

Goan Dances

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When one talks about the dances of Goa, one's imagination tends to stop at people dancing to trance and techno music. In case you didn't know, the Goan dances extend much beyond those rave late night parties at beaches. The traditional dance of Goa gives a picture of the mindset and lifestyle of Goans. They reflect the rich historical and cultural legacy that Goa abounds in. Goa has a unique amalgamation of different cultures and the Goan dances portray this blend of different faiths very beautifully. Some very popular folk dances of Goa are Dhalo, Dekhni, Fugdi, Shigmo, Kunbi, Lamp Dance, etc. (Source: <http://www.goavacationguide.com/goan-dance.html>)

The dances of Goa are a manifestation of the rich and unique cultural heritage of the state. Goa is home to many ethnic castes and tribes, each with its exotic folk dances and performances. Moreover the rule of different dynasties throughout the ages has left their indelible imprint on the indigenous dances of Goa. While the folk dances have been carefully preserved, the influence of the Portuguese rule has given birth to new art forms. (Source: <http://www.bharatonline.com/goa/dance.html>)

Here is a brief description of the various traditional dances in Goa compiled from various internet sources:

Bhandap

Bhandap is a traditional folk dance performed by the womenfolk of the scheduled tribe community, who were the original settlers of Goa, in the second half of the Hindu month Bhadrpada. (Source: <http://www.goa-travel.com/performing-arts-in-go/goan-folk-dances.html>)

Corredinho

This Portuguese Folk Dance is a peasant dance which is accepted among Goan fortunate youth. Dekhm-Beauty dance is performed only by women, displays an excellent blend of Indian & Western rhythms. (Source: <http://www.goa-travel.com/performing-arts-in-goia/goan-folk-dances.html>)

Dashavatara

Dashavatara directly translates as 'ten incarnations' and is associated with Lord Vishnu. Opinions are divided as the origin of the dance. Some believe it to have evolved from 'Yakshagana'; others consider it to have emerged from 'Kuchipudi'. The subject involves the theft of the 'Vedas'. It is discussed by the Sutradhar (stage manager), Brahmin figures, women actors representing the rivers, actors playing Lord Brahma (the Creator) and Goddess Saraswati (the goddess of learning), and the demon Shankhasur. (Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/goa/people-culture-and-festivals/dance-in-goia.html>)

Many actors believe that Dashavatara is originally a dance form from Kerala, and they worship a deity of the Walaval region of Kerala. Whatever the source maybe, the form was introduced to the Konkan region in the 16th century. The subject of the theft of the 'Vedas' is discussed by the "Sutradhar" (stage manager), 'Brahmin' figures, women actors representing the rivers, actors playing Lord Brahma (the Creator) and Goddess Saraswati (the goddess of learning), and the demon Shankhasur. The overture continues for about two hours, and the proper drama known as "Akhyana" begins after this. The play, concerning itself with stories from the epics and mythology, concludes at sunrise. The red and white makeup of Dashavatara actors distinguishes them from the spectators who arrive shortly before 11.00 pm for the performance. The evening commences with prayers to Ganapati or Ganesha (the elephant-headed god), sung by the Sutradhar (stage manager). (Source: <http://www.goa-travel-tourism.com/dances-of-goia/dashavatara.html>)

Dekhni

Literally meaning 'bewitching beauty,' the folk dance of Dekhni is a blend of indigenous culture and Western music. This popular dance features Christian girls performing to the beats of folk drum 'Ghumat.' This dance form is essentially a portrayal of the life of Devdasis who perform dances in Hindu temples to appease the gods. (Source: <http://www.bharatonline.com/goa/dance.html>)

The Dekhni is basically the traditional dance of those Christians who converted to Christianity from Hinduism during the Portugal rule. These people were the ones to compose this traditional dance form of Goa. The dance also involves singing by people. It usually begins with a beautiful lady starting the dance and is joined later by other dancers gradually. The music of this dance is a lovely combination of rhythm and melody of both western and Indian genre. (Source: <http://www.goavacationguide.com/goan-dance.html>)

