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# FOLK MUSIC OF GOA BEFORE AND DURING THE PORTUGUESE REGIME \*

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## SYNOPSIS

**T**he origins of Goan folk music can be traced back to times immemorial. Goan folk music has largely been based on Goan folklore. The Goan language — Konkani — has an inherent musical tone. Prior to the arrival of the missionaries Goan folk music was composed in accordance with the laws of Hindustani music. With the advent of the Missionaries in the 16th and 17th Centuries Western melodic and rhythmic structures made their appearance in Goan folk music.

The evolution of Goan folk music can be seen in the development of the following:

- I Folk Music in the Paddy Fields
- II Folk Music in the Courtyard
- III Folk Music in the Living Room (Sal)
- IV Folk Music on the stage
- V Folklore Development in ART MUSIC
  - (1) Secular Art Music: the Mando
  - (2) Religious Art Music
  - (3) Dance Art Music

A close study of the lyrics of the folk songs show its intellectual basis hidden in simple words. Analysis of the rhythmic and melodic structures of Goan folk music reveals the use of simple, compound and seven beat rhythms as well as ornamental notes.

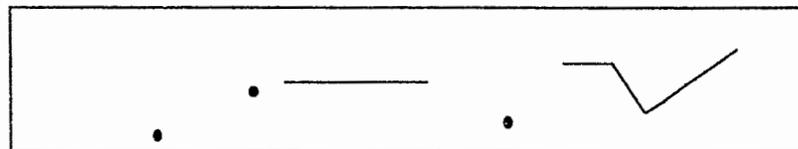
The **FOLK SONGS** of any country are a spontaneous expression of its people. They are usually preserved in oral form and passed on from generation to generation orally.

The **FOLK MUSIC** of Goans dates back to times immemorial.

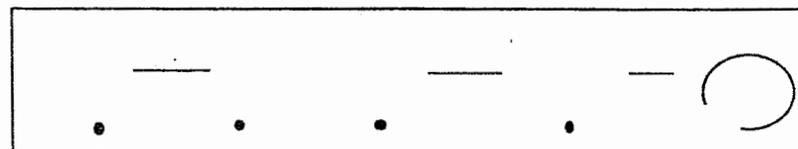
Music in its simplest form can be heard everyday in the announcements of certain vendors i.e. sellers, who even when not seen can be recognised by the individuality of their intonation. The phrases which they sing remain unchanged from day to day. These phrases have a folkloric motif and retain the music and rhythm of the local language.

The **FOLK TUNE** has a single line of notes and it is not very long or difficult to sing. We shall illustrate two such phrases sung by vendors of Acxi (Agasaim) village, with graphs, without musical notation to give a vague idea of the intonation and rhythm:

“BHAI TANTI (A) M JETA - I”



“GOR DUR CHI - RI - SAM JE TAI JEI”



It is interesting to note that the intonation and rhythm of the vendors differ in the various districts of Goa giving it the regional flavour of that particular district.

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The Goan language has an inherent musical quality rendering it easily to melody. Even today the colloquial Konkani language spoken in any district of Goa, is usually a sing song dialogue and to an outsider seems to be a musical conversation. This musical quality of Konkani language was very instrumental in enriching Goan Folk Music.

Before the introduction of Western music *FOLK MUSIC* had made sufficient progress following the centuries old Indian culture based on seven principal notes associated with the sounds of animals and birds. To meet the requirements of the higher pitches, they made use of major, minor and even chromatic intervals in the construction of the *RAGAS* thus the music was composed strictly in accordance with the laws of the music of Hindustan.

The *FOLK SONGS* of Goa which centuries ago was preserved only in its oral form from generation to generation evolved and developed in the fields of religious, secular, dance and dramatic Arts.

Illustration:

JITEM SUNGOT NACHOTA  
KONGREM ZATA  
KAILIM' GAILEARI SUNGOTT  
TAMBDDEM ZATA

This is one of the earliest songs in its simplest forms. It was sung in only 3 notes with a simple tune rendering it easy to sing and understand.

It means a prawn can dance and make merry as long as it is alive.

If it is fried on a pan it turns red. Hence it tells not to be overjoyed or complacent during happy times because bad days might also follow.

Thus the lyrics of that period consisted of witty sayings, stories with morals or based on some aspect of human behaviour or way of living.

### THE HISTORY OF GOAN MUSIC

Music among Goans has evolved through various periods of history. Hence it should be the object of special consideration.

It is quite interesting to note that music among the Catholics of Goa retains the traits of both the Indian secular music and Western music which was introduced by the Missionaries (of various religious orders) who came to Goa in the 16th and 17th centuries. The missionaries taking advantage of the amazing capacity of the Goan soul to absorb music and the musical quality of the Goan language introduced the Gregorian chant in the religious services. They also fostered the taste of western secular music. As the music evolved it remained loyal to the local tradition and at the same time was open to the new trends i.e. the "new motifs" of Western music both in its melodic and rhythmic structure.

The variety of Goan music as it evolved can be seen from the following:

#### I — FOLK MUSIC IN THE PADDY FIELDS

It was a great pleasure to hear the narration of stories interwoven with folk songs during the transplantation work in the paddy fields about 60 years ago.

