

CHAPTER NO.VDANCE FORMS OF THE CHRISTIANS IN GOA

Goa, a tiny little piece of land on the vast subcontinent of India is 3611 sq.kilometres in area. It is surrounded by the sea in the west, Maharashtra in the north and east, and Karnataka in the south. Its present population is 10,07,749 (as per 1981 census). Goapuri was one of the names it was known by the ancient times. The origins of this 'Paradise of India' are shrouded in mystery. A popular legend has it that Parasurama, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, flung an arrow from the Sahyadri Ghats into the sea which laid bare the fertile land of the Konkan. The arrow struck Benaulim village. Then he brought ninety six Saraswat Brahmin families from Tirhut, of whom 66 settled in 66 villages in Salcete, and 30 in Ilhas. From here the Saraswats spread out to Bardez, Pernem, Savantwadi and other parts of the Konkan. This was in the 1st century B.C.<sup>(1)</sup> Thus, this quasi-history of Goa is full of mythological colouring beginning with its very name.

During its chequered history spanning over 2,000 years, the life of the Goans has been shaped by the Andrabhrihityas (100 B.C. -400 A.D.), Kadambas (400 -550 A.D.), Chalukyas of Badami (578-767 A.D.), Rashtrakutas of Mulkhed (754-973 A.D.),

Western Chalukyas of Kalyani (973-1189 A.D.), Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra (1103-1300 A.D.), Yadavas of Devagiri (12th and 13th centuries) and the Vijayanagar Kings (1336-1469 A.D.). At various periods merchants and pirates came to Goapuri for trade and plunder. There is also enough evidence of Buddhist influence in this region which came to light due to an excavated image of Buddha of the 3rd century. When the Muslim ruler Adil Shah was ruling Goa, Alfonso de Albuquerque captured Goa for the Portuguese on 25th Nov. 1510 and they were there till Dec. 19th 1961 when Goa attained independence and became a part of Indian Republic. The Portuguese, when they conquered Goa brought with them not only politics but also the Christian Religion.

Goa's changing history owes its varied colourful nature to a succession of rulers. And each dynasty has left its multiple and lovely shades in the cultural life of the Goans. Their theatre arts, especially dance bears out this conclusion. Needless to say the cultural background, religion, art-forms and other aspects of life of the rulers have contributed immensely to the development, evolution and also birth of a few new dance-forms in conformity with their policy in Goa. In each existing dance-form different influences of the rulers and their period can be clearly seen in some and vaguely in

many others. There is every possibility that quite a few art-forms must have disappeared from Goan life or drastically changed beyond recognition due to the repressive measures of the rulers, mainly the Portuguese period which existed nearly for 451 years.

(2)

However, twenty seven art-forms have been identified in Goa, a land undisputably endowed with the choicest blessings of nature. Its glorious landscape is complimented by the sensitive and creative mind of its people. There are dances performed exclusively by the Hindu community like Talgadi, Goff, Virabhadra, Foogdi etc. The Mando, Khel Tiatre, Mell, Carnival, Mussal Khel, Kunbi, Dekhni etc. are a few known art-forms of the Christians. Muslims have the Raatib dance. The Gowda Jagar and Gowda Dhalo are parallel forms of Hindu Jagar and Dhalo. However, Christians do participate in certain dances of the Hindus, like Shigmo and likewise Hindus also join the Christians in some of their dances.

The origin of today's Goan Christian theatre tradition can be traced back to the arrival of Franciscan Christian Missionaries in 1517 for the proclamation of the Gospel seven years after the conquest of Goa. The literary activities of the Franciscans and Jesuits were the starting point and

inspiration for the Christian theatre tradition of Goa.

" Their first efforts at evangelization were made in Portuguese, but they did not touch the Goan heart: ' Sermanvak gelolom axen, sermany zalo firongi bhaxen- ' ' I hungered to hear the sermon , but as it was in Portuguese, I could not understand it '. For, inspite of all endeavours at the lusitanisation of customs and the imposition of a foreign language, the population of Goa remained fundamentally Indian and Goan. Hence the choice before the missionaries in general, and the Franciscans in particular, was either to learn the language or to leave the country. Hence the Franciscan missionaries of the island of Goa and Bardez, to whom these districts were entrusted for the purpose of evangelization, gave themselves heart and soul to the study of Konkani, and also Marathi, which was the hieratic language of Goa, though not understood by the masses for whom the former language was more familiar and homely: ' Lingua da terra vulgar- the popular language of the place ".(3)

Later, when there was apparent negligence on the part of the religious priests in mastering the Indian languages, "The ecclesiastical authorities began to legislate in the matter. In 1567, March 23, Pius V declared that no religious should

occupy the post of the Parish Priest unless he was conversant with the language of the place. This brief was directed to the King of Portugal. The fourth Provincial Synod of Goa, 1592, legislated that no priest should be entrusted with the office of the parish-priest unless he knew the local language ". (4)

Also " the General chapter of the Franciscans in 1639 promulgated a special statute on the study of local language"(5) Motivated and encouraged by this, many missionaries like Joao de Sam Mathias ( translated the Symbolum Fidei of St. Robert Bellarmine into Konkani), Jeronimo do Espirito Santo, Miguel de S.Boaventura, Manoel Batista, and many other Franciscan fathers worked for the development of the Konkani language and translated many original works from the European languages into Konkani and Marathi. Another important name to be remembered is Gasper De Sam Miguel O.F.M. who had 13 books and one loose poem to his credit in Konkani. Franciscans also had four centres for Konkani studies.(6)

Many Jesuit scholars like Thomas Stevens, Diogo Ribeiro, Antonio Saldanha, Migule de Almeida had also contributed towards the Konkani language by writing books, dictionaries and grammar. However, the real dawn of Christian Theatre must

have begun with the original works in Marathi in the form of Purannas.

PURANNAS:

Fr.Thomas Stevens in his Krista Puranna, 1:1. 142-143, describes how a parish-priest, "Paḍr-guru" was accosted by a Salcette parishioner and complained before him how, while a Hindu, he had his sublime Purannas to delight his mind with, and, now that he was a Christian, he had the poor fare of Catechism, meant for beginners. That made Stevens and his companions think and create the Christian Purannic literature and they enriched the literature of Goa, Marathi and Konkani with Purannas for the enlightenment and enjoyment of the new Christians they made.<sup>(7)</sup> Here, an artistic thirst of the Goans was to be quenched, who inspite of becoming Christians ever remained Indians in their heart and aspirations.

Fr.Thomas Stevens, a pioneer on many scores in Goa opens the series of Purannas in Goa , almost all written in Marathi with his " Discurso Sobre a Vinda de Jesus Cristo" (Discourse on the coming of Jesus Christ) popularly known as " Krista Puranna" , first printed in 1616 at Rachol, followed by his Passion of Christ, " Discurso sobre a Vida do Apostolo S.Pedro" or puranna of Etienne de la Croix ( commonly known as

"Sam Pedruchem Purann"), Bom Jesus ,1662, " Desclaracao da Dolorosa Morte e Paixao de Cristo". (Discourse on the Dolorous Death and Passion of Christ), " A Paixo de Cristo descrita em tres mil versos (The Passion of Christ, described in three thousand verses) by Gasper de Sam Miguel, " Vida de Cristo", escrita em Lingua Bramana" (Life of Christ , written in Brahmin language), " Poema sobre a Paixao de Cristo", (Poem on the passion of Christ) of Manoel Jacques de Noronha: " three or more poems on the Passion of Christ, "Onvalleancho Mallo", on the life of Saints and Apostles by Miguel de Almeida in 1658, " Sant Antonichi jivit-katha", the life story of St.Antony by Antonio Saldanha and " Puranna de Bombaim" " The Puranna of Bombay", whose authorship is disputed, are some more of the Purannas in the similar style of Thomas Stevens.

"Krista Puranna" by Thomas Stevens who took the pen-name "Krista-das" is a masterpiece of literature in Marathi was originally written in Roman character and later translated into Devanagari and Kanarese characters. " Upto this day, the singing of the motetes of Goa, verses of the psalms or words, taken ordinarily from the servant Song of Isaias, or sayings, culled from the narratives of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, fill the Indian soul with devotion and

sympathy towards the suffering Lord".<sup>(8)</sup> The Krista Puranna written mainly in Marathi and interspersed with Konkani words was very popular in Goa and Mangalore. The Mangalorean Christians when they were " taken captives by Tippu Sultan to Srirangapatnem made the reading and singing of Krista Puranna their every day consolation in the midst of long captivity where many of them lost their lives for the faith of their ancestors ".<sup>(9)</sup>

Sam Pedruchem Purann by Etienne de La Croix reveals the mastery of the author in Indology who quotes from the original Indian Sacred Scriptures: " Ahilia Catha, Hari Granthu, (Hari Pur), Pralada Charitam, (Parl Pur), Bhagavatha Granthu, (Bhag. Pur) Ramayana (R.Pur), Assuamedha Lhita (As.Pur), Sita Sudhi, Vasistah Yoga, Adiparva, Anubhavananda Granthu Guita, Vishtnu Pur, Harichandra Pur".<sup>(10)</sup> The names of the Hindu Trinity Brahma, Visttunnu, Mahessu and their respective incarnations: about sacred animals, cow, serpents, nagas, about sacred plants: " Voddu", " Pimpollu", about devils, Betal, Purussu, Bhutas, about soothsayers, ghaddis and counttallis, about saints and ministers, rissis, bhots, and acharis, books and sacred scriptures, Vedas, Purannas, and Xastras, about rites and ceremonies, eadessies, sattvies, prassads are also found"<sup>(11)</sup>



Any rich literature is an inspiration for the artist and an orientation for the indigenous theatre. The Purannas were a good beginning for the Theatre Traditions of the Christians of Goa. Though initially the rulers and the Christian Missionaries ruthlessly suppressed the Hindu religion and their customs and habits, the love for the language: Marathi and Konkani, and the ambition to get across their message to the people had brought them unconsciously closer to the culture of the natives. This development, if followed, would have developed a rich Theatre traditions of the Christians of Goa. Unfortunately, the winds of change blew from the opposite direction. The suppression of the Konkani language was now started by the Franciscans, ironically enough, the very same order which gave recognition and birth to the Konkani language in the Church.

#### SUPPRESSION OF KONKANI:

The second half of the 17th century is marked by decadence and corruption and bastardization of Konkani. It was then that the unnecessary borrowing of vocabulary in Portuguese began. The positive programme for Konkani's suppression was launched by the Franciscans. In 1684 Conde de Alvor, the Viceroy of Goa enacted a decree to suppress Konkani. The language had

to disappear within three years. 1687, during which Konkani was still there and hence he forbade the use of Konkani both in public and private. In 1731 Amaral do Coutinho ordered that Konkani Christians should give up their native speech and speak only Portuguese so as to avoid contact with Hindu gurus who could re-convert them and lead them back to Hinduism through Konkani which was common to them. In 1745, Archbishop Lourencho de Santa Maria made it incumbent on all Christians to speak Portuguese only, or else they would not be allowed to marry or become priests. In 1761 Jesuits were expelled from Goa which worsened the situation for they were the most powerful advocates of Konkani. In 1778 Archbishop Assuncao de Brito ordered that all religious instructions should be given in Portuguese. In 1812 Manoel de S.Galdino, Archbishop of Goa forbade the use of Konkani in the schools.<sup>(12)</sup>

With the systematic suppression of Konkani, the mother-tongue of the Goans, the Purannas were avoided or went into oblivion. The classic literature failed to give birth to any classical dance traditions in the land. However, the creative instinct could not be completely destroyed in the Goan Christians. That is why, today, inspite of all the adverse developments one finds innumerable art-forms in Goa expressed in their Festivals and Folk-dances. At this juncture, after

researching past history, efforts have been made here to study the Theatre traditions of the Christians of Goa as they are performed or exist today. Though the emphasis is laid on the dance-forms, the treatment of the allied art-forms like drama and music cannot be overlooked, because many a time the three are moulded into one form.

a) PASSOS:

The Passos in Konkani, Les Jeux in French, 'Das Passions-spiel' in German, and the Passion Play in English is the telling of the Biblical story of the Passion of Jesus Christ in the musical and dramatic media. The devotion to the Passion of Christ is a special characteristic of the Goan spirituality. The list of the purannas mentioned earlier shows its tilted balance towards the Passion of Jesus Christ. " The Purannas of old described the feats and acts of heroism of their saints and great men. For the Christian their great hero is Jesus Christ, and it is in his Passion that his love for men and his great courage in suffering and saving mankind are revealed. In this land, intoxicated with Karma the sufferings and the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to the French Poet and novelist Paul Claudelo " did not come to take away the suffering, not to explain it away but to teach men how to suffer, was a theme, most appealing to the Indian Soul".<sup>(13)</sup>

Concerning the Passion of the Lord, this is what Fr. Antonio Pereira writes, quoting Fr. H. Hosten, Culcutta based historian of the Society of Jesus, who quotes Fr. Alexander Rhodes from one of his reports written at Salcette, Rachol in 1621, " I heard a very beautiful poem on the passion of Our Lord, which the Christians were singing in the Church in the evenings, on all the Fridays of Lent; the devotion lasted a good part of the night, with such great concourse that from Goa alone there came ordinarily ten to twelve thousand people to assist at this beautiful devotion". (14) The Purannas must have been the source of inspiration and the reason for the birth and the form of the Passos in Goa. The Passos in Goa represent the different scenes of the Passion of Our Lord. The singing, tune, words and acting really brings tears to ones eyes. We have a beautiful description of the Passos how they were celebrated in the Colegio de Sam Paulo.

