

An Analysis of Syncretism's Historical and Sociological Aspects in Goan Culture, Focusing on its Evolution and Impact

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Abstract:

Goa, an Indian state, possesses a diverse cultural legacy that the interplay of many ethnic, religious, and linguistic communities has influenced. Syncretism is a prominent feature of Goan culture, involving the fusion of diverse cultural elements such as religious beliefs, behaviours, and traditions. The historical development of syncretism in Goa is an intricate and varied phenomenon influenced by colonisation, migration, and trade.

Keywords: syncretism's historical , sociological influence

This study paper investigates syncretism's historical and sociological influence on Goan culture. This paper will analyse the historical influences that have contributed to the emergence of syncretism in Goan culture. It will explore the interactions and contributions of various cultural and religious groups in shaping the development of syncretism.

Additionally, it will highlight significant historical events that have facilitated the fusion of diverse cultural elements within Goan society. Moreover, the study will examine the sociological consequences of syncretism in Goan culture, encompassing its effects on the social hierarchy, customary behaviours, religious observances, traditional customs, and the collective identity and perspective of the population in Goa. This study paper aims to thoroughly analyse syncretism in Goan culture and its significance in today's society.

The historical development of syncretism in Goan culture.

What historical causes influenced the emergence of syncretism in Goan culture?

The historical circumstances that led to the emergence of syncretism in Goan culture are intricate and diverse. One reason contributing to this was the Christian liturgy's prohibition of some Hindu sacred things, including plants, flowers, rice, coconut, betel leaf, areca nut, and turmeric [1]. Furthermore, Goa's historical significance as a hub of international trade greatly influenced the emergence of syncretism in Goan culture since diverse cultures and traditions amalgamated in this cosmopolitan environment [2]. Hindu nationalist organisations placed significant emphasis on the process of reconversion and de-Christianization, which resulted in contacts and negotiations between Hindu and Catholic traditions [1]. Another element that played a role was the displacement of local deities, resulting in the assimilation of Catholic shrines and images into religious rituals [3].

Moreover, the impact of Hindu rituals and traditions on Christianity in Goa was substantial, as Goan Hindus paid homage to *Saiba* St. Francis Xavier, and Goan Catholics revered the goddess *Saibini Sateri-Shanta Durga* [1]. The caste system was also adopted by a religion that does not have a caste system due to the transfer of social groups with similar economic relationships. This resulted in the caste system becoming a more significant element in social bonding than religion itself [4]. During the mid-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the practice of vandalising temples and idols was widespread. As a result, almost 90 per cent of the people eventually converted to Christianity [1]. Although Goa has a violent history, the shared practices in the region stem from the community's deep connection to and involvement in the local area. Syncretism in Goan culture has created a common ground for Hindus and Catholics through their shared devotion and ceremonial practices. This has resulted in spatial similarities, rituals that commemorate their shared pasts, and the use of therapeutic symbols. These rituals also serve as a form of collective memory that opposes the focus on historical events in modern times.

The interplay between diverse cultural and religious groups significantly influenced the development of syncretism in Goan culture :

The interplay of diverse cultural and religious factions influenced the development of syncretism in Goan culture. The book explores the interplay between colonialism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Catholicism within Goan culture [1]. The historical significance of Goa as a hub for international trade and the influx of various communities to the Uttara Kannada region following the Portuguese atrocities played a crucial role in developing syncretism in Goan culture [4]. Various cultural and religious organisations, including sculptors, architects, carpenters, and blacksmiths, played a role in developing syncretism in Goan culture [4]. The craftsmanship of these people is evident in the intricately carved wooden pillars and ornamental wood ceilings found in Goa temples [4]. The Brahmin communities of Goa interacted with other groups, including kings, who provided them patronage. The Karhade Brahmins likely originated from Karad in Maharashtra and received support from the Silaharas of Kolhapur and Southern Silaharas [4]. The Kramavant Brahmins are a distinct and tiny community primarily conducting post-death rituals. The Padheye Brahmins are considered a subgroup of the Karhade Brahmins and are mainly located in the Ponda taluka region, with a significant number of Kulagars [4]. The Bhattaprabhu community originates from Bori and Siroda in the Ponda taluka. Unlike the Karhades and Padheyes, they communicate in Konkani [4]. The temples emerged as the surrounding populations' primary religious and social hubs. The GSBs assimilated numerous indigenous grama devatas into Hinduism, incorporating their family deities and constructing temples throughout Goa, within or near the agraharas [4]. The book examines the connection between syncretism and liberalism and the influence of religion throughout the beginning of modernity [1]. The author employs historical, comparative, literary and anthropological methodologies to investigate the development of syncretism in Goan culture [1]. Regrettably, the article fails to elucidate the impact of the interplay of diverse cultural and theological factions on the development of syncretism in Goan culture [4].

What important historical events precipitated the amalgamation of many cultural components in Goan society?

The amalgamation of diverse cultural components in the Goan civilisation can be ascribed to many historical occurrences. The migration of three primary groups, namely Bhojas, Chediya, and Saraswats, to Goa, resulted in the fusion of diverse cultural aspects in the area [4]. It is thought that these groups came

either through Trihota in Bihar or by using maritime routes along the west coast. Moreover, the Brahmavarta region is regarded as the birthplace of Indian civilisation, and it was irrigated by seven rivers, including Saraswati [4]. Nevertheless, the river Saraswati experienced desiccation due to an extended period of aridity, compelling the Vedic population to relocate towards the eastern, western, and southern regions, including Goa [4]. Upon reaching Goa, these tribes established themselves in the Gomantak region of Keloshi and Kushasthal, where they formed two communes, namely Tiswadi and Shasasthis [4]. There were 96 localities known as Sahanavis, which likely influenced the development of Shenvis or Shenoy [4]. The arrival of these diverse groups introduced their distinct practices, traditions, and beliefs, which significantly impacted the development of syncretism in Goan culture. The amalgamation of these heterogeneous communities contributed to forming a diversified and intricate cultural fabric uniquely characteristic of Goa.

