CHAPTER IV
SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF FENI DISTILLATION

A community gets its identity from the occupations that are created by the prevailing social structure. This in turn, forms the fundamental component of that specific community. In fact, India's caste system was based on the then existing occupations.

Feni distillation in Goa is one occupation that supports a number of families. In fact, it has evolved into a social organization with its own specific characteristics.

This chapter attempts to understand the anthropological and socio-cultural aspects of feni distillation in Goa. The focus is on the continuation of this occupation in the family, the allotment of duties on the basis of gender, techniques and instruments used, changes that have eventually affected the distillation methods, the rituals involved and the difficulties faced by those involved in this occupation. The various aspects of feni distillation are also discussed and this collectively forms the social organization concerning this occupation.

Goa is identified with the local alcoholic drink feni, popularly called soro and jocularly, kop. A number of songs eulogizing feni have become popular and have even figured in Bollywood. Bobby, Majboor and King Uncle are some films in which feni has been referred to and even shown consumed.

In Goa there are two types of feni. The one prepared from toddy or coconut sap is called palm or coconut feni. The other, called cashew feni, is prepared from cashew apple juice. The community involved in distilling palm feni is a sub-caste called render (toddy tappers). Among the Catholics, the render have their own place
in the *Sudir* caste, while among the Hindus also they form a sub-caste of *Sudir*, called the *Bhandari* community or *poi kape*.

Palm *feni* predated the cashew counterpart in Goan society. The Portuguese introduced the cashew fruit in Goa. Even before the arrival of the Portuguese in Goa, certain traditions and rituals demanded the use of palm *feni*. Another indicator that palm *feni is ancient* is the existence of the sub-caste involved in this occupation whereas those involved in cashew distillation do not constitute a sub-caste. Earlier, *feni* may not have been distilled in the *refined* methods used today but there must have been some crude technique used. What is important, however, is that *feni* distillation has given an impetus to the development of a cottage industry in Goa. A number of families depend upon *feni* distillation for their livelihood, thus, making it an important economic activity.

The word *feni*, according to Azevedo (1987: VIII) and Sá (2001: 16) comes from the word *fenn* (foam or froth seen in the *sur* or toddy when it begins to ferment). However, according to some of our respondents, *feni* was a term originally used by toddy tappers to qualify the strength of the *soro* (alcohol) and not the produce itself. In the bygone era, when there was no *gray* (alcometer), alcohol quality was measured indigenously. Alcohol quality was checked by vigorously stirring the alcohol in the *kollso* (earthen pot) with a *it* (coconut palm *mid-rib*). The *fenno* (bubbles) produced by this indicated its strength: if small and slow to *fizzle*, it was presumed to have a strength ranging from 20 to 21 proof. *Feni* producing weak bubbles was known to be of inferior quality, measuring only 18 *gray* and below. Accordingly, traders would decide on the price. Another method to produce these bubbles and check the quality was to take two glasses and continuously pour some of the *alcohol from one glass into another*. Here, too, the *strength of the feni* would be gauged on the type of *fenno* produced.
The fermentation of the coconut sap must have been the early natives' intoxicant. The knowledge to tap coconut trees existed even before the Portuguese rule (Azevedo 1987: VI-VII, Sá 2001: 16). According to Sá (2001: 16) some warmed the fermented sap to attain higher strength.

Native Goans were taught to use toddy in a more effective manner by the priests. The priests taught the natives to construct alembics similar to the ones used in Portugal. *Aguardente* (literally, 'burning water') was distilled by Portuguese peasants in alembics. *Aguardente* was nothing but the distillate of fermented pulp of the rejected table fruits (Ibid.). Abram (1995: 36) also supports this view as he asserts that distillation was first introduced in Goa more than 400 years ago by Catholic missionaries. Portuguese peasants stewed grape skins. Goans replaced the grape skins with locally available material like coconut sap or cashew apple juice. Over the years, the distillation process has been refined. In all areas under their control, the Portuguese extensively promoted the cultivation of coconut tree (Azevedo 1987: VI). Eventually, those villages that had palm groves provided financial scope for the *Bhandari* or toddy tapping community (Souza, 1994: 40-41).

**Collection and Distillation of Feni**

In order to understand clearly the distillation process of the two types of *feni*, we shall discuss them separately here below:

**Coconut or Palm Feni**

The coconut itself occupies an important place in a Goan household. The kernel is used for curries and dried into copra to extract oil. Coconut curries are an essential part of the Goan diet. Sweets in Goa are usually made of coconut, rice and jaggery mixtures. One variety of jaggery itself is prepared from the toddy.
Apparatus Involved: Palm feni distillation has been an age-old occupation in Goa. Over the years, the instruments used have undergone a gradual but noticeable change. Previously, the instruments used were made out of things available in nature. For instance, the dudnnem (a container used by toddy tappers to collect sur) was made from a gourd. The changes that affected the apparatus occurred basically due to two factors — availability of synthetically manufactured material and the need for safety. Another noteworthy factor is that earlier most of the occupations were interdependent. To a large extent the render depended on potters and blacksmiths for the instruments required for distillation.

Before we acquaint ourselves with the distillation procedure, we must know the apparatus used. Hence, a description and functioning of the apparatus is provided below. The description gives an insight into the improvements that the instruments have undergone. This also throws light on the changes that have taken place in occupations that were interconnected since times immemorial.

The following are the apparatus used in both collection of sur and distillation of palm feni.

a. Kati: It is a very sharp crescent-shaped blade used by the render to slice the poi (spadix of the coconut tree). The blacksmith beats a metal to make this instrument. Since the blacksmiths’ profession is dying out it is becoming very difficult to procure a good kati nowadays.

b. Damnnem: It is a small earthen pot used by the render to collect the sap. This pot is carried up the coconut tree. Its mouth is fitted to the cut poi, from which the sur trickles into it. At regular intervals the render empties the sur collected in the damnnem into the dudnnem. With plastic utensils now a practical proposition, the render have begun to use plastic damnnem, which, however, due to their light weight
would get dislodged from the *poi* and in many cases even blown away by a heavy gust of wind. The synthetic *damnnem* generate heat, which affects the flow of *sur*, all of which makes the earthen *damnnem* the best choice.

c. *Dudnnem*: The *sur* from the *damnnem* is emptied into the *dudnnem*. Traditionally, this was made from *konkon dhuddi* (bottle gourd), specially cultivated for this purpose. An elaborate procedure was followed to ensure that the *dudnnem* could be used for its specified purpose. Later, these bottle gourd *dudnnim* were replaced by plastic ones; but they still keep the oblong shape of the *konkon dhuddi*. Presently, the *render* complain about the unavailability of the traditional as well as the plastic *dudnnem* in Goa. They have to fetch them from Kerala and other places outside Goa.

d. *Gope*: These are made from the frond of palm leaves. They are also called *vaie*. These strands are immersed for two hours in fuming *godo* (the residue in the *bhann*). Later, they are rinsed in water and dried to induce elasticity. These can then be stored for three months for future use. Once the *gope* are used to tie the *poi*, they cannot be used again as they lose their elasticity.

Presently, the *render* are facing problems in finding *gope*. Earlier, landlords in the coastal areas used to make seasonal *chuddtam paddo* (felling of coconut leaves) with the help of the *paddekar* (coconut plucker). Toddy tappers procured the *vale* from the *paddekar* by paying an agreed amount. As the *chuddtam paddo* is no longer made, *gope* have been replaced by *bett* (plastic strips) available in the market. It is learnt, however, that the synthetic nature of *bett* affects the freshness of the *poi* and consequently its productivity.

e. *Kollso*: It is a round earthen pot used by the *render* at the toddy tapping site to empty the *sur* from the *dudnnem*. He is usually seen either carrying this pot on his shoulder or tied to his bicycle. Nowadays, these earthen containers have been replaced
by plastic ones which are more durable, easier to handle and readily available in the market. At times he may be seen even with a 'gallon' tied to his bicycle.

*Kollso is* also used to collect the *feni* in the distillation process. The earthen *kollso* of the past used to facilitate cooling as the fresh *feni* is always warm. A typical *kollso* is understood to contain a standard amount of *feni* i.e. eighteen bottles or 13,500 mls. Thus, it also becomes a convenient unit to measure the quantity of *feni* from every distillation process. Most of the *render* have replaced the earthen pot with a plastic one.

1. **Bhatti:** This is the furnace. Colloquially, *bhatti* often refers to the place where the apparatus used for distilling by the toddy tapper is installed. In the traditional method the furnace was made up of a set of three stones plastered with *rounnechi mati* (mud taken from anthills) on all sides. This furnace was fuelled with firewood. According to the *render*, the use of firewood not only increased the yield but also made it tastier as the flames of the furnace fuelled with firewood could be adjusted as required. However, today due to scarcity of firewood and consequent increase in prices, kerosene stoves have replaced the traditional furnace.

g. **Bhann:** Conventionally, the *bhann* is a large earthen pot mounted on the furnace and has two openings. The larger one is the mouth through which the fermented *sur* is poured, the other is for the release of vapours. In numerous cases, the earthen *bhannam* have proved to be dangerous to the *render*. Quite a number of cases of the *render* dying or getting severely injured due to bursting of earthen *bhannam* have been reported. Gradually, due to the dearth of potters it became difficult to procure a *bhann*. For safety, hygiene and easy access, today the conventional earthen *bhann* has been replaced by a copper one. The *render* prefer the copper *bhann* to the earthen *bhann* as the latter develops cracks or breaks after two or three distillations while the
copper bhann can be used for years together. Besides, it is easier to clean the copper bhann.

**h. Dhanknnem:** It is the lid that covers the mouth of the bhann. It is made of wood that can retain the vapours inside the bhann.

**i. Nollo:** It is a duct made of either a hollow bamboo stick or by scooping the bonddkecho hat (Pandanus tectorius soland). The nollo made from bonddkecho hat is now available in the market in a ready-to-use condition. The nollo serves as the connection between the bhann and the lavnni (the earthen pot used for condensation). This duct is around half a metre long. To withstand high temperatures, as a result of vaporization, the nollo is insulated with sackcloth and bounded by coir rope.

**j. Lavnni:** It is a pot used for condensation, and earlier it used to be an earthen vessel. It is connected to the bhann through the nollo. The function of the lavnni is to cool the alcohol vapours. In recent times, the lavnni is replaced with an aluminium spiral coil. Like the conventional lavnni, this coil is designed in such a way that every condensed drop comes out from the outlet.

**k. Kodem:** This apparatus plays a major role in the distillation process. It is a large earthen basin containing water and the lavnni. Kodem is meant to help in condensing the alcohol vapours. Kodem is known to have some disadvantages: it develops cracks and eventually breaks. Hence, the kodem has been replaced by a cemented tank, big enough to contain more water. An aluminium coil is used as a lavnni in these cemented tanks. The advantage of the tank is that it is long lasting and can hold water for a period of two or three months.

Many occupations were involved in supplying the needed apparatus for distilling feni. The toddy tapper depended on the potters as well as blacksmiths. Earlier, the potters used to supply all the earthen utensils at the toddy tapper's house.
Today with the change in the occupational structure, the number of potters is also diminishing, obliging the toddy tapper to go to distant places to procure his utensils.

