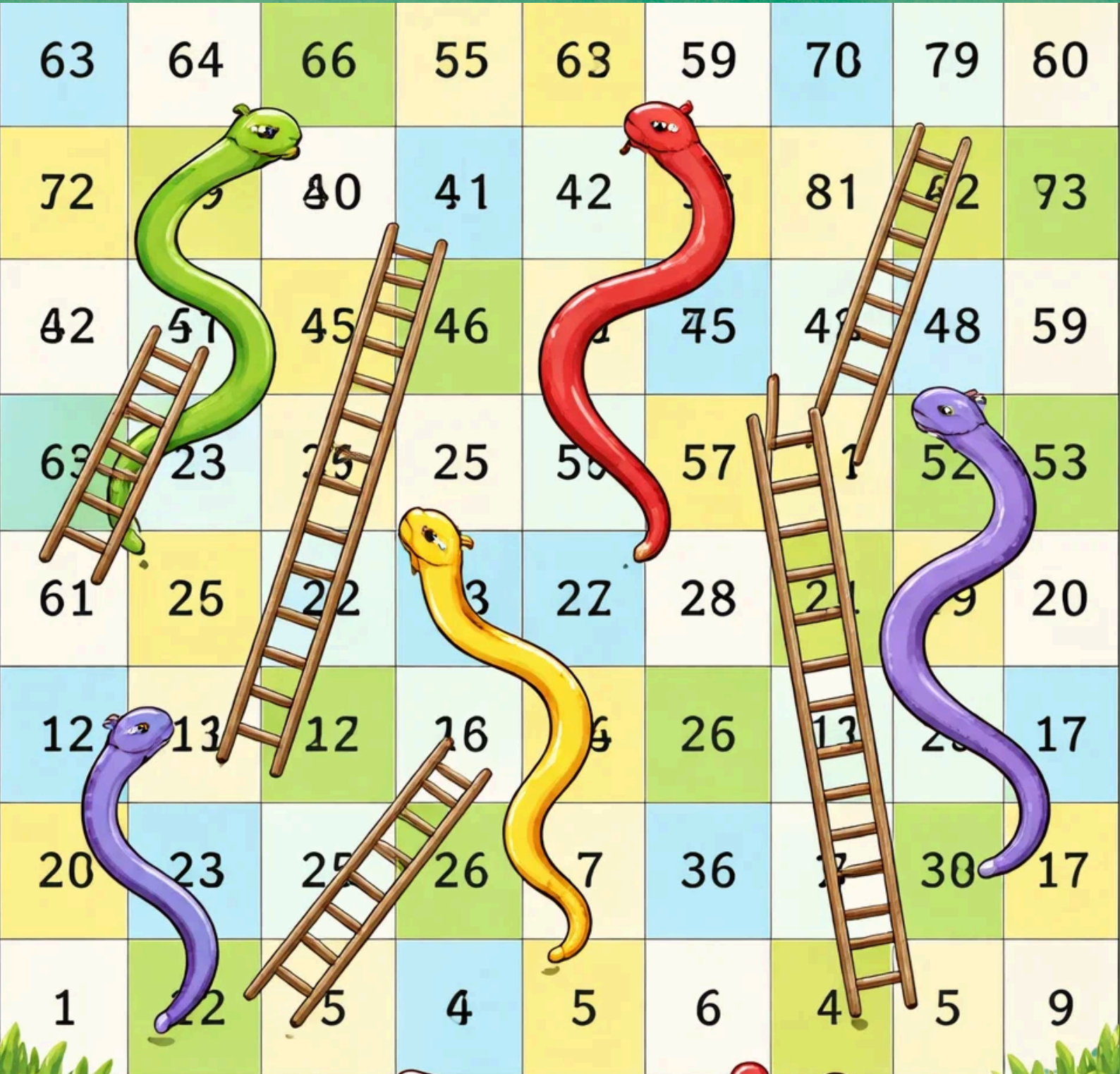


# Snakes and Ladders



Board games have entertained people for centuries, but some games also carry deeper meanings and lessons. One such fascinating game is **Snakes and Ladders**, which many children in India and around the world enjoy playing today. While it may seem like a simple game of dice and chance, its origins reveal an interesting story about **Indian culture, philosophy, and education**.

The modern version of Snakes and Ladders actually comes from an ancient Indian game known as **Moksha Patam or Paramapada Sopanam**, which was played as early as the 13th century.

### The Origins of the Game

Snakes and Ladders was originally designed not just for entertainment but also to **teach moral values**. The game was believed to have been created by Indian saints and teachers to help children understand the difference between **good deeds and bad deeds**.

