Chapter – VI

CULTURAL HERITAGE
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Goa retains the assemblage of places of cultural heritage value related to its indigenous people. These areas, the art and art forms, archaeological and traditional sites, places of worship, sacred places and monuments are the treasures of distinctive value. Goa has shown a responsible attitude and general awareness to safeguard this treasure trove of cultural heritage for the next generations.

The Present is the outcome of the past. Many castes, sub – castes and tribes mingled in the past to produce a variety of folk art that reflects the traditions, customs and convictions of the people. The folk songs, the music, the dance, the drama, the visual arts, the folk – tales, all these remain inseparably linked to religion, whether Christianity, Islam or Hinduism. The relation between the folk arts and religion is mediated by definite social motivations, the comunidades, and the mands. These institutions have helped a great deal to preserve our heritage.

The working definition of cultural heritage is prepared by the meeting of the world bank in Washington D.C. in 1998 is “cultural heritage encompasses material culture, in the form of objects, structures, sites and landscapes, as well as living (or expressive) culture as evidenced in forms such as music, crafts, performing arts, literature, oral tradition and language.

Maand

Maand in folk-life has carved a niche for itself in the cultural identity of Goa. The concept of Maand needs to be studied in context with
communities existing here, their social dealings and cultural life. With the changing values, the new laws and the educational facilities, the whole set up is undergoing a metamorphosis. Technical development and the wide coverage of the media have reached the remote villages and this tidal wave of information is wiping out the simple trusts and beliefs of the people. Naturally, Maand is also proving to be an ineffectual and outdated concept, but till the middle of this century the Maand was a living, vigorous and powerful institution.

Maand was initially a basic cultural requirement and gradually, over the years, it became an accepted social institution. It is difficult to date the emergence of Maand as it existed in the unlettered and unacknowledged communities. No records were kept so there is no written proof. Only some comparatively recent records which go back to couple of decades, cannot decide how old the Maand tradition is. One has to depend on the oral tradition, legends, tales of the elder people, the hearsay accounts and speculative guess.

**Meaning of Maand**

Throughout Goa each village has Maand. Literally, a Maand is space of about 100 sq. mts. for the cultural observances of the village, with perhaps a tree on it. The concept of Maand is only with the communities called as Shudras by earlier system of Chaturvarnya.

As dedicated to Gods, the Maand is the symbolic support and base of cultural emotions and artistic expressions of the folk life. The Maand is an institution governed entirely by its concept. There are no written rules or constitutions, everything is settled by beliefs, tradition and
trust. One of the village men is the Maandkari by hereditary right and has first precedence at any observance. The symbolic head of the Maand is a lit samai, a kind of pedestal lamp with wicks burning in oil. All have access to its sacred precincts. There is a general feeling that all will go well when the proper invocations and other rituals are performed.

The invocations are made by the Maandkari. The main deities invoked at Maand is Dhartarimata (mother earth) and Vanadevata (goddess of forest). It is the Maand that decides what performances of folk arts shall be performed. Each Wada (neighbourhood - in the old concept of village, each caste or community tended to have its houses in particular Wada to which it is identified, such as Bhat-wado, Bhandar wada, Kharwada etc.) may have several Maand, named after the folk festivals or folk arts they are concerned with, for example, the Shigma, Dhalo, Jagar, Ranmalen, Gade of Hindus and Sanjaon, Intruz, Dhalo of Christians, out of which only Shigma and Intruz Maand are at the command.

**Functions of Maand**

*Maand* is a sacred place for the people. Quarrelling, abusive language, swearing, telling lies or gambling is strictly prohibited at *Maand*. Except women in their menstruating period, everyone had free access to the Maand. It is believed that such women bring calamity if they enter the Maand area. Nothing is hidden at the *Maand*. There is a practice to have angvan to *Maand* deity.

The *Maand* encompasses all aspects of the rural life. It expresses the essence of its culture. Even the activities unrelated to the *Maand* are affected by it. Like the *Dhenlo* of the cowherds celebrated in the month of
Kartik. The cowherds carry decorated wooden Ghumati with Krishna idol. Singing songs, they dance in front of every house of the village, where they are given coconut and poha (puffed rice). Now the Maand has nothing to do with it but the amount for decorations and the musical instruments belonging to the Maand are given for the dhenlo. Even the annual dramas staged at the village temple are given monetary aid by the Maand. Except Perni Jagor and the Dashavatar Kala rest of the art forms depend on the help of Maand.

The folk-art we see in Goa today is noted by the local culture only after they got acceptance from the Maand. Even the variations found in the Phugadi were performed at the Maand and then they became popular. The change in the governing powers and social customs were depicted initially by the Jagor, the ‘Dhonga’ added new songs and dance steps and the Ranamale flourished through them. The Gade Maand kept the singing of the Ram’kathan alive. Even though the Maand started working on the economic and religious spheres, basically it was created for the folk arts.

Goan culture in general and folk arts in particular survived because of the Maand. These are the signposts of the Indian culture and the Maand kept them intact and in healthy form.

History of Maand

When we look back, we realise the wonderful multi-faceted character of the Maand. The concept of Maand is based on the human idea of secularism, going beyond the casteism and individualistic behaviour pattern. There is conclusive evidence that dates Maand back to 5000 years.
It is a fact that *Maand* is a part and parcel of Goan soil. It has merged with the land of Goa with the attitudes and aspirations of its people, with habits and habitat and the physical and psychological requirements. It has maintained this proximately for ages and people, right from the pastoral nomads like *Dhangars* to the rural *Kulwadis, Kulambis* and *Gavdas* have spent generations under the shade of *Maand*.

The influence of *Maand* on the rural mind has remained intact inspite of the social and political upheavals. Even the Portuguese high handedness could not support it, may be due to the inaccessibility of the villages, where the ruling power could not reach. And where it reached, the *Maand* ignored it.

The *Maand* has outlived the atrocities of the earlier phase and since there were no idols to be destroyed the Portuguese left it after banning the singing and dancing at some places. Throughout the, Portuguese rule, the *Maand* remained functional and even dared to comment on the rule through some dance and drama forms. In a way the *Maand* kept the Goan culture alive in those 450 years of occupancy.

**Religion’s Role**

Religion takes a different form at the *Maand*. Religion in the popular sense has no place there, neither idol of deities is kept nor the religious ceremonies performed at the Maand. People may pray at the time of calamity but it has no religious authority on the other hand, the *maand* has no interest in any religion. The only rituals seen at the *Maand* are lighting of a lamp, the offering and/or breaking of coconut, flowers or the rare sacrifice of an animal. No priest or *Bhatji* is needed at the *Maand* as no
chanting of mantras or *havans* are performed there. The rituals at the *Maand* have background of traditional songs and conventional rituals.

**Etymology**

The word *Maand* has many connotations. In Konkani, a grocery shop is Called ‘*Maand*’. One of the ‘Goan folk songs, ‘*Maando*’ is derived from the meaning of the word - ‘the one that has a specific form or notations’. There are many words like ‘*Maandani*’, which means layout or construction. All the constructive work does start at the *Maand* in folk-life; like the in vocation for the protection of the village. *Maand* also means ‘tax’. Similarly a tax is collected at the *Maand* too. It can be related to the Vedic ‘Mandala’. The *Bhartiya Sanskriti Kosh* defines *Maahdala* as ‘a place Where the god or goddess resides According to Mollesworth, “it is a sort of mystical diagram inscribed in summoning a’ divinity on occasions.” Both the terms *Maandala* and *Maand*’ have vast connotations and experts believe the Maand may be pre Vedic belonging to the lower castes like the Shudras. When we consider the structure of the *Maand* and the work done by it, it seems improbable that it has come from the Sanskrit word *Maandala*.

**Financial**

The money spent by the *Maand* for the cultural and social activities is collected by various means. First source is the donations given voluntarily by the villagers. Generally, on occasions like wedding, people donate something to the *Maand*. It can be either cash or something like
fruits, cloth, ornaments etc. Second is the tax collected by the *Maand*. It is called ‘Pati’; this tax is per person, per house, per head of the cattle or on each fruit bearing tree. Every year the *Maand* decides which taxes will be levied depending on the expenditure foreseen. Every one deposits this tax on the *Maand* without any reminders and generally there is no hitch in the collection. Thirdly, the things like fruits, food grains etc., donated to the *Maand* are auctioned and the money goes to the *Maand* funds. This auction can be conducted couple of times in a year, and a nominated treasurer handles all the funds. The fruits tied on the Toran are also auctioned and anyone can buy them. Even they can buy back the donated item, as it becomes a ‘Prasad’. The most important item is the ‘Naralvido’ (Coconut, Betel leaf and Areca nut) first auctioned. Sometimes it fetches upto a thousand rupees. It is an honour to buy this coconut and much bidding is done for it, as it is considered very auspicious to have the coconut. This auction or ‘Pavnni’ is an important source of *Maand* funds.

A major portion of the fund goes towards the cultural activities that take place at the *Maand*. Things needed for the rituals, the musical instruments, the dresses, the lamps need recurring, expenditure, which comes through he funds. How much is spent depends on how large the funds are and if, by chance, there us over-expenditure,, a kind-hearted villager lends the needed sum, which is returned to him as the collection is made. Similarly, when a villager needs money he can take a loan from the *Maand*. This loan is, available to everyone in the village, at the interest rate set by the *Maand* committee,. Sometimes, this loan is taken against some security deposit. The land deeds are not accepted by the Maand, but things like utensils, ornaments or .cattle are allowed. It is commendable to note that nothing is put on paper, all these transactions are done orally and by mutual trust. Actually, trust is the base of all transactions done at the
Maand and. Very rarely a fraud or cheating takes place. In such a situation, if it happens, a ‘Garhane’ is said at the Maand and it is believed that the Gods will give the right punishment and the amount is written off.

The social expenditure done by the Maand is for works like digging a well for the village or constructing a ‘bund’ for the agricultural purpose. This sort of expenditure is done only when the situation demands ‘it. Then the committee meets and takes the decision or the ‘Avsar’, the possessed person, gives the decision. The funds are always left with a trustworthy and honest person and there is no case of misappropriation.

**Judiciary**

No squabbling or fights take place at the Maand normally and even if there are disagreements, no one ever steps out and forms a new Maand. In the thousand year old tradition of Maand, there might not be a single such occurrence. Every dispute is handled in a democratic manner at the Maand and at the most, the dissatisfied person stays away from the Maand and its activities. Then the elders step in and solve the problem. Mostly, the disputes are minor and are forgotten easily. The real fights are fought between two Maands and then the villagers fight with all their hearts!

Some places have a history of these long lasting fights between two- Maands, and then there are no ties between. These two concerned communities. They do not agree to marital relations, and also do not eat together. But, that is very rare because the Maand is deeply interested in social welfare and it knows that its survival depends on the society. The well-being of the society, the keen interest that the people should know the traditions and that the people should stand by the social values is of prime
importance to *Maand*. It has the authority to supervise it too. This authority does not come from the Committee or from the *Maandkari*, it comes from the faith in the divine power presiding at the *Maand*. Everyone bows down to this authority and generally, follows all the norms set by the *Maand*. If a person strays away and oversteps the rules, the Committee has the power to fine him. The moral values are very important and things like adultery or birth of an illegitimate child are considered grave offences. Even causing injury to an animal or cutting a tree is a serious offence. In such cases, the criminal approaches, the *Maand* and asks for forgiveness. He pays a fine as punishment: As a most severe punishment one can be declared an outcast, and as, a result ‘his family has to leave the village.

This is followed to such an extent that any contact with the outcast can result into the other party being outcast too. The outcast person can ask for pardon and pay the fine imposed by the *Maand*. This fine can be cash or in the form of donation of musical instruments or bearing the cost of a lunch for the entire community a ‘*Gaonjevan*’ (Village Meal). A bigger crime demands the digging of a well for water. These punishments are given after consulting the whole community.

Incidentally, on Goan cultural scenario, the area of Sattari and portion of Sanguem taluka at the foot of the Sahyadri mountains, a different system of *Maand* is found. In this area *Maandkar* is totally absent and an elderly person from Gaokar family (performs the ‘relevant duties. *Maand* maintains no separate treasury but their village deity, under the control of *Kulwadi* community manages the same. The institution *Gavkari or, Communidade*’ is also not in existence in this area.
Conclusion

This is the overall picture of the way a Maand functions. But for the last 30-40 years, religious ceremonies like the Satyanarayana Pooja are, performed at some Maand. When we note the cultural events, we can say that culture is an abstract term but it manifests itself through the art forms. The folk art transcribes the social norms and the norms create the conventions making. Ideas acceptable It is apparent at the functioning of Maand where. All decisions related to the dance form or to the musical instruments to be played are taken at the Maand. Any One can give the suggestions. And after consulting the Maand guru and the knowledgeable people, the committee settles the matter.