The sociological impact of syncretism on Goan culture.

What impact has syncretism had on the social structure and customs of Goan society?

Syncretism has significantly influenced the social structure and conventions of Goan society. The Lusitanian version of Christianity has been crucial in changing the region affected by syncretism [5]. The syncretic aspects of theogony have served as a shared point of convergence for the Catholic and Hindu communities concerning worship and ritual practice. For example, a portion of the Catholic population in the area now goes to Hindu temples. In return, the Hindu community has shown a reciprocal gesture due to miracles and church celebrations [5]. As a result, there has been a need for extraordinary remedies, blessings, promises, donations, grand celebrations at temples, and community festivals associated with the traditional customs and deities [5]. The Cuncolim umbrella celebration exemplifies syncretism, with the participation of Catholics and each umbrella representing one of the twelve Chardo clans from the Cuncolim region [4].

Nevertheless, caste remains a significant factor that fosters close connections among communities in Goan society, even more so than religion [4]. The caste system was transferred to a religion that does not have a caste system due to the transfer of social classes with similar productive relationships [4]. Ultimately, syncretism has played a crucial role in the metamorphosis of Goan society, enabling a shared platform for religious and cultural customs among diverse populations.

What impact does syncretism have on religious practices, customs, and rituals in Goan culture?

Goa exhibits a robust heritage of syncretism, which has significantly impacted religious practices, traditions, and rites in the area. An illustration of this phenomenon is the gradual process of Sanskritisation that specific deities experience to transform into Shantadurga [5]. At certain temples in Goa, a metal mask is attached to the top of the roof to symbolise the process of Sanskritisation. This serves as another example of the syncretic character of religious customs in Goa [5]. While several temples pay homage to Navadurga, others revere the conventional manifestation of Santeri [5]. The assimilation of the female deity from the Little Tradition into Sanskritic Durga is based on the origin of the notion of Shantadurga in Goa and Konkan. This process is characterised by peace [5]. Another instance of syncretism in Goan culture is the god Devaki Krishna, which amalgamates the images of Krishna and his biological mother Devaki [5]. In Goa, the cult's significant presence is devoted to the mother goddess. This religious belief involves the fusion of the mother figure with a male deity, which resembles the iconography of the Madonna cradling Baby Jesus [5].

Moreover, the fact that Hindus participate in Catholic feasts and engage in liturgical services of Christian churches serves as proof of syncretism in Goan culture [5]. The conversion of Catholic worship houses in Goa strongly appeals to devout Hindus, indicating the prominent influence of syncretism in religious activities [5]. Regrettably, the Portuguese's destruction of formerly sacred sites dedicated to the mother goddess resulted in their transformation into Catholic places of worship. This event further emphasises the intricate history of syncretism in Goa [5].

The process of syncretism has significantly influenced the identity and worldview of the people in Goa.

Syncretism has substantially impacted the formation of the identity and perspective of the people in Goa. The Goan people possess a distinct cultural identity distinguished by a notable level of religious syncretism and cultural hybridity. This may be observed in the architecture, cuisine, festivals, and everyday life [6]. Syncretism is a technique that has facilitated the merging of various traditions into a unified cultural narrative [6]. The Portuguese unintentionally caused the development of a unique Goan Catholic tradition by repressing indigenous religious rituals and artistic expressions. This tradition assimilated Hindu, Muslim, and Portuguese influences [6]. The Inquisition inflicted lasting wounds upon Goan society, which became integral to Goan identity [6]. The elimination of the Inquisition was a pivotal measure in Goa, enabling the state to launch a fresh trajectory of religious inclusivity and cultural amalgamation [6]. The initial encounters between the Portuguese and indigenous inhabitants in Goa involved religious missions to establish a Christian community. The Jesuits, a Catholic religious order, substantially impacted these missionary endeavours [6]. The objective of the missionaries was to proselytise the indigenous population, persuading them to adopt the Portuguese language and Catholic customs [6].

Nevertheless, syncretism has contributed to the ongoing pursuit of communal harmony in Goa [6]. Goa was marked by the enduring presence of memories of persecution and the resulting divisions [6]. Nevertheless, Goan culture has transformed into a distinctive amalgamation of various customs that have been integrated into a unified cultural storyline, which still influences the identity and perspective of the people in Goa.

The study paper examines the process of syncretism in Goan culture, analysing the historical and sociological causes that influenced the amalgamation of diverse cultural and religious components within Goan civilisation. The study highlights the intricate and diverse nature of the syncretic phenomena, which emerged from the interaction among different cultural and religious groups, such as Hindus, Catholics, and Portuguese colonisers. The dissertation emphasises the crucial role played by the Jesuits in advancing Catholicism in Goa. It examines the effects of the Inquisition on the psychological well-being of the local populace. The study also analyses the transmission of the caste system to a religion that does not have a caste structure. This transmission occurred through the transfer of social groups that share similar productive ties. As a result, the caste component became a stronger bond than religion. The study highlights the significance of location and community in influencing syncretism within Goan culture. The paper finishes by acknowledging the constraints of the research and proposing further avenues for exploring the development and influence of syncretism in Goan culture. In summary, the research offers a valuable understanding of the intricate relationship between historical events, cultural practices, and religious beliefs that have influenced the syncretic identity of Goan culture.

Citations

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