We shall now see how sur is collected and the distillation conducted.

The Process of Collecting Stir

The render's profession is amongst the oldest in Goa (Guha 1983: 67). The render climb the coconut tree to extract sur, which is used for many purposes. Most coconut trees in Goa are five to eight metres tall. The render, who is usually an adult male, climbs the coconut tree by stepping on the hampam (grooves cut into the trunk). A traditional render is seen with a kati, a dudnnem and a kollso. Collection of sur or toddy tapping involves a well-defined set of sequenced activities. It is mandatory for the render to climb the tree thrice a day, i.e. in the morning, afternoon and evening.

Being his traditional occupation, a render has the necessary knowledge and skill to deal with the various aspects of toddy tapping. He has to discern if the poi is mature enough to yield toddy. Normally, when the third poi sprouts up, it is assumed that the first one can be tapped. The maturity of the poi is further confirmed by checking the swelling at its base. However, if the poi to be worked on is neglected or overlooked for more than five days, it becomes zun (over-mature) and cannot be tapped.

The render then has to treat the poi with angaro (a moderate hammering) using the butt of the kati for two consecutive afternoons. Then a zig-zag incision is made at the tip of the poi. On the third day, the poi is fastened with gope. From the next day onwards, the apex of the poi is meticulously sliced for four days. The angaro is continued to induce the flow of sur. From the fourth to the sixth day the poi is cut three times. Droplets of sur form, which trickle down the surface of the poi. This is
called *poi panea lagli*, meaning that the *poi* is ready to provide *sur*. Next, a *damnmem* is fixed on the *poi* in such a way that it can collect the *sur* produced for twelve hours — from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The quantity of *sur* increases by the day. Normally, *poi* is expected to exude *sur* for one month or a little more.

In order to increase the yield of the *sur*, the *render* uses yet another method called *matanne*. This is not done by all *render*, as it is quite tedious. In this procedure the *poi* is initially treated with a slight incision; and *kakonne* (twisted ring made of coconut leaves) is tied around it. The *render* then gives a very moderate hammering at the tip of the *poi* for three consecutive days. To be specific, the *render* gives fifty to fifty-five knocks on the *poi* with the butt of the *kati*. This is done very carefully ensuring that the *poi* does not crack. Many *render* complain of developing blisters on their palms following this hammering; as such most of them avoid this procedure. However, it is learnt that *matanne* induces the *poi* to produce more *sur*.

Every morning the *render* climbs the palm tree to empty the *sur* from the *damnmem* affixed the previous evening. The *sur* is emptied into the *dudnnem*. He again slices the *poi* with his *kati*. The sliced portion is half a centimetre thick as cutting thicker slices would end the *poi* faster. The *damnmem* is then refitted to the *poi*.

Later, in the afternoon, he executes the *xōv i.e. cuts into the poi* but does not collect *sur*. *Xōv* is done to ensure the continuity of the flow. In recent times, however, some *render* do not climb the trees in the afternoon. This may be attributed to factors like declining interest in the occupation, laziness and low returns for the produce. But he compensates for this by cutting an extra half-inch in order to maintain the freshness of the *poi*. If the *poi* is not cut regularly it shows signs of drying and less *sur* is produced. In the evening, the *render* climbs the tree once again to collect the *sur*
accumulated in the *damn nem* since morning. He once again cuts half a centimetre to dispose of the dried part of the *poi*. This incision exposes the wet surface like a fresh wound, thereby inducing a good flow.

The health of the tree determines the quantity of *sur* produced. Some trees are known to yield *sur* for months. Management of the *poi* also plays a major role in the quantity of *sur* produced by the tree. It is believed that the *sur* collected for the first few days is very sweet and is relished in the morning. Usually, the *sur* is sweet but by the end of the day it turns sour and cloudy as it begins to ferment. The output of *sur* is more during the months from June to January as compared to the output in the remaining months. This is attributed to the weather conditions. Thus, the production of *feni* is also greater during the months when the output of *sur* is higher.

It is extremely important that the *render* collects the *sur* before it spills out of the *damn nem*, as otherwise, it could imperil the tree. *Sur* from the *damn nem* spills into the tree's crown and is absorbed by the tender new leaves. This can create *kidd* (worms), which can destroy the tree. Whenever there is a spillage of *sur*, the *render* treats the *kidd* by pouring either water or human urine on the affected part. Sometimes, a paste of camphor and cashew nut shell liquid is also used. However, in present times pesticides are used to treat the same. This danger to the tree makes it mandatory for the *render* to tap the tree under all circumstances including inclement weather or his ill health. This continuous work is another reason why the younger generation does not opt for this occupation.

Significantly, Obayemi (1976: 202) refers to a similar procedure used by the Ijumu and Abinu groups for tapping palm tree in West Africa.

The Distillation Process: In order to distil, the *sur* has to be *ambott* (sour) or fermented. The froth seen in the fresh *sur* has to settle down. Usually this takes about
four days. The fermented *sur* is emptied into the *bhann* for boiling. Normally six *kollxe* of fermented *sur* are required to distil one *mollop* (residue after distillation), which is more or less eighteen bottles.

After emptying the *sur* into the *bhann* it is slightly heated. Then the *bhann* is closed with the *dhanknnem* (lid) ensuring that no opening, however minute remains. The edge between the *dhanknnem* and *bhann* is covered with *rounnechi mati* (mud taken from anthills). This mud is considered to be of the finest grade, helping as a sealant. This procedure is called *moranne*. It is a very important procedure and demands skill. If the *moranne* is not done properly, it can jeopardize the distillation and can even be fatal to the attendant.

The *bhann* is then heated with high intensity flames till vapours of the fermented *sur* exude. Later, the flames are lowered. The vapours pass to the *lavnni* through the *nollo*. This is an important stage in the distillation process. The attendant at the *bhatti* has to be experienced to know when and how to regulate the intensity of the flames. The management of the flames determines the quality and quantity of the output. It takes about five hours to complete one distillation.

As mentioned earlier, the *lavnni* is immersed in a *kodem* filled with cold water. The water in the *kodem* helps condensing the vapours passing through the *lavnni*. The condensed vapours (now in liquid form) trickle down and are collected in the *kollso*. This liquid is called *mollop*. Normally, it contains 18 bottles or one *kollso*. Its degree is around 19-21 proof and is a crude form of *feni*. 
4.1 Copper *bhann* used in distillation

4.2 Steel *bhann* used in distillation

4.3 Traditional attire of a *render* at a fancy dress competition
Also visible is the advertisement of the Kingfisher beer at the Bonderam float parade.

4.4 Plastic *dudnnem*

4.5 Earthen *bhann*

4.6 Sur kept for fermentation
After the heating process is over what remains in the bhann is hot godo. This is emptied from the bhann with a doi (a big ladle made of coconut shell). Godo is normally used as a feed for pigs and in some cases even to cattle by diluting it with water. The fire is then extinguished and the godo is emptied after breaking the moranne. This has to be done fast in order to reduce the pressure on the bhann.

In order to get feni, two mollpam along with another six kolixe of sur is then poured into the bhann. To neutralize any sour odour from the fermented sur two tambie (tumblers) of water are added to it. The process of heating is repeated. The final output, which is attained now, is known as feni. The feni at first is potent. If the procedure is continued persistently, then the strength diminishes. When the degree shows 20 proof for the output, the fire is put off. Whatever comes out of the lavnni after this is called pochok (residue after palm feni distillation).

Cashew Feni

Cashew plantations are found abundantly in the non-coastal areas of Goa. The laterite soil of the hillocks is highly suitable for cashew cultivations. The largest concentration of cashew plantations is found in Satari, Bicholim, Quepem and Sanguem talukas. The cultivation of cashew and the benefits attained thereby is credited to the Portuguese.

Originally, the cashew tree was found in the West Indies. Four centuries ago the Portuguese imported it to India from Brazil (Azevedo 1987: V, Sá 2001: 16, Abram 1995: 36, Directorate of Agriculture 1995: 19, Achaya 1998: 222, D'Souza 2001: 10). The cashew tree is a low, wide-spreading and fast-growing green plant, bushy, perennial, drought resistant and easy to cultivate. It can reach a maximum height of 12-15 metres and has a lifespan of around 40-50 years (Directorate of Agriculture 1995: 19).
Azevedo (1987: V) points out that the first systematic survey of Indian flora was made by Garcia de Orta. In his book *Colóquios dos Simples, Drogas e Coisas Medicinais da India* (1563), Garcia de Orta did not mention the cashew tree, although he devoted an entire chapter to the coconut tree. This proves that the cashew tree was not known to India in those days. According to Souza (1994: 41) the cashew industry did not begin till after the end of the 16th century. Later, by the end of the 17th century, Dr. Gemelli Careri describes the taste of the cashew apple juice and its medicinal properties but does not make any mention of the brew. Botanically, the nuts are the actual fruits and the apples are their succulent stems. In Latin the cashew tree is known as *Anacardium Occidentale*. ‘*Anacardium*’ means ‘heart-shaped’ and ‘*Occidentale*’ means ‘Western’. The term ‘*caju*’ has been derived from the term ‘*acaju*’, used by the Tupi tribe of Brazil. The Portuguese, who also colonized Brazil, coined the word ‘*caju*’ (Achaya 1998: 222).

The cashew *feni* distilling industry also supports other related occupations. This *agro-industry* promotes the processing of fresh cashew kerlings, cashew nuts, cashew-nut shell liquid, *niro* (sweet cashew juice), *urrack* (the first distillate of *feni*) and *cashew feni*. Cashewfeni is a clear drink and has a distinct aroma. *Urrack*, which is the first distillate of cashew, is considered to be a seasonal drink consumed during the hot summer months of March to May. It is never consumed directly but is always diluted with a lemon drink, which is mostly *Limca*, or with soda and limejuice. Local folklore has it that drinking *urrack* during the summer generates and preserves sufficient heat in the body to resist the wet monsoon season that follows.

Cashew *feni* distillation process is similar to palm *feni* distillation. The only difference is that cashew apple juice is replaced for the *sur*. The quantity distilled by the distiller depends on the capacity of the *bhann*. What is significant here is the
collection and the squashing procedures. Significantly, this is not a caste-based occupation, as the caste system had evolved much before the arrival of the Portuguese. As the Portuguese introduced the cashew fruit to Goa, initially those involved in the distillation took up this activity by merely replacing coconut sap with the cashew apple juice. However, earlier, only those from the *Sudir* caste were directly involved in this lowly occupation. Today, people from different castes are involved in cashew *feni* distillation, either directly or indirectly. Those involved in this industry are collectively called *kazkar*.