1. The Maand is to be considered as ancient concept of cultural institution.

2. Even after cultural distraction and mass conversion of Hindus to Christianity by the Portuguese, the Maandha kept the Goan culture alive, particularly at the level of proletariat section of the society.

3. The Maand has maintained harmony and unity amongst Goans irrespective of the religion, caste and community

4. The variety of cultural manifestation and its slickness is a gift of Maand, an ideal concept of Goa.

5. The Maand is a concept of creativity and it has given birth to the various new art forms and innovations to the indigenous artistic expressions.
6. Not only the art forms but every aspect of culture is enriched by the activities at the end around the Maand and under its supervision. The language by the oral tradition, narration of songs

   b. Offering of traditional food items to the deities and preparation for ‘Mhatan’ - a ceremonial meal to villagers.

   c. Observation of rituals.

   d. Maintenance of musical instruments.

   e. Continuing traditional forms of sports.

   f. The concept of God and style of worship.

   g. Social and economic aspects, including judiciary.

   h. Environmental preservation:

7. The identity of Goa and Goans is to be established by these cultural phenomenon/substances. The Maand is in prevalence throughout Goa and the Ghumat, an instrument typical of Goa, its beats are familiar to each and every Goan, irrespective of religion, caste, class and community. In other words, Maand and Ghumat are in existence everywhere in Goa.

   In almost all villages of Bicholim taluka the institution of Maand exists either as a Dhalacho Maand or Gaddyacho Maand
Lalit

*Lalit* is series of presentation of various characters based on social and religious themes during festive occasions in the temple premises. This used to be generally the epilogue of a Keertan wherein men used to mime as *Vasudev* or *Lord Krishna* on earth\(^4\). A man dressed as Lord Krishna used to go from door to door and beg for alms. His typical headgear with peacock feathers could catch every body’s attention. In the performance named *Lalit*, several such characters were enacted. It is difficult to say as to when *Lalit* came to be attached to Keertan. The saint poetry of *Dnyaneshwar* and *Namdev* does not contain the word *Lalit*. In Maharashtra, the language of the *Lalit* performances shows that there is an impact of Persian language on Lalit\(^5\). Hence, it is quite likely that Lalit developed after the Islamic state was properly established in the Deccan i.e. in the latter half of the 14\(^{th}\) century.

The *Lalit* form also existed in Konkan\(^6\). We find the meaning of the term ‘Lalit’ as enactment of various characters depicting the concerned script or part of the story.

In Goa, the ‘Lalit’ is performed at only two places and incidently both the places fall in Bicholim Taluka. Shree Dattamandir at Sanquelim (Sankhali) belongs to the Goud Saraswat Brahmin’s Mahajans class. The main festival of this shrine is the Dattajayanti. On the succeeding (next) day of the Dattajayanti, a group of Saraswat Brahmins present the performance of ‘Lalit’ in the shrine\(^7\). This is an performance by this class of Mahajans being performed for many years as a tradition and heritage.

In Velguem village, there is a shrine of Shree Mahadev (Shiva). One of the Mahajan class of the temple are Gaud Saraswat Brahmins with
surnames as ‘Dhond’. A image of ‘Sri Ram’ is in the family possession of this ‘Dhond’ family. On the day of Ram navami, this image is taken out in procession and taken to the Mahadev temple and programes are held on the festive occasion.

One of the annual programme on the occasion is the performance of ‘Lalit’ by locals. The taking out of Sri Rama’s image to Siva (Mahadev) also symbolizes Hari – Hara cult which is also noticed in some other places in Bicholim Taluka like Narve Village.

Mannge Thapnee: The worship of the Mugger Crocodile

The very specific practice of mange thapnee or crocodile worship is prevalent in the villages of Ponda and Bicholim taluka of Goa (Fig. 6.1).

In Goa, such a religious practice goes on in Bhoma and Durbat Wadi in Ponda taluka. The day of worship is the new moon day of ‘Pausha’ month of Hindu calendar. Incidentally this day also coincides with the commencement of the threshing of harvested paddy. Paddy field workers equaling the number of fields assemble on the bunds. They then get into the waterlogged paddy fields and scoop the silt. This silt is then deposited on the bund and given the shape of a crocodile. The scuttle and the eyes of the crocodile are made by planting clam shells in the appropriate place. Teeth are made with small straight sticks. A little mud is then scooped from the back of the crocodile dummy to make a pit. A live chick is then introduced into this pit and it is closed with a coconut shell. The crocodile is then decorated with flowers and vermillion. A community prayer (Garhane) then follows. Offerings of puffed rice and jiggery are given to the god and then shared by the devotees.
In Bhoma, a small village also along the Cumbarjua canal, Mugger pooja also includes a goat sacrifice. The goat is taken in ceremonial procession on all the bunds along the canal and then sacrificed. Its meat is then disturbed to all the villagers as ‘Prasad’.

It is revealed that this practice has been going on for generations together without a break. It probably started early enough when the paddy fields adjacent to the canal used to get water logged with sea water thereby destroying the crops. The hypersaline soil was rendered less desirable for agriculture. It is then that the villagers decided to pacify the sea by worshipping the crocodiles, which were abundant in the sea then. Curiously enough, since then this practice continues with participation of the youth.

It is not known still whether the crocodiles had anything to do with the purpose of defending the island as the Portuguese had a custom of maintaining the reptile as a pet at Malwara, Colombo, Kalutara and other river ports. In any case, what these documents have confirmed is that the Mugger which now occupies the Cumbarjua has been doing so for over 500 years.

The practice is also prevalent in Mulgaon village of Bicholim however on a smaller scale. There is one lake near to the Dempo Mines which is a source of supply of water to the fields for taking vaingan crop. Somewhere between Dussera and Diwali on one auspicious day crocodile made of marshy mud is prepared and one egg is placed in the mouth of the mugger and it is placed near the sluice gate channel of the lake. This practice is a sort of nature worship and also appease the crocodile as the protector of the lake water. Instead of sacrifice of peafowl egg is placed in the mouth to avoid sacrifice of live birds villagers by local tradition believe that the crocodile protects the water of the lake which feeds their crops.
Khazans

When we speak of Communidades, it is not possible to dissociate from three important and unique features. One is the special type of paddy field known as Khazanas, another is that of protective bunds (embankments) and the third is the manas (sluice gates).

Khazana is a term that refers to a cultivable field near the river or sea. The level of the land in Khazanas is lower than the level of the sea or river water. For that purpose it was necessary to exact bunds (embankments) along side the river to prevent entry of water in the field. However, to permit entry of the waters in a controlled manner for the purposes of cultivation openings (sluice gates) were kept in the bunds. The doors were placed in such a way that during the high tide they would remain open due to the force of waters and during low tide they would automatically close.

Maintenance of bunds

Even the manner in which the bunds were built and maintained was unique to Goa. Annually or every two years, a longitudinal trench was opened in the bund. Mud from the river and the field was brought in and the trench was filled with that mud and covered with grass (kupto)This work was traditionally entrusted to an organization known as bouco (paim) paid by the Communidades. Due to the special manner of construction the breaches in the bunds were very rare; even if there were ruptures, they were taken care of immediately.
Khajan fields in Bicholim taluka are found near those villages on the banks of river including Amona, Sarmanas (Pilgao), Cotombi and others.  

**Devrais (Sacred Groves)- Sacred bio – diversity**

Sacred Groves/ forests or ‘Sharanalayas’ (Sanctuary Shrines) are places of India’s sacred Bio – diversity where the foliage and animal inhabitants are carefully nurtured and are heavens for different species of birds and animals. They are considered to be treasure trove of our cultural heritage.

Known by different names – ‘goomphas’ in some north eastern states run by Buddhist monasteries, as ‘gymas’ in Sikkim, as ‘Orans’ managed by the Bishnoi community of Rajasthan, ‘Karus’ and ‘devekavus’ in Kerala, ‘Samas’ in Madhya Pradesh, ‘nagvans’ in Manipur and as ‘Devrais’ in Goa and Maharashtra, these groves play different roles in the day to day lives of the people.

Sacred groves have drawn considerable attention in recent years. A sacred grove is a patch of forest near a village or amidst forest covering an area of between a few square meters to as much as twenty hectares in some cases. The area is afforded protection by the village communities and is a valuable example of successful social fencing. All forms of vegetation within the grove are considered sacred, as distinct from the con-mon phenomenon in India, where single specimens of trees (particularly ‘Vad’—(ficus bengalensis) and ‘Peepal’—(ficus religiosa) are worshipped and protected. The boundaries of the grove are clearly known, even when surrounded by forest on all sides. The grove can easily be distinguished from the surrounding forest as it harbours virgin forest in its climax
condition, unlike the rest of the forest which is likely to have suffered some human interference.

The sanctity of the place is maintained by following rules passed from one generation to another. Unfortunately, in modern times, the taboos surrounding the groves have weakened and groves have been steadily shrinking in size. Even in the remaining areas, human interference is on the increase, due to increasing commercialisation and the influx of outsiders who do not have the same respect for the tradition that locals do. This is unfortunate, as the groves constitute the last refuge of vegetation species, which may have died out from the surrounding forest (or are available there in considerably degraded form). They also provide a shelter for wildlife, as there is usually a taboo against harming any living being in the grove.

The Tradition in Goa as well as in most parts of India, care and respect for nature has been influenced for centuries by religious beliefs and concerns. The sacred groves that exist in the Western Ghats of Goa are repositories of plant and animal wealth that have been conserved over centuries. They are dedicated to forest gods or other local deities, and are worshipped by local inhabitants as the deity’s sacred territory. Sacred groves are green patches, which constitute a unique example of in situ conservation of our genetic resources. These areas show microclimatic conditions within their own distinct floral and faunal values, and are important in terms of providing water for irrigation and drinking purposes. The ethno-botanical value of sacred groves is also an important factor leading to their protection by local communities.

Since ancient times, these sacred groves are undisturbed and due to this they are a heaven for birds, animals and plants that might otherwise have become locally extinct. A typical grove surrounds or adjoins a stream
fed by a perennial spring. As trees outside the grove are cut down, the springs they protect may dry up soon after the end of the rains. The sacred grove then becomes the last refuge, not only of plants and animals, but even of life giving water. They are indigenous ecosystems which are managed by traditional societies and are shining examples of how our natural resources can be effectively managed. The rich tradition of maintaining sacred groves is one method of expressing gratitude to the trees which have supported and sustained human life under a given agro-ecological condition.

The area usually has rich vegetation, but in a few places only a few tree species are seen. The forest types range from moist deciduous forest to semi-evergreen forest. It is evident that the rich biodiversity of these areas is retained in the name of religion and tradition. The floral and faunal diversity occurring in sacred groves is vast. Many floral species occurring within the grove are not found in the surrounding forest due to over-exploitation. This area acts as a gene pool reservoir. Floral species like Saracca indica and climbers like Gnetumula (the only gymnosperm found in the Western Ghats) are seen in these sacred groves.

Some groves have rich faunal diversity as well. Faunal diversity of the area depends on the location, i.e. if sacred groves are near the forest they are very rich in faunal diversity, but in case of isolated sacred groves they act as a refuge to smaller animals, and have poor faunal diversity. Smaller animals like mouse deer, Indian pangolin, barking deer, civet cat, land squirrels etc. are found. Some of these animals breed here, as the area is not allowed to be disturbed. Rare snakes like Golden Vine Snakes, Shield Tails, Flying Lizards or Dreco are found. Apart from this, bird and insect life is at its best. The lofty trees provide nesting sites to the birds like Great Pied Hornbill, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Indian Giant Squirrel, Flying
Squirrel, etc. As hunting and killing of animals is not permitted in this area, animals take refuge here. Water bodies like springs and ponds in the sacred groves suffice for the needs of villagers and wildlife.

Perennial springs feed water to the streams in the area. In some sacred groves, it is believed that the springs have medicinal properties and the water is used in treating skin and other diseases. Ethno-botanists depend on sacred groves for many plants that are not found in other areas. In Goa, sacred groves are known by names such as ‘Devrai’, ‘Devgal’, ‘Devran’ or ‘Devavan’. Earlier, almost a village had sacred groves, but today there are only a few places where the tradition is still alive. These groves are ancient, untouched, protected, virgin forests. In some places these groves are small.