Dekhni or Dakhnni is a form of song-cum-dance in the Christian repertoire of song among the people of Goa. It is a song composed by Christian artistes perhaps an expression of the Goan Christian nostalgia for their lost Hindu past, where the Devdasi or kolvont in Konkani was an alluring symbol. The term Dakhnni in Sanskrit means devil of a female. It is danced in a manner that verges on the voluptuous, with gyrations and significant gestures which are so suggestive in character. The main danseuse is joined by other females, enticing in their appearance, who announce themselves to the audience. Then begins the pleading and coaxing by the women, including finally the boatman with offerings of anklets, bracelets, nose-ringlets, by turns and finally clinching the deal with the offer of a kiss, which latter the boatman accepts in the surrender to their wiles, to ferry them across to the other side of the river to a place belonging to a man called Damu, where they have to perform at the wedding. (Source: <http://www.webindia123.com/goa/art/arts1.htm#man>)

The Dekhni is essentially performed by Women and is a traditional dance form. The music to which this dance is performed is has ingredients of both the East and the West. So the music is both ethnical and contemporary. (Source: <http://www.goasinoman.com>)

<http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/goa/people-culture-and-festivals/dance-in-go.html>)

Dhalo

Usually seen in the rural hinterland of Goa, Dhalo is performed by village women folk on the moonlit night of Hindu 'Paushya' month. Accompanied by songs sung in Konkani and Marathi, a group of 24 women dance by arranging themselves in two parallel rows of 12. The songs are fraught with religious and social connotations. (Source: <http://www.bharatonline.com/goa/dance.html>)

One of the most popular dances of Goa is the Dhalo. It is one of the choicest dances of the women dwelling in rural Goa. In this dance form, young girls and women form a semi circle by joining their hands behind each others waists. They then sway in coordinated movements to beats of rural musical instruments and music. It is a dance full of fun and frolic. (Source: <http://www.goavacationguide.com/goan-dance.html>)

Dhangar

The Dhangar is a Navratri dance. It is a fusion of adoration and dance – in essence, almost like the dance performed by the Sufis. (Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/goa/people-culture-and-festivals/dance-in-go.html>)

Dulpod or Durpod

If the Manddo can be called an expression of the romantic aspect of the Goan, the Dulpod that follow it is the singing repertoire. The Durpod gives its couplets a compressed and catchy note providing fleeting glimpses of the variety of Goan life. It is a thing of joy and gaiety, evoking laughter, carefree in its mood and lively in its expression. As the hunting melody of the Manddo moves towards a conclusion and ends, it is followed by the Dulpod, the beat of which is the opposite to that of the Manddo and more quick-moving, symbolising the lively sprightliness of life among the common folk. The Dulpod moves into a staccato beat and quickens in a syncopated rhythm. The most popular among the Dulpods are the one about Cecilia and her sewing, Modgonvam Thovyanger and 'Maya-ya-ya' or Lia-lia-lo. The Dulpod encompasses the whole of life in its infinite variety- human, animal and vegetables. All of it is captured in the Dulpod in couplets, whose effect in its wording, is very pithy and telling. (Source: <http://www.webindia123.com/goa/art/arts1.htm#man>)

Fugdi

Another group dance of women, the Fugdi dance is performed either in a circle or by a row of dancers. Even though Fugdi dances are performed sans any musical instruments, there are a number of special Fugdi songs. Fugdi dances are performed at both religious occasion and folk celebrations. (Source: <http://www.bharatonline.com/goa/dance.html>)

The Fugdi is a traditional dance of Goa that is quite popular among the womenfolk of Goa. This dance is devoted to the Hindu Elephant God, Lord Ganesha. This dance can be performed on any occasion and does not require any particular festival to be performed. One of the most common dances that is performed in Goa, this dance requires continues swirling until one gets exhausted and sits down. (Source: <http://www.goavacationguide.com/goan-dance.html>)