Illustration of a song from D. Pedro Quadraon story,

GODDEAR BOISUN NOVRO AILO (The suitor arrived  
sitting on a horse

KUMVRIN TAKA BHAIRO KELO The princess  
rejected him)

The people working in the fields sang such songs and musical stories during sowing, transplantation and harvesting seasons.

They thus entertained themselves and worked with a happy frame of mind instead of getting bored with the repetitive work. Unfor-

Unfortunately such songs cannot be heard much nowadays due to migration of the traditional farm workers to other occupations and places.

## II — FOLK MUSIC IN THE COURTYARD

In the distant past, the folk music especially in Southern Goa (Salsette) developed very much in the performance of *FÊLL* or *KHELL* during the Carnival and Easter seasons.

The peasant classes or simple folks in the villages used to entertain themselves and others with *FÊLL*. A group of villagers would constitute a *FÊLL* performance group. They would invent an original story which would be acted out using dialogues, folk songs and dance. The accompanying instruments were the trumpet and drums.

*FÊLL* continues to be performed today, as earlier, on any of the open grounds of the village or in the villagers courtyards.

The lyrics of such folk songs were usually humorous or based on some topical subject or some aspect of social life.

Illustration of a humorous song based on 3 notes of scale,  
INCHEAN, TINCHEAN GELEARI  
CHANIOM ROT'TAI RUKARI,  
ANV ANI CAITAN DOGOI,  
CHEDVAM GELE KUMPARI

## III — FOLK MUSIC IN THE LIVING ROOM (SAL)

In some villages during the preparation for a forthcoming wedding a small group of women would gather in the *SAL* of the bride's or bridegroom's house and sing "*JOTI*" i.e. the traditional Goan wedding songs.

Illustrations of *JOTI* (wedding songs)

- I FUDDDEM, FUDDDEM UDKACHEO (In front are the  
 DODDI RE PHATLEAN water pots  
 PHATLEAN VOKLANCHEO VOLLIFollowed by the stream  
 HEA AMCHEA TANDDULLANK of future brides  
 BESANV DITA Heavenly Virgin Mary will come to  
 SORGINCHI SORGINCHI ANKVAR MORI bless the rice)
- II ROS(U) MURE TO KADDUN RE VIVA (The coconut juice  
 is extracted  
 GUNBA TUJEA PONDA And kept covered with Gullimb  
 OHA, OHA ROS(U) LAIAI TONDA, Come on let's put  
 the Ros,  
 HEA AMCHEA NOVREA BABACHEA On the face of our  
 bridegroom)

These *JOTI* (or pre-nuptial wedding songs) originated in ancient times. They are usually composed of blessings and prayers of God to bless the bride and bridegroom with many children and a long and happy married life. These *JOTI* are usually sung in the houses of both bride and bridegroom during a ceremony called *ROS* which is held on the day preceding the wedding. This *ROS* is a symbolic ceremony in which close relatives and friends apply coconut juice on the heads of the bride and bridegroom and pray to God to bless them with children and a long and happy married life. These *JOTIS* are also sung during the house work and other work connected with the wedding, when the bride has a bath and wears bangles etc and when she leaves the house.

Specimen of one *JOTI* in 7 beats rhythm which clearly shows that these pre-nuptial traditional wedding songs have their origins in our ancient hindu culture. After conversion the catholics still retained them after adapting them to their new religion. The various references to rice, coconut etc. in the *JOTIS* further proves this point.

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TOST(U) CHIMBU GHEUNUM VOKOL (Together with  
 NANIENT DENVTA SOKOL the bucket and tumbler,  
 AI LE, LE, LÈ LE, LE LE, LE The bridge is entering  
 NANNIENT DENVTA VOKOL the bathroom)

#### IV — MUSIC ON THE STAGE THE TIATR

The Tiatr is a drama form in Goa. In olden days, Goan plays or Tiatr used songs based on the folklore of Goa. Now-a-days Tiatr is commercialised and has almost lost the flavour of traditional Goan folksongs. Today the songs mostly imitate Western music rhythms and structures. This may be because the writers, dramatists and directors have been exposed to Western culture and education.

#### V — THE FOLKLORE DEVELOPMENT IN ART MUSIC

##### (1) SECULAR ART MUSIC: THE MANDO

The Mando is based on the folkloric "dulpod". The Mando evolved into the ART SONG during the latter 19th century. It was influenced by the composers of the Aristocratic class. The melodic structure of the Mando has a mixture of Western and Indian flavours. Till today it reflects the folklore of Goa.

##### (2) RELIGIOUS ART MUSIC

Religious art music consists of hymns and prayers which are sung during the Mass and other religious services. The music loving Goan people and the musical languages konkani had easily absorbed the Gregorian chant in the Mass and religious services from the missionaries. Yet the traditional Goan folkloric flavour was also retained.

Hence we can find today the religious music based on Gregorian chant, traditional Indian, Western music and a curious combination of these styles.

