



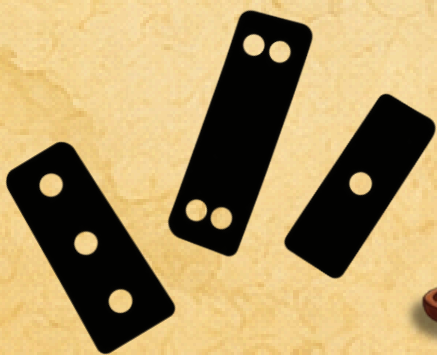
BHARAT AT PLAY

Exploring the History of Indigenous Games and Sports



Chapter 4:

MALLAKHAMB



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A Wrestler's Pole



What began as a way to train wrestlers eventually became one of India's most distinctive traditional sports.



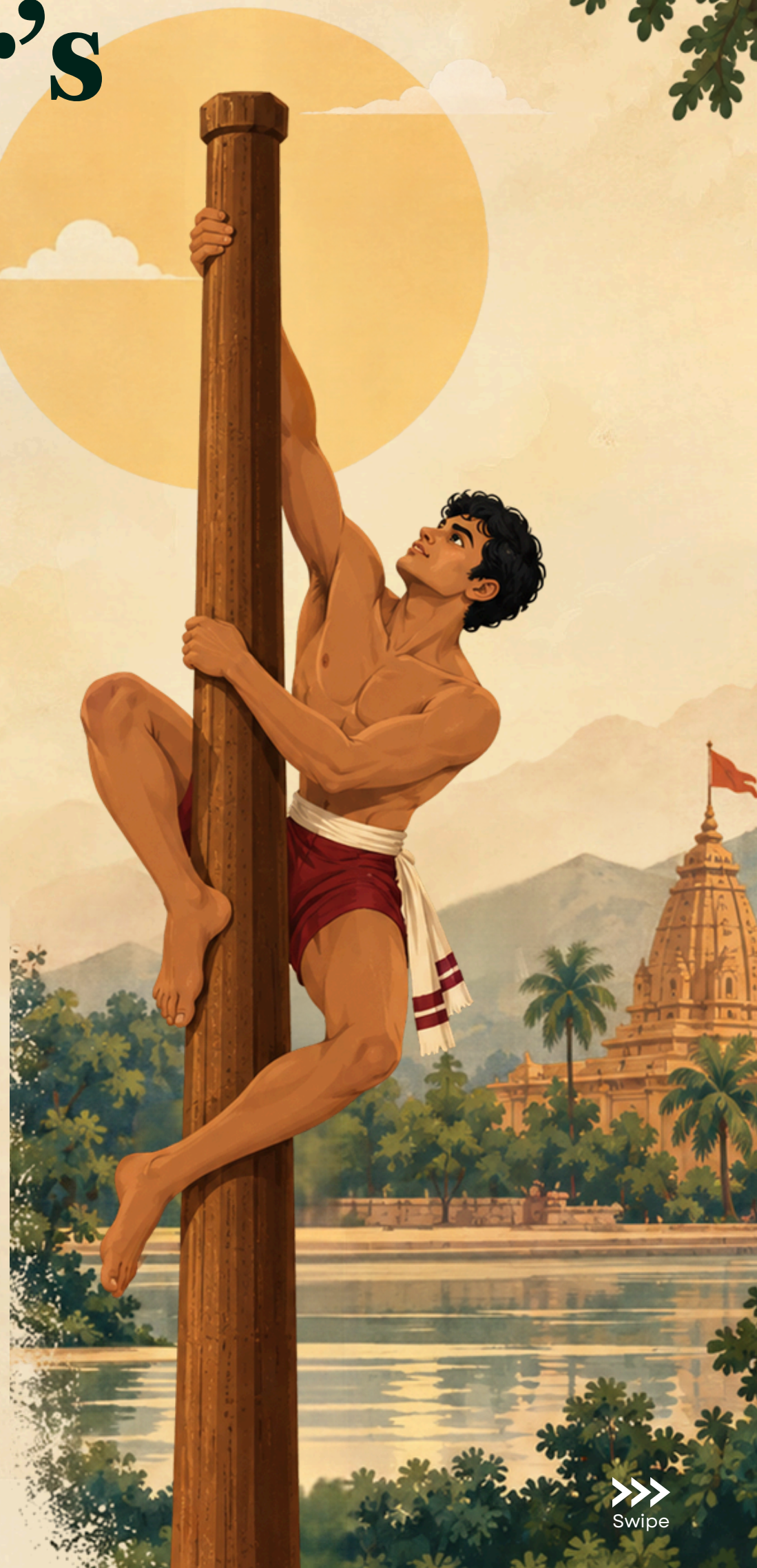
Mallakhamb gets its name from two Sanskrit words: **malla**, meaning wrestler, and **khamb**, meaning pole.



This sport involves climbing, balancing, twisting, and performing acrobatic movements on a wooden pole or rope.