It is a dance very much loved among Goan Hindu girls and women. The details of the dance vary from caste to caste in Goa. Brahmin girls dance it with a brass pot on the head. Farmers, fisher folk and Kunnbis (Gavddis) dance it by forming an interlocked circle often of up to 12 girls. The Mahar women of Pednem area, dance it singly throughout, though in a group with exquisite footwork and attractive rhythm, which is kept up with foot claps every time the dancer revolves around herself. At the Chovoth in Goa, nature revives the spirit of fulfillment with the season of fruitfulness. An uncontrollable explosion of energy sets the feet in motion. The girls and women start singing and dancing before Lord Ganesha. The most popular form of Foogddi in Goa is the one with circle formation which begins with the chanting of religious invocations. Konkani songs of special significance as well as of social themes follow upon the religious hymns. They are sung by first improvising some homely group activity like grinding, washing or kneading which provides them with a dramatic setting. In this conductive setting, the group exchanges opinions and information in crisp couplet and salacious stanzas. It can also include scandals and gossip about those who are absent from the scene. After this first part in slow tempo, the group breaks up into pairs and with interlocked hands, swirls around with gradually increasing pace, singing songs of matching speed. When the swirling attains maximum speed, they simply keep up the rhythm by blowing air through the mouth, making Foo.. Foo sounds. When totally exhausted after the song and dance they sink down with heady satisfaction, laughing yet looking jealously at the pairs still spinning like tops with the dizzy emissions of Foo..Foo..Foo.. in the air. This unique sound in the expression of the song has bestowed the name of Foogddi, on the dance form. Foogddi is an all weather indoor dance and needs no special religious occasion for performances. It is mostly danced on all important religious and social occasions. It may even form the tail-end portion of other dance forms like the "Dhalo". (Source: <http://www.webindia123.com/goa/art/Arts3.htm>)

Goff Dance

It is a folk dance with cords, manifesting joy and happiness of Goan peasants after the harvest. It is performed during the Shigmo Festival in Phalgun (March) month. Each dancer holds a colourful cord hanging at the centre point of the 'Mand' - the place of performance - and starts dancing intricately with the others, forming a beautiful, colourful, intricate braid at the end of the first movement. The music starts again and the dancers reverse the pattern of dancing so skillfully that the braid gets unraveled and at the end of the second movement, all the cords are loose and single once again. There are 4 different braids of Goff. The songs sung are devoted to Lord Krishna. "Ghumat", "Samael" and "Surta Shansi" or melodic instruments accompany the dance. Goff has an affinity with tribal dance forms of Gujarat. (Source: <http://www.goa-travel-tourism.com/dances-of-go/folk-dance.html>)

Kunbi Dance

Kunbis, the earliest settlers of Goa, are a sturdy tribal community mostly settled in Salcete Taluka, who though converted to Christianity, still retains the most ancient folk tradition of the land. Their songs and dance belonging to the pre-Portuguese era are uniquely social and not religious. The fast and elegant dance by a group of Kunbi women dancers, wearing traditional yet very simple dresses, lends a colourful touch to this ethnic art form. (Source: <http://www.goa-travel-tourism.com/dances-of-go/folk-dance.html>)

Lamp Dance

This dance derives its name from brass lamps used in the dance during the Shigmo festival. The accompanying instruments include Ghumat, Samael, Cymbal and Harmonium. The performers indulge in a slow dancing movement, balancing brass lamps with burning wicks on the head and the hands. The balancing act controlled by tremendous self-discipline and exquisite footwork matching with the rhythms of the traditional folksongs are eye-catching. This group dance is popular in the southern and central Goa. (Source: <http://www.goa-travel-tourism.com/dances-of-go/folk-dance.html>)

Manddo

Manddo is a song or rather a poignant story of love told in the form of a lovely song. The word Manddo, derives from the Sanskrit 'mandalam' meaning circular movement. It is believed that originally the Konkani Manddo dance involved movement in circle. At present such circular patterns are noticed when the dancers get into a feverish pitch in the concluding stages of the dance. In the normal course the dance moves along parallel lines, with graceful movements to and fro, advancing and receding, the men displaying in a flourish towards the women their colourful handkerchiefs and the women admiring their toy fans, with an eye on the men. The Manddo music appears to have been strongly influenced by Latin or rather Italian music. The dance-song Manddo may be called a synthesis of the Italian minuet and the temple Devadasi dance-song. The singing moves majestically in a slow, andante rhythm, with dignity and grace. It falls into a drowsy dormant mood towards the fag-end of the singing function when the singers are tired and may have imbibed considerable quantities of alcohol and cannot go on much longer. The Manddo has attained the virtual status of a classical or art song after being subjected to a process of sophistication and stylisation. The ghumott provided the right beat, attuned as it is to Manddo singing and dance. The beat of it moves faster and faster as the singing progresses to a crescendo, on to a frenzy and conclusion. Though the Manddo is a story of love told in song, there have been a few songs composed on a similar pattern but involving themes of a political nature called Political Manddo. There are Manddos on the revolts and uprisings of the Ranels, the legendary Warriors of the Sattari taluka of Goa, and the Christian Kustoba's feats of daring against the Portuguese government etc. Every year a Manddo festival is held as an event of importance from 1966 onwards, with a special Bernardo Award for the best Manddo. (Source: <http://www.webindia123.com/goa/art/arts1.htm#man>)