It is interesting to note that the Goan people can use different languages and their corresponding styles for their religious music — viz. Konkani, Portuguese, Latin and nowadays English. Special mention must also be made of the popular 'ladainha' (or litany) which is sung in different styles and is the most common religious ceremony for all occasions.

Illustration of religious music in the styles of Gregorian chant based on penta tonic scale or 5 notes.

PAPIYA RE NIRBHAGIA	(Oh unblessed sinner
TUM PAP NAM SANDXI	If you don't avoid sins,
SASNACHEA SASNANK PAPIA	You will burn in hell
EMKONDDANT ZOLXI	eternally)

### (3) DANCE ART MUSIC

Dance Music as an art was developed by band-masters and composers of dance music. These composers used Goan folklore motifs in their composition of the "Contradança de Honra", which was the original dance of the Aristocratic Goans. As time passed the composers combined the Goan folkloric motifs with the prevailing Western dance rhythms of the time e.g. One-step, Tango, etc.

### ANALYSIS OF THE LYRICS OF THE FOLK SONGS

The lyrics were usually humorous based on some topical subject or some aspect of social behaviour or human relationship. They were also religious or based on stories and witty sayings. A study of the lyrics showed the way of living and attitude of the people at that time.

The composers were earthly yet intelligent people as reflected in their songs. They tried to change social evils through their verse medium. There was an underlying intellectual basis in their simple looking songs. The songs showed a hidden meaning when studied closely.

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With the bare minimum of words in a strict poetic structure and a catchy tune the composers conveyed their ideas with great clarity through their folk songs. This we have seen in the folk songs shown above. The further illustration will also prove the point.

BANGDDO NOVRO, PEDDI NOVRI  
KONKARO TANCHI DEDDI,  
VAGULLEM EKLENCH MATO(U) GODDI  
SANGADDO TACHI MEDDI

In this humorous song the composer has very intelligently compared the physical attributes of some fish to the appearances of a wedding party in a strict poetic structure.

GAINGHEM LOGIN ZATA MUNN  
MISSANGHEM TAMBDDDEM KELAM TONDD  
PODDOLEAN VORXEM KELAM SONDD  
BOBRAN GHETLAM MONE PONN

Translation:

SINCE THE BRINJAL WAS GETTING MARRIED  
THE CHILLI'S FACE HAS TURNED RED  
THE SNAKE-GOURD HAS WRINKLED HIS NOSE  
AND THE PUMPKIN HAS FALLEN SILENT

The composer here has tried to show the evil emotions in the society. He has intelligently shown the physical qualities of some vegetables to compare with the evil human emotions.

When a girl in the neighbourhood (BRINJAL) is going to get married to a perfect boy some neighbours instead of being happy and sharing her happiness turn red with jealousy (CHILLI) or wrinkle their noses with envy (SNAKE-GOURD) or hide their evil feelings by maintaining silence (PUMPKIN).

**DIALOGUE SONG:**

AGO CHEDVA TUM MAK  
 SANG GO KONNALEM  
 ANV CHEDUM SAIBA  
 MUGELEA AVOI BAPAIEM  
 AVOI BAPUI GO CHEDVA  
 KONN(U) GO TUGELO  
 ANV NENNOM SAIBA  
 TAKA MUNTAI JUANV MOTTELO  
 JUANV MOTELLO  
 TO ZOBOR AMIG MUGELO  
 TOXEM ZALLEARI SAIBA  
 TAKA DI REKAD MUGHELO.

## Translation:

Boy: Hello young lady, who are you?  
 Girl: Sir, I am my parents' daughter  
 Boy: And who are your parents?  
 Girl: I can't tell you, but my father is called Stout John.  
 Boy: Oh! Stout John is my good friend  
 Girl: If that is so, please give him my regards.

This beautiful dialogue song shows the social behaviour and way of living of the people during that period. Society did not allow boys and girls to mix freely. They could only have a formal conversation but could not openly show affection for each other or propose marriage. Marriage was usually fixed by their parents. Also, the common method of introduction was by reference to one's parents and family history — a system still prevalent.

In this song the boy enquires about the girl's family etc. but she avoids giving him a straight answer. To every question by the boy, the girl gives him an evasive, witty reply, thus hiding her identity.

In this dialogue song the composer intelligently portrays the orthodox behaviour of the society in a humorous manner.

Thus these simple looking folk songs reflect their deep intellectual basis and also the profound wisdom of the composers.

### ANALYSIS OF THE RHYTHMIC STRUCTURE

The rhythmic structure of Goan music retains its Indian flavour. It shows simple and compound times, as well as a seven beats time (1 2 3 12 12) e. g. in JOTI.

### ANALYSIS OF THE MELODIC STRUCTURE

The melodic structure as in Indian Music has "SRUTIS" i.e. chromaticmicro tones and ornamental notes like APPODGIATURAS, PORTAMENTI, ACCIACCATURAS. Such ornaments are used by the composers and violin players in secular, religious and dance music.

In regard to this we might quote what the great Sanskritologist SOMANATHA has said in his treatise on music "RAGHAVIBODHA". SOMANTHGA says that "A melody devoid of embellishments is like a moonless night, a river without water, a creeper without flowers or a woman without garments."