The eco-feministic festivals like Dhalo were once performed in the month of Pausha inside the Sacred groves by the women community by singing sweet songs praising the mother earth and beauty of the nature. There are also various rituals related with these groves, including animal sacrifices and worship of tree. Today, though this tradition is predominantly nurtured by the Hindus, once it was also followed by other religious communities. In Ibrampur Village of Pernem, inside a religious shrine called ‘Pirapeth’ Muslim have guarded more than twenty five Caryota Urens and other trees in the honour of Gazipir Ibrahim, a pious saint respected since traditions by both the Muslims as well as the Hindus.

In some of the Sacred groves Killing of the animals or insects and even removing a leaf is totally forbidden. The members of community strictly follow the rules and regulations.

Even during the course of traditional hunting, if an animal enter the sacred grove, no one dare to kill it rather accord full protection. Not
only living beings but also nonliving objects inside a grove are considered as the sacred and thus protected. Goa which has acclaimed wide popularity as the well known tourist destination even in the changing scenario have still maintained the traditions of Sacred groves in some of the remote area. The tribal’s cannot collect firewood from their ‘devrai’. The dead wood can only be used in community kitchens during the annual festival for the deity.

Most groves are regarded as abodes of the worshipped deities. The ‘gynas’ in Sikkim are used for meditation while ‘orans’ in Rajasthan provides shelter to wild animals and birds. Repositories of biodiversity they harbor many threatened floral and faunal species. The protection provided by the Bishnoi community to the Blackbuck is an example.

The sacred groves can basically be classified under three categories:

- Traditional Sacred Groves are the place where the village deity resides, who is represented by an elementary symbol.
- Temple Groves are created around a temple and conserved
- Groves around burial or cremation grounds

Their ecological significance is as follows:

- Conservation of Biodiversity: The sacred groves are important repositories of floral and faunal diversity that have been conserved by local communities in a sustainable manner. They are often the last refuge of endemic species in the geographical region.
- Recharge of aquifers: The groves are often associated with ponds, streams or springs, which help meet the water requirements of the local people. The vegetative cover also helps in the recharging the aquifers.
• Soil conservation:- The vegetation cover of the sacred groves improves the soil stability of the area and also prevent soil erosion

Threats to sacred groves vary from region to region and even from one grove to the other. But the common threats identified are:-

Disappearance of the traditional belief systems, which were fundamental to the concept of sacred groves. These systems and their rituals are now considered mere superstition.

Sacred groves in many parts of our country have been destroyed due to rapid urbanization and developmental interventions such as roads, railways tracks and dams including commercial forestry. Encroachment has led to the shrinkage of some of the largest groves in the country. Many groves are suffering due to Sanskritisation or the transformation of the primitive forms of nature worship into formal temple worship.

Invasion by exotic weeds such as Eupatorim odoraum, Lantana camara and Prosopis Julifloa is a serious threat to some groves. Pressures due to increasing livestock and fuel wood collection, add to the threat.

Inventory of sacred groves, documentation of flora and fauna of each sacred grove, preparation of management plan, labeling of important species and signage, cultural operations including weeding, improvement of footpaths, laying of eco trials are among the works supported by the central and state governments.

To many, the sacred grove forests may appear idyllic islands in a sea of consumerism and environmental degradation. But they are actually beacons showing how humans can preserve nature against all odds.
Goa, with its beaches of silvery sands and blue sea, has been projected as the ‘Rome of the East’, and is a major tourist destination. Yet, very few are aware that besides its beaches, Goa has the imposing and pleasing green Sahyadri. Like other parts of India, Goa too has a rich and varied cultural heritage. Goans are nature worshippers and extend protection to various forms of nature just like any other culture of India. The Gavda, Kunbi, Velip and Dhangar-Gouli tribal’s of Goa worship various forms of nature. They have a sacred cow, sacred goat, sacred banyan tree, sacred hill, sacred stone, sacred ponds and also sacred groves. By considering them sacred, they have protected them. Sacred groves are indeed very old sanctuaries where not only the living but also the nonlivings are afforded protection through the grace of any one traditional deity or spirit.

In Goa, there are instances where the biological wealth of some sacred groves receives total protection on account of their association with some deity. Once various taboos are associated the groves, they are completely or almost completely safeguarded from human interference. These holy forests may range in size from a clump of trees to as much as ten hectares in area. Though a grove may be small in size, it does not make it any less significant. Sometimes one comes across some old and magnificent specimens of trees and climbers in even the smaller groves. In some areas, these groves constitute a heaven for flora and fauna, which would otherwise have become extinct. Though they have disappeared from locality but can still be found in the sacred groves. Today, unplanned developmental activities are responsible for massive deforestation and sacred forests have come to be the only remnants of the original forest. Many rare plant species can be found in these groves.
Grazing or hunting was not allowed within the grove and hence they represented a sample of vegetation in its climax state. In view of the protection and optimum growth condition prevailing in the sacred groves some arboreal species exhibit their grandeur and become a fascinating sight. Earlier, human beings relied on sacred groves for the supply of various medicinal plants, shrubs and creepers. In order to pluck these plants they had to perform some rituals to please the forest god. Even today, in the remotest parts of Goa, locals who are still far away from any rural health services, go to these sacred groves for herbal medicines.

In many villages, locals believe that the forest groves or spirit would get offended if the trees are cut, flowers or fruits are plucked or if the animals inside the sacred forest are harassed or killed. That is why these groves are not molested and are well preserved. The sacred groves are traditional institutions, deeply involved in the conservation of not only few individual species in isolation but also the ecosystems at large.

Bicholim Taluka also boasts of some sacred groves which include Shevro (kharpal), Siddachi Rai (Vadawal), Barazanachi Rai (Cudchire), Devachi Rai (Surla). Some sacred groves at Mencurem, Sarvan have now became extinct in course of time. The existing sacred groves, however, harbor the sacred biodiversity of the Bicholim Taluka. Siddhachi Rai at Vadawal hamlet of Latambarcem village has the biggest Shivling (Phallus of lord Shiva) of almost thousand years old which may be as old as the Rai itself. Barazanachi Rai harbours several micro flora and fauna\textsuperscript{12}.

**Dance**

The changing colours of history have left their multiple and lovely shades on Goan life. And folk art has not been an exception to it.
The traditional folk dance, music and drama have continued uninterrupted, while the influence of the Portuguese music and dance on the local culture has helped evolve new forms. This happy blending and co-existence of cultural traditions gives Goa a unique character.

Goan folk dances bear a tradition of thousands of years, characterized by innumerable forms performed by and reflecting lifestyles, cultures and aspirations of different strata, religions and castes of Goan society. The prominent ones are described here.

**Dhalo - Devotion to Mother Earth**

Blessed with a rich cultural ancestry, Goa boasts of various folk festivals, folk beliefs, folksongs and folkdances that speak volumes of the social life, flora and fauna of the region.

These folk festivals, folksongs and folkdances have percolated from the ancient times to the modern era and the traditional folk culture of the region has carved out an important place for itself in the modern era. Women have been worshipping Mother Earth from times immemorial in varied forms and the various traditional women folk festivals, folkdances and folksongs reflect their devotion to the life-producing Mother.

Dhalo is one such traditional women folk festival that has become an integral part of the social and cultural life of the local people of Goa, especially the village folk. Dhalo is a combination of dance, drama and song and it reflects the women’s devotion for the Earth Goddess and the Forest Goddess. The women worship the Earth Goddess (Dhartari Mata) and the Forest Goddess (Van Devata) by reciting varied folksongs.

Dhalo, which is a unique festival celebrated in the various
villages of Goa by the women for five, seven or nine days, in the month of Pausha and Magha of the Hindu calendar is performed in an open courtyard which is locally known as ‘dhalyacho mand’ or sometimes simply ‘mand’. The ‘mand’ is a considered to be a sacred place and one has to remove one’s footwear before entering the ‘mand’. Usage of foul language is also not allowed here. During the Dhalo, women stand in two parallel rows, facing each other, and sway forward and backward to the beat of the songs. It is believed that the deities, who are invited through the Dhalo songs, come on the ‘dhalyacho mand’ to give their blessings to the women present there. The duration of the Dhalo festival differs from place to place, but the Dhalo songs tell the stories of life, society and harmonious relationship of women with nature.

Dhalo, which is only performed by women, begins on ‘Dhalyachi Poonav’ (full moon day). Before the Dhalo begins, women dress for the occasion; bedecked with flowers perform the puja of the tulsi. The following folksong gives reference of this occasion.

“Kartika Mahina, Kartika Mahina
Malani Poonayen Alashe
Aalo Zhalay Baro Zhalo, Tulshi Zagha Benage
Kartika Mahina, Kartika Mahina
Malani Poonayen Alashe
Tulshi Tumhe Ghala Ge”

The people of the rural area still worship nature through various festivals and the Dhalo festival is an example of it. The Dhalo festival and its songs reveal the bond with various facets of nature. Entwined with
simple yet meaningful phrases the Dhalo songs do not need professional or competent singers, only a love for Mother Earth. There are various Dhalo songs that make reference of the flora and fauna. Dhalo comes to an end with a special ceremony called ‘Mand Shimpane’, in which women sprinkle water on the Mand.

Like Foogdi, Dhalo is performed by women (Fig. 6.2). But it is danced on the moonlit winter nights in the courtyard of the house, when the floors are done up soon after the monsoon and khariff crop of paddy is about to be harvested. After the grain is winnowed, dried and stored, the womenfolk is free to assemble in the pandal for all cultural activities. A specific spot close to the door is called a MAAND or station. Here every activity is initiated by Pooja with a lamp kept lit. This spot is sacred and represents the spirit of the occasion. The courtyard is later also roofed by thatched palm leaves supported by framework of batel tree poles. This covering over the Mand is aptly called Mandov by Hindus and Matov by Christians. When the word is sent around that certain family has already installed a Maand for Dhalo, participants start gathering in the courtyard soon after it is dinner on the moonlit night of Pausha month. As many as 24 women take part in each session of this dance-cum-song form. They split into two files in positions, parallel rows of twelve, facing each other and like the tribal women of Bastar, form a closely knit unit by linking themselves with arm around, the back arrangement, singing in unison. They sway, bend, move forward and backward, singing songs of religious and social import. Over the years, new messages are conveyed through this form which has social bearing and which are locally composed and occasionally revised of themes extempore, reflecting contemporary life. New experiments of themes are carried through Dhalo. They ridicule liquor
addict, tease newly weds and advise them to limit their families for greater happiness.

Greatest fun of a Dhalo session occurs on the concluding day. The week of the women’s lib concludes almost with a sense of freedom, wherein women put on all sorts of fancy dresses often to caricature man. Few would caricature animals and birds and act out their respective parts very meticulously and with great dramatic gusto.

A tiger may suddenly spring upon a youth amongst the spectators, boldly carry his prey away. Those who are not skilled in histrionics would confine to sessions of Foogdis and so ends the glorious week of the women, for the women and by the women.

Gawda Dhalo is a parallel form of Hindu Dhalo. The former was separated only when section of Gawdas were converted to Christianity. The Gawda Dhalo later observed new life of Gawda community after conversion and the form reflected new themes depicting change in their life and social structure.

The Dhalo is the eco-feministic festival of Goa celebrated mainly by the non-Brahinin communities, that make a living toiling hard in the soil. There are a number of folk songs sung in the Dhalo referring to the trees, water bodies, animals, flowers of the area.

The blossom of the mango tree during the winter, different kinds of agricultural operations are reflected through the melodious songs of Dhalo. This festival is more popular among the agricultural communities of Goa. The sacred place where the festival is performed is known as ‘Mand’. Various old trees are worshipped by women in honour of the two local folk deities known as Rashtroli and Daad. For five or seven nights women,
dressed in traditional attire, and decorating their hair with flowers like aboli (crossandra), perform the Dhalo, singing and dancing. 13

One of the most popular Goan dances, Dhalo is performed by women folk on the moonlit night of Paush month. Compared to Fugdi, it is slow. The songs are in Konkani and Marathi. Normally 12 — 24 women assemble after the dinner at a pre-selected specific spot (Mand) in the courtyard of a house in the village. They arrange themselves in 2 parallel rows of 12, facing each other, and in a tribal fashion form a close knit by linking themselves arm-around, the back arrangement, singing in unison. The songs cover religious and social themes. The dance goes on every night for a week. On the concluding day, women sport all sorts of fancy dresses and caricature man. The Christians of the Gauda community perform Gauda Dhalo a parallel form of Hindu Dhalo which depicts the life and social structure of the Christian community.