In the case of palm *feni* distillation, *any render* who wishes to distil *feni* can apply for a license from the Excise Department and commence distillation. However, in the case of cashew *feni* distillation, the government controls the distillation and its trade, as it is a seasonal activity involving innumerable cashew plantation owners. Much before the cashew trees bloom, the Excise Department of Goa Government organises a *pavnni* (auction) for the setting up of distillation units. The highest bidder gets the licence and assumes monopoly to set up the 'still' i.e. the distillation unit. He can then rent it to the distillers from the stipulated area for a period of three months. All the surrounding *kazkar* from that zone have to compulsorily distil *feni* only at this authorised unit. An Excise Guard is commissioned to maintain all records and to check the quality of the distilled *feni in each zone*. He is also assigned the task of maintaining details about the *feni* and *urrack* produced. This is done to enable the authorities to fix the amount for the following year's bidding as well as to exercise quality control. While this mechanism is in use all over Goa, the villagers of Bali have got together and they collectively control the bidding for their village. Thus, they have managed to do away with monopolistic malpractices.
Cashew *feni* distillation is a lengthy process. For our understanding this entire process is phased in two stages: 1. Collection and squashing of the fruit 2. Distillation of cashew *feni*.

**Collection of Fruits:** Cashew *feni* distillation starts by the end of February or early March. But, for those involved in cashew *feni* production, the work begins earlier. In the months of November-December *sankallop* (de-weeding and clearing the undergrowth) is done to ensure that the fruit collectors have easy access to the trees. Besides, the tree is provided with sufficient space and light to bloom well. Other than pruning the dead branches, the *kazkar* does nothing else to care for the cashew tree, not even its manuring. Even if the cashew tree has bloomed well, it may not produce cashew apples due to *murem* (mist), which occurs often towards the end of February, thereby destroying nascent flowers, and this in turn affects the yield.

By the end of February or early March, the fruits ripen. From now on, the remaining three months are a full time commitment to the distillation activity. The entire family including the children, who by then have finished their exams, are available for help. The women complete all household chores early so that they can also participate in the activity. We did observe a pattern of gender-based assignment of tasks. The women and children are usually engaged in picking the windfalls, while the men remain at the *ghuto* (place where the 'stills' are fixed). Jobs at the *ghuto* include procurement of firewood and storing and selling the produce. If there is no work at the *ghuto*, the men join the women and children in collecting the windfalls.

The *kazkar* family starts work early in the morning. They begin by moving over the entire plantation to pick the fruits that have fallen over the night. The fruits are not plucked from the tree because it is said to affect the other fruits that are yet to ripen.
Besides, the fallen fruits are more than sufficient for the day. Thus, considering all these factors, only the fallen fruit is picked.

Continuous picking of the fruit is a tedious job and moving up and down is also very tiring. However, what is important is the speed at which the fruit is picked. As these people are always involved in this work, they have become very proficient in collecting the fruit at a very rapid pace. In order to make the collection easier, the kazkar from Bali use a thin bamboo stick with an iron nail fixed to it. The Kazkar from Valpoi, on the other hand, use a twig. This twig is actually thorny, each thorn measuring about two inches. All the thorns are removed with the exception of just the one at the end. In both cases, the fruit is forked and put into a ddbo (large empty tin) or a bucket with much ease. After filling the ddobo, the fruit pickers proceed to the kollombi, which is a round or oval trench cut roughly into a rock. Sometime a dried hollow trunk of a matt’tti tree (Terminilia crenulata) is also used as a kollombi. The kollombi needs to be necessarily sloping at one end to enable the juice to flow out. The fruits are emptied at the side of the kollombi. If the kollombi is large, the fruits are directly emptied into it.

Squashing the Fruits: After deseeding, the fruits are heaped in the kollombi and squashed with the feet. Mostly, men undertake this laborious task; sometimes the women also join in. In Bali, kazkar’s use a heavy broad base stick to squash each and every fruit. This makes it easier to squash the already crushed fruit. Some men use gumboots to protect themselves from allergies. While squashing, some men also use bamboo sticks for support. These sticks are tied horizontally to lean on. However, when few fruits need to be crushed, the sticks are merely held in the hand.

Mechanisation has also crept into this traditional occupation. The Salesian priests at Sulcorna in Quepem taluka and some kazkar at Valpoi use machines to
crush the fruits. After crushing the fruit it is transferred into the presser for more juice. The first squashing unit was devised by Catholic priests at the SVD Ashram Raia, in Salcete taluka. The Kazkar from Bali are aware of these mechanical crushers but have not invested in crushing machines due to small-scale production and uncertainty of the yield. Another dissuading factor is that the distillation is done at the plantations. Besides, the security of the machine is an issue: after the season, the mechanical crushers and pressers have to be greased and polished to prevent them from rusting. But, above all, the easy availability of labour force in Bali precludes the use of machines.

The juice is normally extracted in the late evening. After the fruits are crushed the juice drips from the end of the kollombi. This kollombi has a small duct from which the juice is allowed to flow into the plastic kollso or ddobo kept there. This juice is thick and used for distillation of cashew feni. The pulp that remains is then gathered in mounds and loosely fastened with vines or sumb (thin coir rope). A heavy stone is placed on each mound. The juice that flows from this pulp is the niro, which is sweet and is a speciality of the cashew season. This is drunk directly or after refrigeration. Niro is believed to have medicinal properties. It is also considered to be a refreshing drink in the hot summer months. However, niro loses its sweetness after six hours as it then begins to ferment. After the extraction of the niro, the pulp is sundried to be used as fuel. But presently, many distillers reuse this pulp by letting it ferment after adding sugar. The resultant fermented produce is also used for distillation.
4.7 Picking cashew apples with a nail-fixed stick

4.8 Men holding onto a stick, wearing gumboots to squash cashew apples

4.9 Squashing cashew apples with the feet

4.10 Machine used for crushing cashew apples

4.11 Cashew apple squeezer
4.12 Stone placed on the pulp for *niro*

4.13 Rock carved *Kollombi*

4.14 Barrels filled with cashew juice kept for fermentation

4.15 Aluminium coil as *lavnni*

4.16 Pouring fermented cashew juice in the barrel mounted on an iron bracket for distilling *urrack*
4.17 Copper bhann used for cashew distillation

4.18 Breaking the moranne after the distillation, at Bali.

4.19 Furnace fuelled with wooden logs

4.20 Crowd at SVD Ashram to buy niro. Pressing machine also seen

4.21 Gray used to test the strength of feni

4.22 Offerings kept for Devchar at cashewfeni distillation site
The juice collected from the *kollombi* is stored into big plastic barrels to ferment. The small *kazkar* who do not have sufficient juice for distillation sell their juice. This juice has to be sold only to the authorized distiller who gets the *pavnni* in that area depending on the existing rate. Usually, it takes 3-4 days for fermentation to be completed. Most mark the date on the barrel when the juice was poured for fermenting on the barrel itself. This is done because, if the juice is kept for more than five days, sourness sets in thereby, affecting the taste of the *feni*. Fermentation also depends on the temperature.

**Apparatus:** The apparatus used in cashew *feni* distillation is the same as in *palm feni* distillation. As this has been discussed earlier, we shall not repeat the description of the apparatus used in cashew feni distillation; we shall only concentrate on a different apparatus, which is used in Bali.

The place where the cashew distillation is undertaken is colloquially called *ghuto*. While earlier a big earthen pot was used, most of the distillers have now switched over to the copper cauldron called *bhann*, for reasons already discussed earlier. In Bali, instead of a copper *bhann*, they prefer to use an empty tin barrel. These barrels are neatly cut in the middle and connected to another barrel with the *bonddkecho hat*. The *lavnni* is placed in the second barrel. The *bonddkecho hat* is insulated with *numb* and cloth and amalgamated with a paste of *rounnechi mati*. The barrel is mounted horizontally on an iron bracket affixed to the ground. This barrel has two openings. The opening nearer to the ground is plied with a nut, which is opened to discharge the hot *godo*. In comparison to the copper *bhann*, these barrels bought collectively by some distillers are relatively cheaper and easier to dispose of at the end of the season.
In Bali, unlike other places in Goa, the villagers enforce their monopoly at the auction. The villagers unite on the basis of their wards and bid. As the villagers unitedly undertake the bidding, the distillation unit is also installed collectively and distillers take their turns for distillation. Families sharing a distillation unit develop strong personal bonds with each other. Another interesting feature in Bali is that the distillers arrange their ghuto near the river to get easy access to the continuously flowing streamlets. Water from the streamlets is directed into a tilted barrel containing the lavni. The flowing water helps to maintain the coolness required for condensation. Even though barrels are used in Bali for the distillation process, we prefer to use the term bhann for a proper understanding of the process.

**Distillation Process:** Once the kazkar gets sufficient juice for the first distil, he commences distillation. After pouring the juice into the bhann it is closed with a dhanknnem in the same manner as is done for palm feni distillation. The bhann is closed to prevent the vapours from escaping. If the vapours escape, they can become uncontrollable and dangerous. A cloth dipped in rounnechi mati is used to make an air-tight packing i.e. the moranne for the dhanknnem. The bhann is then heated for several hours with intense and constant fire till the vapours are formed. The flames are reduced on the formation of vapours. Tending the fire requires knowledge and expertise and is considered to be a man's job. It is believed that a woman in her traditional attire is at risk near the intense flames. However, in exceptional cases, a woman tends the fire.

It takes nearly five hours for one distillation. The vapours from the bhann move through the bonddkecho hat to the lavni where they get condensed. The condensed liquid trickles down into the container kept at the outlet of the lavni. This first distil is the urrack. It strength ranges between 18-20 gray.
At many places in Goa, including Valpoi many distillers have shifted to the more convenient cement tank to submerge the lavnni. It should be noted that the cooler the condensing unit the better the urrack/feni. Usually, six ddobe of fermented cashew juice are boiled along with one tumbler of water to produce one-and-a-half kolxe of urrack. Every barrel can contain six ddobe of juice. One ddobo is equivalent to twenty litres.

In order to distil feni, two and half kolxe of urrack along with one ddobo of cashew ros (juice) and two tumblers of water are emptied into the barrel. Water is added to this distillation process to eliminate the strong odour of the fermented juice. The same procedure of moranne and boiling is repeated. This results in one gallon of feni, which amounts to forty-five to fifty litres of cashew feni. As two kolxe of urrack are used to distil feni, the price of the feni is twice that of urrack.

Socio-Economic Life of the Rendêr

The occupation of the render demands a rigid regimen of work throughout the day. Physical strength and good health are most essential in this occupation. Illness or change in seasons does not matter, as he has to tend to the trees. Even if there is a death in the family, he has to arrange for another person to do his job.

Though a render is traditionally visualized dressed in a kaxhti (loin cloth), it is rare to find a render in kaxhti today; he now wears shorts and a vest or a T-shirt. It is observed that even in areas where toddy tapping was the main occupation it is slowly losing its attraction. This is due to various factors, including social stigma. Since the toddy tappers figure low in the caste hierarchy, the social stigma attached to this occupation dissuades newcomers from joining the occupation. Even the younger generation is not inclined to continue with this family occupation. Most youth find it more lucrative to work in the Gulf or other foreign countries or in the hotel industry or
the foreign cruise. Such jobs are less laborious and provide steady income and leisure.

Our study revealed that most toddy tappers are not so well placed, socio-economically speaking.

