

Goa – Paradise on Earth

Yogita Sawant

Assistant Professor, JVM's Mehta College, Airoli

Email Id: yogita.y.sawant@gmail.com

Abstract: Goa, also referred as the 'Rome of East' is one of the most happening and modern tourist destination in india with heritage goan culture and tradition. Colonized by Portuguese for 450 years, cultural heritage of Goa consists of numerous goa churches, temples and mosques. Goa's cultural richness and vividness is well reflected through Goan folk dances, Goan folk culture and Goan songs. One also gets charmed by a series of Christian monuments that reveal some of the most attractive architecture.

KEYWORDS: Cultural richness and vividness, Heritage, Folk dances, Monuments

1. Introduction

From the ancient time known as *Gomantak*, *Goapuri*, *Gopattanam*, surrounded by natural beauty and preserving the culture of its own is the small state known as GOA. Goa, a former Portuguese territory, for more than 450 years is often described as '*The Rome of the East*'. Goa - a state that was the epicentre of Portuguese occupation in the Asian region. Portuguese culture is today so imbibed in the lives of Goans that it's difficult to imagine Goa without its Portuguese connection. The rich cultural heritage of Goa is a stark contrast to the rest of India. This is one quality that makes the culture of Goa truly unique. Goa is a place where you find people accepting the presence of all major religions without any ego or hesitation. This is the place where people follow tradition as well as remain ahead with time and trends. The Goan culture is very easy going and relaxed. You won't find people fighting or arguing over religious issues or dress codes. Everyone is free follow the kind of lifestyle they want to, unlike the rest of India where tradition and conservatism is an inseparable part of one's life.

2. CULTURAL RICHNESS AND VIVIDNESS :-

The result of four and half centuries of rule is today what Goa is, a unique, rich blend of western and eastern culture. This unique blend apparent everywhere, from art and architecture to food and music, is the trademark of Goa. Religion is very close to the hearts of the Goans, rather their

lives revolve around their gods and places of worship. Though Goa is a land of many religions but people of Goa, irrespective of their religions, mingle freely and participate in each other's merriment. No month passes without a fair or festival in Goa, every season is marked by fairs and festivals. Like rest of the India most Hindu, Christian and other religious festivals are celebrated here but then with Goan touch. Some of the renowned festivals of Goa are:-

- **Jatras:** Goan festivals are actually Jatras (Feast) of the local or family deity celebrated at the Devasthan (temple) of the God or Goddess. It is a festive and colorful occasion in the temple complex with thousands of devotees taking part in the celebrations and the palakhi (palanquin) procession. This worship and participation in the festival of the deity forms an integral part of the Goan Hindu culture. Interestingly a number of these Jatras, are attended in large numbers by members of the Christian community to seek the blessing of the deity. This unique example of communal harmony is best seen at the Fatorpa temple of Goddess Shantadurga.
- **Chovoth** (Ganesh Chaturthi): The most important and almost the national festival for Goan's is the Ganesh Chaturthi known as 'Chovoth'.The festivities run into several days, but minimum at least for two and half days, when puja of Gouri and Mahadev along with Ganapati, is performed. Goddess Gouri is drawn on paper and Lord Shiva symbolised by a coconut. it sees the return of most Goans to their native place of birth or their ancestral houses to join the entire family for the occasion. Most towns and cities in Goa wear a deserted look as Goans return to their native places in the hinterland.
- **Homexhan:** Shirgao Jatra is famous among devotees and tourists alike for the celebrated walk on hot coals raked from an enormous bonfire. Hundreds of people from the villages in surrounding areas also take part in these celebrations.
- **Goa Carnival:** State's heritage and rich culture is reflected with the graceful dances and non-stop festivity along with strumming of guitar and carnival beats. This carnival is exclusive to Goa and introduced by Portuguese with lots of colures and festivity in it. The most awaited event is meant for drinking, festivity, merrymaking and a perfect blend of tradition and modernity. Celebrated in the month of February for three days this carnival is well awaited by crowd of excited audiences. With band, huge parades are organised throughout the states with grand balls in the dawn. The famous red black dance concludes this three day carnival.