**Kaalo**

Kaalo is one of the theme of ten incarnation of lord Vishnu. It starts with the entry of Ganesh with Riddhi and Siddhi, his two wives. The character of Ganesh dances only by lifting his feet one after the other on typical rhythm provided by the Mrudung. Whereas, Riddhi and Siddhi come forward through dancing in a typical festival through dancing in a typical Devdaasi style which is nearer to the Kathak, and Indian classical dance.

Other dances in this form are performed by the characters like Sankaasur, the demon depicted in black costumes. The style of movements, footsteps and histrionics is indigenous in nature. During the performance lord Vishnu warns Saankasur through gestures. The act culminates by a
warrior dance. Few other characters like Putanaa, Chimo, Poklo etc. are also depicted through the dance. In the south, this form is called Sankaasur Kaalo, which begins with a typical character called Kuddamachi. This character presents a humorous dance. But not specific identity or characteristic of the dance slot in Kaalo.

These are folk drama forms representing the subsequent development of Jagar as Tiatr. Dashavatari resembles the famous classical drama Yakshagan of Karnataka. Kala is based on the character of Sankasur which projects the idea of pantomime while the story of Goulankala (Fig. 6.3) centers round the pranks of young Krishna among the shepherds and also the spiritual love between the Lord and Radha.\(^{14}\)

**Morulo**

A dance of a peacock is termed as Morulo in local parlance (Fig. 6.4). This dance is famous in north Goa and is performed during Shigmo by the farmers. At the village Sarvan in Dicholi (Bicholim) Taluka, this dance form is considered as annual ritual. The dance reflects the movements of the peacock in a typical gesture. A group of male members of the village in equal numbers get prepared for this form of dance. Naturally the individual has to receive proper training from the elders to get acquainted with the steps and movements. Most of the members belong to Kshatriya Maratha class\(^ {15}\).

Morulem is another such form which constitutes part of Shigmotsav is presented with movements to bear the mock resemblance to the peacock. The dancers dress, while Dhoti with short – sleeved Kurta, with thin flower garland around the neck and peacock feather on head. The dance based on ‘Padanyas’ of peacock dance, accompanied by *Tabla,*
Harmonium and Kasalem. The performers sing traditional songs invoking the deities. Over the years Morulem dance performers also sing devotional (Bhakti) songs.

Most communities in Goa are fond of this dance form but the Kulmis have a special liking and skill for forming varieties in it. The Taalgadi is performed by the males who dance to a special rhythm. The ritualistic Taalgadi at the Maand is performed only on constant beats of Dhol, with pauses. While at other places, this form of dance requires a constant rhythm in the background. Musical instruments like the Dhol, the Taaso, the cymbals and sometimes even a harmonium is played. This dance has local variations in its nuances and requires an even number of participants. Usually the Taalgadi is performed in front of the village deities and at the house courtyards. Talgadi is performed in villages of Surla, Mayem in Bicholim Taluka.²

The costumes are quite simple. The dress includes a tight Dhoti around the waist covered by a blue belt, a white vest, a garland of colourful flowers around the neck, with smaller pieces tightened on the wrist and arms. A strip of cloth or paper, necessarily in blue color is tied to the head and a lovely feather of a peacock is tucked in to it. A bunch of Ghungrus are also fastened to the foot.

The musical accompaniment includes the Ghumat, Shamel, the Zaanj, and sometimes even a Harmonium and a Tabla. A rhythmic song is sung at the time of dancing. The narration describes the peacock caught in to a snare and how the peahen roars into laughter. The dancers exhibit the actions of peacock, his glee after getting released from the snare, his jump in joy and finally his cheerful rejoicing.
It is a traditional folk dance presented by the backward community during the Shigmo festival. The dancers, dressed in white Dhoti, short-sleeved Kurta, flower garland and peacock feathers on the head, mimic the movements (or padanyas) of peacock (mor), singing traditional or devotional songs accompanied by Tabla, Harmonium and Kasalem.

The Morulo folk dance was another popular dance which depicted the vivid dancing styles of a peacock (Fig. 6.4). Once it was performed in many parts of Goa, but today Sarvan and Narve of Bicholim has the tradition of performing the Morulo dance. The artistes singing the song describe the behavioural pattern of a peacock to the tunes of folk music.

The Morulo dance and Sarvan village were once synonymous. During the Ghodemodni, the villagers were performing the Morulo and people from various parts of Goa used to come specially to witness the performance of this unique dance.

**The Cultural Tradition Of Dashavatar**

The belief in the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu, the Preserver of the Universe, is imminent in the people who follow the Hindu Faith.

Whenever ethical degeneration prevails on Earth, then the Lord appears in the form of an incarnation so that goodness may triumph over the evil — This is a recurring phenomenon in every Age.

Although the concept of the ten avatars is religion-oriented, it has been derived from the imagination and experiences of the people, and from this point of view, the concept has socio-biological significance. It is in
fact, a concept that is almost parallel to the Theory of Evolution, which was expounded by Charles Darwin in the 15th Century.

Every region has minor variations in its expression of the ten avatars or incarnations, and in South Konkan, the belief is patterned on the faith as it is prevalent in the region of Maharashtra.

The first three avatars of the Lord are non-human in form — (1) Matsya (fish); (2) Koorma (Tortoise) and (3) Varaha (Boar). The fourth avatar is half beastial and half human, that is, Narasinhavatar. This is followed by four avatars in human form, (a) Vamana (Dwarf), (b) Parasurama (Warrior), (c) Rama (the ideal man) and (d) Krishna (the supra-personality) also known as the Purnavatar or the perfection in incarnation.

The last two avatars are related to the present Age and the future. The avatar of Buddha is interpreted as Lord Vitthala, the Divine Being who is the Saviour of his devotees in this Age. The tenth avatar of Kalki, or Kalanki as it is known in Marathi, is a phenomenon that is yet to come on Earth - A personality on a horse, a concept of force and energy that will overcome evil so that goodness shall prevail on Earth.

The folk art form of Dashavatar is a direct expression of the religious concept of Dashavatar, that has been popular down the centuries, for it has a message of hope for the people.

The presentation of Dashavatar, in a form of Drama, according to research scholars, seems to have originated in 7th Century A.D.

However, the folk art form of Dashavatar (Fig. 6.5), is distinct from the mere presentation of the ten avatars in the form of a play, for its has its own definite ritualistic and dramatic structure.
The folk art form of Dashavatar, may be estimated to have been prevalent in Maharashtra around the 17th Century. Saint Ramdas, in his lyrics has made a mention of the grace and artistry of the Dashavatari — the artistes of Dashavatar. Shri C. K. Dikshit, makes a mention of Shamji Nayik Kale, from the village of Adivara in Karnataka, who was invited to present a performance of Dashavatar, in the Durbar of Angre a Commander of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaja, during the 18th Century.

During the 14th Century the Vijayanagar Empire encompassed not only Andhra Pradesh, but parts of Karnataka and Maharashtra and the entire region of Gomantak (Goa) as well. It was during this period that Dashavatar, which had originated in Karnataka became prevalent in Maharashtra.

South Konkan is the region from Devgadh and Takola to the border of Goa, up to Karwar in Karnataka.—According to the Dashavatari, a Brahmin by the name of Gore, initiated Dashavatart performances in Konkan. In the village of Walawal, Kankavli Taluka, Sindhudurg District, there is a stone edict commemorating the performance of Dashavatar by Gore, established in front of the Temple of Narayana, which can be seen to this day. Further, Dashavatar has many aspects in common with Yakshagana, which is yet another traditional art form of Karnataka.

Dashavatar may be considered to be a ritual drama for its presentation is intimately bound with the worship of rural deities in Konkan and also in Goa. The regional folk deities of Goa are — Ravalnath Sateri, Bhumika, Kelbai, Brahmanimaya and shrines dedicated to Vishnu or Krishna. The temples were the centres of the rural culture, as well as social
welfare, such as all matters pertaining to law, order, education, and economic projects at the rural level.

The factor of entertainment also came with in the purvey of the temple dire and thus the religious strands were interwoven with the folk art forms.

The Festivals or Jatras of the temple were the occasions of community life at its greatest proximity. The factor of worship brought together people of different castes to participate in the Jatra.

The role of the Dashavataris in the Jatra is very significant, for apart from the fact that in olden times, the performance was presented only during the Festival, the Jatra could not begin or end in the absence of the Dashavataris.

The palanquin or Palki of the deity cannot start on its procession, until the initial overture in rhythm is played on the Mridanga by the Dashavatari. At the end of the Festival after the performance, the ritualistic finale must be performed by the Dashavatari who plays the role of Krishna of Lord Vishnu. It is believed that the breaking of the pot by any other person is not acceptable to the deity.

Dashavatara is a form of folk drama. The folk art forms, be they traditions of songs, dances or drama, are derived from the fundamental ethos and life styles of the rural people.

The folk art form are inspired mainly by the religious traditions of the regions. Each of the Gods, in the polytheistic structure of Hinduism, is involved with a specific aspect of the cosmos. The fate of man is destined by the will of the Gods; that the propitiation of the Gods is
essential for the well being of mankind is a fundamental belief of the people to this day.

From the post vedic period, the forms of worship combine the rituals before the idols with prayers to the elements of nature. The Devas (Gods) of the eight directions (Asht Dikpal) are invoked in homage, and then the main deities are offered prayers.

The traditional folk art forms, in most cases, were offered as a part of the ceremonial offerings for the entertainment of the Gods. This element of the religious feeling is prevalent, even in the Dashavatari artistes of today, for, Dashavatara is a folk drama form that is presented essentially in the propitiatory festivals of the temples. The edict installed in temple of Walawal, during the initial performance by Gore, also has a ritualistic significance.

The importance of Dashavatara is in the religious Festival or Jatra is worthy of note, for it is they who initiate the procession of the Palkni; and it is the Dashavatari enacting the role of Vishnu or Krishna, who completes the final ritual of “Dahi Handi Phodne” i.e. to break the pot filled with curd.

The traditional performing arts, from the Vedic times, were a part of the ritualistic pattern. Dashavatara, as one of the traditional art forms, is also a ritual drama form.

In recent times, the aspect of ritual that is implicit in the structure Dashavatara has been lost sight of, by several scholars. In a ritual drama for such as Jagran, wherein the rituals are performed within a family, they have distinct predominance in the structure of the art form.
The performances of Dashavatar in the contemporary times are presented outside the precincts of the temples. In these performances, the accent is the entertainment of the audience and not the Gods. The stories enacted Dashavatar performances, however; are derived from the epics or the purana and are never secular in their themes. But when the performance is not related to any religious festival, it is thought of- as a folk drama form without any ritualistic undertones who consider their profession as one belonging to a religious order. These traditional artistes have distinct status in society, an honour which is not accorded to the artistes who perform merely in commercial-oriented art forms.

Dashavatar as a performing art form is often taken to be a dance dram or dance ballet performance. In a dance drama, the story is, narrated through lyrics and dialogues, which are sung or spoken by the vocalists in the orchestra The dancers, through mime and body movements, enact the text in a dramatic manner. Angikabhinaya is the main element, not only in the dances, but in the dramatic enactments as well.

In Dashavatar, as in any form of drama, the delivery of dialogues vachikabhinaya of the actor has tremendous significance. In the Purva Ranga is true that there is a predominance of the elements of dance and music, especially in the presentation of Ganesha, Riddhi, Siddhi, and Saraswati. However Sankasura and Vishnu, or even the Sutradhar and the Priest, speak their dialogue as in a play.

The main story or Aakhyan, is presented almost like a full length play with every actor portraying his character through dialogue and mime. Wherever the dialogues are supplemented by songs, they are sung by the actors themselves.
The element of dance, in the Aakhyan, prevails as a subsidiary element that augments a particular characterisation, as for instance, the portrayal of a Mohini, Apsara etc. The dance form may also be used as a stylised movement have in the depiction of fights between two characters.

However, music and dance are an aspect of the main element of abhinaya of the actor. The gestures and the movements of the artistes follow a stylized pattern, and are hence mistaken for dance forms.

All forms of traditional Theatre have a temporal proximity with the classical Sanskrit Theatre of India, and hence they share the common concepts of total theatre—that is, the inclusion of music, dance and drama in the performance of a play.

The music in Dashavatara is a confluence of the devotional lyrics of the saint poets and the songs derived from the natya geet or popular trends of contemporary musical plays.

The songs in the Purva Ranga are highly devotional, for they are in praise of the various deities. During the presentation of the theme of Dashavatara, the songs composed by traditional Dashavatariis are also presented. The Purva Ranga, as a matter of fact, in predominated by the element of music.

However, in the Aakhyan the songs derived from the natya geet are sung, as they have a popular appeal for the audiences.