" But most important were the Passos or Image Passion plays, in several acts, some of which survive today. In one of these acts statues of Christ and the Apostles were arranged round a table to represent the Last Supper- a practice which I saw followed in Vandrem (Bandra or Bandora, formerly an important village of the Portuguese Province of the North,

and now absorbed into the city of Bombay). Other acts were the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging at the Pillar, the Crowning with Thorns, the Ecce Homo, (Behold the <sup>M</sup>an), the Carrying of the Cross, Pilate's Judgement and the Crucifixion (leading to the Entombment). The last passo had a procession in which there were flagellants and penitents, some holding their hands to the flame, but most with arms stretched out and generally tied to a cross, with real or painted wounds on their bodies. There were also boys in long robes and surplices, carrying replicas of the instruments of the Passion - like the column, cross, hammer, pincers, scourges, ladder, spear, songe, nails and crown of thorns. Other boys with wings fastened to their shoulders, were given the task of drawing the sanctuary curtain and of holding the chalice. There were also the musicians, some playing the harp and other chanting the Pupilli facti sumus. We are like orphans without a father. Also present were the Irmandades or Brotherhoods, with varicoloured capes, and the clergy, their heads covered with part of their surplices.

But the most dramatic types in these processions were men impersonating three types of characters. First, the historical and other figures of the Passion and of the New Testament, such as the Apostles, Nicodemus, Judas,

the angels, executioners, shepherds and jungle folk. Remarkable among these were Jews with their long beard and Moorish caps, and the centurion (Longinus) dressed in black, shaking his clapper before the cross. Second, the figures of the Old Testament, like Adam and Eve, Abraham and Isaac, and the Serpent of Eden. Last, were the animalistic and terrifying figures like Death, and the Spectres bearing the bier of the dead Christ, demons and other horrific and brutish beings. The Ressurrection was announced by men in the costumes of savages and foresters. During the chanting of the Responses of Matins, boys dressed as angels holding candles and singing the Gloria, in imitation of the descent of those heavenly messengers, were let down from the roof or the windows of the church. These and other evocative spectacles were curtailed or eliminated by the Archbishops of Goa, renowned through their high office, but otherwise generally unremarkable for their sanctity or erudition. As Voltaire says somewhere, les grands crimes n'ont guere été commis que par les celebres ignorants, great crimes have not been committed except by ignoramuses of renown ". (15)

We also find the Passion of Christ being enacted in other parts of India (this shall be dealt with at a later stage) though not as age-old a ritual as it is in Goa.

It is also found in other parts of the world. In 1680, the villagers of OBERAMMERGAU, presently belonging to West Germany decided to perform the passion play every ten years as their way of thanksgiving to God for sparing them from a plague that had hit much of Central Europe. This custom has been kept even to this day. " The play was first performed in the church, but later it was presented in the nearby cemetery. In 1820 an enclosure with a stage was built on the outskirts of the town now called 'Passion Meadow' and this continually grew into the fine theatre that was built in 1900 and enlarged in 1930. Although an arching roof , supported by soaring steel girders, protects the audiences - 5200 spell-bound spectators per play - from the elements, much of the stage remains open to the sky, so that the incomparable Alpine backdrop still adds beauty and grandeur to the play".<sup>(16)</sup> This is much later than the existence of Passos in Goa. There is every possibility that the European Missionaries must have carried home the Passion spirituality of Goa.

However, in Goa, due to the suppression of Konkani in the late 17th century by the Church and the Portuguese Govt. who forced the people to give up their culture and the ways of worship for European ways, the Purannas with their eternal themes of Passion which gave rise to the Passos must have

slowly disappeared from the face of Goan religious life. But the Passos did exist in a milder form among the Goan Christians and also those who migrated to Mangalore and Khanapur (presently in Belgaum Dist.) from Goa during the suppression. Even today, we find the Purannas and its passion sung at Tiracol, Arambol and Strophes in the form of pathetic songs, making present to the listeners events which took 2000 years ago.

The present author on his field work found a Passo being enacted at the church premises of Verna, close to Margoa, by the people of that parish. The presentation and acting were not of any high standard, but one could feel the Religious involvement of over 4000 spectators, children, young and old, rich and poor who were watching with utmost attention and reverence. Simple people attired in simple costume were on stage. The costume and decor were of Jewish origin (64). Before the Passo commenced, a short history of salvation from the beginning of creation till the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was explained through sound and slides (a modern media indeed). Then , before every scene , a boy and a girl dressed in the Jewish manner, came into the stage and sang in Konkani, verses about the scene to follow.



This was done to the accompaniment of drums and electric guitars (65). The soul-stirring and plangent tunes of the violin were under-played by the volume of the guitars ,while the traditional percussion of Goa, the ghumot was not used. However, the music came very close to the traditional mandos of Goa.

The sequence of the Last Supper where Jesus offers bread to the Heavenly Father and the washing of the Feet of the Apostles by Jesus (66) was really impressive. After the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, the carrying of the Cross to the Calvary (67) and the crucifixion scene were really touching and realistic (68). Jesus was left on the cross for nearly three minutes and the conversation of Jesus and Mary could really move anyone who had a human heart, regardless of his religious following.

The Passo was written by Fr.J Fernandez a few years back and for the past three years it has been enacted regularly during Lent in the church premises of Verna. With the resurrection of the Passos so many years after the liberation of Goa ,one hopes that these religious art-forms may flourish and live in the hearts of the people. However, one would ardently hope that these attempts may play down

the Western influence, especially in the field of music and bring back the past grandeur of the Purannas where the Passion of Christ was recreated in the indigenous thought pattern. Passos are a special spirituality of the Goans bound with their theatre-arts which can enrich and fill the hearts of the Goans both spiritually and aesthetically provided the church and other responsible institutions give it the required support and encouragement.

b) KHEL:

'Khel' in Konkani means 'play' or 'play-acting' . Khel is a kind of 'play-acting' found mostly in the villages of Salcette area in Goa among the toddy tappers, agriculturists and other middle class people. It is performed during Intrus.<sup>(17)</sup> When the city folk are busy with the carnival, the villagers themselves occupy with these sort of activities. The existence of today's Khel can be traced back to the 16th century, firstly, when " the early Spanish missionaries thought of play-acting (which later became Khel) as a means of instruction and entertainment to effect considerable changes in the social customs of the people of Goa, whose character, customs, prejudices and conservatism presented insurmountable obstacles. Secondly, this means of communication, which was able to

ensure a free and hearty welcome from people of all castes and conditions, began to supply entertainment and distraction rather than information. The priests must have pieced together some of the striking events of the Bible. Such actions were presented in church squares, with a minimum of setting and arrangement. Soon there followed simple plays to illustrate religious or moral principles. They were no longer restricted to the Church and other religious circles, but percolated to the village levels. These plays illustrated moral lessons with symbolic characters. Gradually, there was a tendency for the character to become actual persons and not mere moral types".<sup>(18)</sup>

In the 18th century, the evils of the society were reflected and found a free expression in 'Khel' the artistic pursuits of the middle-class people of Goa. By and large the rich kept themselves aloof from these theatre activities. for , they identified themselves with the Portuguese and imitated their customs. " Thus Khel became ever present and unceasing especially with the small Goan community. In a way it served to build up the values of comradeship and co-operation to counter-balance the fragmentation arising from the subjection to foreign authority. It had a socialising dimension, encouraging work, harmonious group living and providing for

entertainment. It blossomed into an irreplaceable facet of human communication ".(19)

FROM CHRISTIAN VALUES TO SOCIAL THEMES:

The Khel at the end of 18th century and later in the 19th century, slowly and gradually came to be dealing mainly on the moral and social themes. Vinay Kamat and Damodar Ghanekar analyse the process of this development; originally the Khel was " related essentially to Christian values and virtues and divorced from other aspects of society. Its convergence with Goan social structure and its dependence on cultural life were seldom given adequate thought. Society might have been led into wrong choices. Perhaps, efforts to give their own audience what it wants or is believed to want tends often to lower the quality of what is purveyed. (Today it is widely recognised as a social process to be studied from every angle not in isolation but in an extremely broad social context. Awareness of these interlinks has become more widespread in today's Goan society than ever before. Khel, as a means of mass communication, can be more effective if the messages conveyed are already reflected in public opinion or in emerging interests)".(20)

During the field-work, I found many village troupes

performing 'Khel' very enthusiastically. Many villagers have their own 'Khel troupe' and they consider this to be a great honour.

#### SCRIPT OF THE PLAYLETS:

The plays are written by the 'Maestro', literally means 'teacher' in Konkani. In the olden days he may have come from a particular family who continued the work of writing the plays and training the troupe. Today the Maestro is commonly called the 'director' who does the writing, directing, arranging the shows and even acting in the 'Khel'. He is responsible for the quality of the shows. In certain villages the village heads appoint the 'director' and a committee to bear all the expenses and arrange the shows, in other places the 'director' himself takes the initiative, gathers together a few people and goes ahead with the preparation. Every year the plays are newly written or rewritten with additions and omissions from the previous one. There are hardly any traditional playlets written on record. The writer senses the need of the time and the social problems and then expresses them in the plays. Once the play is written, it is censored by the Sarpanch in most cases. (In the olden days the church authorities and the Portuguese must have been

very firm on censorship). At present censorship is not that strictly followed. During the observation one could find that practically each troupe had three 'Khels' , each lasting for about half an hour. There is no link from one play to the other. For example Santan Pinto from Agala Ghobor (Near Margoa) (69) had three Khels ; i) Seith Sampadlo (The land-owner got caught) ii) Soponn ( Dream) iii) Almarintlo Bokul (the cat from the cupboard). All the three were attacking the evils in the society, there was also a mild attack on the present political system complemented with a lot of humour throughout the performance. However, one should not forget that all the plays are packed with Christian values and moral teachings. Each play has a lesson for the people given in a 'story' form.

#### THEATRE PRACTICES:

One month before the commencement of the performance the director or 'Maestro' writes the 'Khel' and gets the script ready. He then selects the actors, singers and musicians with the help of the Village heads and begins the practices. All the artists are from the village itself. Each actor or actress should be capable of singing. The main actors are usually good singers. Practice is given not only for the acting but also for the singing by the main musician, or by the 'director'.

The actor-singers are taught songs together with the facial expressions and a few simple hand gestures which is considered to be very important. The costume is selected and decided by the 'director'. The rehearsals go on for many days till they have their first performance in their own village, usually on the Intrus Saturday.

#### MAKE-UP AND COSTUME:

The costumes are used as per the role of the person in the play. Simple make-up is done for the women but most of the time every character has a big patch of red-paint on both the cheeks. In a few troupes men were dressed up as women and were acting out female roles. Inas Miranda's troupe from Dovorlin had two men in female roles. In certain troupes men had characterized themselves in their natural appearance to fit into certain roles. In Santan Pinto's troupe from Agalo Ghobor, (69) a man had shaved off his hair just for the occasion to act out a role of a Brahmin in the play. When asked why he had done this instead of doing the make-up, the director said " I have no time and money to do all that and it is not practical; besides we want to be realistic in our approach ".

#### SPONSORSHIP OF THE PERFORMANCE:

Khel performances are held during the Intrus period.

The performances are organized and sponsored in many ways.

i) When a single person or a family sponsors the 'Khel' it is performed in their courtyard. Usually a troupe has three 'Khels' and they act one or all the three according to the sponsorship they receive. ii) The head of Vadho (village) collects contribution from all the members of the place and a common place is selected where they erect a raised wooden platform to enact the 'Khel'. Here, different troupes come and perform till the funds are exhausted. The rule is, first come first served. During the visit I saw this system at Chinchinim in Salcette district. There were three troupes waiting for their turn to perform. iii) Sometimes a village also invites a fixed number of troupes to perform in their village. It is the prestige of the village to invite other teams into their village. However, they have their own troupe performing throughout the Intrus period elsewhere. It is a healthy exchange of stage-art among these village-folk.

A few years back the troupes were paid just Rs.20 to 40 for a performance. Now, they fetch anything from Rs.200 to Rs.600 according to the popularity of the troupe. Each and every member of the troupe is paid by the 'Director'.

#### PERFORMANCES:

These days the Khel troupes engage vehicles for their



speedy transport from village to village. As soon as they arrive at a place for 'Khel' they get into the job quickly setting up the mike, the musicians (normally three) hurry to their seats, people rush from all the directions and gather around the courtyard forming a circle. In the centre of the circle there is a little space left which will be the acting area. Thus, within five minutes of their arrival the 'Khel' starts and the crowd still pours in (70). The director announces the name of the village from which the troupe has come and the title of the 'Khel' to be enacted. Then the two singers start singing in voices to the accompaniment of the musical instruments. Sometimes even the name of Jesus is invoked though the Khel is purely on the social theme. The general format is that, first the story is told by the actors singing the verses in lyrical Konkani. This is followed by spontaneous dialogue and conversation among the actors. This pattern is followed throughout the Khel. (This method is similar to the Yakshagana performance of Karnataka. Here one should note that Goa was under the Kadamba dynasty of Karnataka for many years. Hence the influence cannot be ruled out.)

There is no curtain, no erected stage, no setting, but the atmosphere whether the situation is in the house, at the police station or anywhere else, is suggested to the onlookers

by their subtle change of voice, acting etc. (71). In one of the Khels a person was to be taken for post-mortem: They just lifted and placed him on a mat which they spread just in time. No sooner he was placed there, he gets up and sits among the audience. There is no reaction from the people for this strange way of acting. For the people, he was taken for post-mortem (72).