- **Shigmo:** This festival is celebrated during springtime and the celebrations extend to five days. People also call this festival as Shigmotsav and all its festivities come along with the festival of Holi. During this festival, honor is paid to various warriors to return to their homes after defeating the invaders. At this time, people play with colors. People hold umbrellas as well as small sticks and enjoy dancing.
- **Sao Joao Festival:** This is a festival that is celebrated with much cheer on 24th of June every year since during this day the catholic community pays honor to St. John the Baptist. The festivities involve a number of folk dances that are referred as 'Sangodds'. The people of the village, mainly the young people make it a point to wear leaves and fruit laden crowns. People also present fruits to their in-laws as well as friends.
- **Bonderam Festival:** The main jubilation of this festival takes place at the Divar Island. Bonderam refers to flag in Portuguese. Flags have significance in this festival because they actually helped putting an end to fights and wars among the two sections of the Divar village. The festival is celebrated every year on the 4th Saturday of August. There takes the procession of a parade accompanied by loud music.

3. FOLK DANCE

Dance and music is deeply embedded in the Goan culture. The most popular dance forms in Goa are *Fugdi* and *Dhalo*, which are traditional dances, performed only by women. Some dances are specific to an occasion or festival they are performed in. The *Dhangar* is performed during the Hindu festival of Navartras and during the Shigmo festival women perform a lamp dance. Goa comes alive in the festive season and it is then that you see the splendid blend of cultures that coexist beautifully over here.

- **Dhalo:** One of the most popular dances of Goa is the Dhalo. It is one of the choicest dances of the women dwelling in rural Goa. In this dance form, young girls and women form a semi circle by joining their hands behind each others waists. They then sway in coordinated movements to beats of rural musical instruments and music. It is a dance full of fun and frolic.
- **Dekhni:** The Dekhni is basically the traditional dance of those Christians who converted to Christianity from Hinduism during the Portugal rule. These people were the ones to compose

this traditional dance form of Goa. The dance also involves singing by people. It usually begins with a beautiful lady starting the dance and is joined later by other dancers gradually. The music of this dance is a lovely combination of rhythm and melody of both western and Indian genre.

- **Fugdi:** The Fugdi is a traditional dance of Goa that is quite popular among the womenfolk of Goa. This dance is devoted to the Hindu Elephant God, Lord Ganesha. This dance can be performed on any occasion and does not require any particular festival to be performed. One of the most common dances that is performed in Goa, this dance requires continues swirling until one gets exhausted and sits down.
- **Kunbi:** One of the earliest folk dances of Goa is the Kunbi dance. This dance was mainly performed by the earliest settlers of Goa known as the Kunbis. The dance has more of a social element in it rather than a religious feeling. The dance is performed by the women dancers who perform this dance very elegantly at quite a fast pace. Their traditional attire adds the color to this dance form.
- **Lamp Dance:** The Lamp Dance is called so because of the brass lamps that is used to perform this dance. The dancers have to dance very slowly balancing heavy brass lamps on their heads. The music is usually instrumental and folk instruments like Ghumat, Samael, Cymbal and Harmonium are used. This dance requires immense amount of self control and discipline in order to balance the lamps and dance.

4. HERITAGE OF GOA

- **Basilica Of Bom Jesus:** The Basilica of Bom Jesus is dedicated to St. Francis Xavier. The Construction of the church began in 1594 and completed in May 1605. The church is called 'Bom Jesus' meaning 'good Jesus' or 'infant Jesus'. This church is the first Minor Basilica in India and is regarded as one of the best examples of baroque architecture. The imposing facade built out of black granite in an exquisite combination of the Doric, Corinthian and composite styles, is remarkable for its simplicity. It measures 183 ft in length, 55 ft in breath and 61 ft in height. The main altar is 54 ft high and 30 ft broad. The interior of the church is built in Mosaic-Corinthian style. There are paintings of events from the life of St. Francis Xavier.