A frantic effort is being made to keep this occupation alive, by using hired workers. The render community has started employing youngsters from the Gauddi community. To manage twenty trees and to collect sur from them, a hired render is paid Rs. 3,000/- per month. Besides, they are provided meals.

The following table provides information of the decline in toddy tappers occupation.

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When not engaged in tending the trees or stoking the fires at the **bhatti**, the **render** keeps busy with the maintenance of the tools and instruments of his trade. For instance, he sharpens the **kati** and washes the **dammnem**. The **dammnem** has to be kept filled with water for two days, properly rinsed and sun-dried. During the winter season, the **render** plasters the outside portion of the **dammnem** with **xenn** (cow dung). This prevents it from developing cracks. He also keeps himself occupied by chopping logs of wood to fuel the furnace.

The **render's** wife assists her spouse in more than one way. After every distillation she washes and replenishes the **bhann** with fermented **sur**. She washes the **dudnnem** twice a day. She tends to the fire and later empties the **godo** from the **bhann**. She knows to check the strength of **ffeni**. Previously, she used to also sell the **feni**. However, in present times, it is the **render** himself who sells his produce. The children normally help by filling water in the **kodem** or tank.

There is a rare case still remembered in the village of **Benaulim**, where an unmarried woman who was left financially helpless after the death of her father continued his occupation. A woman taking up the job of climbing the tree and tapping the tree had such an impact that she is remembered even today with some people even recalling the clothes she used to wear. She used to wear a long loose skirt, and the hem was taken between the legs and tucked in at the waist behind, like the **koli** women wear their saris. In fact, the **render** community maintains that the occupation is exclusively a male domain and this particular case is cited as an exception.

In the past the father used to initiate his grown-up sons in the occupation. It took four to six months for the son to learn the trade. They would climb a young and yielding coconut tree together to know the intricacies of tapping. At home, the son would take his father's **kati** and practice by making incisions into the **poi**. Our
interviews revealed that the majority of respondents interviewed have very little formal education, and their job was passed on to them informally.

However, as nowadays the render's children have got educated, they prefer salaried jobs. The most important reason is that it elevates their status since toddy tappers are placed on the lower rungs of the social hierarchy. The render also dissuades his children from taking up the profession because he does not wish to see his progeny doing the same routine and hard work that he did. He also feels that since he has invested in the children's education, they should take up jobs in keeping with their educational qualifications.

**Perils of the Occupation:** Among the risks involved in this profession, the most significant one is that of climbing the coconut tree during the heavy monsoon season. The moss growing on the trunk makes it slippery and the render runs the risk of slipping down from the tree. Besides, the tree swings dangerously during the heavy gusts of wind. Courage and strength are what the render armours himself with. Thus, it is assumed that the toddy tapping profession is exclusively gender-based.

The render face many clangers during the distillation process, too. In Benaulim, five fatalities have occurred due to the explosion of the earthen bhann, which happens for two major reasons. Firstly, if the sealing process is not done properly, it results in the fermented sur trickling out and coming in contact with the flame, thereby causing an explosion. Secondly, if the bhann develops a crack, the fermented sur trickles out, which causes the explosion. The distillation process becomes riskier when the distiller tries to adulterate his produce by using sugar or jaggery. The melted sugar or jaggery can seep through the porous bhann and thus come in contact with the flames, resulting in an explosion.
Besides, the render cannot carry on with his occupation for many years. In course of time, he develops many health problems. His knees begin to trouble him thereby, making it painful and ultimately impossible for him to climb the coconut tree. The constant climbing of trees puts tremendous stress on the knees and the cartilage in the knee joint, which wears out due to the constant friction, causing orthopaedic problems.

Unfortunately, the render does not enjoy any social security. There are innumerable cases where render have either died or been crippled after falling down from a tree. The family then goes through severe socio-economic crises as it loses the bread earner. The toddy tappers welfare fund board provides some compensation. In order to avail of this he has to be registered with the toddy tappers' association and has to tap minimum ten coconut trees. He also has to pay some amount for such indemnity.

**Socio-Economic Life of the kazkar**

As compared to the palm feni distillation, which is a perennial affair, cashew feni distillation is only a three-month activity. Every season provides an opportunity for the younger members of the family to learn the necessary tasks. For instance, the son of the kazkar, with every passing cashew season, will catapult from a mere fruit picker to a crusher of fruits and later on, into a person knowledgeable enough to distil feni.

In some cases, cashew feni distillers also hire labourers. The labourer is paid Rs. 2,500/- per month along with food and drinks, if he consumes alcohol. The hired men pick the fruit, squash it and even distil the feni. However, a lady employed has a different job profile and is paid on a daily basis. Her work includes picking of cashews and carrying the juice and firewood to the ghuto. These hired labourers,
whether men or women, are people living in the vicinity of the kazkar's residence or his ghuto or the cashew plantation.

We have found that most cashew feni distillers are Hindus. Earlier, it was the Bhandari toddy tappers (belonging to the Sudir caste) community that was involved in the distillation of cashew feni in Valpoi. Most of the present distillers in Bali belong to the Velip community. Earlier the Desai (Kshatriyas) and the Naik (Shudras) used to distil cashew feni. The concept of a particular caste carrying out this occupation has currently been eroded by the lucrative nature of this seasonal occupation since cashew apple juice and firewood, which are readily available, are the only requirements. Besides, the labour force is available in the household itself. The collective ownership of the apparatus also gave an impetus to people taking up this occupation. As a result, caste assignment no longer decides distillation. People of different castes, including Brahmins, are now involved, either directly or indirectly, in cashew feni distillation as it brings in money at a faster pace and that too with hardly any investment.

Cashew feni distillation has united the Bali villagers and hence, sociologically, it is an important area of study. The unity is manifested in the form of an informal cooperative society through which the kazkar collectively get involved in the distillation process. This unity was forged in order to do away with the middleman who used to successfully bid at the auction. As mentioned earlier, the kazkar jointly participate in the auction. The 'still' is owned jointly by a group of families. The barrel and other requirements like the funnel used to pour the juice into the barrel, the tumbler, the iron bracket used to mount the barrel, the lavnni, the gray etc. are purchased collectively. At the end of the season, they are stored for use in the following year, in the house of the person who was the front man (leader) for all of them. As the barrel
cannot be used the following year, it is sold and the money is utilized to buy a new barrel. Even the money needed for the pavnni is collectively raised. Since distillation is a collective occupation of a group of families the order of using the 'still' is amicably decided. We could also see families helping each other at the ghuto. Every ghuto contains at least three to four 'stills'.

Primary data reveal that earlier the Velip and other small kazkar used to sell the juice to the person who was successful at the auction and owned the 'still'. The Velip did not know the distillation process nor were they interested in learning it, as they had kept away from consuming alcoholic drinks But in the last 12 years, they have actively taken up distillation. This is because investments are low and the returns high. Besides, unemployed people get seasonal employment and those involved in this activity also consume it This motivation may have got them together to keep the pavnni under their collective control.

As this is a seasonal activity lasting a few months of the year, the distiller has to work hard to earn his reputation for providing good quality fení. Once the reputation is established, marketing the produce is easier as bar owners and others soon begin to visit the distiller at his house to purchase the fení.

There is no association or organization of cashew fení distillers. There could be two reasons for this; the first being that it is a seasonal activity lasting for only three months and the second being the quick sale of the produce.

Though cashew fení distillation is a three-month activity, the earnings enable the kazkar to subsidise his other agricultural activities. Many Velip families in Bali survive only on their income from fení. The rest of the year they are busy with their local vegetable cultivation, while other communities involved in distillation take up sundry other jobs. Earlier generations were uneducated, as their jobs did not demand
any formal education. But presently most children are educated and the job reservation policy has enabled many of them to get government jobs.

Other Indian states regard cashew as a cash crop only for the revenue earned due to high demand for cashew nuts. The *Kazkar* from villages bordering Maharashtra and Karnataka, knowing that fenī distillation is not allowed in those States, thought it would be profitable to get the fruits from there to distil fenī in Goa. However, plantation owners from the neighbouring states increased the selling price for cashew apples. This price hike along with the high transportation costs makes the exercise economically enviable.

Cashew fenī distillation generates income for the State. It provides employment to a number of people.

**Rituals and Beliefs associated with Distillation:** The render's occupation, as mentioned earlier, is risky. Therefore, certain fears confound the community. Irrespective of their religious bearing, superstitious beliefs invariably exist in the render's social milieu. The render follow many ritualistic practices during the collection and distillation process. After completing the tapping for the day, they pour a little sur near the last coconut tree. This is Devak (for God), who protects them from mishaps. Similarly, after every distillation he throws a little fenī on the flames. But today since many toddy tappers have replaced the wood furnaces with stoves, the fenī is thrown on the bhann. Both these practices can be traced to the original Goan practice of appeasing the devchar or zageavoilo. Even Catholic render continue with this practice.

Similarly, among the kazkar cultural ethos are involved in the distillation process and have become a part and parcel of the seasonal activity. Distillers in Bali perform many ritualistic practices at almost all the stages of distillation. Before setting
the 'still', distillers keep two or three stones at different places. Then they visit the temple for prasad pakli (divine sign) to ascertain whether or not the site selected for distillation is appropriate. After receiving the prasad pakli, the Zolmi (community leader) of the place is taken to the place where the 'still' is to be set and asked to have the garannem (prayers) to the zageavoilo. He appeases the zageavoilo by giving ronth, comprising leavened bread, dry fish, iddio (country made cigarettes), a lit incense stick and palm feni. It is significant that the zageavoilo is 'appeased', first with palm feni even though cashew feni is distilled in the area. This establishes the fact that palm feni existed long before cashew feni. Construction of the distillation unit begins only after this ritual is over.

After every distillation, the kazkar keeps a little cashew feni in a coconut shell or in a dhonno (cone made of leaf) for the zageavoilo. This is to express gratitude for the protection given and also to pray for further protection. A little feni is also thrown on the flames. However, the kazkar, not knowing why this is done, wonder if it is meant to appease the Agni Deva (Lord of Fire). A similar procedure is followed while dismantling the distillation unit. Before the setting up of the unit, the ritual is done to ask for protection, but while dismantling, it is done for thanksgiving.

The kazkar in Valpoi also invite the gaunkar before the distillation process. The gaunkar puts the garannem at the site where the 'still' is to be set up. The zageavoilo is appeased with feni that is kept for him a little away from the bhann. At the end of the distillation season, the village temple god receives a cash offering.

Both at Bali and Valpoi, it is only the zolmi/gaunkar (member who enjoy social rights) who initiates the distillation process. Even though he actually does not set up the 'still' he is required just to 'touch' the unit to be assembled. The distillers
dare not commence their risky activity without first carrying out this ritual. The distillers pay him for this service.

**Difficulties faced by the Render and Kazkar:** Over the last few years, the demand for both palm and cashew feni has declined for various reasons, particularly because of its odour and the social stigma attached to the 'poor man's drink'. It has also lost ground to I.M.F.L.