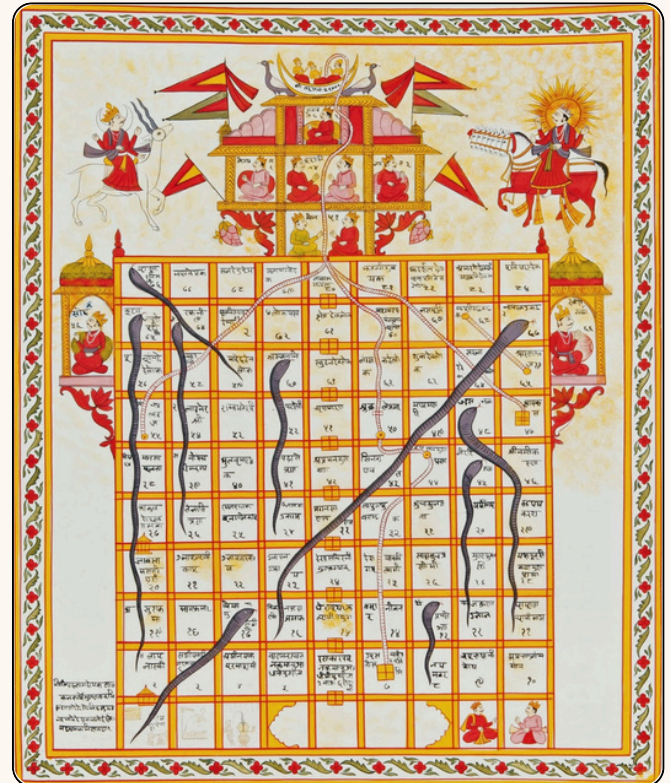
In the original game board, ladders represented **virtues** such as kindness, generosity, humility, and honesty. Climbing a ladder symbolised progress in life.

On the other hand, snakes represented **vices** such as greed, anger, jealousy, and dishonesty. When a player landed on a snake's head, they had to slide down, symbolising how bad actions can cause setbacks.

The goal of the game was to reach the final square, which symbolised **Moksha**, or spiritual liberation.

### Learning Through Play

Ancient educators in India believed that games could be powerful tools for learning. Snakes and Ladders was used to teach children important life lessons simply and engagingly.



For example:

- Helping others could move you forward in life, just like climbing a ladder.
- Negative actions could lead to problems, just like sliding down a snake.

Through this playful system, children could understand the **consequences of actions** and the importance of making good choices.

This concept of learning through games is now widely used in modern education.

### How the Game Spread Around the World

During the colonial period, British soldiers and travellers in India discovered the game and brought it back to England in the late 19th century.

In England, the game was simplified and renamed **Snakes and Ladders**. The strong moral and spiritual elements were gradually removed, and the game became more focused on fun and chance.

Later, the game spread to many other countries. In the United States, a similar version was created called **Chutes and Ladders**.

Today, the game is played by millions of children worldwide and remains one of the most recognisable board games.



## Why Snakes and Ladders is an Innovation

Snakes and Ladders is an example of an early **educational innovation**. Long before modern educational technology, Indian thinkers created a learning tool that combined **storytelling, ethics, and gameplay**.

This game demonstrates several important ideas:

- Learning can happen through play.
- Simple tools can teach complex concepts.
- Education can be both fun and meaningful.

Modern educators now use similar techniques in **gamification**, where games are used to improve learning and motivation.

## Did You Know?

The earliest versions of Snakes and Ladders had **more than 100 squares**, and some boards included specific moral messages written next to snakes and ladders.

## Classroom Activity

Teachers can help students explore the original meaning of Snakes and Ladders with a creative activity.

Ask students to design their **own version of the board game** by:

1. Drawing a board with snakes and ladders.
2. Assigning each ladder a positive value, such as honesty, teamwork, or kindness.
3. Assigning each snake a negative habit, such as laziness, anger, or cheating.

Students can then play the game and discuss how these actions affect progress.

This activity helps students understand both **game design and moral lessons**.

## Conclusion

Snakes and Ladders is more than just a board game. It is a fascinating example of how ancient Indian thinkers used creativity to teach important lessons about life.

What began as a moral teaching tool in India eventually became a popular game enjoyed across the world.

Today, when students roll the dice and climb ladders or slide down snakes, they are unknowingly participating in a tradition that connects **play, learning, and cultural heritage**.

This simple yet powerful invention reminds us that sometimes the best ideas are those that make learning **fun, meaningful, and memorable**.