The actors also find a place in the audience, when their turn comes for acting, they come to the acting area and act out their role. Once it is over, again they turn to be a part of the audience (73 + 74). Everytime, to suggest the end of a scene and the beginnig of the next the director gives a whistle. The story ends with the victory of the good over the evil. As soon as the 'Khel' is over the troupe rushes to another village for their next performance.

#### MUSIC:

Khel, usually is accompanied by three musicians namely the drummer, clarionet player and trumpeter or violinist. The music is a blend of East and West (75). At times the Goan folk-tunes are also heard. They normally sing in voices. The blending of different voices even among these simple village folk is very interesting and soothing to the ears.

This must be the influence of the European mode of singing.

KHEL-TROUPES:

There are many 'Khel-troupes' because many of the villages do have the tradition of having a troupe in their village. I witnessed the performance of many of the 'Khel-troupes' namely 1) Kaitan Fernandez of Dovorlim, enacted Ghorachem Nisanthan (Destruction of the Home), Sunita ( a story wound round a girl called Sunita) and Neet ( Justice) at Raia. 2) Dominic Cardoz of St.Jusa Areal De Cross enacted Makas Lagon (Just because of me) Damplo (closed) Korumkh Dista (Feel like doing) at Ghanta-Morad (Navelin), 3) Santan Pinto from Agala Ghobor had Seth Sampadlo (the land-owner got caught) Sppann (Dream) Alamarinthlo Bokul ( Cat from the cupboard) at Kudtholim, 4) Inas Miranda from Tallea village enacted Askhat Endo ( mentally retarded) Tina ( a story of a village girl) Rajaram Shetty ( a story on the person of Rajaram Shetty) at Chinchinim. These were a few of the many I would like to put on record.

c) CARNIVAL:

'Carnival', 'Carnevale', 'Carniovale', or 'Carnaval' are some of the different forms the word is spelt in. As per the etymology of the word 'Carnival' is derived from the Latin word 'Carnem Levare', means to bid farewell to meat. In the practical usage it denotes the last few days, i.e. from Sabado Gordo or Fat Saturday to Shrove Tuesday (the eve of Ash Wednesday) when people feasted and enjoyed before the season of lent. " In Italy, it signified the whole of the time from the first day of the year to Shrove Tuesday (inclusive); in other places, Carnival started from 7th January, i.e. from the feast of the Epiphany, and lasted till the midnight of Shrove Tuesday. The word 'shrove' comes from 'shrive' which means " give absolution to".

In Italy, it was also called 'Carnavallare' from the Italian word 'avallare' meaning to swallow, a greater quantity of flesh (meat) at that time of the year. The feast or celebration also came to be known as Carnalla in imitation of SATURNALIA a Roman pagan feast in honour of the field God Saturnus, held annually in December.

ABSTINENCE:

In ancient times, when the law of abstinence was much

stricter and forbade many other foods besides meat, the clergy and a good number of the laity started abstaining progressively during the pre-Lenten season, until they entered a complete fast on Ash Wednesday. After the Sunday before Lent, this voluntary fasting began with abstinence from meat; consequently that Sunday was called Dominica Carnevala from the Latin word Carnem levare, which means 'withdrawal' or 'removal' of meat. The origin of the Carnaval can be traced to feasts of ante-Christian times like (a) the Bacchanalian feast which was celebrated twice a year by the Romans in winter and summer in rhythm with the solar system; and (b) Lupercalian festivities in honour of Pan and Ceres (Pan is a pastoral god in Greek mythology, half-man and half he-goat and Ceres a Roman goddess of harvest and grain). Pope Gelasius I (496) strove to supercede this feast by introducing the feast of the Presentation of Jesus or Prification of Mary with a procession in which burning candles were carried.

#### IN ROME:

In Rome Carnival was a gala occasion, an important element in the material prosperity of the city. Many tourists flocked to Rome for this feast- which meant more income to the city. For some reason or the other, Popes condoned some

of the excesses of the Carnival days; in fact they actively promoted and assisted the revelry such as mascarado etc. The Carnival feasts became very splendid during the papacy of the great Farnese Pope, Paul III (1534-49). There were processions of maskers , a race of riderless horses along the Corso, confetti battles etc. Soon enough, apart from Rome, Venice, Turin, Milan , Florence, and Naples introduced the Carnival .(21)

#### ORIGIN OF CARNIVAL IN GOA:

In Konkani, the language of the Goans, Carnival is known as Intruz, an adaptation of the original Latin word 'Introito' or introduction to Lent. The origin of " Carnival in Goa (the only area in India to throb to its festivities) can be traced to the Portuguese conquest of 1510, wherein the Portuguese ' Entrudo' was localised by the indigenous cultural glitter of Goa to evolve to its present form: an intriguing amalgamation of Eastern and European influences ".(22)

Hence " Carnival in Goa represents an effervescence of the fusion of two cultural straits - of the West and East - as it is rooted both in millenary European rites brought over by the erstwhile Portuguese rulers and in the local ehos, as carnival resembles the colourful Hindu spring festival of

Holi in many ways like the squirting of coloured water and powder by the revellers on all and sundry ". (23)

Carnival was celebrated mostly by the Goan Christian community and a few of the Hindu and Muslim brothers. In the early period of the Portuguese rule, Carnival is said to have been a crude affair with the revelry quite often ending in fights and debauchery. In the 19th century these excesses were curbed and Carnival was refined and stylised. " It was only then that Carnival reached the peak of its pomp and splendour in Goa. This was the epoch of splendid, colourful pageants of allegoric floats depicting traditional scenes or historic episodes with acrobatic groups and dancing troupes parodying the real ones.

Carnival in Goa , however, is not confined to towns, but finds an exquisite expression in the villages. Here small troupes of fancifully dressed actors and musicians stage satirical playlets from door to door, singing and dancing all the way to the tunes of violins, ' Ghumots' and bleating trumpets. The orchestra provides also the musical back-ground for the show which evokes almost continuous peals of laughter from the spectators at the witty and piquant scene and songs,

punctuated from time to time by prolonged drum-beats ".<sup>(24)</sup>  
 This is commonly called 'Knel'. There are also many other art-forms performed during this period like: 1) Mell, a ceremonial thanksgiving dance-cum procession among the Christians of Baradi area , 2) Kunbi dance by the Kunbis from Salcette district , 3) Mussol-Khel, a native dance of Chandor (Chandrapur) Christians. These will be dealt in detail at a later stage. Besides this, the merry-makers of Margoa had ASSALTOS, Halloween - like trick or treat promenades; Mapusa staged the re-enactment of the ancient war between Portuguese and Marathas. In short, during these days every Goan has an opportunity to give vent to his feelings and emotions, scope to give expression to his artistic talent and time to socialize and feast.

However, a few years before the liberation, Carnival in Goa had retreated from the streets to the theatre, clubs and dance-halls. The social and public celebration had become a part and right of the upper-class. In 1962 the incoming administration had cancelled the celebration branding it as a colonial affair. But later the Govt. allowed it and for the past two years the Dept.of Tourism itself has taken a keen interest in patronizing the feast. A lot of controversy and



criticism about the Govt.'s involvement in the socio-religious feast is raised both by the press and eminent citizens. The church authorities have boycotted the 'Carnival procession', criticising the Govt. for its efforts to convert it into a tourist affair and condemning the vulgarity that is involved in the celebration.

#### CARNIVAL IN GOA TODAY:

The Carnival in Goa begins with a mile-long parade of the votaries of King Momo, the Lord of the Carnival, with his weird entourage of dancers, revellers and merry-makers. It is a vivid electrifying tableau of floats, cars and carriages that move sedately along to the accompaniment of folk music provided by local bands. " King Momo enjoys his protean status of supreme sovereign for the period of four days giving his 'citizens' through a royal proclamation the right to complete freedom while his reign lasts. His antecedents have been traced by international historians to the Greek God of Satyr and laughter, while in India an irrevocable link has been established between Momo and King Mahabali of Kerala who having been banished to the netherworld by Lord Vishnu, requested that he be allowed to visit his people just once every year to experience first hand their innate joie de vivre ". (25)

CARNIVAL PROCESSION OF 1984:

The Carnival procession of 1984 started on the 3rd March at 4.00 P.M. with the triumphant entry of " King Momo" in the city of Panaji, which was witnessed by a mammoth gathering. According to the customs, King Momo proclaimed his rule at the Church square. The declaration of gay fiesta was of course preceded by a colourful parade of 30 floats, through the main city. For a person who had gone to Goa for this year's(1984) Carnival, with the desire to watch the traditional way of celebrating Carnival with its traditional floats, Goan music and dance, it was partly a disappointment. For, there were commercial floats (76) which used the occasion to advertise their products, fanciful floats like the foot-ball game on the street, imported floats ( 77 + 78) from Karnataka and Maharashtra, Military floats, 'Victory 61' an army parade presented by the youth of Mala etc. But a few traditional floats like O Zagor (79), an ancient colourful and musical entertainment, presented by Mr. Bernadine Mendonca, "Crab hunters" by the Super Stars led by Winoy Dias, ' Etak', a carnival dance float, led by Mr. George Richardo Margoa, " Goyche Render" , a Agacalm youth club led by Mr. Steven Dias were indeed a consolation for an art-loving person (80)

One of the English dailies of Goa had the following in

its editorial on the carnival procession under the title "Viva Vulgarity". " If the carnival procession is any indication of the carnival spirit, it is indeed a very sad commentary on Goa. The carnival as reflected in the procession seemed a period-cocktail of 60 per cent alcohol and 20 per cent militarism, 15 per cent foot-ball and 5 per cent of the most unabashed vulgarity. A cocktail more calculated to please Yokels from Haryana than anyone with a modicum of sensibility, sensitivity and any sense of aesthetics ".

" Unwittingly perhaps a float meant to represent toddy-tappers epitomised the abysmal taste of the carnival committee. A float which pictured a number of drunken stagglers who quite conceivably were really in their cups, seemed to dramatise both the nature of the titillation the carnival as conceived by the Tourism Department, provides as also the disgust of any genuine Goan with the synthetic 'carni-vivality'. At least the locals know that carnival procession is merely a mela put up to tantalise tourists. But the face that Goa presents through the carnival , ugly and pock-marked.

Culture has never been bastardised quite so efficiently as the Tourism Department abetted by the carnival committee appears to have done. Little wonder that the average tourist

goes away with the impression that Goa is Sodom and Gomorrah and all the sin cities of the world rolled in one ". (26)

Fr. Moreno D'Souza, one of Goa's foremost Konkani writers had the following to say on the carnival procession. " The present carnival is not of the Goans but a figment of imagination of the Tourist Department. How Karnataka and Maharashtra floats will show Goan carnival- a contradiction. The Tourist Department has killed the traditional carnival of Goa and has made Panjim etc. a house of prostitution- scantily dressed girls from college allured to take part in the public street dancing and at night they are violated ". (27)

The press and the public opinion may be slightly exaggerated. But the fact remains that the commercialisation of the carnival is in progress and it is no way to popularise any feast or art-form. One should not be perturbed by the degradation of Carnival celebration in the cities, because the traditional spirit of carnival still exists among the village-folk. During the Intruz one could find youngsters with masks on ( 81, 82) on the Colva beach going round dancing and making music for the people. Of course, they accept and make a little money, all in good spirit. In the

villages children paint their faces, put on queer masks , go from house to house singing and dancing. In Raia, one of the villages in Salcette, during the field work I was forced to play carnival, throwing colour on each by children. In Chinchinim people put on strange costume and masks, go on dancing and singing from village to village. These are a few different faces of traditional carnival which is found in its purity in the remote villages of Goa.

Carnival procession on the "Fat Saturday" is only the beginning of the celebration to come of the carnival or Intruz which goes on till the eve of Ash Wednesday (83). Each area or locality has its own form of celebration expressed in its costume, music, dance, playlets, processions etc. During the field work I could find and classify many of the art-forms. However, a detailed study is made on the following art-forms like Khel, Mēll , Kunbi, Mussal-Khel etc.

a) MELL :

The ceremonial thanksgiving and going to meet the ancestors in a dance-cum procession in central Goa is called Mēll. This is more of a marching, procession cum dance than a dance performed systematically. The rituals and customs are very well defined and the performers are very particular

in observing them as strictly as possible. Mēll is found among the Christians of Baradi, 35 K.m. from Margoa, close to Chandor town. These families come from the warrior community who got converted to Christianity during the Portuguese rule. Mēll must be a remnant of their ancestral rituals, customs and art-forms. Mell is very close to the performance of 'Shigmo', the Goan version of 'Holi'.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Mēll is closely connected with Hindu customs and rituals. It is nothing but the feast " Shigmo" , adapted and moulded to the tune of the Christian feast- Carnival. This ethnic community has clung to its traditional customs and rituals, substituting carnival time for Shigmo. At this juncture it is interesting to note that the present day Mēll celebration begins and is centred around the " Baradi Cross".

#### BARADI CROSS:

Baradi is a small hill over-looking the Bethul, Velin and other low-lying village areas, extending towards the Arabian sea. On the top of the hill there is a Chapel dedicated to the "Holy Cross", at the edge there is a construction of a big cross, next to that there is a small cross, all painted white, on visit one would normally find a few burning candles

and flowers offered by the devotees. At the foot of the Hill there is another cross where the Christian and the Hindus alike offer their prayers, to the left there is a spring which is considered to be very holy by both Christians and Hindus and they have great regard and reverence for it.

