What Is Chaturaji?

Chaturaji is an ancient Indian four-player game that was similar to Chaturanga. Nowadays, most historians agree that Chaturanga was the predecessor of Chaturaji, although it's impossible to know for sure.

📷 *A reproduction of a Chaturaji board.*

What Are The Rules Of Chaturaji?

There are no clear and definite records of Chaturaji's origins or rules; therefore, it's impossible to know how the early Indians played it. Many historians claim that it was likely a game of chance, with players throwing dice to determine which pieces would move. Additionally, most agree that there were many different rules for Chaturaji instead of one standard way of playing it.

On Chess.com, you can play one of our variants of Chaturaji. There are no dice, and players can choose which piece to move—making the game more strategic.

The game is played on an 8x8 board. Each player starts with four pawns, which can only move one square at a time, perpendicular to its neighboring pawns. They also have a king, a bishop (originally an elephant), a knight, and a boat (which moves like a rook). You can see the starting position for those pieces below:

The game starts with Red moving first, followed by Blue, Yellow, and Green. There are no checks or checkmates in Chaturaji. Instead, the ultimate goal of the game is to earn more points than the opponents. Players earn points by delivering double (+1) and triple checks (+5) as well as capturing active pieces, with each piece's value listed below:

- **Pawns:** +1
- **Knights:** +3
- **Kings:** +3
- **Bishops:** +5
- **Boats:** +5

When a player loses their king, they are eliminated from the game, and their pieces become inactive. Capturing inactive pieces doesn't yield any points.

📷 *Green's king was captured by Yellow, but the game continued.*

Finally, the last detail about Chaturaji regards pawn promotions. In Chess.com's version of the game, pawns always promote to boats when they reach the board's last rank.