Presently, feni is available in three categories at the Toddy Tappers' Association: Feni of 15 gray for Rs. 300 per kollso; 16 gray for Rs. 350 per kollso, and 17 gray for Rs. 400 per kollso. But the toddy tapper does not secure these prices, as his stock is sold to any person who successfully bids for the entire stock of feni in that particular year and pays the Association a fixed fee.

This pricing pattern raises the question of economic viability. The render distilling feni from toddy complain that, all factors considered, their feni should have fetched them at least Rs. 900/- per kollso. The present sale price makes one suspect that the feni of the first category above is either distilled only once or is made with additives, a suspicion corroborated by some toddy tappers. To add to the render's woes, local bars purchase feni from them on credit. This makes selling sur for vinegar a more profitable venture.

On the other hand, the Toddy Tappers' Association does very little to protect the render from the onslaught of distillers who use irregular methods of distilling feni — either by fermenting sugar, fermenting a mixture of sugar and jaggery or fermenting a mixture of sugar and toddy, and the use of novsagor (alum) — which turns the produce impure and harmful to health. We have further learnt that an essence is also available, which is dissolved in a mixture in the proportion of one bottle of palm feni to two bottles of water. This soluble content gets the disposition of feni both in
intensity and taste; but it has to be consumed within eight days, after which it loses the flavour of feni.

The market for toddy-based feni distilled in the traditional manner seems to be diminishing. But there is a small section of Goan afficionados abroad and landlords who, yearning for genuine toddy-based feni, do not mind paying a higher price for pure toddy-based feni. The Goan Diaspora appreciates its medicinal value, as seen from the success of the Madame Rosa export brand; but barring this exception nothing is really being done to exploit this avenue.

On their part, the kazkar have their own problems, which make it difficult for them to continue their traditional occupation: Cashew feni distillation being a seasonal occupation, unlike palm feni distillation, which is done through the year, the kazkar has to take up a second occupation outside the cashew season. Secondly, the poor holding capacity of the kazkar makes them sell their produce at the earliest. Thus the price of cashew feni is not determined by the kazkar but by the purchaser, which leaves the producer always frustrated. Thirdly, the kazkar cannot hoard cashew feni because, believed to be a heat-generating beverage, most consumers prefer it in the monsoons.

Although the niro is a much relished summer drink, most kazkar cannot exploit this demand, because the fruits are squashed late in the evening, in the interior of villages, and without proper transport facilities. Further, the kazkar do not have any organization to protect their interests.

In conclusion, it can be said that toddy tapping is a full-time and laborious occupation, demanding time, stamina and discipline. The render cannot work after the age of fifty years because of the characteristic occupational diseases. Besides, the
insecurity, lack of government support and declining sales, is slowly killing the occupation.

On the other hand, the Toddy Tappers’ Association merely keeps a record of the number of toddy tappers. Its office is just a selling point for palm feni, with the purchaser deciding the price; it does not have any quality control or price monitoring mechanism. Selling feni depends on the individual distiller’s ability to market it with no help whatsoever coming from any other quarter, be it the Government or the Association.

Competition with has become a losing battle for the feni distillers. Those involved in plantation do not engage in research and development to protect their crop or increase the production; they rest solely on the know-how they have received from their elders. The use of modern technology is conspicuous by its absence, and the plantations, particularly the cashew plantations, are left to the mercy of Nature.

Many respondents opined that having a co-operative movement of feni producers would help the community immensely. They suggested that the Association should become a marketing agency for the render. Even the kazkar feel the need for a co-operative society to help them market their produce effectively. Given that Goa is a tourist destination, a co-operative society could market both palm and cashew feni as a Goan drink par excellence.
CHAPTER V

ALCOHOL AND THE QUOTIDIAN GOAN LIFE

Every country has specific customs and traditions, whose origins and meaning are sometimes difficult to trace. They are basically social habits or folkways that through repetition, over a relatively long period of time and passed down from generation to generation, have become a formally recognized order of social behaviour; they are a repository of social heritage interrelated with the culture to define the identity of that country (Singh and Nath 2000: 1-2, 4).

Like other societies, the Goan society, too, has its own traditions and beliefs, especially when it comes to treating illnesses. We observe the use of local fenil in preparing home remedies for many common ailments. Similarly, every culture is distinct in its food habits. These are partly a result of religious ideas. In Goa, the Portuguese culture and the new religion introduced by them have influenced Catholic cuisine.

For the purpose of our study, in this chapter we trace the use of alcohol in the day-to-day Goan life. To enumerate the various uses of alcohol, we have divided this chapter into three sub-topics: alcohol as a medicine; alcohol as an ingredient of Goan cuisine, and, finally, customs and traditions involving the use of alcohol.

Alcohol as a Medicine

Despite the all-encompassing influence of the Portuguese culture in Goa, it is interesting to see that Western or allopathic medicine took a very long time to take root in Goa. To begin with, medical facilities were available only in urban areas; they were out of reach for the rural residents. Secondly, the villagers had practically no
purchasing power. Thirdly, age-old family remedies handed over diligently from one generation to another generally took care of medical ailments, and so there was no pressing need to try out the new medicines.

In Goa a number of ailments are still treated with palm and cashew *feni*. Its uses are manifold, as seen below:

**Feni as an Antiseptic:** *Feni* used in the absence of methyl spirit to disinf ect the area before an injection prick. In most Goan households, irrespective of caste, class and creed, cuts or bruises are routinely treated with palm or cashew *feni*. The stinging sensation experienced when *feni* is poured on a wound is said to hasten the healing, helping as it does in blood coagulation. Vinegar is a substitute for *feni*.

**Feni in deliveries and childcare:** *Feni* was widely used at deliveries held at home. The *voiginn* (mid-wife) would ensure that a bottle of *feni* was at hand to treat the umbilical cord. The instrument used to cut the cord was also kept dipped in *feni*. After delivery, the nursing mother was advised to pour some of it on the homemade sanitary pads then in use. A little-known practice is that *voiginneo* would sometimes take a mouthful of *feni* and blow it on the vagina immediately after the delivery, which, they believed, helped heal the vaginal lacerations at delivery. At a time when antiseptic lotions were unheard of, *feni* was the only antiseptic at deliveries.

Even today, in some families a few drops of *feni* are added to the baby's bath water as a protection against common cold. After bath, the person bathing the baby dips a finger in *feni* and gently rubs it on the baby's tongue to cleanse it and to protect the baby from a cold.

**Feni as an Appetizer:** In Goa they say palm *feni* keeps the doctor away. Senior citizens are often medically advised some *feni* as an appetizer before dinner, and as a sedative too. This happens overwhelmingly among the Catholics. Among upper caste
Hindus it is common practise for the nursing mother to have some grape wine for a period of three months or during lactation. This helps as an appetiser and to produce milk. It also helps the mother to recover from the trauma of delivery, including blood loss. Port wine is preferred; if unaffordable, feni is opted for.

_Feni as an Anti-Flatulant: Feni_ is used to treat stomach disorders: its ingestion and rubbing on the belly of a person help loose motions to subside. In some cases, cotton dipped _in feni is_ placed on the navel and tied with a cloth. This is done particularly when the loose motions are accompanied with stomach gripes. Another prescription for gripes is a brew prepared by boiling cashew _feni_ with a little sugar and _pudina_ (mint) leaves. _Feni_ is also used to treat constipation: the patient consumes some and gets it massaged on the belly and the back where the large intestines are situated.

_Feni for deworming:_ Children are often de-wormed with _feni_. It is not ingested but applied on the head and stomach. Sometimes a small _pottli_ (bundle) of herbs and condiments soaked and crushed in _feni_ is hung round the child's neck and/or rubbed on the neck and joints. The patient also has to inhale the strong odour of the concoction.

Different pastes are used to treat the worms. Some recommend the mixing of crushed onion, garlic flakes and _jirem_ (cumin seeds) in _cashew feni_. A _pottli_ of the mixture is then hung around the child's neck, whose continuous whiff is said to be a cure against worms. At other times, _palm feni is_ mixed with camphor, petrol and stale ghee, to be rubbed against the joints. Yet another paste is made by grinding _poingiro_ (Erythrina indica), bark of _anter_ (custard apple: _Annona squamosa_), _khajro_ (Stryegnos nuxvomica), _kayo_ (Melia composita) and _sontonn_ (Indian devil tree: _Alstonia scholaris_) with palm _feni_ for application with a piece of cloth wound tight round the head. A variation of this is a mixture of _koddu voum_ (Aijwan: _Trachystemnum spp._),
sunflower leaves, guava leaves, tender leaves of drumsticks ground in palm *feni*,
which is applied to the patient's head.

*Feni* is also a preventive against worms: either *koddu voum* or *kiranttem* (*Androgaphis panniculata*) is soaked in cashew *feni* for a week. The child above one year of age is administered a spoonful of the concoction once a week. Another concoction is prepared by keeping *koddu voum in pochok* (residue after palm *feni* distillation) for months together, of which a teaspoonful is administered to the child every week.

*Feni* to treat colds and fevers: Particularly during the monsoons, sugar dissolved in cashew *feni* is set on fire for ingestion soon thereafter. If jaggery is used instead, the mixture is drunk without being set on fire. A burnt concoction of sugar, cinnamon and cloves with cashew *feni* is yet another common prescription. To cure sore throats, *alem* (ginger) is ground with cashew *feni* and consumed with honey. *Palm feni* mixed with nutmeg paste is also recommended in case of common cold. To treat chest congestions, egg yolk is flipped with sugar, with brandy or rum added later.

The treatment for fever consists of rubbing *feni* all over the body, especially the head if the fever rises rapidly. Besides, *feni* compresses are also used on the forehead, to prevent the fever from affecting the brain; and sometimes, bark of *karō* (*Melia tomposita*), *kiranttem*, *alem*, *jirem* and *kando* are ground in palm *feni* to form a paste, for application on the head.

*Feni* as an Analgesic: Some Goan villages have ‘*bonesetters*’, who treat all kinds of orthopaedic problems, including fractures, by using a *pap* (paste) of local herbs and spices. These are ground in either cashew or palm *feni*. Whether it is a simple dislocation or a fracture, the *pap* is applied to the skin, which is then bandaged. The patient is advised to soak the bandage regularly either in cashew or palm *feni*. 

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5.1 Mixing *pap*

5.2 Application of *pap* by the bonesetter

5.3 Application of *pap* on the ribs
In case of pain due to a fall, or a sprain, there are indigenous medicines with *feni* as the base. In some cases, *vol’lmachi sal* (bark of *Mitragyna parviflora*), *jirem* and Epsom salt are ground with palm *feni*. The paste is applied to the affected portion, which is normally covered with a piece of paper, which has to be constantly moistened with *feni*. Rheumatism is treated by rubbing the affected joints with a mixture of pepper powder and *feni*.

*Feni* is also used to treat dizziness. *Feni* and salt are rubbed hard on the patient’s feet and palms. He is also made to inhale a whiff of the *feni*.

Another common ailment, toothache, is also treated with *feni*. The patient rinses the mouth with *feni*. In case of a cavity, a cotton swab dipped in palm *feni* and crushed cloves is pressed into the cavity to ease the pain.

**Urrack as a Tonic:** Many Goans consume *urrack* as a tonic during summer months. This is said to provide the person with sufficient body heat against the cold in the ensuing monsoons.