There is an interesting story connected with the Baradi Hill. In the olden days the deity, after whom the hill is named Baradi, called Baradigarn, may be a form of Shakti . The shrine in which the deity presided must be the present ' Holy Cross Chapel'. The holy spring at the foot of the hill was the place where the deity had her bath and the cross at the foot of the hill was the place where she had her hair get dried.

The procession of 'Shigmo' festival usually starts from the shrine of the local deity. So , in the olden days when they were the ethnic Hindu community, they might have been starting their procession-cum-dance from the shrine of 'Baradigarn'. When they became Christians, the community could not just leave their customs and rituals. Hence the deity was substituted by the cross, shrine was substituted by the " Holy Cross Chapel". So, they continued their customs and rituals in a slightly adapted form. When asked why you

do this: an elderly man said, " If we don't continue to celebrate these procession-cum-dance, the things will turn out to be bad for us". Hence , every year they perform Mēll religiously and dutifully. Baradi also means twelve places or points. It is possible that their deity must have been worshipped by twelve villages or tribes. Even today 12 Mēlls or groups can be identified among this community: Porab, Naik, Dos Naik, Baradi, Kairo, Desai, D'Silva, Tolecardo, Betul I, Betul II, Zeino and Gork-Morad . Till recently all the groups used to come together for the final celebration but since eight years they come separately due to some disagreement among them.

#### MODE OF CELEBRATION:

Mēll begins traditionally on the Fat Saturday( the Saturday before the Ash Wednesday) and ends on the eve of Ash Wednesday. The villages echo the hypnotic rhythm of the drums that throb unceasingly through the four days of the Mēll. Vibrantly-hued powders cloud the air and passers-by are drenched with coloured water which will remind the onlooker the celebration of 'Holi'. Traditionally only men participate in these March-dances.



PROCESSION-CUM-DANCES:

Procession-cum-dances of Mēll( the ethnic versions of King Momo's Parade) are undertaken with great ebullience and enthusiasm. Each group celebrates it with its own rituals and customs. People gather together in the village-head's house and with a prayer to Jesus Christ start their way to the 'Baradi Cross', planted on a hill-top. There the elders lead the long prayers. It is said that in the olden days the head of the village used to hurt himself and offer a few drops of blood at the foot of the cross ( nowadays they have only painted wounds) and would light a few candles (84). After this initial rituals at the Baradi Cross, the real procession cum-dance begins. It is crowded, colourful and noisy; with banners , umbrellas of ceremonial build, festooned sticks and batons, with swords and shields, with local drum- the Ghumot, Kettle-drums and trumpets, they descend the hill with the cry " Shere-Shoo" (This might be the battle cry, because they belonged to the warrior class).

The biggest banner is always in the lead. Surprisingly, the Indian national flag is used by them. During the Portuguese period they used the Portuguese flag. Probably, the Portuguese must have imposed this custom of using this

flag on them. After the liberation they have started using Indian national flag. Twigs of greenery (symbols of the coming of spring) are waved unabashedly as the procession attempts to keep in with the music of the Mēll-drum renditions, intermingled with raucous whistles, hand clapping and cheers. Some just walk along or march, whereas others dance vigorously as the whole procession marches on to a fixed route. Each village ( Vaddo in Konkani) has a fixed route chalked out in their tradition. They are bound to follow the same. At times, people even open their fenced property and allow the Mēll to pass-by. For, the Mēll has to go that way and with this regard they make no compromise. Dancing and marching, they go from village to village visiting their ancestors. Each village has a few fixed points to be visited and a few in common. Whenever a group comes to visit the village they are given a welcome by the head of the village who gives them a good treat. At certain points, a family members waits to give a drink to the head of the group visiting them. They have a few common points to be visited by all the villages and a few particular points reserved for a particular village. After completing the traditionally marked route, they return to their homes for food, relaxation and to get ready for final the celebration on the afternoon of the Shrove Tuesday.

SHROVE TUESDAY AFTERNOON:

At about 2.00 P.M., gradually people move out of their houses to the area commonly called as 'Mandd'. Mandd is a place chosen by the people for their religious rituals. A lighted Indian lamp is placed in the centre (85), speaks itself for the ethnic community which is deeply rooted in the traditional rituals and rites. Men come out in the female attire, musicians assemble with their instruments and here, the women-folk too join the celebration (86). At the prescribed time the head of the village comes to the fore-front and ceremoniously lights the lamp (87) to the accompaniment of the frenzied tune of the musicians. Quickly the whole community joins in the forceful dance around the lighted lamp. The mood and tone of the dance is essentially martial and the spectator stands spell-bound to the nerve wrecking beats of the huge drums and bleating pitch of the trumpets. They also play with colours. On observation blue (indigo) is commonly used among (may be because blue is the favourite of the warrior community) them. Practically no singing is heard except a few slogan like Ho Nāch Zainagaranchō, (This dance is of the Zaino community) thus each group has its own slogan repeated in a rhythmic mode (88). After this

for the final celebration all the groups assemble in a common place where the dance and music will continue (89). Now, the elders of one of the community come forward and embrace each other with full of feelings and emotions. One can witness a few people shedding tears of joy. It is a happy meeting of each other - "Mēll." Then the final prayers are said all together (90) usually the Porab ( Porabs are one of the early converts to Christianity) village head in the lead; FURSAA SAIBA AMI VOITAT TINGA PAV (Lord of the cross help us wherever we go) SAN FRANCIS SAIBA VOITA TINGA AMKAM PAV (St.Francis Xavier help us wherever we go). With this grand finale the "Mēll" comes to an end. People slowly move to their respective houses which is normally followed by the family meal.

In Mēll, one finds the fusion of Eastern and Western music, the feast of 'Shigmo' and Carnival, the rituals and rites, music dance and folk-tradition of East and West, Hindu and Christian religious customs etc.rolled into one. Inspite of all the repressive measures of the foreign rulers towards the indigenous customs and art-forms, this ethnic community has still retained its traditions and customs; and Mēll is a compelling proof for the above deliberations.

Even to this day Catholic priests neither involve themselves nor join the celebrations, nay many of them are ignorant even about the form and existence of Mēll which is also an indication of the Church's attitude towards the art-form of this warrior community. Initially, there must have been a systematic dance and music in existence; however, the present day Mēll must have lost many of its original niceties, especially of dance and music and we have mainly a bundle of rituals and customs still observed by them with the glimpses of traditional music and dance found here and there.

e) KUNBI DANCE:

The dance performed by the Kunbis is called 'Kunbi dance'. They are commonly called as " Gaudis " in Goa. This Kunbis are the oldest settlers of Goa and hence their folk-dance represents the most ancient tradition of the land. In fact they are the only community who sing and dance for their personal recreation. Secondly, theirs are only songs of the pre-Portuguese era, which are based on social themes. All other forms of pre-Portuguese folk music are associated with religious practices and rituals. Kunbi dance is performed during Intruz and wedding occasions.

MODE OF CELEBRATION:

As said earlier, during Intruz Kunbis dance in the evenings. But the most important celebration is reserved for the Shrove Tuesday, the eve of Ash Wednesday. Here is a description of the celebration which took place in Vidya Nagar, a village close to Margoa, on the 6th of March 1984, where Ruzar Gomes is the Village head.

In the afternoon villagers had the carnival procession which is similar to that of King Momo's parade except that it was performed in a traditional way with the emphasis on the Kunbi habits and customs. The whole village took part in the procession where they had the traditional Kunbi dance to beats of the Ghumot. But the events that followed were of most interesting.

In the evening the villagers went to a shrine, dedicated to the 'Holy Cross' and danced in front of the same to the accompaniment of the Ghumots. The dance went on for quite some time (91). At about 8 P.M. the people marched towards the village. They came to the village head's house and the woman of the house went to welcome them, she incensed them in the traditional way (using a coconut shell) and led them to the courtyard of the village-head, where everyone bow to

the cross which had the shape of the English capital letter ' T ' where a traditional lamp was kept lit for the dance.

The Kassal ( a sort of big cymbal) player took his place in the centre of the courtyard and the Ghumot players sat around him forming a semi-circle. The main Ghumot player started singing. The themes were social and mostly based on love and Romance. For example one of the most common song was: " The coy bride is filling the pitcher in the ankle-deep water of the rivulet and the fish (called) Thigur is winking at her" (translated from Konkani). All the dancers are mostly women who dance in different choreographic pattern till the musicians come to a halt with a sort of ending beats (muktaya). One after the other the dance goes on till the middle of the night when the Kunbis retire for rest and to start the season of Lent the next day.

#### CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERN:

Kunbi dance has many varied choreographic patterns. The dance steps and movements are very delicate and soft especially in the beginning of each number. A few of them are explained as below:

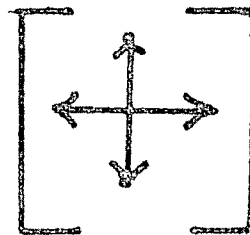
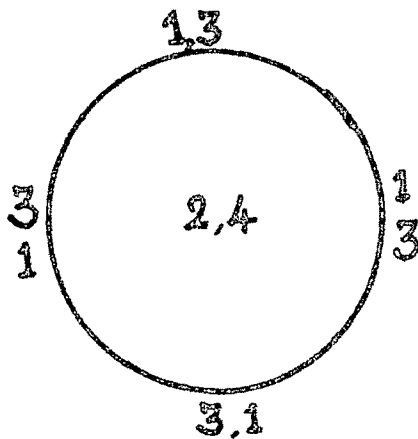
The Ghumot players with Kassal player take their seats

# BASIC CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERN

i    ii    iii    iv    v    . . . . .  
 D    D    D    D    D    . . . . .

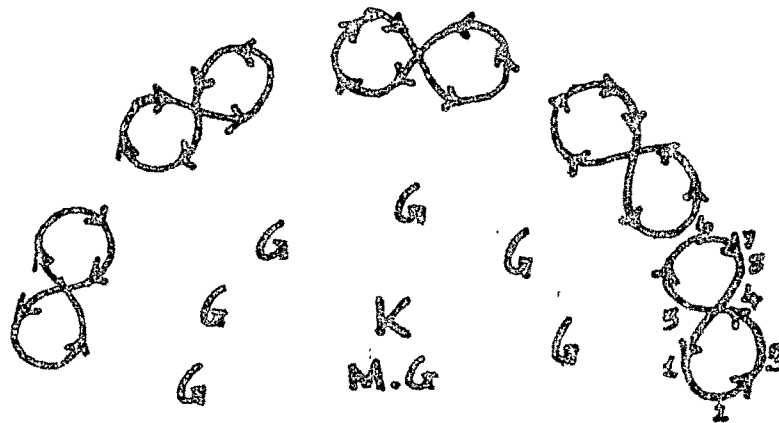
D - DANCER

## CHOREOGRAPHIC MOVEMENT



2,4 - LEFT LEG

1,3 - RIGHT LEG



K - KASSAL PLAYER

G - GHUMAT PLAYERS

M.G - MAIN GHUMAT PLAYER.

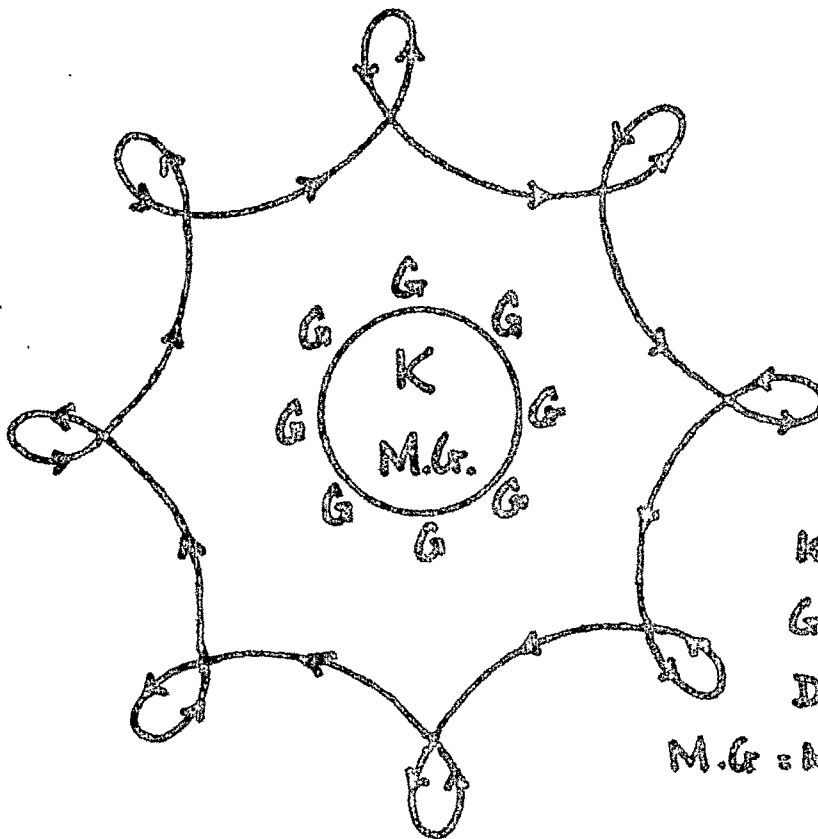
1,2,3,...8 - EIGHT BEAT RYTHUM.



on one side, Kunbi dancers form a line in front of them. The main Ghumot player starts singing, when he gives a special rhythm, other Ghumot players and dancers join in. First step is taken with the right leg, a delicate stamping of the foot in the front on the first beat followed by the second beat by the left in the same place and again the third step is taken by the right foot, now positioning it at the back and the fourth step on the fourth beat, is by the left leg also in the same place. This choreographic pattern is set to a 4 beat rhythm (92).