Dashavatara, although influenced by contemporary trends of theatre in fleeting manner, has not lost its fundamental inspiration and style derived from the religious tradition of the temples wherein it originated.
The characters, derived from the religious themes, reflect the images of dram their make up as well as costumes.—The Aakhyans of Dashavatar, have not deviated in their narrations or visual picturisations, from the religious texts which they Seek to present.

It is this factor that makes Dashavatar as a traditional form, not deteriorate into a weaker version of contemporary theatre, but retain the vibrancy of a cultural heritage that has survived in its intensity down the centuries.

**Dashavatara — the performance**

The folk art form of Dashavatara has within its structure of presentation a definite pattern or style, as is prevalent in all traditional art forms. The Purva Ranga has a definite sequence of events that are enacted without any variation. The Uttara Ranga presents an Aakhiryan or story which varies in every here performance.

**Purva Ranga**

The Purva Ranga of contemporary performances of Dashavatar, was in the ancient times, the main performance itself.

To-day, although it is presented in its miniscule structure, it retains traditional mode of the performance of Dashavatara. The main aspect of Dashavatara was the presentation of the first eight avataras (incarnations) of Lord Vishnu. The last two avataras of Buddha and Kalki that are related to the present era and the future were never presented. Hence, in fact, the rural artistes speak of this folk art, form as Aad (eight) Dashavatara.
In earlier times the artistes used wooden masks for their portrayal of the different characters. In contemporary performances, however, this practice has fallen into disuse, and only a symbolic form of masks for some of the characters such as Ganapati, Saraswati, Sankasura etc. are in vogue.

**Ganesh Avahan — Naman**

The Purva Ranga begins with invocations to Lord Ganapati with Riddhi and Siddhi, introduced by the Sutradhar and the priest performs the ritual of worship. The dialogues, between the priest or Bhatt and Sutradhar are also noted for their content of humour.

**Saraswati**

The character of Saraswati is presented through only music and dance, for no dialogues are spoken.

**Dashavatar**

The, presentation of the ten incarnations is, in contemporary performances limited to the presentation of the first avatar, that is, Matsyavatar (Incarnation in Fish Form).

This involves the characters of Brahma Deva, Sankasura and Lord Vishnu, who fights the evil Sankasura in the guise of the fish and restores peace and harmony in the world.

The characterization of Sankasura in Dashavatar, deserves a special mention for its unique combination of a demon and a clown. Sankasura is moreover, a popular character with the audiences and he speaks in Konkani whereas the other deified characters speak in pure form of Marathi.
With the victory of Lord Vishnu, the Purva Ranga reaches its completion. The Purva Rang is intensely devotional and creates an atmosphere of religiosity. The movements of the artistes are also, to a great extent, predominated by dance patterns, rhythm and songs. A significant feature of the rhythm is that it initiates and terminates the entries and exits of all the characters.

**Uttara Ranga**

The main presentation in contemporary period is that of a full length play, or Aakhyan, the theme of which is derived from the myths, legends and religious literature of the Puranas and Epics.

The salient features of traditional- Dashavatar, which have been retained are—

1. All the roles, including those of the female characters, are enacted by men.

2. The performances are presented by only those troupes, who have the traditional Petaras (cane box) in the families.

3. The dialogues, dances, and the imagery through make-up, are traditional in their import and interpretation.

As regards the elements of makeup and costume, certain codified concepts are adhered to even to this day. For instance, the characters that are required to evoke spectacles of horror, like Kali and Yamadharma Raja, use red and black colours in their makeup, whereas Lord Vishnu is always presented in blue colour and the women characters are dressed in gaudy colours, that make them prominent on their entries. In older times, the
women characters used to wear branches of leaves in their hairs for greater emphasis.

Some of the Dashavatari artistes, became artistes on the commercial Stage at the turn of the 20th Century. Thus both forms have mutually influenced one another, and this can be seen most emphatically in the realm of music and style of acting, in both Dashavatara and early musical plays of the urban stage of Maharashtra.

Dashavatara being a traditional art form, is inter-twined with certain ritualistic patterns which are essential features of its presentation.

The performance itself is a part of the Festival in certain temples, as a form of worship to the presiding deity. On certain auspicious days, the deity, and the divine image is placed in a palanquin. The honour of leading the procession on rhythm instruments like the Mridanga and Zanj, is the proud privilege that is accorded to the Dashavatari.

On the completion of the procession, further rituals are performed before the deity and then the performance of the Purva Ranga of Dashavatara, or Dahikala, as it is known, is presented.

Prior to the performance, the Dashavatari troupe are given a room for makeup, known as Ranga Pat, in the temple precincts. The artistes offer their prayers to the holy symbol of the Petara, in the Ranga Pat, for the success of their performance.

The Petara (Box) has tremendous significance for the Dashavatari. A Dashavatari troupe can be led only by one who has inherited the Petara from his forefathers. Further, it is incumbent on a family that has inherited the Petara, that it should continue the tradition of the performance of Dashavatara. If the performances are discontinued,
then the family may be cursed by the Gods — this is a belief of the Dashavatari.

   The Petara is a cane box, within which are contained — the mask of Lord Ganapati, sword, bow and arrow, Gada, and a doll. All these are properties used in the performances. The Petara is brought out after the monsoons, and the performances are presented.— When the Petara is put away for a period, either at the home of the Iivialik or Leader of the troupe, or the temple in his village; no performances will be presented. Even in contemporary times, in the absence of the Petara, the Dashavatari do not present performances.

   “Dahi Handi Phodne” is another important ritual that marks the end; not merely, the performance, but of the religious festival itself. Dahi Handi is an earthenware pot, containing curds, and the pot is suspended on rope, in front of the deity in the temple, after the performance.

   The audience and the artistes gather around the pot and the artiste, who portrays the character of Lord Vishnu or Lord Krishna, is called upon to break the pot. The artiste breaks the pot with his hands or a stick, and the crowd collects the curd that falls from the pot. The Dahi (Curd) is distributed to everyone as Prasad or the divine offering.

   The Dashavatari, are given the social status of divine entertainers. Hence during the performance the trustees of the temples give them gifts of grains or Shidha, or in the form of money which is known as Bidhagi.

   The Purva Ranga of the improvisatory or commercial theatre / urban theatre production is traditional in its presentation.
In the Uttara Ranga; the play can be seen at two levels—(1) the one of traditional Dashavatar performance, the performance in which the Dashavatari is seen as the actor—(2) the other of the enactment in “Dashavatari style” that is not related to the traditional Aakhyan, but is a comment at the Sociological level\textsuperscript{16}.

In Bicholim during festivities of temples, ‘Dashavatar’ is performed as ‘Raat Kaalo’ (The play that is held in the night) It is usually the occasion of Jaatra or kaalo in village festivals. These deity is either the female goddess or shrines dedicated to Vishnu or Shiva\textsuperscript{17}.

### Karavalyo Festival

The 3 day long Karavalyo festival of Nanoda village in Bicholim is annually celebrated with traditional fervor and gaiety. This festival is celebrated as a part of the Shigmotsav festivities by the villages. The festival is also celebrated in most of the villagers in Sattari taluka, Bicholim, Dodamarg (Goa) and Aai, Matne, Vazari villages on Goa – Maharashtra border region. In Bicholim taluka, Nanoda, Usap, Cudchirem village celebrate the Kavavalyo with traditional gaiety.\textsuperscript{18}

The festival is celebrated in the memory of the now eradicated Hindu practice of ‘sati’. The youth dressed in female attire move from house to house in the village. The household women perform pooja while the Karavalyo sing songs and abhnagas like Tukobachi Kanta, sange Lokapashi, Jato Maza Swami Pandharesi etc.

In Nanoda, after visiting all the houses in the village, the Karavalyo return to the Shri Santeri Purmar temple, Nanoda. The gaonkars
offer group prayers on behalf of the village for protection, peace and prosperity of villagers. The villagers after seeking blessings from Goddess Santeri Purmar, consume tirth Prasad and then the festival concludes, informed the villagers of Nanoda.

This is totally a ritual dance observed during Shigmo by the Kulwadi community. Generally 2 to 3 young boys are dressed like girls in a traditional Kulwadi fashion, with 9 yard Saris. Such girls are adorned with typical ornaments and flowers. They carry a handkerchief in their hand and move from place to place by visiting the houses nearby. While moving they dance along the path. The accompanied music is of a Dhol, Kaansaalem and Taaso. The dancing style is simple with footsteps and hand gestures, but has a significant character of its own. The karavalyo are considered to symbolize the age old tradition of Sati (a virtuous wife getting burnt alive at the time of cremation of her husband). Taking into consideration the said convention, the Karavalyo are offered a vhontti by the host of the house even by others on the road. For cutting long distances and to honor the Karawalyo, they are carried on the shoulder by others many times (Fig. 6.6). It is considered as an honor if a person gets a chance to carry to Karawalyo.

**Foogdi / Fugdi**

At the Ganesh – Chaturthi festival, nature revives vigor with steady receding of monsoon. An uncontrollable explosion of energy sets the feet in motion, and the girls and women start singing and dancing before the idol of Lord Ganesha. The most popular form of Foogdi in Goa is the one with circle formation which begins with the slow chanting of
invocation to Hindu Gods, and suddenly picks up fast to the climax. After invocation the themes of the songs fall upon social aspects. As the Foogdi dance progresses, it takes various action forms dealing with household chores of the women such as grinding, washing or kneading, which provide the dance with a dramatic setting. In this setting, the groups exchanges opinions and information in crisp couplets and sometimes include scandals and gossip about those who are absent. The dance actions cover also subjects like animal fables such as the hawk coming to snatch a chick and the mother then trying with all her wit to protect it. The group breaks into pairs at each change of footwork and with inter-locked swirl around, gradually increasing tempo, sings songs of matching speed. When the swirling attains maximum speed (Fig. 6.7), the group simply keeps the rhythm by blowing air through the mouth, making FOO – FOO – FOO – FOO sounds. When totally exhausted, they sink down with heady satisfaction, laughing yet challenging one another still spinning like tops with the dizzy troths of FOO – FOO – FOO in the air. This sound has given the name FOOGDI to the dance form. Foogdi is an all weather indoor dance and needs no special religious occasions, though it is mostly danced on all important religious and social occasions and even may form a tail – end portion of other dance forms like DHALO. Within this broad form there are two other sub-forms namely katti Foodgi and Kalshi Foogdi. Though these varieties are closely related to the original form, both these have established their popularity by their respective distinction. The ‘Katti Foogd’, is performed with coconut shells in their hands, while their general footwork with coconut shells in their hands, while their general footwork conforms to the original form. It is played to singing invocations to Lord Krishna and his multifaceted personality. In their attire, all participants look like ‘Gaowlans’ in spirit with the theme of the song.
“Kalashi Foogdi”, is yet another sub form and is performed with pots on their waists. This form is performed as social celebration after the sravan religious ritual of newly wedded women is over. They build up a round structure by blowing into pots by holding the pots to their mouths bending their heads.

Foogdi, with its variety of sub forms and paternal changes from place to place and from community to community, is a most popular dance cum song form of Goa.

All women dances in Goa are referred as Fugdi\(^1\). There are a few annual events where essentially the Fugd is to be performed. The girls and ladies of the Brahman fold of society perform it at the time of Mangalaagouri; a vow practiced in the month of Shravan, and the Chitpavans perform it at the time of Mahalakshmi Vratotsav which is celebrated during the Navratri. A few families of the barber community also observe a vow called Dishtaagouri in the Hindu month of Bhaadrapad and perform the Fugdi on this occasion as obligatory ritual. However, the Fugdi performed by common women folk at the rural and tribal level is more skilful and vigorous, consisting different varieties. Such varieties are inspired by the festivals of Dhillo, Dhaalo and Chavath to obtain blessings from Ganesh. The convention followed by the village folk is to perform the Fugdi in front of Ganesh idol. It is also considered to be a form of worship. In few localities a group of ladies are assemble and present the Fugdi at least in five houses as customary ritual. In Piligao, Menfolk from Prabhugaonkar family perform Fugdi before Ganesh idol during Ganesh Chaturthi\(^2\).

For through understanding of the Fugdi, one should be familiar with the daily routine of the folk life, which involves hard labour and an
imaginative spirit. The actions, movements, footsteps, hand gesture, beats of clapping, patterns, formations, dealings with co-dancers; everything is associated to their life style.

It will be more thoughtful to be accustomed with the nature of their indulgence while they attend different kinds of occupation.