At Valpoi, the oxen used for ploughing fields are forcefully fed a bottle of *cashew feni* every year. It is believed that the beverage protects the animal from illness and generates energy during the monsoon season.

However, in the present times, these home remedies are on the wane. *Eau de Cologne* compresses have replaced *Feni* compresses, especially since pure *feni* became a rare commodity. Besides, prompt availability of modern substitutes, easy access to health facilities, and improved economic conditions have contributed to the decline of traditional home remedies.

**Feni as a Plant Nutrient:** Palm or *cashew feni* is used as a plant nutrient along with effective microorganisms. *Feni* enhances the ability of the microorganisms to provide
nutrients to the plant, according to a farmer-priest from Pilar. This technique is slowly gaining popularity, though not officially accepted.

**Alcohol as a Food Ingredient**

As Rodrigues (2000: 13) points out, the 450-year-long Portuguese rule produced a symbiosis not only in the food habits but also in the overall lifestyle of the people. As mentioned earlier, Hindus and Catholics present two different facets in the matter of food and lifestyle. Goan Catholic cuisine is a unique fusion of Portuguese and the local cuisine; that is to say, it is neither purely Eastern nor entirely Western (Sá 1986: 9). The traditional Hindu cuisine presents a striking variation.

Wine is an important ingredient of Portuguese cuisine. In Goa, the Portuguese substituted it with the locally available *feni* (Rodrigues 2000: 29). According to Guha (1983: 67), realizing the culinary value of *sur*, they introduced vinegar prepared from *sur* in the Goan Catholic cuisine. Vinegar gives the food a slightly sour flavour; it also acts as a preservative for meat, fish, vegetable and pickle recipes. *Sur* is also used instead of yeast to prepare *pão* (bread) (Gracias 2004: 40).

Vinegar is used not only for taste but also as a preservative. In Goa, it is prepared from fermented toddy. Though a synthetic substitute is available, Goan Catholics prefer vinegar made from toddy. This and palm *feni*, *wine*, and palm jaggery are frequently used in the Catholic cuisine.

According to Gracias (1997: 46), Goan cuisine is one lasting influence of the Portuguese. Some Goan dishes were designed to suit the European taste buds and the availability of ingredients. Beef and pork were introduced in the diet of the middle and the upper class Catholic converts, who evolved their own cuisine over the years.

As compared to other regions in India, Goa follows few dietary restrictions. For example, people from all religions consume fish, while in other parts of the
country Hindus are largely vegetarians. One reason for the Goans' consuming fish is its coastal location. The major difference between the two communities — Hindus and Catholics — is the consumption of meat, especially beef and pork. Among the Portuguese, wine used to be a standard accompaniment to the meal (Larsen 1998: 126).

Hindus normally observe certain var (days) and festivals, when they avoid non-vegetarian food. Many Catholics abstain from meat during Lent. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are the only two days when fasting and abstinence is required of Catholics.

**Feni/Vinegar** in Meat Preparations: Palm feni is used to prepare the famous Goan sorpotel (a dish prepared from the organs of a pig), salted tongue, salted pork, and in beef and pork assado (roast). Some respondents revealed that beer is alternatively used to prepare pork roast. Local condiments ground with vinegar are used to prepare sorpotel and other pork preparations like cabidela, balchão, vindalho, and feijoada (a preparation of beans, sausages and salted pork).

**Feni/Vinegar** as a Preservative:. Palm feni is used to prepare gallmo (fine shrimps). Shrimps ground with feni, turmeric, cumin seeds, etc. are exposed in the blazing sun till they dry to powder. Gallmo can be preserved for more than a year and used for a variety of fish preparations. Feni/vinegar prevents the formation of maggots.

Most Goan pickles — vegetable pickles like tenddli (gherkins), aubergine, mango, chilly, lime, etc., and even meat and fish pickles, called para or môl — use vinegar as a preservative.

**Feni/Vinegar** in Goan Sausages: The famous Goan sausage, though tedious to make, is a lucrative business. Sausages are prepared by marinating tiny pork pieces for a day or two in a vinegar-based masala of dried chillies, ginger, turmeric, cloves,
Lnamon, pepper and garlic. The mixture is then stuffed in dried guts of cow or pig, after they are smoked and dried. Thus protected against maggots, sausages can be served for months together.

According to (Rodrigues 2000: 35) like most other Portuguese food items seen in our daily diet, the sausage has been adapted to our taste. Homemade sausages use fen, and sometimes brandy, for better taste, whereas the traditional Portuguese sausage uses salt, cloral (a preservative) and a colouring agent, and is prepared in one. The Portuguese make it long in size, while Goans make a string of small sausages.

Besides being an accompaniment to rice, it is a popular snack in bars. Sausage o (bread with a sausage filling) is a delicacy in the Old Conquest areas.

Vinegar in Fish Preparations: Recheado is a popular masala for the Catholics of Goa. It is a paste of chillies and other spices ground in vinegar, used to stuff fish mackerels and pomfrets. Some people add a little palm fen to this masala. Fish cheado is a popular dish in most Goan restaurants. Slices of big fish, such as big fish, are also dipped in the masala prior to frying. Interestingly, most Hindu families do not use vinegar while preparing recheado masala.

Among the Catholics, ambott-tik (a hot and sour curry) is a famous curry prepared with catfish, shark fish, and ray fish, and sometimes sardines, too. This curry dispense with coconut, an ingredient in all other Goan curries, but has to be necessarily prepared with vinegar.

Vine in Cakes: Rum, brandy and wine are used in preparing cakes. Normally, dried its to be added to the cake are soaked in wine, rum or brandy, sometimes for several months. This enhances the taste and increases its shelf life.
Some Goans improvise by adding wine to Chinese preparations. Our field study has revealed that particularly many Catholic households are adept at making wines at home, using local fruits and berries.

*Sur* for Leavening: *San ‘nam* are steamed rice muffins, made from soaked boiled rice and coconut ground together in *sur* and fermented for a couple of hours. The batter is placed in small plates and steamed.

To conclude, we can say that Vasco da Gama's journey to India caused considerable changes to happen in the local cuisine. Between the years 1510-1961 many local habits were discarded and new ones adopted. The lifestyle of the Goan society changed with the introduction of new food products and customs (Gracias 2004: 38). It can well be said that palm *feni* and vinegar has given the Catholic cuisine its identity whereas the Hindu cuisine derives its own from the tamarind pulp or lime that it employs liberally.

Alcohol in Customs and Traditions

The Goan life comprises a number of practices observed at different times and in different contexts, at the individual and family levels. The lower socio-economic groups attach greater importance to them even without knowing their origin or rationale.

Although conversions to Christianity took place five centuries ago, some Hindu practices are still extant among them. A number of Catholic families consult the *bhatt* (Hindu priest) and visit temples for *prasad paklli* (divine signs). At one temple (in the New Conquests), a specific time is allotted for Catholics seeking *prasad paklli*. They also make ritualistic offerings to Hindu deities, either annually or on auspicious occasions.
The data in this sub-topic is based solely on oral sources and our observations. We have also consulted knowledgeable elders on related beliefs and practices. Since the data collected indicates that many beliefs and practices are connected with the devchar (local supernatural spirit), we would like to briefly clarify a few concepts. Documented here are only those that involve the use of alcohol.

Devchar: Many Goans have a strong belief in the supernatural power or a spirit, often called devchar. He is known by different names at different places. The Velip in Bali refer to him as nas. In Shiroda, he is known by names like Vallpikar, Apoikar, Satkar, etc.

Fearing the name, the devchar is often referred to, euphemistically, as zageavoilo, bandavoilo, etc., which is a reference to its presumed dwelling place. In Goan folk culture the devchar is venerated publicly, especially by the Hindus, who unquestionably believe in the spirit, who is thought to be benevolent, although never given the place of the deity; but like other gods in the Hindu pantheon, the devchar is remembered on particular days, viz. Sundays and Wednesdays. As God’s envoy, he is believed to help an individual realise his intentions or wishes and to protect him and his property. At the community level, he is believed to protect the fields, hedges and waterways, and promote the welfare of the villagers.

The place where he is believed to reside is considered holy and so kept. A number of places in Bali and Shiroda are known for devchar dwellings. A red flag is placed beside a ghumtti (a little stone structure) erected for him. In Cordem ward of Bali there is a famous place of the nas near a stream. The villagers do not have proper drinking facilities and depend on this stream for their water supply. There is no structure constructed for the nas; yet the people very faithfully follow the rules of keeping the place clean. In this way, through the perception of nas, some norms
appear to have been imposed for the welfare of the people, just as the source of the water for the villagers in Cordem is kept clean by invoking the *nas*.

On the other hand, in the Old Conquests one cannot see *devchar* appeased openly, because Hindus form a miniscule percentage *here*; they visit places in the New Conquests to appease the *devchar*.

Besides, it is important to note that the Catholic concept of *devchar* is diametrically opposite. For the Catholics, *devchar* refers to Satan, the devil; he is God and man’s enemy and is never regarded as a benign presence.

*Soro-Ronth:* For all favours granted and to be granted, the *devchar* is appeased with offerings, particularly *sur/soro*, considered his favourite. Offerings are made for good health, at wedding time, before starting a new business, when a new house is built, when a person is sick or in trouble, and so on. Originally, it was *sur-ronth* (toddy and leavened bread) that was offered; but as *sur* has become scarce, it has been replaced by *soro*. *Ronth* is made from a mixture of rice flour and grated coconut baked on a banana leaf. However, in present times, *rontth* is replaced by bread, as the procedure involved in preparing *rontth* is tedious.

However, not all offerings to the *devchar* contain *soro*. Cordem ward of Bali is an illustration of this, where bananas, betel leaves, areca nuts, etc., are offered instead. The reason could be that in the past the *Velip* community kept away from alcoholic drinks. That explains the unique manner in which they made their offering at the Kundeshvar temple. That is to say, members of the *Velip* community always ensured that they would not personally touch the *feni* bottle; hence the bottle would be tied to a stick that they carried.
Community Offerings to Devchar: 'Community offerings' refer to those made collectively on behalf of the village, as against individual offerings, made by a person for his personal benefit.

Offerings at the Dassehra festival in Shiroda are an excellent example of community offerings to the devchar at temples. All the twelve vangddi (members of different castes) of Shiroda consult Rawalnath and Betal once a year and pray for the welfare of the village. On this occasion, it is mandatory to appease the devchar, to preclude his annoyance and obstruction of the celebrations.

Here, feni is compulsorily used on three different occasions. On the tenth day of the festival, the purov (stone) situated in front of the Rawalnath temple is washed with palm fenı, late in the night, after all other rituals are held. Only members of the Vir community are authorized to do so, having been soldiers who guarded the village in the past. The ceremony begins late at night after all the other rituals are over.

Animal sacrifices of a bokddo (goat) and kombe (roosters) are carried out, in that order. The Mahar's kombo is offered last, given their last place in the social hierarchy and the fact that their sacrifices are considered 'polluting'. Cooked rice mixed with the blood of the sacrificial animal is then spread on the purov called choru.