The Kassal player, the main Ghumot player and other Ghumot players sit in a semi-circle as indicated in the diagram and the dancers form a semi-circle in front of them, each dancer dances in the choreographic pattern forming the English number '8'. The dance is set to the 8 beat rhythm pattern. For the detailed choreographic pattern, refer the diagram and the photos (93).

Now, they dance in a circle with an interesting and exciting choreography. As usual the Kassal player, the main Ghumot player sit in the centre, around them other ghumot players sit forming a circle. Dancers also stand around the musicians and form a circle. In the first two dance pattern



K = KASSAL PLAYER

G = GHUMAT PLAYER

D = DANCER

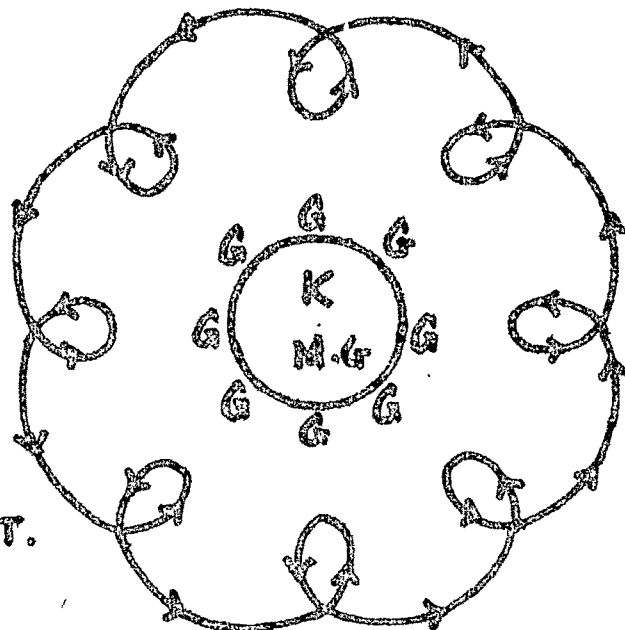
M.G. = MAIN GHUMAT  
PLAYER

CLOCKWISE MOVEMENT

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K. KASSAL PLAYER.  
G. GHUMAT PLAYER.  
M.G. MAIN GHUMAT PLAYER.

ANTI CLOCKWISE MOVEMENT.



the dancers hold a silk-cloth in their hands wrapping around the waist and in this dance they completely let loose their hands down (dōla hasta). Each dancer forms a choreographic pattern as indicated in the diagram below. At first they dance in clockwise and then anti-clockwise (94). This dance is set to 16 beats rhythm pattern .

#### DRESS AND MUSIC:

The dress of the Kunbis is very colourful. The saree is tied in a special way high up to the knee, which is typical of these ethnic community. This may be because they belong to the working-class, who work mainly in the fields, hence the stylisation could be because of profession. This of course could be the reason for the main emphasis on the foot-work. In their hands they hold a silk-cloth which is wrapped around their waist again reminding the need of such cloth for a peasant working in the field. Their hair is nicely groomed and tied like in the manner of a Mohiniāṭṭam dancer. They wear neck-laces with a special pattern typical to this community. For their hair they have Mogra (Jasmin) or Abolin (red flowers which look almost like paper and which has no smell whatsoever). The musicians mostly wear white shirts.

MUSIC:

Tunes are typically folk in their melody and rhythm. The common timing is like the Ādi Tal of the Carnatic music or Teen Tal of the Hindustani music. The instruments are Ghumot, a typical Goan percussion made of earthen pot, to ne side there is small hole where the left hand of the player is placed to produce different sound effects and the other where the main rhythm is played by the right, they have skin of the jungle lizard tied to the mouth of the earthen pot. However, the size and form of the Ghumot varies. Kassal is like the cymbal which is used in other parts of the country which leads the rhythm.

f) DHALO:

Like Foogdi, Dhalo is performed by women. But it is danced on moonlit winter nights in the courtyard of the house, when the floors are done up soon after the monsoon and kharif crop of paddy is about to be harvested. After the grain is winnowed, dried and stored, the women folk are free to assemble in the pandal for all cultural activities. A specific spot close to the door is called MANDD. This spot is sacred and represents the spirits of the occasion. The courtyard is later also roofed by thatched palm leaves supported by frame-work

of betel tree poles. This covering over the Mandd is aptly called Mandov by Hindus and Matov by Christians. When the word is sent around that a certain family has already installed a Mandd for Dhalo, participants start gathering in the courtyard soon after the dinner on the moonlit night of Pausa 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 armaround, the back arrangement singing in unison. They sway, bend, move forward and backward, singing songs of religious and social importance. Over the years new messages are conveyed through this form which have social bearing and which are locally composed and occasionally revised extempore's reflecting contemporary life. New experiments of themes are carried through Dhalo. They ridicule liquor addicts, tease newly weds and advise them to limit their families for greater happiness.

The 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 amidst 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.

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

g) MANDO:

Mando on the other hand, is a group song where a choric group of boys and girls, as many as 20 in number, stand in semi-circular formation with girls forming the front line and the boys forming the back line. In singing the tune, orchestral in outlook, sometimes girls sing a line followed by the boys, whereas sometimes they sing all together as chorus. The peculiarity of the costumes of the girls is notable in its form because it is of Burmeese Saronge-type dress, locally called Tollopo, probably picked up by high family ladies

while travelling between Goa and Macao and Timor, erstwhile eastern Portuguese colonies (95).

Set to the Latin-American tune, the theme of Mando is thoroughly local and the sentiment is sufficiently romantic, expressing frustrations and deceptions in love. The song which starts with a sad and slow note ends on a faster beat labelled as Durpodha or Dulpods, reminiscent of the similar rhythmic arrangement in Khaiyyal singing which begins on a slow rhythm and ends on a faster one.

h) DEKHNI:

A solo song-cum-dance presents synthesis of Hindu-Christian traditions of life in Goa. In local Konkani language "Dekhni" means bewitching beauty, and its theme originates from the devdasi life. The devdasi girls who were the custodians of art, would travel from place to place to offer their performances at weddings and other occasions. A devdasi girl comes to a river-bank-crossing and coaxes the boatman to take her across to honour her commitment at the wedding on the other side of the river. The girl's request and the subsequent dialogue between her and boatman forms a versified lilting song with soft graceful rhythm which lingers

in the mind for a long time after the song (96).

Hanv Saiba paltadi voitam,  
 Damuchea lognaku voitam  
 Maka Saiba vattu Dakoi,  
 Maka Saiba vattu kolona  
 Ghe,ghe,ghe,ghe,ghe,ghe,ga Saiba  
 .....

(Oh boatman take me across. I have a performance at Damu's wedding. Show me the way , as I do'nt know to go about).

The song runs over several couplets and each time the girl seeks to bribe the boatman for priority-crossing. She is in hurry and would not mind giving him all ornaments, the nathi, Ghungroo, earrings and all she wears. The song is noted for its soft tone depicting the feminine grace of a dancer and sets people into nostalgia of early days of peaceful life in this land. Dekhni rightfully starts with faster beats and culminates with an ascending structure. Although probably the original song involved one girl and the boatman, presently, the main character is accompanied by a group dressed alike in Devdasi style for the impact of stage performance. The description of the girl in the song reveals the type of dress, ornaments and flowers, the typical devdasi puts in her hair(97).



Notably the form is popular only among Christians though the culture it depicts is Hindu, for obvious reasons. The song is set to a western tune to the accompaniment of folk drum "Ghumot" . The form reflects peace, communal harmony and secular life of this land.

i) JAGAR:

This folk drama form is supposed to be the precursor of the modern Marathi theatre in Goa. There are two forms of Jagar. One form has been the exclusive prerogative of the Pernni community while the other has been popular among the Christian Gawdas. The theme of the Pernni Jagar traverses beyond the realm of mythology and tackles philosophical subjects like the origin of the universe. The Christian-Gawda Jagar derives themes from the contemporary village life.

j) MUSSAL KHEL:

Mussal means a pestle, primarily used by the women folk to pound rice, Khel is dance or play. So ,Mussal Khel (Dance) is a vigorous march cum dance with a very old tradition behind it. From the date as available today from the oldest residents of Chandor town, which as Chandrapur, was the capital city of Kadamba rulers of Goa, Mussal dance(Khel)

seems to be a victory dance. The dance in Hindu days of Chandorians was performed during Sigmo season on the full moon day. The Kshatriyas of Chandor were converted to Christianity, yet the dance is performed on the second day of the Intruz or Carnival. Mussal dance is more of a ritual aimed at drawing away the evil by invoking the Gods- a dance based on the story of the legendary prowess of the ancient Kshatriyas, a story that must have been dramatically exhibited in 'Sabhamandapa' of the royal temple of Lord Chandraswar at Cotta. This city, in ruins today, is a living proof of the glamour and glory it had in the past.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

It is commonly believed that the Mussal dance serves to commemorate the victory of King Hariharan I, son of Buka I of the Vijayanagar Kingdom, over the Cholas at the ancient gate of the fort of Chandrapura in 1310 A.D. This may be simply a historical conjecture, but the local legend says that a Chola general was taken captive and incarcerated in Cotta. The captive bear ( the bear being the emblem of the Cholas) in the Mussal dance represents this Chola general. Besides this, another feature that lends weight to this belief is the fact that, although the Vijayanagar Kings were sun worshippers,

King Hariharan I claimed descent from the Lunar Race , a race perpetually engaged in war. Therein it would seem logical that the significance of the dance being held on the full moon night and the allusions to Chandrapura, Chandrawadi and Chandranath.

However, appealing this theory may sound, it cannot be maintained without inviting serious objections. For instance the recent excavations carried out in unearthing the ancient temple complex and the ceramic evidence obtained from trial pits elsewhere have confirmed that the Satsvahanas were in occupation of Chandrapura in the 2nd - 3rd century A.D. They have also corroborated the evidence found in the Shivoda Copper plate, the grant of the Bhoja King Devaraya about the occupation of this ancient city. There is nothing to suggest that Chandrapura was known by any other name either earlier than the occupation of Satvahanas (2nd -3rd century A.D) during or after the occupation of the Bhojas in the 3rd-4th century A.D. Besides, Chandrapura was founded by the Choliakya prince Bhandrattitipa, the son of Peelakeshin II. The type of the confusion referred to above is typical of Indian records which often mix legend and myths and then regard them as historical facts merely because of the resemblance. It is

certain from the above explanations that Mussal dance must have been in practice from the early centuries. However, the exact date can't be spelled out. Any folk art which is ritualistic takes a long period to take its definite shape. So, Mussal dance also must have taken years to be a fully developed art-form. It is certain that by the time of the coming of the Portuguese, Mussal dance must have been a fully developed art-form in practice among the warrior clan of Chandor. When the people of Chandor were converted to Christianity they kept up their tradition of dancing the same way with some adaptations to the new religion.

#### TRADITIONS OF MUSSAL KHEL AND ITS DEVELOPMENTS:

It is very interesting to note that this art-form though practiced by the Christians of Chandor still has the significance and aura of Hindu mythology and the religious practices incorporated into it. Besides the historical occurrences especially the defeat of the Cholas at the hands of Harihar I, and the conversion of these people to Christianity whose influences are clearly seen as one witnesses the Mussal dance both in its mode of performance and theme. Mussal dance is also a imagery of the warrior nature (Kshatriya) of these people.

All in all the Mussal dance is a war dance- a ritual

dance of a martial race or caste- as opposed to an agricultural dance or harvest dance as some erroneously have believed it to be. It is true, the employment of the 'Mussal' and the imagery of the composition of the couplets in general engender in the mind a pernicious comparison with the external actions by which they are expressed. But this is too simplistic an interpretation, although it is quite legitimate to presume that agricultural pursuits and other occupations found a place in the hymnody of the 'Mussal dance'.

SIGNIFICANT RELEVANCE TO THE HINDU MYTHOLOGY:

The esoteric significance relevant to the Hindu mythology can be found in the expression of the Invocation to Lord Shiva asking for His blessings and the gifts of 'Satshe guna' ( i.e.66 virtues) -

OM Ishvara, Ishvara Holi-varah OM,

Satsheguna , Gaja-Gouri OM; and of the Incantation-

Oh Simha ,Oh Vira voss(u) re gnara,

Satxim ganna Hariharac-oh

gives us an unmistakable clue why the 'Mussal' , otherwise an instrument (i.e.pestle) primarily used by women folk for pounding rice, is used by menfolk in a martial dance. The symbolism of the 'Mussal' becomes too obvious and, therefore,

needs no detailed interpretation.

The invocation is Mantric and who can imagine the Lord being invoked for 'Satsheguna' in a agricultural pursuit? Furthermore, the wording of the Incantation almost spells a magical or tantric assurance and is, undoubtedly, an hyberbolic expression of Varna Dharma usually alluded to the Kshatriyas. What would be the meaning and purpose of ' Satxim ganna' (i.e.seven hundred clans or legions) accompanying (that is being with and for) Harihar in a agricultural pursuit or festivity, particularly when there is the suggestion of strength and valour (i.e.Oh Simha, Oh Vira) as well as an oblique assurance of victory ? There is yet another significant clue, though not very persuasive, in the wording of and the imagery it evokes in the couplet-

Edi, edi sankxi sambrachi,

Tintum assa Saibini bangrachi .

This is undoubtedly an allusion to ' devkaj-sanskar' ceremony- a ritual of Kshatriyas and Brahmins - in which the child after the 'upanaiyana'ceremony is shown the 'Kula-devata' (family deity) or the 'graha-devata' (patron deity of the house). To the ancient Chandrapurians the 'Saibini' was none other than the Lord Shiva's consort , Parvati ,locally known

as Xanta Durga, which after Christianisation came to be associated with Our Lady of Piety.