The kitchen is attended by bending the waist, Maintenance of mud flour is carried out by applying fresh cow dung, while doing so, a lady has to squat, move her body left and right by moving the legs etc. Cleaning utensils and washing clothes is by another position of the body. Collection of fire wood from the forest requires careful steps on uneven and sloppy area. A bundle of firewood collected is tightened by the jungle creeper and is carried on the head. The grinding of spices and corn by the traditional stone hand mill is sitting on the ground by stretching both the legs in an in and out posture. A synchronized movement of hands and legs together is necessary at the time of pounding to separate rice from the husk. All such acts are expressed at the time of dancing the Fudgi. But this is depicted in an absolute improvised manner. Joining depicted by two to four ladies by catching each other’s hand and spinning their bodies suggests the unification of village folk. Clapping in between is to articulate the pleasure and enjoyment of dancing.

A practice of performing the Fudgi in nude fashion was earlier prevalent in Goa. This fugdi was performed in front of Ganesh, as Aangwan (Vow), to cure skin diseases. This was also a part of customary services during the Dishtaagouri.

The Fugdi is the most popular form of folkdance of the Goan woman, irrespective of the caste. It is performed during the Ganesh Chaturthi, among the non Brahmins, during the Dussera, only among the
Dhangar-Gauli women and among the Brahmin women during the Mangalagaur festival. In Fugdi folkdance, there are different forms like, for instance, Kasav Fugdi, where there is an enactment of a turtle dance. In Beduk Fugdi, women hop like frogs.

Mining has damaged the forests and agriculture of the Shirgao village in Bicholim. However, there is a popular Fugdi which tells about the ecological richness of the village. There are some folksongs sung traditionally by the women who make description of the natural setting of a village, its geography, ecology and environment.

Phugdis of different kinds are danced by women at such festivals as the Dhalo or Ganesh Chaturthi – that is, at both strictly religious and folk celebrations. A striking variation is the Kalashi Phugdi before Mahalakshmi during the vrata (disciplinary observance vowed to some deity) offered to that goddess. This is accompanied by no songs, but the dancers carry the large vessels called Kalashi or ghagar and blow into them rhythmically as they spin around. Altogether there are twenty seven kinds of Phugdis so far recorded in Goa. Of these thirteen kinds are danced with Marathi saint’s compositions being sung or otherwise in a Maharashtrian style. The Gavade peasants, both Hindu and Christian, show twelve kinds of energetic Phugdis.

A distinctive style of Phugdi is found among Dhangar (shepherd community) women. No songs go with it: two women join crossed hands and spin around together, bending and swaying to a distinct rhythm. Stylewise there is no handclapping; nor are there any special steps; only the sway of the bodies is distinctive.

The naked Phugdi is probably peculiar to Goa. A woman may vow to some deity that she would dance the naked Phugdi if some boon,
usually a child to a woman friend, is granted. If a child is born, then, on the sixth day from the birth, in the mother’s confinement room, the naked Phugdi is danced behind closed doors. Rituals are provided for this; also, a special style of Phugdi. The benevolent dancer is given gifts of honour, mainly a sari and a blouse – piece. Such a vow may be made to Ganesha or other deities for other boons too; then the naked Phugdi is danced before the deity. In almost all the villages of Bicholim taluka, Fugadi is the most popular folk dance form of women folk.

**Romat or Mell**

The ceremonial thanks – giving dance cum procession is called Romat in the northern Goa and Mell in the Central Goa. It is crowded colourful and noisy. With banners, umbrellas of ceremonial build, festooned sticks and batons, with teams of dancers from various sectors of the village population, with the biggest banner in the lead, dance and march to the nerve wrecking beats of huge *Dhols* and crackling beats of *Tashas*. Some just march, brandishing their feathered sticks whereas other dance vigorously as the whole procession marches towards the temple of the presiding deity or to the house of landlord. The mood and the tone of the march is essentially martial and the spectator stands spellbound as village after village, in groups inches its way trying to parade their finery of dress and banners as well as the skill of their drummers and dancers. The dance form is part of the Shigmo festival and is not usually performed on stage as essentially Romat is a marching procession.22
The cacophony emanating from deafening beats of huge Dhols and Tashas and a prolonged, vigorous dancing procession displaying colourful dresses leave the spectators dazed and spellbound.

**Ghode Modani**

Granary already full with the new harvest, the warriors from the village embark on the expeditions under their feudal chief on the day of Dussera, the day of “Shimollanghana”, or crossing the home frontier, on horse back.

A few serious students of the field have come out with the theory that the horse dance which prevails in Bicholim and Pernem Talukas of Goa was previously performed at the time of the Dussera festival but presently it is being organized at the time of Shigmo Festival, in the month of Fagoon. The Ghodemodni folk dance is a gift of North Gujarat and it shows the impact of horse – trade on dance forms.

Ghode Modani is a spectacular dance. Warriors with naked swords and in full traditional livery, wear the colourful head-gear made out of flowers. The horse is an wooden effigy fixed at the waist of the warrior and is beautifully bridled and decorated with spotless white clothes. Holding its bridle in one hand and flashing the sword in the other, the dancers gracefully move forward and backward trying to make as real as possible the prancing of war horses. The feet of the dancers carry Ghungrus and there is martial accompaniment of Dhol, Tasha and Cymbals.

Modani is derived from word modam or modan, meaning gyrations and dance like movement made by a more or less stationary man or animal. After Ghode Modani there is also another part called Ghode Sadovni where movements are of military March. As such Ghode Modni
could be described as the folk form or martial recreation. There was a time, perhaps, when the whole of the returned unit of the army used to take part in this ceremonial procession. Today, however the warriors on the horse back are accompanied by a group of foot soldiers who march in front and a washer man follow the warriors, perhaps representing the ancient logistics and services to the fighting force. Similar horse dance celebrating victory in the war is extant in Rajasthan.

It is basically a ritualistic dance form, performed at number of places in North Goa\textsuperscript{25}. The hobby horse dance nomenclatures as Ghodemodni. Ghodo – horse, Modni means cutting a route of calamities and creating obstacles for crossing the village boundaries. This dance is performed annually during Shigmo.

The wooden masks of horses in stipulated numbers are prepared traditionally and worshiped regularly by placing it at sacred place in the house of Maankaari (Chieftain) of the village or mostly in temples of the village deity as is found in majority of the cases in Bicholim Taluka. These masks are taken out only at the time of performance. It is strongly believed that the masks are not to be lifted at any occasion other than the scheduled.

Bamboo frames in similar number, suggesting the body of a horse are prepared and maintained and are taken out at the time of festival. These frames are covered by coloured Sarees and decorated with flowers. In the front, the horse mask is tightly bound to the frame. The stipulated dancers wear Rajput styled costumes. They are adorned with ornament and flowers and hold a sword in their right hand and stand in the hollow space of the semicircular bamboo frame. Ropes of cloth pieces are tightened from both the sides of this frame for lifting it. The ropes are detained to the
shoulders in such a manner that the frame is adjusted to his waist. The dancer controls this frame by catching the horse mask by his left hand.

After a prayer is offered to the village deities, the horses starts dancing, on the beats of instruments like the *Dhol, Taaso* and *Kansalem* by forming a procession. The convoy is combined with the royal paraphernalia – locally known as *Abdaagiri, Chavrya, Divtya* etc. The group then marches towards village border. On the path, the dancers perform the warrior dance, on the robust and vibrant music. On reaching the borders, the procession observes pin drop silence for a minute or two. The Maankaari stands on the line, facing the other side of the village. He holds a quadrangular piece of red color cloth and shouts aberrantly – Ay-yy-yo. It is a sort of warning which is spiteful and wicked. The music starts again and picks momentum on which the procession returns. It culminates at the spot from where it was begun.

**Ghode Modni** (‘Ghode’ means ‘horse’ and ‘Modni’ means ‘gyrations’ and dance-like movements’) is literally a dance involving war like movements. It is a spectacular warrior-dance commemorating the victory of the Ranes, the Maratha a rulers of the Sattari taluka in Goa, over the Portuguese. The dance is popular in Bicholim, Pernem and Satan talukas once ruled by the Marathas. It is performed during the Shigmo festival.

This folk dance is performed in some parts of the talukas of Bicholim and Pernem, which lie near the northern boundaries of Goa. It represents the mounted cavalier setting off to war. The costume is like that of a Rajput chieftain but the head-dress used is a Peshwai Puggree (A Turban). Two or eight dancers, fastened inside hobby horses below their waists, brandishing swords, execute this warlike dance to the beat of dholak
and tasha. There are no accompanying songs. The dancers go as far as the village limits and return in their dance. The influences behind this form seem to be also northern.

No festival in Goa exhibits such a wide variety of folk dances like Shigmo. It is the most appropriate occasion for folk artistes to make their presentation of folk dances. Besides, folk songs are not compiled but are formed through a process of recreation of material which is already in existence. These folk dances are spread over many individuals and generations, and they never come to an end as long as the tradition of the festival like Shigmo is alive.

In some villages of Pernem, Bicholim and Sattari and brother areas of Maharashtra they perform the Ghodemodni dance. The dancers tie wooden effigies of horses to a bamboo covered with colourful cloth and wear a turban. In the ritualistic form, the dancers holding swords in the right hand, the dancers march towards the temple of the village deity and perform the dance to the beats of drums. This dance reflects the heritage of warfare and while performing, the dancers pretend to seat on live horses.

The Ghodemodni of Thane Dongurli of Sattari attracts a very large crowd and is held after every alternate year. Fourteen horses from Rive, Golauli, Hivre – Budruk, Hivre Khurd, Charavane, Pali and Thane come to the sacred place called “Mundalgirache mol’.

Villagers who belong to the warrior class have the tradition of Ghodemodni. Annually these dancers will visit the fixed places and perform the dance to pay gratitude.

The Villages in Bicholim Taluka where the Ghode Modni is has a rich history of bravery. It is reflected through the folk dance of
Ghodemodni with the blessings of the village deities (Fig. 6.8). The season of Shigmo festival celebrations in North Goa is full with the beating of drums, cymbals, and various other traditional instruments. The music during the Shigmo festival makes the body vibrate. During the Shigmo festival people surrender themselves to the mood of exceptional gaiety. There are different types of folk dances, which are performed during the Shigmo festival. One of the spectacular dances that reveal the brave deeds of the warriors is the Ghode Modni, which can be seen in the Sarvan village of Bicholim taluka.

In this Ghode Modni, two horses perform the dance. The dancers are dressed gorgeously in Ghode Modni, which is a dummy horse presentation. They wear headgears made of colourful flowers and to the waist is fixed effigy of a wooden horse beautifully decorated. The Ghode Modni of Sarvan begins after the Mourlo (peacock dance) is over which is held in the temple, the persons who are going to perform the Ghode Modni are dressed in front of the temple at a sacred place. Once the Garane (prayer for the blessings) is made, the Ghode Modni begins with the dancers waving naked swords with one hand. From the temple area the Ghodes (horses) go the nearby ground where they perform the dance taking several rounds. Large numbers of people throng to see this spectacular dance, which is accompanied by Romat.

During the Ghode Modni, dance, the steps and movements portray the valour and deeds of the warriors. The dancers dance rhythmically to the sound of music of dhols and tashas.

At the end of the Ghodne Modni the Romat goes to a place in proximity to the temple called Vadakade where some persons bare footed
walk thorough the fire. This is really a mind-blowing. This is the end of the Romat and then the (drama) starts.\textsuperscript{26}

Apart from Sarvan, Ghode Modni is held in various other places of Bicholim as a part of Shigmo. The number of horses varies from place to place in Ghode Modni. In Bordem(4), Bicholim town (2), Nanoda (2), Usap (2), Maulingem (2), Cansarpale (2), Mulgao (2), Maym (1), Navelim (1), horse/s take part in this ritualistic Ghodemodani procession.

**Suvari - Folk Music**

It is a traditional folk music, a tone setter to all Hindu religious and festival performances. The music is orchestral in nature and relies heavily on laya and tal, as spoken words are few. The orchestra consists of ghumat, shamel, cymbals and sometimes shehnai and surt. The popularity of Suvari can be gauged from the fact that a good Suvari band is regarded as a matter of pride and honour of a village. During Shigmotsav (Gulal) at Amona village, in Bicholim taluka there used to be nine “Sunvaris’ till recently and the Shigmo of Amona is Known for the instrumental music that these Suvari’s were able to dish out for the audiences\textsuperscript{27}.