- ***St. Francis Of Assisi Church:*** The Church of Saint Francis of Assisi is a Roman Catholic Church situated in the main square of Old Goa. The Church and Convent of St. Francis of Assisi were established by eight Portuguese Franciscan friars who landed in Goa in 1517. After their arrival in 1517 with their consistent efforts they constructed a small chapel with three altars and a choir. Eventually in the year 1521 the chapel was modified into a church and dedicated to the Holy Ghost in 1602. Later the church was pulled down and the present church was constructed on the same spot in 1616. The west facing church has a nave with three chapels on both side, a choir on the first floor, a main altar and two other altars. Belfry and a sacristy are on the north of main altar, today which you see the house of Archaeological Museum was actually a convent forming annexure to the church.
- ***Shri Mangeshi Temple:*** This beautiful temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It belongs to the typical Goan Hindu temple style of architecture. It is very distinctive with its white towers, welcoming at the entrance even though it is small and exquisite. In the temple of Mangesh is a prominent Nandi Bull which is considered to be the Vahana (Vehicle) of Shiva. The temple complex consists of a spacious courtyard surrounded by the temple itself and rooms for weddings and pilgrims. The temple also has a magnificent water tank, which is believed to be the oldest part of the temple. The "Deepastambha" is an eye catching structure; it is a seven storey octagonal lamp tower. Considered as the tallest and most imposing column in Goa, it looks picturesque when illuminated at night with traditional oil lamps during festival nights. The tower is crowned with a small dome. The sanctum houses a Shiva Lingam. A golden Shesha, the Linga and an image of Shiva constitute the main altar. It has shrines of Parvati and Ganesha.
- ***Shri Shantadurga Temple:*** The temple is a combination of Indo-Portuguese architecture. Unlike other temples of Goa, the temple has a Pyramidal Shikara, Roman-arched windows and a flat dome encircled by balustrades. The maroon, peach and white colour paint of the temple gives the temple a serene beautiful look. Another major attraction of the temple complex is the Nayanmanohar Deepsthamba. This Deepsthamba is lighted during the festival times and the beauty of it is beyond description. On either side of the temple building are the big buildings of Agarshala. There is a big lake beyond the compound wall in front of the

temple. The highlight of the temple is its golden palanquin (palkhi) in which the deity is carried on festive occasions.

- ***Mahadeva Temple, Tambdi Surla:*** The most ancient temple in the whole of Goa is located at a place called Tambdi Surla. The temple itself is built in Jain style in the twelfth century. There are some interesting details about the construction itself which has led to debates about the actual origins of the temple. The temple is built in a place which is quite inaccessible and away from the main settlements of the time. The size of the temple is quite small as compared to the size of the average Goan temple. And finally the top part of the temple has never been completed. The small, beautifully carved and perfectly proportioned black basalt temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is reminiscent of the temples at Aihole in neighbouring Karnataka. The temple has survived Muslim invasions and Portuguese persecution, in its almost perfect condition mainly due to its remote location in a clearing deep in the forest at the foot of the Western Ghats which surround the site in a sheer wall of impenetrable vegetation.

5. CONCLUSION

Goa is the land of great variety and was also the epicenter for the Portuguese. It is much like the jewel in the crown in India. Cultural heritage of Goa consists of numerous goa churches, temples and mosques. Moreover, Goa's exotic beaches that sprawl over wide and soft sands as well as the sea food of Goa are much admired and liked by people visiting Goa from different places. Goa's cultural richness and vividness is well reflected through Goan folk dances, Goan folk culture and Goan songs. One also gets charmed by a series of Christian monuments that reveal some of the most attractive architecture. It's a great place to be at any point of time, during any season, whether it's just for having some fun or for sheer business purposes.

6. REFERENCES

- Gunaji.M, *Chala Mazya Govyala*, Rajhans Prakashan.
Khedekar.V.V, *Goa Sanskritibandh*, Padmagandha Prakashan, 2012.
Mhadeshvar.N, *Sushegaad Goa*, Granthali Prakashan, 2007
Tendulkar.M, *Govyatil Parytan*, Snehal Prakashan.
Trichur.R, *Refiguring Goa*, December 2013