However, the strongest mythological and religious evidence lies in the verses about 'Rumbodd' (Ficus glomerata in Latin, Umbar in Marathi). These verses interpreted for their mythological and esoteric significance give an intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought which in their combination and interpretation create a contemporary relevance. 'Rumbodd' is the mythological abode of Trimurti and women to get a male child would give a thousand turns around this tree. Which woman than a Kshatriya woman, always plagued as she was with death of either her husband or her son, would placate the deity for a male child? One is almost tempted to employ a certain arbitrary discretion in the treatment of 'Rumbodd' theme and arrive at the inevitable conclusion that the feminine monster Dhunda who cause illness to children on the Full moon day in the month of Phalguna must be appeased by a ritual round the 'Rumbodd' tree. Must not the male children of a Kshatriya woman be saved from evil spells? Extending this kind of treatment of interpretation even further, the Kshatriya woman must necessarily go on a pilgrimage to a holy land or site (teerth) to prevent Brahmo

or Mungi - the ghost of a Brahmin who died during the ceremony of 'upanaiya' and who is believed to reside in the 'Rumbodd' tree - from intimidating the children, particularly the sick ones and more so the male children. It will not be a mere conjectural exercise to say that Dharmatari -a ferry landing on Kushawati River at Cotta about 250 metres away from the temple of Lord Chandraswar was extensively used by pilgrims during the Full moon night of Phalguna. Deeply rooted in the Hindu mythology the lyrics used in the Mussal Khel, the Choreographic patterns and the practice of this art-form itself spells out the historical accounts of Chandor and the influence of the new religion , Christianity.

#### MODE OF PERFORMANCE:

The dance was originally, i.e. upto the time of conversion to Christianity, held on the full moon night in the month of Phalguna to placate Lord Chandraswar . Since Christianisation it is held during the same month more or less but on the second night of the (western) Carnival (i.e. significantly on Monday). The noteworthy fact is that the Chandorians have carried on with this traditional dance despite conversion and without fear of the Inquisition by adopting the politic course of substituting respectively for the Hindu deities and mantras



the Christian saint, St. James the Apostle, and a short Christian prayer (for the invocation). The preparation for the dance commence on the first day of the Carnival (i.e. Sunday). One of the most senior gaunkrs (i.e Kshatriya) is eligible to become the captor of the bear. Dressed in ancient native costume consisting of a dhoti over which a white shirt-like garment is worn, a jacket and a turban and 'ghungroo' on the left foot, he carries a rope in his hand and a 'ghumot' is slung down from his neck. Another 'gaunkar' (i.e. another Kshatriya and not a member of any other caste, is chosen in reference to the captive general's rank) dressed in a ragged blanket, his face covered in mask of a bear, a rope tied round his waist the end of which is held in the hands of the captor, and carrying a branch of a mango tree (or 'Rumbodd' tree) is taken prisoner by the captor and exhibited to the Kshatriya households in the Fort area (Cotta). At six O'Clock in the morning both the captor and the captive bear proceed to the main gate of the fort near St. James' Chapel (i.e. the site of the ancient temple of Lord Mahadeva later known as the temple of Lord Shiva or simply the temple of Gram-devata to whom there is a reference in one of the verses of the song). From the gate they come, the captor beating the 'ghumot' and the bear growling, to signify total submission. Then they go

along from house to house of every gaunkar, care being taken to arrive last at the house of the captor where he and the captive bear change into their usual dress. The purpose of this ritual is to announce the Mussal dance on the following day and to remind the gaunkars that all must participate in it.

On the second day of the Carnival at about ten O'clock in the night all gaunkars assemble at the Sabhamandapa of the temple of Lord Chandraswar. Here it is necessary to mention that after the temple was destroyed and when Christianity was established, a shrine, commonly known as Devllantoicho Khuris, was erected in the proximity of the ruins and that site was used for nearly four centuries as the Mandd. About seventy years ago this shrine was moved a little distance away from the ruins and presently this serves as the Mandd. In the past, after the officiating priest (the Gurav) had recited the invocation (perhaps preceded or followed by other religious ceremonies), the Gaunkars dance before the distinguished presence of their King or his royal representative in the Sabhamandapa of the temple. As the Sabhamandapa (assembly hall), measuring 7.00 by 12.50 metres, was divided into three bays, and although the central bay was wider than the side bays, the dancers movements were likely to be encumbered and so we hazard the guess that

the dance was most likely performed in the porch or the 'Mukhamandapa' which had two side openings as well as a central one but all leading to the 'Sabhamandapa'. In modern times a short Christian prayer is said and the dance begins. When they have finished dancing at the 'Mandd' the procession led by torch-bearers and attendants proceed to the chapel of St. James near the main gate of the fort. There the officiating priest (i.e. the Gurav of that temple) recited the Invocation (now a simple Christian prayer is said) and the dancers perform the dance. Then they go from house to house to every gaunkar and when the last house has been visited they return to the 'Mandd' and disband.

At every house the lady of the house must welcome the dancers by bringing out a lamp. If no lamp is shown a call is given singing the following verses:

(name of the husband or householder)

- che ghorcani, ghorcani bai gue  
Benddac(o) chavi lai gue-oh  
Benddac(o) chavi lai gue  
Bhailean(u) fell, fell(u) eila gue,  
Bhailean(u) divo add (i) gue-oh  
Bhailean(u) divo add(i) gue

If the dancing troupe knows that the head of the family is not participating, the following is sung almost as a challenge:

(name) -ache baile gue, (name) fuim guela

(name) -aca sodunc ami eilaum -oh

(name) -aca sodunc ami eilaum .

This same verse is also sung if it is known that the head of the family is out of station to which is added:

(name) guela godda bazarac,

Godda bazari, ghor-sounsar -oh

Godda bazaru, ghor-sounsar.

Not only that, if during the year, i.e. between one Carnival and another, should there be a new daughter-in-law in the house, and even though her husband may be participating in the dance, the first verse-(name) ache baile gue (name) fuim guela.....' is sung as an initiatory act and as a sign of welcome to the young bride. On the other hand should there be a death in the house during the year it is customary to say a short prayer for the repose of the soul of the departed. It is not known if there was any special ritual performed in the pre-Christian days on such an event occurring. After this the 'Mussal' is beaten into the 'Barik Rounnem' at the sound of

Oh, oh,oh,...oh and the singing of cymbals and the beating of ghumots and madollim.

At this point it is well to remember that the temples of the ancient city of Chandrapura had no Brahmin priests, the religious ministers being invariably Kshatriya Guravas. (The last of the generation of one of the most prominent Gurav families of the ancient days is Shri Josefato Antao of Molla, Cavorim). Although there existed a Brahmin ward in the vicinity of the temple of Chandraswar known as Kamatvaddo (Kamtivaddo today) these brahmins, Mahamae Kamat and Kamat as the names suggest, were mostly engaged in agricultural pursuits and other occupations pertaining to the administrative and clerical work etc.

On the third day of the Carnival at about ten O'clock in the morning one of the Gaunkars, dressed in the native costume and carrying a ghumot, and accompanied by a peasant woman who carries a basket of coddung on her head, a pot of water on her hips and a broom in her hands, takes the same route of the previous night and sees that the 'Barik Rounner' (i.e the central spot where the Mussal was beaten hard into the ground during the dance) is levelled with coddung to signify that peace has returned and to reassure prosperity and well-being

of the city's inhabitants. A token is given to the sweeper woman and another one to the gaunkar as the household's contribution to the 'Mandd's fund. This fund serves to meet the incidental expenses of the dance which includes a short religious ritual in the Garbagriha of the temple of Lord Chandraswar (presently a litany is sung at the shrine of Devllantoicho Khuris).

Originally all male inhabitants of the Fort City(Cotta) belonging to castes other than that of Kshatriyas were duty bound to take part in the dance procession as torch-bearers and attendants. In modern times this practice has ceased. However, only the Kshatriya males, as gaunkars , had as they still have, the privilege to sing and dance. In course of time this privilege was extended to the subsequent Kshatriya settlers, known as Moradores. Nothing is known of the participation of the early Brahmin inhabitants in one form or another in the Mussal dance. Presently there are no Brahmin households in Cotta.

The Mussal dance is also performed on the third night of the Carnival at Cavorim , another component village of Chandor in the immediate vicinity of the fort area (Cotta). A somewhat different significance is attached to it and another pattern

of dancing though not completely dissimilar, is followed. The tune and the wording of the song, though again showing similarity, is suggestive of a later innovation and imitation of the Chandor-Cotta form. The Cavorim form follows one basic step movement and is boringly monotonous although presently certain variations have been copied from the Cotta form. There is also the opinion that the Cavorim form is an 'off-shoot' of the original common dance form, when 'the old city of Chandrapura extended down to the foot of the hills, about two miles from the opposite side' . It is a subject worth investigating in depth because it may throw light on the controversy that Cavorim (in Konkani meaning a gate) despite suggesting itself strongly in favour of an extended city and forming 'part of the outer petta of Chandrapura was an independent fort and unconnected with the Kadamba rajdhani'.

#### COSTUME:

The attire, the instruments and the torches blend nicely to make the dance really vivacious. The attire of the torch-bearers is a simple dhoti with a short tunic and a turban all worn in true peasant style. The attire of the dancers and musicians and singers consists of a dhoti worn in a trouser-like style( N.B. Some insist and with good reason that the

lower garment was a narrow salwar typical of the warrior class), a long short-sleeved, collarless shirt-like tunic over which is worn a jacket somewhat resembling the Multani jacket. The head is covered with a tight turban. The left foot is adorned with 'ghungroos' (tiny ringing bells), the left arm with a broad metal band and the right ear with a broad earring. Round the waist there is a sash tied with the knot on the left side. The neck is adorned with a thick necklace which carries a medal with the emblem of either the Gram-devata , Cula devata or the Graha-devata and tilak of the Shivaite cult on the forehead ( a simple dot is used on the forehead of the torch-bearers). Different colours are used, but after the Christianisation the dress became monotonously uniform- a turban, short black jacket of western style over a long white shirt, and either a pair of white long trousers (in support of the 'Salwar' theory) or a white 'dhoti' and ghungroos on the feet. The Gurav's dress is a long white dhoti with the sacred thread across the torso, tilak on the forehead etc. and other paraphernalia used in the performance of Temple rites.

The Mussal is made of solid bamboo of about 6-7 feet length with inserted hawk's bells and is carried only by the dancers. The torches used were made of coconuts, sliced midway



longitudinally, dried like copra and treated with a mixture of mud and cowdung. These are held upright on a spike at the end of a long bamboo stick. A wick is inserted which burns in the fuel that oozes out of the dried kernel. Besides these, wax torches also must have been used in the olden days. Nowadays the petromax has replaced these awe inspiring torches and there is hardly a procession of any length.

#### TECHNIQUE AND TRAINING:

Mussal dance has a well-defined code of technique and definite steps used for the dance. The dance steps are basically a one-step and a three-step movements, but a combination of one-step, two-step and three-step movements, each in clockwise and anticlockwise turns, can be danced. The dancers as they arrive marching form a circle wide enough depending on the number of dancers, but never greater than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet and not less than 3 feet in radius. Dancers in excess of nine participants in the ring becomes unwieldy. One of the dancers is the leader who directs the change of steps and turns. After forming the circle the dancers beat the Mussal in the centre, called the 'Barik Rounnem', at the cry of 'Oh, oh, oh.. oh ! and take their position along the ring with both feet together (i.e. heels touching and feet spread outwards).

The Mussal is held in the right hand at shoulder height and in the left hand at belly height and positioned between the feet.

The dancers move the left foot forward towards the 'Barik Rounnem' and lift the Mussal at an angle above the heads without changing the position of the hands and beat it vigorously in the centre (i.e. Barik Rounnem) on the single beat of ghumots, cymbals and madollim (mridang), at the same time raise the head up as an expression of achievement. Then quickly move the right foot sideways to the right along the ring, then bring together the left foot with the right foot simultaneously lifting the Mussal and beating it lightly on the second single beat of the instruments between the feet. These basic steps are danced for one-two-three rounds in an anti-clockwise direction when the leader gives the signal to reverse the direction by saying 'Vira' , very quickly the Mussal holding position is changed by shifting the position of the hands. The left hand goes to shoulder height and the right hand to the belly height. The same steps are done in a clockwise direction for another one-two-three rounds and then back again to anti-clockwise position. As soon as the anti-clockwise position is taken the beat changes to 2 double short beats and one long beat and also the steps. The holding

of the Mussal is again changed by shifting the position of the hands. In this position two half turns are done by each dancer along the ring with the Mussal being beaten skillfully between the feet at each half turn on the double short beat and on completion of the full turn (i.e. two half turns) ( the dancer now facing the <sup>B</sup>arik Rounnem) in the Barik Rounnem on the third long single beat. The half turns are made in an anti-clockwise direction and on the toes of the right foot, sliding forward gradually until a round is completed. Then signal is given ('Vira') to do the half turns in a clockwise direction, very quickly the position of hand on the Mussal change. Half turns are now made in a clockwise direction on the toes of the left foot gradually sliding forward until a round is completed. Then signal is given for the slow tempo on the single beat time in order to give breathing time to the dancers. After a round, signal is again given for the 'twirl' - the most enchanting part of the dance. On the call every alternate dancer to the right of the leader leaves the Barik Rounnem and together they form an outer ring wide enough so as to hamper the movements of the dancers in the inner ring. While the inner ring dancers dance in half turns as described above the outer ring dancers keep the same tempo but do three straight steps along the outer ring beating the Mussal on the beats as indicated above.