**Virabhadra**

Folk dance cum drama is dedicated to the Virabhadra “the Manasputra” (Son of Will) of Lord Shankar. It resembles closely to the Yakshagan of Karnatak by the costume, the footwork and by very first words of address and respect to the Virabhadra – “Vira – Bhadra Anna
Avdoo, Kailas valage, viranuvir, Mahavir, Virabhadra Anna”. The form is popular and forms part of the ritual at the fag end of the fortnight celebrations of Shigmo festival in places which include Bicholim, Sanquelim (Carapur) and Sanguem. However, the Virabhadra dance is performed at Curchorem during Paush month during Dhalo festival. Virabhadra performance is accompanied by a large group of people in their traditional attire with Ghumat, Samel, and Cymbals. The folk form appears to be a gift from the Kannada rulers of early days to Goa.

An exotic cultural tradition the rulers of South Indian dynasties brought to Goa, is Virabhadra. This ritual is equally popular in some parts of Karnataka, Veerabhadra, who owes his origin to mythology, is enacted during the Chaitra Pournima festivities in Carapur and also in Dhalo festival at Sanguem and Ponda Taluka. The person enacting the role of Veerabhadra is draped in the warrior’s costumes. He wields swords as he dances his way in the precincts of the temples.

Veerabhadra is supposed to get possessed by a Divine Spirit and the belief is that even if he inflicts blows of swords on the faithful, it does not hurt them. True to the tradition, even today the invocation of Veerabhadra is done in Kannada.

The Veerabhadra dance in Ponda has its special features. Initially the dancer holds burning torches of dry coconut leaves, which are then replaced with swords the dance continuous. A group of slogan shouters stand at a safe distance from the dancing Veerabhadra, so that they do not get hurt by the torches or swords. The dancer wears a typical southern costume of the older era, which include the gathers of green coloured nine yard Saree up to the knee and a typical Mysore styled turban. (The Karnataka police wore this type of Pagdi / Pugree formerly.) A peculiar back
gear Prabhavall created by bamboo pieces and decorated with papers and flowers is tightened to his waist. The Veerhadra recreates the scene of the battleground on the dancing spot with solemn steps, as the terrifying war music is played in the background. The music includes the Dhol, Taaso and the Kaansaalem. Many in the audience pay their obeisance to the dancer, as he is believed to be the incarnation of the spirit of the legendary Veerhadra.

The ritual of this dance has a deep meaning. The torch bearing Veerhadra signifies the light giver and the sword wielding signifies the protector. The dancer assures light and protection to the people. Huge crowds throng to witness this dance at Sanguem and Ponda during the Shigmo festival.

The origin of this dance could be traced to the various reigns of Southern kings who had sway over the townships, in the distant past, and had acquired a distinct place in Goa’s cultural life. The costumes and the ornaments used in this dance testify its southern origin. The slogans or Varavni is in Kannada language. The rhythm “Tha Thhaiya, Thuck Thhaiya” and the invocation as ‘Veerhadranna’ has a distinct Kannada slant. This ritualistic dance is popular in Goa. At Carapur, Sanquelim it is known for a peculiar expression.

This particular festival is takes place at the temple of Shri Pandurang at Carapur. The four day long festival ends on full moon day of Chaitr. (Mar – Apr) so it is called Chaitri. It is also believed that this deity arrived from Karnataka. The salient feature of this festival is an appearance of the character Veerhadra of southern origin. Thus, this dance is believed to have originated in the Southern state of Karnataka and might have
reached Goa in the olden times. The dance has two components; the dancer dancing to the music and people who shout slogans, called Varavni.

The dance is based on the legend of Shiv – Parvati. Daksh performed a Yadna and Parvati, the daughter of Daksha, being ignored by her father, jumped into the Yadna fire and destroyed herself. Angered by this, Shiva created Veerbhadra out of his matted hair and this hero destroyed the Daksh’s Yadnya. A drama based on this theme is staged in front of the deity. The actors flee the stage as soon as Veerbhadra with one sword in each hand reaches the spot. When this legendary hero enters the scene and reaches the stage walking through the crowd, local people say that his swords hurt no one.

The man who performs the character of Veerbhadra, is made to lie down on the floor for the makeup man to decorate his face. During this, the spirit of the legendary Veerbhadra possesses the actor. The actor is carefully decorated with paper made of bamboo and this hangs down from his waist (Fig. 6.9). It sways attractively as the actor takes the step of his dance.

In the morning, a procession of Rath takes place in the vicinity of the temple. An icon of the god is placed in the Rath. The distinct feature of this procession is that the characters acted as Shiva and Parvati in the drama performed earlier dance in front of the Rath as ritual, narrating a particular song.

Apart from Ponda and Sanguem, these Virabhadra is performed only at Sanquelim. On the night of the observance they also perform there the play Dakshkanya Sati and towards the end, as a final part of the play, Virbhadra enters. As soon as he does, the characters run off the stage. Here the Kannada shouts are not used.
Goa is a land where Lord Shiva is worshipped in varied forms. Vibhadra is one of the attendants of Lord Shiva who is regarded in Goa as one of the sons of Parvati and Lord Shiva.

Although there is no temple or a shrine dedicated to Virbhadra in Goa. Virbhadra is respected and a folkdance of Virbhadra is performed in various parts of Goa during different occasions.

The cult of Virbhadra worship and Virbhadra folk dance clearly indicates the influence of Karnataka. Even today while addressing Virbhadra, terms like Kailasvalige, Houdu and Virbhadra Anna, which have their roots in the Kannada language, are used. It is believed that the Virbhadra folk dance was established in Goa during the Vijaynagar Empire.

It is believed that Shree Vithal temple of Carapur was established in Vithalapur in 1392 AD. Shree Vithal is a popular form of Lord Vishnu, responsible for promoting the Bhakti cult in Goa, Maharashtra, Karnataka and other parts of south India.

Shree Vithal mainly helped in bridging the gap between the two sects namely Shaivaites and Vaishnavities and that is why the Virbhadra dance is performed in the vicinity of Shree Vithal temple near Sanquelim.

Though Shree Vithal temple is situated in Carapur village on the right bank of river Valvont, the Sanquelim town is also culturally and religiously associated with the festival of chaitra and Virbhadra folk dance.”

Virbhadra folk dance of Vithalapur is the most popular performance in Goa and a large crowd gathers to witness the Virbhadra, which is followed by a chariot procession. To the beats of the dhol (drum),
taso (drum) and Kasale (cymbals), a folk artiste dressed in royal costumes and a cardboard having many small flags tied to him, performs the dance.

He also wears a crown on his head, wears long hair and has his face painted to resemble Virbhadra. He holds two swords in his hand as though he is waging a battle and after taking a few rounds, he slips into a trance. His aggressive moods during the performance instill fear and terror in the minds of the audience. Ghodemodni, Virbhadra and Viramel are some of the folk dances which showcase the influence of warfare inherited by the communities.

As per a mythological story, the father of goddess Parvati, Daksha had organized a ceremony of sacrifice. All gods and goddesses were invited except Lord Shiva. When Parvati and Lord Shiva went to attend the ceremony, they were publicly insulted by Daksha. Parvati could not tolerate the insult, so she jumped into the burning fire and turned to ashes. Shiva, in anger, created Virbhadra who not only destroyed the sacrificial ceremony but also unleashed a reign of terror. The Virbhadra folk dance is in ceremony of this incident. “The Virbhadra folk dance which is performed in many parts of Goa, reflects the marital arts tradition of the land. Virbhadra, is the representation of a deity associated with the battle field and his performance of dance is said to inspire the warriors.

**Dhangar Dance & Horbala**

Dhangars, a shepherd community believed to have migrated from Kathiawar region of South Gujarat and settled in the hilly north—western fringes of Goa, are very pious and worship the God called Bira Deva. during Navaratra (literally meaning ‘nine nights’) festival, the leader of the
house observes abstinence and fast, takes bath at early hours in the morning, milks his share of lone one cup of milk per day and prays and dances before the family deity. On the tenth day, after a feast, all the families take out their family idols in an open space in the village, called ‘mand’ and perform a vigorous session of dance accompanied by song. The dance begins with a slow beat and simple footwork to the accompaniment of dhol, cymbals and a long flute called ‘pawa’. Their traditional songs centre on the love story of the Hindu God Krishna and his beloved Radha. The Kathiawari styled white dress and turban in this dance point to their ancestral lineage. Cudchire and Ona hamlets have settlements of Dhangar community in Bicholim Taluka.

The Horbalaa is a major dance form of the Dhangar community, performed at the time of Dasro or Dussehra. The typical musical instruments include Dhol, Thaalo or Jaghant, Zaanj or Kaansaalem and Ghumat. The kandpaava or Surpaawa (flute type musical instruments) provides uninterrupted melodious sound for the swars (sounds).

The Dhangars in general are distinct tribes who have chosen to settle in the grassy highlands in view of their occupation. Their settlements are found in a few talukas, particularly in hilly areas of Goa. Formerly, they were a nomadic tribe migrating from one territory to another. But as far as Goa is concerned, for unaccountable years they have not moved from their places of settlement, rather have constructed pucca houses. Their traditional occupation is goat and cattle rearing. Though a backward community, the Dhangars has a distinct cultural identity of their own.

Members of the Dhangar community are lovers of arts, particularly dancing and display their artistic taste through the Horbalaa dance during the Dasro festival and also through the Chapay dance during
the Shigmo. Their songs include different forms of narration like Powaadaa, laavani and jati. They also give a rendering of a prosaic piece called shiluk. As music lovers, the Dhangars have a specially in Kathaa rendered in Dhangari music.

The Dhangar families trace their origins and associate themselves with trees like Rumad, Pimpal, Vad, Rui and Kolams. Each Dhangar marriage ceremony is preceded by a ritual including union of two branches of trees; each representing the families (kuls) of the bride and the groom. A discussion revealed that to arrange a marriage, a person from Gawda community is necessarily taken as Gaanvkaar (son of the soil).

The dancers wear typical ceremonial costumes like a gown, in a manner that resembles the Kathiawadi style, with red embroidery around the neck and on the sleeves (Fig 6.10). It takes a twelve meter long piece of cloth to make the gown; having a cloth belt. A red handprint is added to it on the backside. Along with the gown a red – bordered sash is worn around the waist. The headgear is a typical Dhangari Pagdi (Mundaasem). The ornaments are also distinctive like thick earrings in the ears, a kadem (ring type bracelet on the wrists), and a garland of coloured beads around the neck. A Vakyaa a metal hollow ring with metal balls inserted into it, is worn on the foot. The sound reassembles a rattle. On special days like the Dasro and Shigmo, they wear flower garlands around the waist.

The dance style is altogether different than any other folk or tribal dance of Goa. After observing a scheduled ritual of Dasro, the male Dhangar folk gather at a stipulated place and stand in the semilunar position. They then start dancing on the beats of instruments which are played in a slow rhythm. The footwork is by lifting and sliding both the legs with a distinctive Hastamudra (hand gesture). Sometimes a
handkerchief of green color is taken in the left hand, cries like Hossay and Hor – Hor – Horbalaa are given out in between. As the dancing goes on the tempo is increased. The Dhangars never form a circle while dancing. The other form called Chapay is presented during the Shigmo. Both are almost similar in nature of dancing and music. But the Chapay is performed without chanting ‘Horbalaa’. Both are treated as ritualistic performance. ‘Chapay’ or ‘Gajanritya’ is performed at Cudchire village by the Dhangars.

**Raadhaa**

During Shigmo, the Dhangr community particularly from Sattari taluka performs this form, named Raadhaa only. In the other settlements of Dhangar like in Sanguem Taluka, it is referred as Radhakrishn Naach (Dance).

A young boy from the community becomes Raadhaa by wearing female costumes in a ceremonial style. At the time of dancing he takes a coloured handkerchief in the left hand and the right hand uses for the Hastmudraa (hand gesture).

Recently for last 70 years, villagers mostly Harijan from Vadaval hamlet of Latambarcem village perform the Raadha dance during Shigmo celebration.
Talgadi

Shigmotsav or spring festival celebrated for a fortnight in Fagoon month abounds in folk forms, obviously because Shigmotsav is essentially a festive occasion for peasants. The Celebrations draw large participation when Goan farmer is free from agriculture operation, the last stage of harvest having been completed, and the Rabi Crop operation is not so close. Free from crop worries and grain in possession, Goan farmer musters all energy – old and Young alive jumps to the thunder of “dhols” ‘tashas’ and ‘cymbals’ holding green twigs to welcome the Spring. Through “romat”, dominates, the festival has evolved few group forms noted for their vigor, rhythm and intricate footwork. These forms do not require a very large space. A Mandap erected in the Courtyard of the village headman or a recognized landlord, is a venue for the dance performances of Shigmotsav. The Dhols and Tashes are used for ‘Romat’, but other dances like ‘Talgadi’ ‘Goff’ and ‘Tonyamell’ are performed to the accompaniment of soft music on harmonium, a light drum, and ‘Talls’. Their skill lies in body movements and the intricate footwork.