A similar procedure is followed early next evening at the purov of the Betal temple. The only difference here is that only rooster blood is used for the choru.
5.4 Offering soro in front of a ghumti at Uskinichi Paz

5.5 Sur and rontth for sale at Margao, in front of the Rakhonndar of Damodar

5.6 Ceremonial washing of Purov at Rawlnath Temple

5.7 Ceremonial washing of Purov at Betal Temple. Also seen is the targan representing deity Betal
After the *zatra* (festival) the *torongam* (umbrellas) representing the deity *Betal* and adorned for the occasion are to be kept back in place in a ceremony called *torongam soddtai* (undressing) performed by the *Vir* and the *Gurov* (temple priest) on a Sunday or Wednesday and signifying the end of the year's *Dussehra*. On this day, the *purov* behind the Rawalnath temple is washed with *feni*, and *kombè* are offered and later cooked and eaten in the temple premises — a ritual that keeps the unity of the villagers, who, irrespective of caste, enthusiastically participate in the celebration.

In Margao, the *Rakhonndar* (protector) of Lord Damodar is appeased at a specific place in the city. A month before any *utsov* (festival) like Holi, Dindi and such, the temple committee members offer *sur-rontth* to this *Rakhonndar* and pray for smooth celebration of the festival.

**Individual Offerings to Devchar:** On Wednesdays and Sundays large crowds from different religions make individual offerings to the *devchar in Margao*, regarded as the *rakhonndar* of Lord Damodar or *Dambab*. Offerings here include *sur- rontth*, specially baked *bakri* (leavened bread), five *vateo* (candles), five *uzvateo* (*agarbatti*/incense sticks) and two *iddio* (country made cigarettes). Interestingly, at Margao, a *Bamonn* does the offering of *sur/ rontth* to the *rakhonndar* of Lord Damodar as he resides close to this place, on behalf of the people. Some people also offer slices of bread and *sur* instead of *bakri*.

**Uskinnichi paz, at Panzorconni** in Cuncolim, Salcete taluka, is another famous place where, on Wednesdays and Sundays, offerings are made to the *devchar*, known here as *Kuddo azoba*. Offerings include bread, *sur* or *soro*, *sukem nustem* (dry fish) and *uzvateo*, collectively called *vosodd* (non-vegetarian). *Soro* is instrumental in appeasing the *devchar*, with sometimes a rooster sacrificed. Interestingly a group of families of the Naik Desai community has been traditionally authorized to appease the *kuddo azoba*. 


In Bali, each farmer makes offerings to the *devchar*, praying to him before the sowing and after the harvesting. They include *soro, sukem nustem, iddi,* and *ujea boddi* (a stick with a flame). After keeping the offerings the individual farmer says: "*Deva, pal, tujem tuka ghe mhojem mhaka di*" (God, the father, take this, what was promised and give us what we deserve). Such practices date back to the times when man felt intimidated by Nature's uncertainties and so revered any power that might be helpful.

Again in Bali, the majority of the villagers offer *soro- rontth* to the *devchar* in front of the Kundeshvar temple, on Sundays and Wednesdays, either individually or as a family. The villagers compulsorily offer *soro- rontth* at least once a year; but some do so more than once, to fulfil a *sangnnem* (vow). A member of the *Devlli* community of temple servants (*Gomant Maratha Samaj*) is in charge of *soro* offerings. The *kolhorkar* who belongs to the Desai community bakes the *rontth* outside the temple in the traditional manner. This illustrates the caste-specific roles followed till today.

At the Chandreshwar Bhutnath temple in Paroda, Salcete taluka, *soro, iddi, sukem nustem* and *bakri* are used to appease the *devchar*, who is known as *hapsi*. Although people from all over Goa make their offerings, only the *Devil!* community is entitled to appease the *hapsi*.

Interestingly, many persons offer a little alcohol to the *devchar* before their own first sip of alcohol, either by pouring some on the ground or dipping their finger in the alcoholic beverage and flicking it, for unknown alcohol-craving spirit hovering around the place to inhale it!

There is a similar practice in Rajasthan: "Jai Mataji" is said while pouring the alcohol, as offering made to *dharti mata* (goddess Earth) (Hasan 1979: 132).
**Feni Offerings by the Shet Community:** The *Shet* (goldsmiths) worship goddess *Jogdomba*, a manifestation of goddess Durga. She is worshipped on a Tuesday of the Hindu month of *Malund*, being offered non-vegetarian food and *feni*.

**Feni Offering by the Gosai Community:** The *Gosai* have a community celebration in which alcohol has a significant place. In the past this community used to beg for their living. Every male member of this community has to undergo an initiation ceremony called the *kanchiro* (ceremonial cut on the ear lobe), normally held at seven years of age. An elderly male called *guru*, belonging to the community but not a resident of the same ward, presides over the ceremony. The blood from the incision is mixed with that of a *kombo* specially sacrificed for the occasion. The mixture is then applied as a *tilak* (vermillion) on the child’s forehead. Offering *feni* is a necessary part of this ritual, after which all those present symbolically dip their finger in it and then touch their tongue as a *prasad*. A little feni is kept in the compound for the devchar and the remaining offered to the *guru*, whom this pleases. Only local *feni*, either palm or cashew, is used.

On *Dassehra* night, all male members of the community gather at the temple in Sirolem ward of Bali to venerate the deity of *Sidhanath Proson’n*. Other communities also visit the temple to pray; they fulfil their vows by offering a local rooster, a coconut and local *feni*. The rooster is cooked and served to the gathering. *Feni* also is compulsorily offered as *prasad* to all those present. Every participant pays 50 paise for the first round of drink, served in an empty coconut shell. Teetotallers dip their finger in the *feni* and take it as a *prasad*. Then, unlimited *feni* is made available for free, and the remainder sold later. It is also a rule that all the participants are expected not to disclose the proceedings at the temple. Such a practice only makes *us* imagine the liberties that the men take after consuming alcohol, in the absence of the women.
folk. To the men of the Gosai community this is like an outing, some relaxation after the weeklong begging for alms.

*Feni for the lam: Xim* (boundary) is a custom followed mostly by the Mahar at the time of marriage. After completing all the other rituals, the married couple, their friends and family, proceed to the xim. There the voddil (elder) pours soro and implores the devchar to grant them a happy married life.

*Feni to ward off Evil Eye:* Goa is no different from other places in India as far as dixtt (evil eye) is concerned. It is said that some individuals have the capacity to intentionally or unintentionally cause misfortune to others just by looking at them. To get rid of the 'evil eye', incantations and charms are used, Wednesdays and Sundays being regarded as appropriate days to do so.

The Mahar community believes that it has powers to counter the ill effects of the evil eye. Palm feni occupies an important place in warding off evil and is used to appease the devchar. After the dixtt is 'cured', the healer pours palm feni for the devchar, in the compound of the patient's house. That very night liquor is poured in the healer's maharangonn (place where the Mahar community worships deities), too.

Warding of and countering the effects of the evil eye is also done by many people without using feni. Salt and chillies are waved around the affected person while reciting prayers and is thrown in the water or in the fire or left by the roadside. This is done by both Hindus and Catholics.
5.8 Offering for *rakhonndar* of Damodar
Note: can also see *Ghumti* (small structure)

5.9 *Soro, sukem nustem* (dry fish) *iddio* and *ujea boddi* (A burning stick)

5.10 Offering *feni* in *dhonno* at the Kundeshvar Temple

511 *Feni* used to get rid of...
**Feni for Vorsavollico Baumann:** Similarly, the *Mahar* community of Bali, visits their *maharangonn* at 12 noon after the *Xiddeo zatra* (village festival). On this day the *voddil* of the community has to offer *soro* to the *maharangonn*, in *a dhonno* (cone made of a leaf). A local rooster is sacrificed in a ceremony called *vorsavollico boumann* (annual respect/remembrance), which is compulsorily made to avoid misfortunes to the community members.

**Sur offering at Maharangonn:** At Zambaulim, in Quepem *taluka*, there is a *maharangonn* known all over Goa and among all religions. This is only a place where offerings to the *devchar are made*; it has nothing to do with the *Mahar* community's place of worship. Hence we should not confuse the place with the *maharangonn* of the *mahar*. The person in charge of offering the *sur-rontth* belongs to the Devlli community. A number of people from all over Goa at times offer *kolloso of sur* at this *maharangonn*. In fact the temple authorities have arranged with the toddy tapper to supply *sur* for this purpose.

**Feni at the Crematorium:** Among the *mahar palm feni* is also required at the *mosonn* (crematorium). After the body is cremated, two *dhonne* containing *feni* are kept in a corner, in appeasement of the *rakhonndar*, who ensure that the dead do not trouble the living. *Palm feni* is also served to those attending their cremation.

**Feni for Exorcism:** The *Zolmi* are the original inhabitants of Karai in Shiroda village. They belong to the *Kunnbi* community, and are also known as *ghaddi* (oracles/mediums). The temple of *Sukddo Zolmi*, built in remembrance of the eldest male member of the community, is famous for exorcism. *Palm feni* is used to 'treat' a person possessed by a spirit. The *ghaddi*, who mediates between the spirit and the person, finds out what the demands of the former to leave the body: Most often it is alcohol. On the day fixed for the exorcism, all the things asked for by the spirit are
ceremoniously offered to him. There is also a purov at this temple and the devchar residing there has to be appeased by pouring soro.

**Feni for Sottvi:** In the past, on the sixth day of childbirth, the whole family would have a night vigil, comprising singing and playing of ghumott (local instrument resembling a drum). The family awaited the visit of sottvi mai (mother goddess) to write on the child's ‘forehead’ its future. Gott (a copper or mud pot) mounted on a measure of rice, closed with a coconut, decorated with betel leaves and adorned with gold ornaments, personified sottvi mai. There was a puja in her honour. Nivedhea (food offerings) was shown to the sottvi first; only then all those present could eat. In order to keep awake the whole night the men drank soro and played ghumott. Coconut feni was the only alcoholic beverage served here.

This custom is also fading with the advent of deliveries made in hospital, the Mahar being the only exception to the rule. On the same day members of the community also offer feni at the maharangonn. Some other Hindus observe it if the mother is discharged from the hospital before the sixth day. This is indicative of the influence of custom and the absence of a scientific temper.

Among the Catholics, sottvi was practised a little differently. There was no playing of ghumott or worshipping of the gott; only a measure of rice would be kept in a corner along with a pint of coconut feni, a coconut and some money. This used to be done to avoid the attention of the society, as certain customs were banned among the people during the Portuguese times. The mother had to remain awake all night with the child in her arms. Early in the morning, before sunrise, the voiginn would take all the offerings.
According to Gracias (1994: 58), at a time when infant mortality was high, before the advent of the tetanus vaccine, or if the cord was not cut or tied in a sterile manner, people felt cursed by goddess Durga, and pre-emptively worshipped her.