While the inner ring dancers do anti-clockwise half turns the outer ring dancers do the three single steps along the ring in an anti-clockwise direction and vice versa. On the signal 'Sa-Porot' all dancers come into the inner ring to their original places and at the cry of 'Oh..oh..oh..oh' and the rattling sound of the instruments the dance comes to a close.

The whole choreography consists of the tempo of the dance beginning with ordinary time beat progressively rising to an expression of fury as the singers with the percussion support of ghumots, madollim (mridangs) and cymbals increase the pace to an almost giddy accomplishment of a collective virtuosity.

#### MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND MUSIC:

The musical instruments used are: percussion instruments, namely a pair of ghumots, a pair of madollim (mridangas) and several pairs of cymbals (i.e. Kansalli and Zang). The ghumots and madollim should be correctly tuned, the latter being tuned to a pitch about one octave higher than the former to give out the distinctive characteristic timbre of these two instruments. The musical pattern of the song is a melody, somewhat monotonous, but under the influence of the Western music the song is now in two voices (first and second voices).

### CHOREOGRAPHIC PATTERNS:

The choreographic patterns in 'Mussal Khel' are based on two factors, the vigorous march dance and the beating of 'Barik Rounnem'. The basic principles followed in the choreography consists of two lines and the circle patterns. While the former is found in the march, the latter at the beating of the 'Barik Rounnem'

#### a) The March Dance in Two Lines:

The march dance has a martial beat and has mainly three different choreographic patterns.

##### i) Clockwise and anti-clockwise in full turns:

Here the dancers on the line to the right move in clockwise movement in full turns. The dancers on the left flank move in the anti-clockwise in full turns in the given basic line.

##### ii) Serpentine Pattern:

Here the dancers on both flanks move forward in serpentine movements, done in half turn to the left and half to the right. From a distance it looks as if two snakes are crawling forward. This also shows the martial nature of the dance, how stealthily the soldiers move forward.

##### iii) Dance in the Straight Lines:

This is done in a very simple straight forward movement from

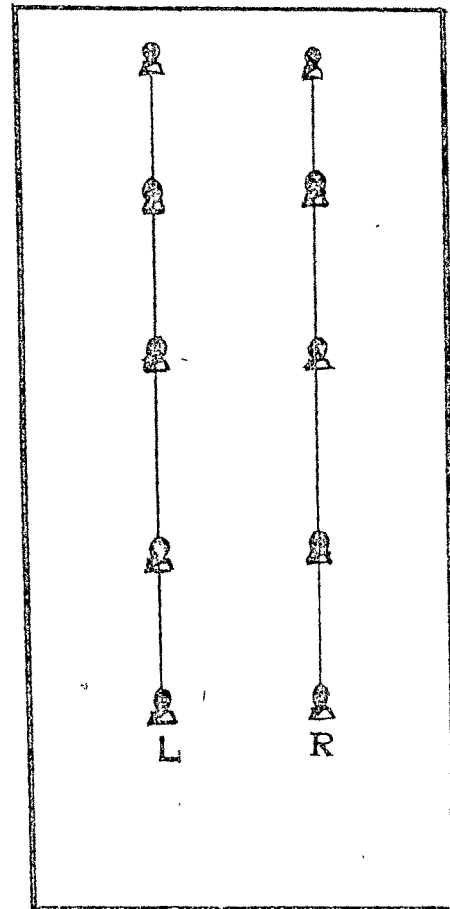
# MUSSAL KHEL (DANCE)

Different choreographic patterns.

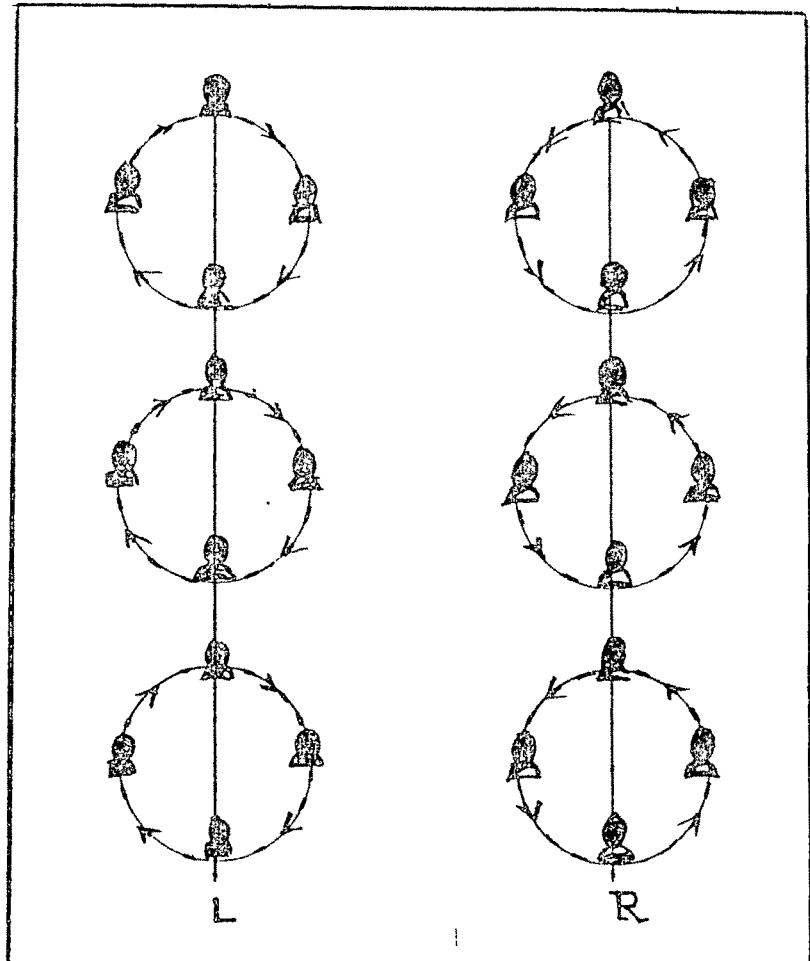
(a) March dance (Mussalkhel) in two line pattern


(i) Basic two line pattern

- Basic line
- ♂ Dancer
- L Left
- R Right




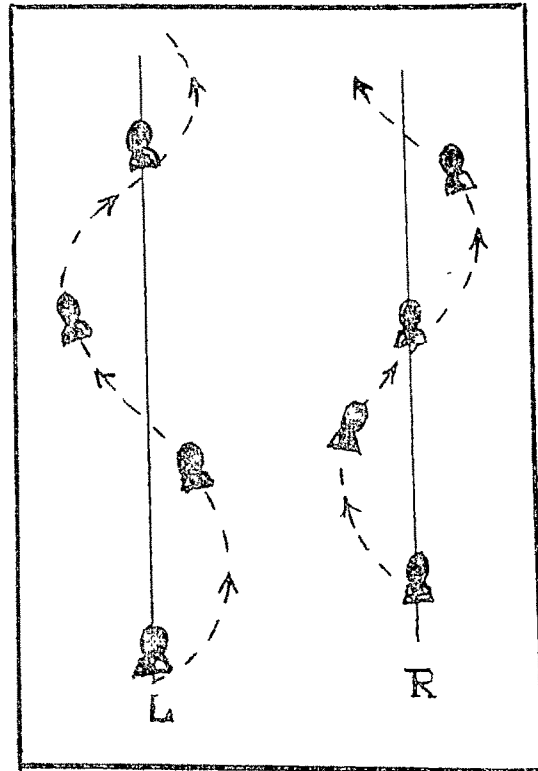
## (ii) clockwise and anticlockwise movements in full turns (circle)




- Basic line
-  Dancer
- > Anticlockwise movement
- <--- Clockwise movement
- L Left
- R Right

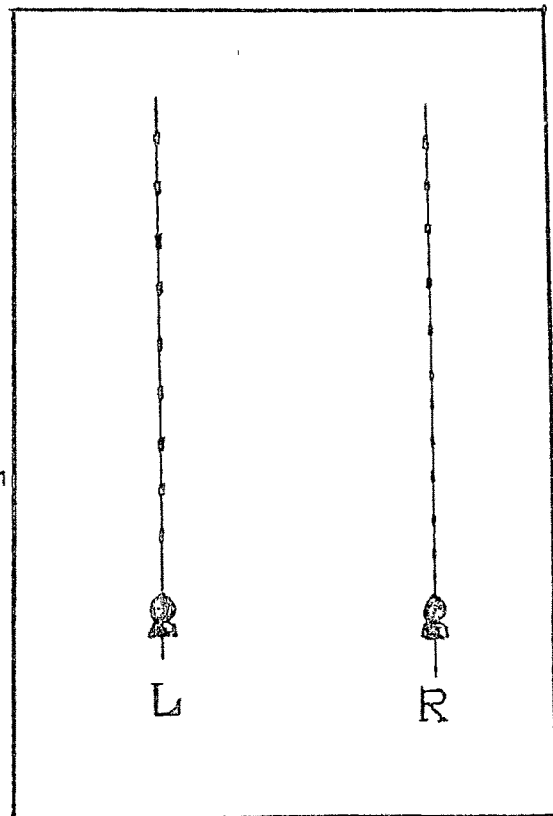
# Serpentine Pattern

-  Dancer
- Basic line
- > Serpentine movement
- L Left
- R Right



## Dance in the Parallel lines

- L lift side
- R Right side
- Basic line
- Movements of the dancer
-  Dancer





both the sides. The starting step everywhere is always the left foot except that in the first choreographic pattern where the left side dancers are completing the full turn starting with the left foot, the right side dancers do the same starting with the right foot in order to keep movements clockwise and anti-clockwise respectively.

b) Choreography in the Circle Pattern

The choreography centred around the circle pattern is another important feature of the dance. Here the dancers moving in different ways beat on the central spot of the circle (Barik Rounnem) with the Mussal (Pestle).

i) Single Circle Pattern around the 'Barik Rounnem'

Here the dancers move towards the 'Barik Rounnem' in one step or three steps combination and beat the Mussal on the 'Barik Rounnem' on the first beat or on the third beat. The dance is performed in clockwise and anti-clockwise fashion.

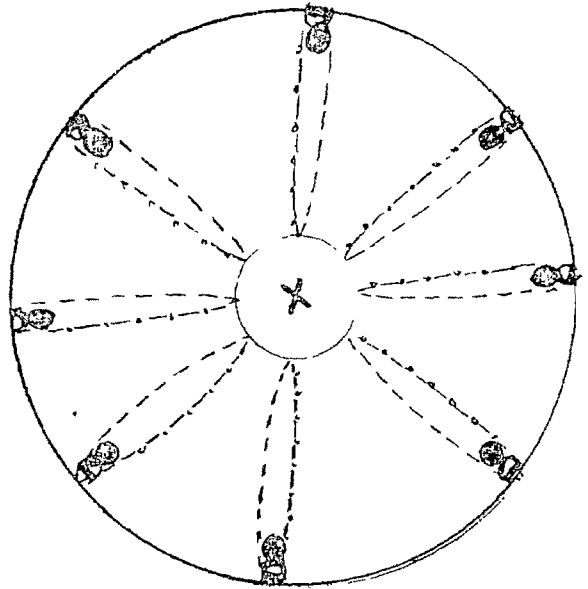
ii) Two Circle Pattern around the Barik Rounnem :

With the signal of the leader every alternate dancer to his right moves and another outer circle to the 'Barik Rounnem' is formed. While the dancers on the inner circle strike on the Barik Rounnem, the outer circle dancers strike with the Mussal

## 6. CHOREOGRAPHY IN THE CIRCLE PATTERN

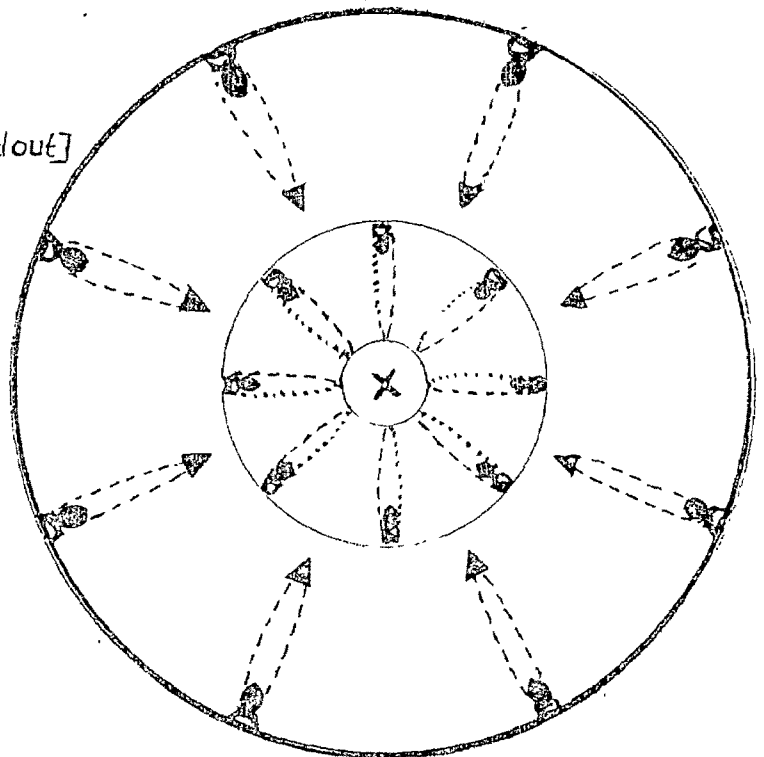
### (i) Single circle pattern around the Barik Rounnem