Mallakhamb was developed to help walkers build **strength, agility, and flexibility**.





From Wrestling to the Pole

Mallakhamb grew out of *malla-yuddha*, the traditional Indian wrestling tradition.

One of the earliest references to its development appears in the *Manasollasa*, composed in 1135 CE during the reign of the Western Chalukya king *Somesvara III*.



Pole
Mallakhamb,
performed on a
tall wooden
pole



Hanging
Mallakhamb,
performed on a
shorter suspended
pole



Rope
Mallakhamb,
performed on a
suspended
rope

**Mallakhamb has three
popular forms**



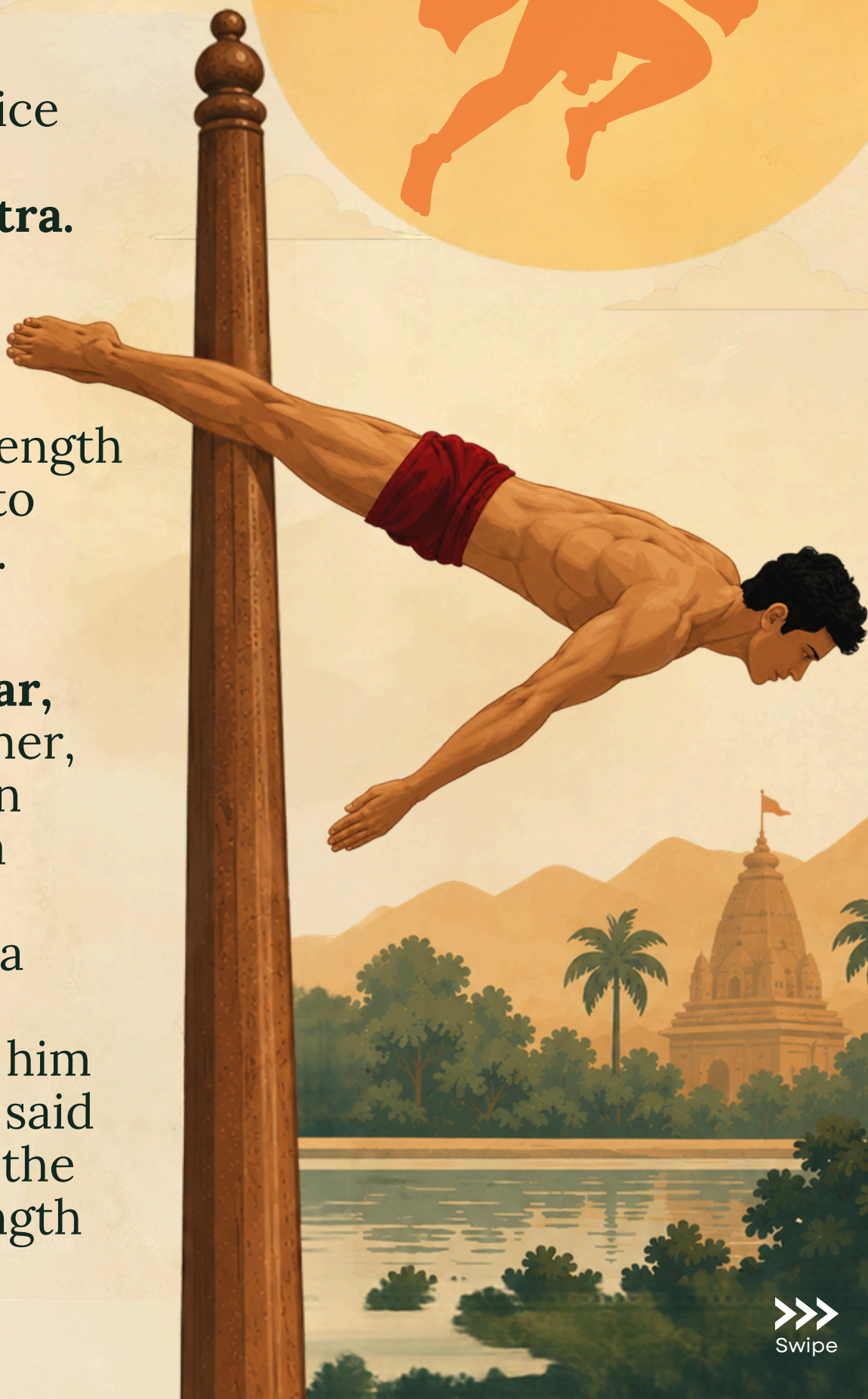


The Strength from Hanuman

After centuries with few written records, the practice was revived during the **Peshwa rule in Maharashtra.**

Mallakhamb's traditions are also closely associated with **Hanuman**, whose strength and playful spirit are said to have inspired the practice.