Mussal Dance

The Kshatriyas, the warrior class of 'Chandor' (erstwhile Chandrapur, the capital of the "Kadamba" rulers) perform this dance-cum-song to celebrate the victory of Harihar, the Hindu King of Vijaynagar over the Cholas in the early 14th century. They hold and brandish pestles ('Mussals') - a favourite war instrument with the Yadavas - during the victory parade and dance as the original one held centuries ago. The march comprises 4 couplets while the main dance uses 22 couplets. Originally the Gaonkars did the performance on the full-moon night of the Falguna. The Kshatriyas, though converted to Christianity, still retains the cultural heritage and perform it now on the second day of the carnival. (Source: <http://www.goa-travel-tourism.com/dances-of-go/folk-dance.html>)

Romat

This thanks-giving ceremonial dance-cum-procession performed during the Shigmo festival is known as Romat in the northern Goa and Mell in the central Goa. It is an extremely crowded, noisy and colourful affair. Teams of dancers drawn from different sections of the village dance and march martially with huge banners, ceremonial umbrellas, festooned sticks and batons towards the temple of the presiding deity or to the house of the landlord. The cacophony emanating from deafening beats of huge 'Dhols' and 'Tashas' and a prolonged, vigorous dancing procession displaying colourful dresses leave the spectators spell-bound. (Source: <http://www.goa-travel-tourism.com/dances-of-go/folk-dance.html>)

Shigmo

The Shigmo dance celebrates the spirit of spring season. It is the time of regeneration of nature for the farmers. For the warriors, it marks the victorious return of man from battlefield. Temples are beautifully decorated and festivity takes place in its entire splendor. This dance also the name of the spring festival and usually takes place in the month of March. It is celebrated in rural Goa where the Hindu population dominates. (Source: <http://www.goa-hotels-resorts.com/goa-dances.html>)

Shigmo or Shimga is the Goan expression of the spirit of spring around the month of March, very close to the carnival. The focal hour of its celebration is the full moon day of the month of Phalguna. Shigmo is the time for the home coming of the brave, who had left their firesides with the Dussehra. For the farmer and the shepherd, it is the time of rebirth of nature and for the warriors, the time of return of man. Ceremonial thanksgiving, processions to temples and shrines, songs, dramas and dances, bonfires, masquerades and abuses, festoons, banners, colours and sweets are in plenty on this occasion. Rang-panchami gets merged into the celebration with the throwing of colours in a boisterous manifestation of gaiety. The other manifestations of Shigmo in Goa are the Romatt or Mell, Goff and Tonnya Mell, Dashavatari Khell and Kalo plays and dances. These are performed in most of the rural areas of Goa where Hindus predominate. (Source: <http://www.webindia123.com/goa/art/Arts3.htm>)

Talgoddi

There are some activities which are peculiar to Goan Hindus. The spirit of the carnival finds its expression in Chandor village among the Hindus in the form of the Talgoddi dance. It literally means young men in rhythm in Konkani. It has eight distinct modes, expressed through its theme and is danced by eight to twelve men. They show their skill in footwork and muscles by dancing a number of group dances, which are a spontaneous outburst of genuine folk spirit, on the Mandd or paved courtyard under the graceful and cool mattov (pavilion made of thatched green coconut, tree plaited leaves and mounted on betel nut poles). It is a sort of an aimless dance expressing a pure rhythmic pattern of human movements, energy and sheer joy of living. (Source: <http://www.webindia123.com/goa/art/arts2.htm#kun>)

Tonyamel

Tonyamel is a popular folk dance with sticks reflects a very vigorous and muscular group dance which is connected with the farm-folk celebrating the joys of good harvest. (Source: <http://www.goa-travel.com/performing-arts-in-goan-folk-dances.html>)