**Feni for Adde Ceremony:** This is held before the *xiddeo zatra* in March, at Shantadurga Balikarin temple in Bali. Two days before the *zatra*, the villagers fetch a long tree trunk, called *adde* from the nearby jungle, which is required at the *zatra*. Two men are separately tied to the *adde* and rotated after they are raised as high as a coconut tree. But before the *adde* is brought to the temple it has to go through another ritual. This authority is given only to the *Mahar's voddil*. Since the *Mahar* are known to ward off all evil they try to purify the *adde* from any evil influences from the forest, in the form of a *puja*. This ceremony is famous for granting of individual intentions. The intentions and the fulfilment of the promises are made in terms of *feni*. After every request made to the *adde* money is given to the *mahar voddil*. Promises are made in terms of offering up to a gallon (twenty four bottles or thirty six bottles) of *feni* for favours granted. The *feni* is poured in a *dhonno* held by a member of the *Mahar* community who stands at a distance of around 100 metres from the *adde* and offered to the *zageavoilo*. The rest of the *feni* is consumed by the gathering and carriers of the *adde* to the temple. The *adde* ceremony is reputed to grant children to childless couples. After this ritual the *adde* has to be carried to the Balikarin temple, which is about two-and-a-half kilometres away.

**Wine used to wash the holy image of Jesus**

Most churches in Goa have the holy image of Jesus Christ washed with wine by male members of the Church committee, before Good Friday. This is done to disinfect the image before which is kept for veneration. Only male members are allowed to wash the image, because it concerns a male figure.
5.12 Offering *sur* at Zambaulim *maharangonn*

5.13 *Feni* poured in the ‘*dhonno*’ held by Mahar community at Adde ceremony at Bali

5.14 Washing of the holy image of Jesus

5.15 Presenting an intention along with a bottle of *feni* at Forgotten Zagor

5.16 Bottles of alcohol kept on the cross after presenting intentions at Forgotten zagor
However, at Varca in Salcete taluka, we have observed a different practice. The cotton used to wash the image with wine is squeezed out into bottles and then transferred into smaller bottles sold to the public. Thousands of devotees come to the place on these days for veneration and for the wine. This wine is used as a protection of the faithful against all perils; this wine is also consumed to ward off evil influences.

Adaptations by Catholics: The Catholics of Goa observe many practices from the pre-Christian days. The devchar is often referred to, as Dhoni or Dev (God) by the catholics.

Both Hindus and Catholics erect a roxi mathov (pandal made for cooking the wedding food) during the wedding celebration. For the Catholics it is important to pour a little fení inside the roxi mathov. On the middle hearth the crucifix is placed and beside it some fení is poured. This is for Devak. Instead, the Hindus offer Viddo i.e. areca nut, and betel leaves and so on.

There is also the Goan Catholic practice of pouring fení while erecting the mathov der (arc at the pandal entrance). The Hindus have their mathov der but devoid of fení offerings. Practices like these make us accept Sinha’s (2002: 28-29) observation that conversion brought about a change not only in the worship of the gods but it also forced the converts to change their way of living. That is because, to instil their faith among the converts, the missionaries sought to eradicate the Hindu practices. Practices considered harmless were adapted, as long as the object and means of worship was Christian in content.

Even though there was a change in religion, some Hindu practices continued among the Catholics even during the Portuguese rule and have survived to our day.
**Feni at Forgottem Zagor:** Catholics from the *Forgottem* ward in Goa Velha village, Tiswadi taluka, observe *a zagor* (night vigil) in the month of May. It begins late in the evening, near a chapel, and continues till the wee hours of the following morning. The *zagor* is held to pray for the well being of the people and the ward at large. An important component of the *zagor* is the appeasement of *dhoni*. He is appeased by an offering comprising a quarter bottle of palm *feni*, *viddo*, a bundle of *iddio*, matchbox, a bundle of *uzvateo*, a small piece of jaggery and bread, all of which are placed under a earmarked tree about 200 metres away from the venue of the *zagor*. Earlier, the *voddil* used to make the offerings; today, any elderly person does it given that the *voddil* as an institution does not exist. The *zagor* begins with a community wish A bottle of *soro* is offered on behalf of the ward; some is poured on the ground and the rest consumed by the musicians and others involved in the *zagor*. Individual intentions and offerings follow, each with a bottle of *soro* from Catholics and Hindus alike. Earlier, the *soro* was necessarily *madd* (coconut *feni*); in the past two years, however, people have started offering Indian Made Foreign Liquor, including whisky. A number of alcohol bottles are consumed all night long and the remainder safely stored in the chapel for later consumption.

The Portuguese found all *zagor* suspect for their religious syncretism; the Inquisition even banned the Bardez *zagor*, which was, however, revived in 1865, following public pressure (Kamat 1999: 71). The Forgottem *zagor* must have been one such pre-Portuguese legacy. Besides, the offerings of *Viddo* and *Soro* placed at the hedge in Forgottem points to the belief of the existence of the *devchar* there.

**Feni for a Good Catch:** Most members of the fishing community of Goa observe *zall ghoddnnek ghalta* (joining the pieces of the net), also known as *ghantt marop* (tying a knot). The entire net is knitted in two distinct halves, which are joined as one big net
ready for fishing. New nets are first blessed by a priest, and later the community prays at a Cross. It is a practice to pour soro on these middle knots. The community believes that the soro will keep evil away and ensure a good catch. Dhump (incense) is also burnt near the knots after pouring of the soro. Dhump also helps to keep away the evil. The fishing communities of Cansaulim, Siridao, Dona Paula and Agasaim follow this custom. Soft and hard drinks are served to all the participants.

The fisherman also makes use of soro to appease the devchar at sea. He pours liquor at the place where he spots fish. He says “aiz mhaka novol/ojap korun dakhoi” (Tray, perform a miracle today’). ”Mhaka ek pondra pantem nustem korun dakhoi” (‘Let me get a catch of fifteen baskets’). This prayer is addressed to the devchar of the sea! The net is then cast, one of its ends tied to the vhoddem (canoe). Soro is poured on this knot, too. In case the net does not fetch them enough, the procedure of pouring palm feni is repeated.

Another practice followed by the fishermen in Benaulim is the maddi (erecting a pole), held before the novenas for the feast of Infant Jesus at the neighbouring village of Colva. A bamboo decorated with rama chuddti (tender leaves of the coconut tree) is fixed in the ground together with a cross. Soro is poured at the bamboo base. Then a small group of people pray for their safety and a good catch. The uncertainties and hard labour coupled with the isolation they undergo when at sea may have persuaded the fisherman to depend on any source that might be beneficial. In Goa, the devchar is looked upon as a benefactor.

Feni for Patti: Yet another interesting custom prevalent among a number of carpenters in Goa is seen when the patti (main beam) of the house is to be installed: in the Old Conquests elderly carpenters ask the owner: “Pattiek soro na?” (‘Aren’t you giving the beam any liquor?’) This patti is very heavy and requires a number of
people to lift it. Once fitted, the house is taken as ready for occupation. The satisfied owner sometimes serves the carpenters some feni; and invariably they pour some on the patti and at the cross, if any, in front of the house. Most of it is left for their consumption. Some of such practices are only excuses to make the contented owner offer alcohol to the workers.

Feni at winnowing time: While the peasants of Benaulim winnow the paddy they also pour some palm feni on the ground and pray to the devchar: "Hem tujem tuka, varem sodd am kam, begin voiar kor" (‘This is yours, take it, and let loose the breeze so that we finish our work fast’). Earlier one quarter of feni with iddi, vodgem (rice cake) and a matchbox used to be kept for the spirit. Presently, this practice has been replaced by reading of some Biblical passages.

Xim: Catholics also follow a custom similar to the xim of the Mahar. After the wedding, the party goes to the xim of the ward or the person's courtyard. The bride's and the groom's relations stand on either side of the boundary, on which bottles of coconut feni are then poured. At every point, words either of forgiveness or of thanking the host are uttered, and requests that the bride be well looked after are said. Nowadays, with the wedding receptions held in public halls, the practice is slowly dying.

Rituals on the Wane: Our study revealed that many practices involving the use of feni are today becoming extinct. In some cases, these practices are followed clandestinely either due to religious pressures or the caste tag attached to the rituals. One of these is the medd marop (erection of the pole), which was very popular with the Gauddi community. This medd was installed before the marriage celebration, at the hands of the village voddil/gaunkar. Palm feni had to be poured at the medd. Underneath the medd, viddo and other amulet given by the ghaddi were placed, in the
belief that they would ensure the smooth conduct of the celebrations. However, the custom is on the wane; even the few who erect the *medd* flatly deny the use of *viddo* or any other things

*Medd marop* among the Catholic toddy tappers of Benaulim is also on the decline. They no longer see much meaning in the ritual. Moreover, the *gaunkar* has relinquished his rights, and this has also contributed to its decline.

*Pikas marop* (striking with a pickaxe) is another such custom. The *gaunkar*, after consulting the *ghaddi*, would be invited to strike with a pickaxe a plot earmarked for a new construction. He would then pour *soro* for the *zageavoilo* and make an offering to the temple on behalf of the owner of the plot. Today, however, most Catholic *gaunkar* have stopped such services; it is now the priest who blesses the *ghor khuris* (blessing of the foundation stone bearing a cross carving). Some even bury a gold cross and a few coins with the foundation stone. The pouring of *feni* is done clandestinely, if at all.

Similarly, the villagers of Verna had a number of beliefs centering on the *gaunkar*, who belonged to the *Gauddi* community. For example, during harvest, people would ask him to make offerings to the *devchar*, which, a decade ago, included killing *a kombo* and pouring *soro*. Very often, the villagers gave the necessary amount for the *gaunkar* himself to buy the required materials.

**Feni Offered at Bandiantulo Khuris:** This cross, considered to be miraculous, is located on the national highway at Cortalim. The Catholic *Gauddi* community alone has the right to incite the *magnnem* (prayer) at this cross, following which palm *feni* is poured behind the Cross, a place demarcated for the *dhoni*, who grants the favours. People from all over Goa come here, on Wednesdays and Sundays, always with alcohol to offer.
5.17 Pouring of alcohol at the Mathov der

5.18 Offerings including rice, coconut and alcohol offered to the person erecting the roxi mathov

5.19 Offering feni at Bandiantulo Khuris

5.20 Inscription on the cross
We gather that most of those who used to participate in the *magnnem* died of alcohol-related diseases. Their family members continuously complained to the parish priest to take some action against the offering *offeni* at the Cross. In 2003, the parish priest objected to the practice dubbing the libation a pagan practice. The use of *soro* behind the cross has stopped, with effect from January 2005, after the new *voddil* took over. However, in secret, some Catholics still continue the practice.

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that alcohol gave all the abovementioned practices a Christian semblance, as a result of which *zagor* and the like escaped the hawk’s eye of the Inquisitors (judges of the Inquisition Tribunal). The use of non-vegetarian items, like roosters, acted as a further endorsement.

Such practices were, however, not restricted to Goa; they were prevalent in other parts of the world. For example, in Greece alcohol was used in libations, for sacrifices and also as medicine. Wine was used in rituals and for festive occasions. Wine was also poured on the ground where any temple or house was to be constructed. This was done with the intention of consecrating the ground (Lucia 1963: 158).