Balambhatta Dada Deodhar, the Peshwa's physical trainer, played an important role in this revival. According to a popular legend, he encountered Hanuman in a vision after outsiders challenged him. Watching him climb a tree, the trainer is said to have learned to imitate the deity's extraordinary strength and movements.





Mallakhamb Takes the Stage

1962

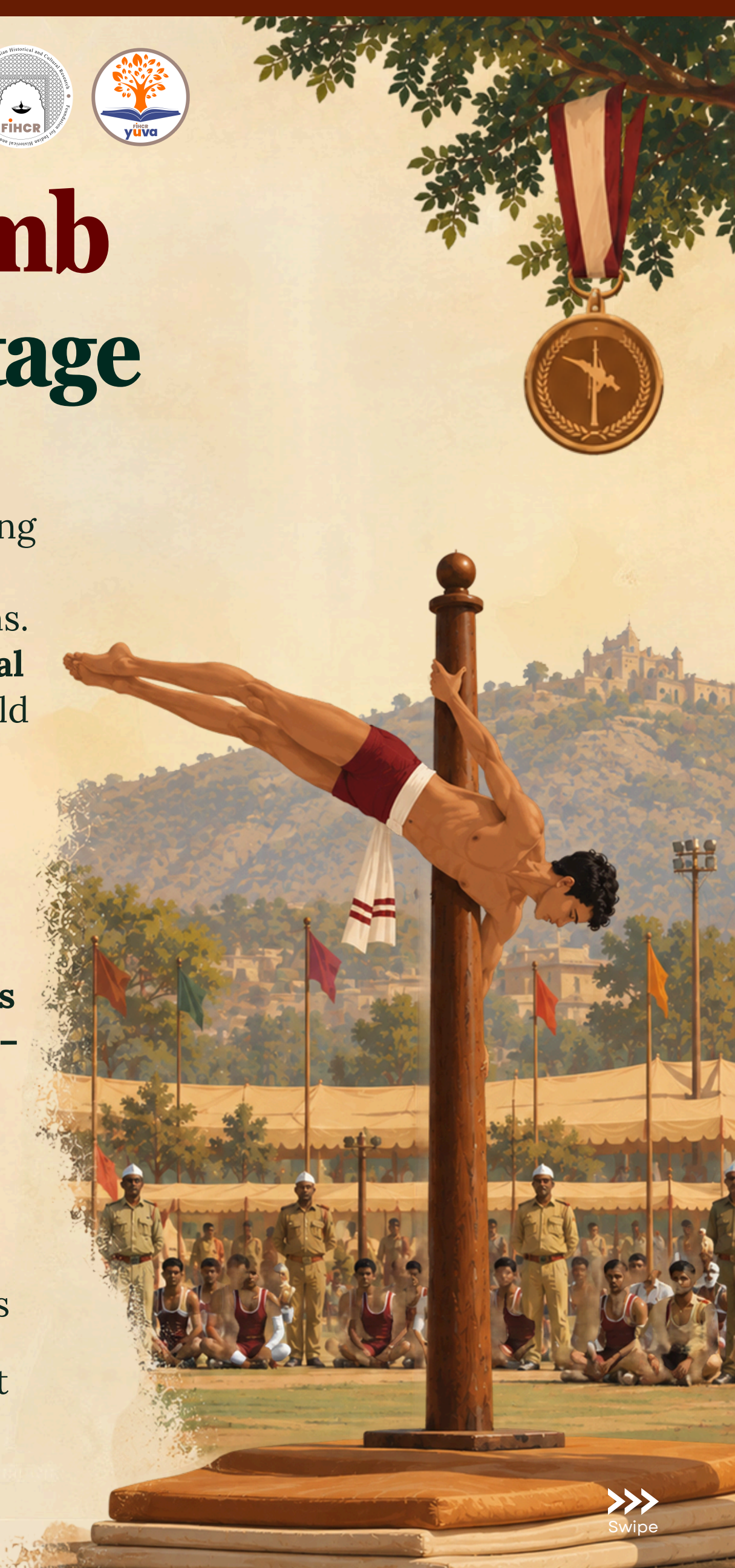
Mallakhamb gradually moved beyond wrestling grounds and into organised competitions. Its first official **National Championship** was held at **Gwalior in 1962**.

1968-69

It was included in the **All-India Inter-University Gymnastics Championship** in **1968-69**.

1981

Thus, Mallakhamb started taking shape as a competitive sport with the establishment of the **Mallakhamb Federation of India** in **1981**.





From Training Ground to World Stage

Mallakhamb found its place in India's modern sporting landscape, entering the **National School Games** in 2008-09, the **Khelo India Youth Games** in 2021, and the **National Games** in 2022.

From its roots in Maharashtra, the sport also travelled beyond India to countries such as the **USA, Germany, Japan, Brazil, Australia and Italy.**

Today, Mallakhamb brings together **wrestling, yoga, gymnastics and acrobatics** on a pole or rope, transforming a traditional form of training into a sport with an international presence.

