


Chapter 9

Mudscapes of Meaning: Performative Language of Chikal Kalo

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ABSTRACT

Chikal Kalo is a unique mud festival celebrated in Marcela, Goa, reflecting deep religious, ecological, and cultural significance. This ethnographic study explores the oral tradition and performative practices of Chikal Kalo, which have been transmitted across generations without written documentation. Through participant observation and interviews with local residents, the research examines the festival's origins, symbolic elements, and evolving expressions. It highlights how embodied memory and ritual performance preserve indigenous heritage. The study also underscores the festival's role in reinforcing social cohesion and cultural identity. Chikal Kalo exemplifies a living tradition rooted in ecological consciousness and communal values. The festival's vibrant blend of dance, music, and food attracts travellers while preserving its devotional roots. The findings contribute to broader discussions on intangible cultural heritage and its role in sustainable community development, while safeguarding Konkani culture amid rapid modernization.

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INTRODUCTION

Festivals have a significant influence on people's personal and social lives. They play an important role in the social and cultural development of communities as well as draw the interest of tourists, helping the economy (Duran & Hamarat, 2014; Munjal & Jauhari, 2015). India is acknowledged for its amusing culture of fairs and festivals. Depending on the religion and geographic location, each festival is important. Several festivals are common in India, though they might be expressed with distinct names according to the different languages and ethnic groups. For instance, Holi, a festival of colour, may be known as Phagwah, Hola Mohalla or Rangpanchmi in different parts of the country. There might also be differences in the way the same festival is celebrated across the states. With an amalgam of different religions such as Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism in India, there are also varied celebrations that are predominantly celebrated with great enthusiasm and rigour in India (Dinakara, 2019; Nayak, 2003).

However, few festivals belong to only a specific locale or clan. Micro-festivals, which are deeply rooted in the religious, ecological, and cultural lifeways of a particular clan, tribe, or village, maintain the pulse of indigenous communities (Nayak, 2003). The villages or clan preserve their culture, reinforce social cohesion, and can also be passed down through non-literary means. Less is known about those festivals as these are localized and celebrated among small groups of people, compared to those festivals where national holidays are recognized. These community-bound celebrations can majorly reflect the rich cultural heritage of India through their ritual performances.

Chikal Kalo is also one such micro-festival that is integral to the town of Marcela in one of the districts of Goa. Goa, a small state in India (3702 sq. kms), is not only popular for its tourism but is also famous for its distinctive customs and traditions. From ancient times, Goa has been known as a historical and cultural center. Goa is referred to as Gopakpattan or Gomant in the Hindu scripture, the Mahabharata, and as Govapuri in the Sutra-Samhita. Goa is a former Portuguese colony with a prolific history and has been an attraction for tourists from all over the globe for many decades (Shetgaonkar, 2024).

Apart from its renowned beaches, Goa offers a diverse range of attractions that appeal to both domestic and international tourists. Among its notable historical and religious sites is Old Goa, a former colonial capital, known for its UNESCO-listed churches and cathedrals. The state is also home to prominent Hindu temples such as the Shri Mangeshi Temple and Shri Ramnath Temple in Ponda, and the Shri Shantadurga Temple in Quepem, which reflect the region's rich spiritual heritage. Additionally, architectural landmarks such as Chapora Fort, Tiracol Fort, and Aguada Fort contribute to Goa's historical significance. Beyond heritage, Goa's vibrant

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