Goa, Gujrat and Saurashtra and must have been brought to Goa by early tribal settlers from the northern shores. Tonyamell is the well known Tipri dance as popular with the Gujarathis and both Goff and Tonyamell use similar costumes which have a distinct Kathiawar touch. But in Goa, Tonyamell is only for the men, whereas in Gujarath both men and women participate in the dance. Usual percussion instruments and cymbals provide the accompaniment for all the above three forms as presented in Goa.

Folk dances like talgadi, tonyamel, goff are specially performed by the men during Shigmo.³² Talgadi folk dance was once performed all
over Goa, but now it is confined to a few areas. The artistes who dress in traditional attire of dhoti and mundashe perform the talgadi to the tunes of folk music. They make use of folk musical instruments like Zanj (cymbal), Samel (a drum made of the goat skin) and Ghumat (earthen drum made of monitor lizard skin). There are traditional folk songs which are sung during the talgadi. On many occasions it starts with the song, ‘Shrirang Talgadi Shrirang Tal’. The folk songs used for talgadi are called as “Jot”. Six to eight artistes are needed for presenting a talgadi and the folksongs are based on mythological stories. The artistes present vivid patterns in the dance and conclude it by saying, the words “tha thai tha.”

**Lamp Dance**

This dance derives its name from brass lamps used in the dance during the Shigmo festival. The accompanying instruments include Ghumat, Samel, Cymbal and Harmonium. The performers indulge in a slow dancing movement, balancing brass lamps with burning wicks on the head and the hands. The balancing act controlled by tremendous self-discipline and exquisite footwork matching with the hymns of the traditional folk songs are eye-catching. This group dance is popular in the southern and central Goa including Bicholim Taluka. This is performed mostly in annual Social gatherings by the children and ladies community.

The dance is associated with brass lamps, a traditional Goan handicraft. The Lamp dance success of the performance depends upon gymnastic skill in holding the lamp on the head during variety of body movements presented on the stage. Participated by women, the form is popular in southern and central parts of Goa, and is performed during the Shigmo festival. The instruments accompanying include ghumat, samel and
The dancers sing traditional folk songs and their ‘padanyas’ and ‘Abhinaya’ is enjoyable for the finesse of the performers ‘show’ in undisturbedly holding the lamps on head. This dance is being performed only recently.

**Bicholim Taluka’s Biodiversity Through Folklore**

Goa is a beautiful state of the Indian union. It is blessed with rich ecology and environment. Known today all over the world as the tropical paradise, this small state amidst the Western Ghats and Arabian sea, is a narrow piece of land, about 105km of length and 65 km wide. It covers an area of 3702sq.km on the Western Coast of the peninsular India. Bicholim is one of the culturally rich taluka of Goa.

Since the prehistoric period, people living in the Western Ghats region follow a path of harmony with nature, in recognition of the fact that human beings are yet another species linked to other species of life-forms in totality.

Through the various traditions, people use their natural resources in this region in such a manner that the resources renew themselves without diminution in quality and quantity and also without affecting the evolution and adaptation of the species.

Favourable climatic condition and excellent natural surrounding make the Goans express their deep sense of gratitude towards nature and environment through their varied folklore.

There are folk dances, folksongs in various parts of Goa including Bicholim which reflect the great ecological history of the region. The availability of potable water and abundance of food has boosted the
morale of Goans. It has sustained the Goan economy for many generations without causing harm to the Mother Nature.

There are many folk stories which refer to the genesis of the universe, plant and animals. The five main principles of nature are referred to by the folk-songs. Mango is the most favourite fruit in Goa. The leaves of a mango tree are hung during all the festive occasions in a garland on the door and also they are used in religious ceremonies.

There are many folk-songs with reference to the mango tree. Shigmo is the most colourful, cheerful festival of Goa that heralds the onset of the spring season. The folk-songs and folk-dances performed during the Shigmo for seeking blessings of mother nature and village deities have become a long established tradition of the Goan society. The exciting festivities of Shigmo clearly show the wealth of the nature with its floral diversity. On the day of Holi or a day before it, there is a tradition of erecting a Palm or any other trees pole in front of the temple of the village deity. The erected pole of the tree is to be decorated with mango leaves. In the past, people use to extract colour from the flowers of palos, pangaro and turmeric and sprinkle the coloured water on each other. But now a days, we use chemical colours that have proved hazardous for the human health. The folk-songs sung by the folk artists make a reference to the rose-ringed parakeet, squirrel, flowering plants and other heritage of flora and fauna of the region.

During the Shigmo, men from Sarvan of Bicholim present the most colourful folk-dance called ‘Morulo’ in which they exhibit, various dance patterns of the peacock, the folk drama of ‘Perni Jagor’ and also of ‘Gawda Jagor,’ a man wearing a mask of a tiger depicts the harmonious relationship between man and tiger. *Sonneratia caseolaris*, locally known
as Kandala, is a small variety of mangrove tree common in the coastal swamps. In Surla of Bicholim, during the Shigmo, folk artistes recite the popular folk-song describing the kandala tree and its flowers and how a woman went close to it to pluck its beautiful flowers.

Among the vertebrates, there are many animals that hold significant positions in the local beliefs. The crocodile worship in the form of Mange Thapni is also observed in Mulgaon village in Bicholim Taluka. A silted effigy of a crocodile is made. It is decorated with a shell. On the day of Nag Panchami, a clay idol of cobra is worshiped, as it symbolizes fertility.

The folk festivals which are celebrated throughout Goa by the Hindus as well as Christians not only encourage communal harmony, but reflect the rich ecological knowledge of the land. The origin of many village names can be traced in Goan folklore based on the ecological features. The names of village Amona, Amthane, Ambeli, Ambauli have evolved from mango tree. Pansule, Phanashe, Phanaswadi are related to jackfruit. The name Mordongar from Vadawal, Bicholim indicates it was an abode of peacocks.

Goa has a fascinating flora and fauna in diverse habitats. Our forefathers have conserved the various elements of biodiversity through the folk tradition. However, today, the rich and diverse tradition is getting depleted. It is an issue of serious concern.
Kirtan

The Second of the Devotional forms in the Nav-vidha (Nine Forms) Bhakti tradition, Kirtan includes narration of stories of various acts of God, recite the name and to celebrate the praise of the God\(^\text{34}\). It refers to celebrating the praises of a God with music and singing or reciting the name of a deity. Kirtan Bhakti is worshiping of the deity by chanting his praises and reciting his names.\(^\text{35}\)

Kirtan is one of the cultural form very popular in Maharashtra state. Bicholim taluka has on its border, the Sindhudurg District of Maharashtra. Since this taluka formed a part of erstwhile Sawantwadi Saunsthan, it is but natural, that their cultural influence is visible in the cultural and religious life of the people of Bicholim taluka region. Kirtans are performed mostly in temples and the narrator and singer is known as “Haridas” i.e. the servant of Lord Vishnu.\(^\text{36}\) It therefore makes it clear that the kirtans are mainly in praise of Lord Vishnu or Hari. Kirtan is performed in two parts namely Purva Ranga and Uttar Ranga. It is essential for the Haridas to have good knowledge of singing and style & expertise in recitation and storytelling. It is also considered as an medium mass education as it makes aware people on various topics of social and religious importance.

In Bicholim taluka, kirtans are performed in almost all revenue villages, preferably on the occasion of Navaratri celebration of Dussehra / Vijayadashmi. Many a temple authorities have regular Kirtan performances of the Kirtankar for consecutive nine nights during Navaratri Celebration.
Bhajan

Bhajan is considered as one of the forms of Bhakti or devotion to God. The devotional music form of Bhajan might have originated from the period of Samveda. Bhajan finds a mention in Srimad Bhagwat and the Bhagwat time period is 300 years BCE. It therefore can be inferred that the Bhajan tradition or parampara dates back to around 2300 years.

The Bhajan tradition found its roots in Goa Somewhere in the 8th century. In the early period, the Bhajan style was in the ‘Warkari’ tradition of Bhagwat sect. Jagannathbuwa Borikar initiated the tradition of ‘Bhajani Saptah’ (week long Bhajan recitation) in Goa in the 19th Century. Bhajans were normally performed in temples with instrumental accompaniment of ‘Tall’, ‘Mrudang’ and occasionally used ‘Veena’ often the ‘Zanj’ was also used for accompaniment to Bhajan rendition.

Before Portuguese regime, the Bhajan was mostly performed in Dindi procession of the warkari’s. The oppressive religious policies during the time of ‘Inquisition’ put a curb on this tradition. After passage of time, the oppressive religious intolerant attitude gradually lost its sting. As a result, the ‘Baithak’ bhajan (Bhajans performed in sitting position) became popular and it replaced the ‘Mridang’ with ‘Pakhawaj’ and ‘Zanj’ with the ‘Taal’.

The style of introducing the Hindustani classical ragas in Bhajan singing and also setting of a particular pattern, was popularised by one Shri Sukdo Shirgaonkar from Shirgaon village of Bicholim taluka, who later gained fame as Manoharbuwa Shirgaonkar. He was born on 4th March 1913 and had his grooming in music under Shri Sakharam Barve, an able music teacher & performer. Manoharbuwa Shirgaonkar is the pioneer of the
existing bhajan tradition in Goa and in the decade of 1940-50, with his shrewd and creative mind, introduced a particular structural pattern of Bhajan singing which has now become popular as Goan Bhajan tradition.\textsuperscript{40}

Manoharbuwa not only popularised the bhajan in Bicholim taluka, but in whole of Goa through his disciples.\textsuperscript{41} Each and every village in Bicholim taluka has groups or bhajani mandals who perform Bhajans mostly commencing from the month of Shravan till the Dussehra/Diwali period. These Bhajan are performed in temples and also at residential places on some religious occasions.
Fig. 6.1

Fig. 6.2

Plate No. 41

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Fig. 6.7

Fig. 6.8

Plate No. 44

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Notes and References


5. Ibid.


7. Personal communication with Shri Roulu S. Shenvi Amonkar, Mahajan of Shree Dattamandir, Sanquelim – Goa.

8. Personal communication with Shri Dinesh Sahastrabuddhe from Velguem – Goa.


10. Personal communication with Shri. Anil Fadte, Amona – Goa.

11. News Article in the daily Navhind Times, dtd. 27/03/2011.

13. Personal communication with Smt. Sulbha Yelekar, Dhalo Performer from Amona Village.

14. Personal communication with Shri Abhay Jog from Surla, Bicholim – Goa.

15. Personal communication with Shri Pundalik Sawant, Morulo folk dance Performer from Sarvan village.

16. Personal communication with Milind Joshi, Dashavatari artist from Bordem, Bicholim Goa.

17. Personal communication with Shri Vinayak Khedekar, Senior folk art expert, Ribandar - Goa.

18. Personal communication with Shri Prakash Naik Gaonkar from Latambarcem village of Bicholim Taluka, Goa.


21. Personal communication with Shri Gurudas Mone, President of Yogeshwari Devasthan, Kulan, Sanquelim - Goa.

22. Personal communication with Shri Prakash Narvekar from Narve village.


24. Folder published by Kala Academy Goa on the occasion of Folk dance festival held on 13th & 14th Feb 1983, Panaji - Goa.

26. Personal communication with Shri Eknath Sawant, folk artist from Sarvan village of Bicholim Taluka.

27. Personal communication with Shri Vishnu Sinai Amonkar from Porvorim, Goa. He is originally hailing from Amona and very well aware of folk traditions of the Amona village.

28. Personal communication with Shri Rohidas Shirodkar from Sanquelim Goa. He has been enacting the trance performance of ‘Veerbhadra’ for past many years at Vithalapur, Carapur, Sanquelim - Goa.

29. Personal communication with Shri Bhago Varak, elderly person from Dhangar community in Cudchire village.

30. Personal communication with Shri Janu Tate from Lakhere, Cudchirem.

31. Personal communication with Shri Vishant Vaze, Press Reporter from Nanoda, Bicholim – Goa.

32. Personal communication with Shri. Pradip Amonkar from Surla – Goa.

33. Personal communication with Shri. Govind Naik, High school Headmaster from Sanquelim, Goa.


41. Personal Communication with Sh. Waman Pilgaonkar, Shi Somnath Chari (disciples of Manoharbuwa Shirgaonkar) and Late Sh. Narayan alias Nana Shirgaonkar (Son and disciple of Manoharbuwa Shirgaonkar).