- Basic circle
- ⊗ Dancer
- ⊗ Barik Rounnem
- Movement of the dancer  
towards Barik Rounnem
- Movement of the dancer  
facing barik rounnem to  
the original place

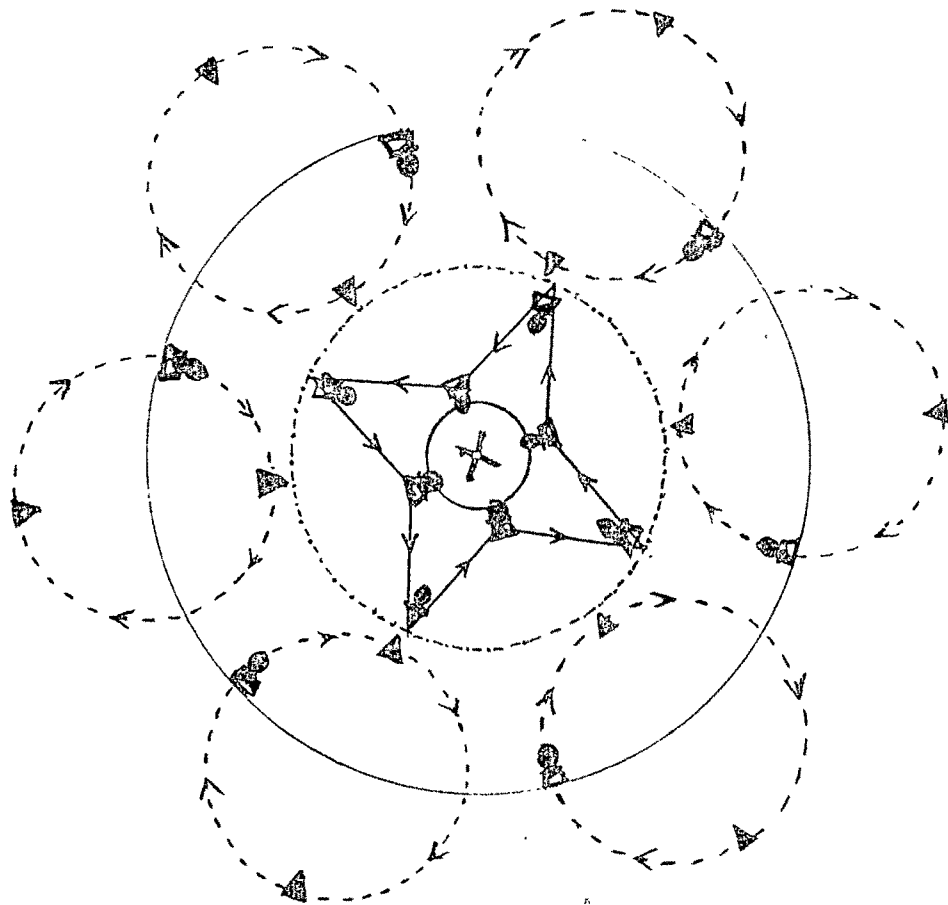


### ii Two circle pattern around the Barik Rounnem

- Basic circles [in and out]
- ⊗ Barik Rounnem
- ▲ Mussal striking spot of the outer circle dancers
- Movements of the dancers in both circles

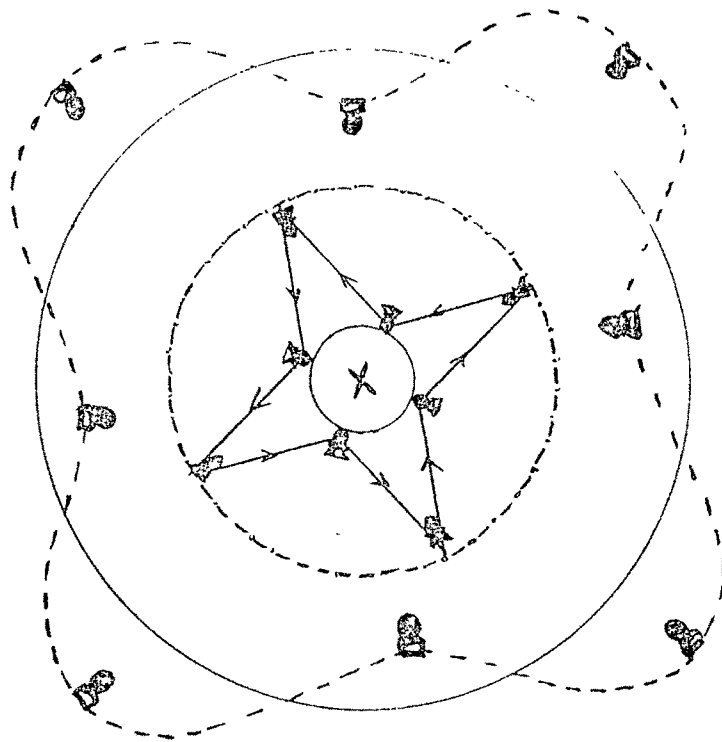


Individual circle pattern by the dancers of the outer circle while the inner circle dancers move in a zigzag pattern



- ▲ dancer
- outer circle
- - - - inner circle
- z zigzag pattern by the inner circle dancers
- ▲ mussal striking spot of the outer circle dancers
- ⊗ Barik Rounnem
- ⊙ individual pattern by outer circle dancers on the outer circle.

Serpentine movement by the outer circle dancers where as the inner circle dancers keep to the same zigzag pattern



- Movements of the dancer on the outer circle
- Movements of the inner circle dancers
- ⊗ Barik Rounnem
- Basic outer circle
- Basic inner circle
- ♂ dancers

to the inner or inner and outer side simultaneously in the making of an individual circle formation or serpentine formation. The dancers on the inner circle strike only on the 'Barik Rounnem'.

#### SONGS OF MUSSAL DANCE

Who, and when the couplets were composed is not known. Most probably they were composed during the early days of the settlement of the ancient city and have progressively suffered accretions, corruptions and changes in the language employed and perhaps even in the form of performance of the dance. The verses must have changed now and then and the names of the new rulers must have been substituted to suit the need and circumstances of the times. For example, note the following verses for changes and linguistic corruptions:

- a) Goiant (u) eilo Sankapari,<sup>(1)</sup>  
Ani cati(i) caddli amchi Turushani.<sup>(2)</sup>
- b) Goin-san Kamdev<sup>(3)</sup> ieta dekh tamasha,  
Are ,Goiam-san Kamdev ieta dekh tamasha.
- c) Goiam-san firngi ieta dekh tomasa,<sup>(4)</sup>  
Are, Goiam-san firngi ieta dekh tomasa.

d) Firngeanchea matear chepem assa re,  
Firngeanchea matear chepem assa ,(5)

e) Jila Jila kanknnam choi vallara  
Jila Jila kanknnam choi vallara (6)

Notes: (1) Sankapari or Sankapariya is a well-known corruption of Shah Ganga of the Bahamni Dynasty.

(2) Turushani is a reference to the Turks i.e. Muslims, who plundered Chandor in 1327 A.D. Attempts by some to link Sankapari to Sankya Sahani , the Hoysala General, would result in making Turushani out of context, but historically Hoysalas are definitely out of place. (3) Kamdev or Kamdeva (1260-1322 A.D.) is one of the last Kadamba kings . He built the Fort (Cotta) at Chandor and once again made Chandrapura the capital of Goa after abandoning Goapuri (Goa Velha).

(4) Note the successive changes and substitution from Sankapari Kamdev to Firngi . Also the corruption from tamasha to tomasa

(5) This is a typical accretion.

(6) This verse more than any other verse has suffered corruption, change and substitution with the result it is difficult to know which is the correct version. The following are some of the known versions:

- i) Jila,jila (also jili,jili) kaknnam choi vallara
- ii) Jilam jila konkan soi vallara
- iii) Jilam jila kanknnam sor bhanddara.

What this verse means is difficult to say and though some suggest that 'jila' is nearly an onomatopoeic word, others reminds that 'Jila' in some parts of Goa, notably Pernem, stands for son.

Despite these changes and corruptions, it would seem a few couplets worded in an esoteric expression have remained unaffected by the vicissitudes of times. The first is the Invocation to Lord Shiva, except that the mystical and sacred word Om is invariably (through ignorance and as a consequence of Christianisation perhaps) pronounced as 'O' in the first line and as 'Oho' in the second line. The existence of this Invocation is known only to a few , mainly because it stands substituted by a Christian prayer, such as the Lord's Prayer. The other couplet that has apparently remained unchanged is the Incantation, although some ignoramuses sing it 'Osima ovio' (sometimes 'Ovia') osregana, Satsegana teliaballa-Oh, Satusegana teliaballe '. But the correct version is known and reads as follows:

Oh Simha ,Oh Vira voss(u) re ghara,

Satxim ganna hariharac-oh .

The English rendering of this couplet would read: O Lion,  
O valiant, go unruffled for seven hundred clans or legions  
are with you and for you O Harihara.

These songs of Mussal dance are a perfect combination  
of Hindu mythology (Shiva and Santa Durga etc) history of  
Chandor or Chandrapura (reference to Harihara, Kamdeva  
Turks etc) and Christianity (Santiagsaibacho, Devllantoicho  
Khuris etc.)(28)

#### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:

Mussal dance is slowly on its way out which means , in  
fact the formal training has long ceased to exist. In earlier  
days, even 50 years ago- when the 'Mandd' was a respectable  
and strong institution there was compulsory attendance for  
males over 12 years of age at rehearsals held a few weeks  
before the festival. There must have been a master to impart  
the required training. One of the aspects of present state of  
degeneration is the lack of training.

All that can be said of the influence of Christianity on  
this art-form is mostly negative. The aspects of these two



religions both at ritualistic base as well as philosophical approach to life were, at least in the early days and throughout the colonial era, antagonistic and therefore could not co-exist. The substitution of the Hindu Mantras and of the other religious ceremonies by Christian prayers or 'devotions' or the substitution of Harihara (Vishnu, Siva) by Santiago (St. James the Apostle) were employed by the missionaries and (though it served the neo-converts as a helpful camouflage for some generations) rendered the dance degenerate. Once the esoteric or mythic significance was lost people forgot why they were performing this dance. However, despite Royal orders and resolutions of Provincial councils imposing draconian measures against neo-Christians and Hindus with respect to their custom etc. it appears the Chandorians carried on with this ritual dance with a measure of solemnity and awareness of their Varna-dharma for at least a century if not more; but with the publication of the 'Edict of the Goa Inquisition' in 1736 prohibiting the 'natives' (i.e. Christianised Goans) to 'wear purvem (dhoti);.... or to hold banquets or any solemnity'.... on the days of the full moon'....or to use robanas, gaitas or any other Hindu musical instruments which the Hindus are accustomed to use in the solemnities of their temples', the Mussal dance was surely on the decline, if not facing

extinction. The only redeeming feature of the Edict would appear to be the provision that 'the Christians may use Hindu apparel only in the dance which it is the custom to present on the day of the conversion of St. Paul, or in any other similar genuine representation' (cf. Voir voir maddick prikolam poiem, Santiagsaiban jikilam Goiem). This is undoubtedly an allusion to Christian victory).

It is not easy to draw a line of distinction between Christianity as represented by the Portuguese (missionaries included) and other Portuguese cultural influences. They were analogous for almost the four centuries of Portuguese rule. The apparent tolerance of it can only be attributed to the fact that the Portuguese regarded or tended to regard the Mussal dance as a burlesque representation of a Hindu custom—an attitude that probably explains why this dance has been held during Carnival. The only positive aspect of this influence would seem to be on the music of the dance. The whole song is now sung in two voices (1st & 2nd).

However, the clergy has never participated in the Mussal dance. At this juncture, we wonder how Mussal dance is still found in Chandor, though in a dying stage, at the present time. Were it not for the strong belief that some calamity always

befalls the family which has not sent a participant to the dance, or that the whole of Cotta, particularly the families of gaunkars, might be the scene of a horrifying visitation if the dance is not performed at all, the Mussal dance would have long become extinct! This belief is neatly woven in the following curse said to have been uttered by the bereaved widower and aggrieved Kadambas princesses:

Kadambo !

Chandra gaum padd zaum,

Varil'lim vanzddin zaum

Addil'lim randd zaum.

The English version of this may be rendered as: Kadambas beware! May the city of Chandrapura ruinate, may the woman who leave the city be barren and those that come into the city be widowed. There is another version which slightly differs from the above:

Kadambo !

Chandra gaum padd zaum

Voril' leanc borem zaum

Addil' leanc randdpoun fevo zaum

Kadambas beware ! May the kingdom of Chandrapura ruinate, may women who leave the city prosper, may those who come to the city be widowed.

Already the ancient village organisation called 'Mandd' in Goa is no more and its funds are extinct mostly due to migration and other influences of the modern society. Belief in legends and respect for traditions are fast dying out, particularly among the young generations, who very often fail to grasp the ethos of their community or do not comprehend the values attached to it. This apathy partly explains why the Mussal dance and the hymnody have not found new accretions or changes ever since the arrival of the Portuguese in Goa. The liberation of Goa has had no influence on the 'Mussal' theme. It is in fact in the process of dying out completely. Unless State institutions and Church take adequate measures for the preservation and revitalisation of this ancient heritage, Mussal dance will soon become a forgotten thing of Chandrapura's hoary past.

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