



# A Critical Review on the Historical background of Goan Murals

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## Abstract

The primary goal of this research is to learn about the history of Goa's wall paintings. How important were wall paintings in Goa. What are the various mediums used by the artists to execute a mural. It is important to draw a serious attention and give importance to the state mural and mural artists. These wall paintings can still be found in a few Goan houses and temples. The analysis will include various mediums, compositions, the nature of aesthetic in a mural, and the impact of Portuguese culture on Goans and Goan art.

People visit Goa not only for its cultural heritage and beaches but also for Goa being the hub of art and artists. Tourists in Goa are captivated by the art displayed on the streets, hotels, offices and in galleries. Murals of various types can be seen, not only by Goan artists but also by artists from around the world who come to participate in the Serendipity arts festival (SAF). It's one of the region's biggest multi-disciplinary arts initiatives. It encompasses the visual art, performing art, and culinary arts, films, live arts, literature, and fashion. (Serendipity arts festival, 2020)

## Keywords

Goa, fine arts, culture, art, murals

## I. Introduction

The smallest state of India, Goa, situated on the west coast of the Arabian Sea is a part of the Konkan region. (Khedekar, 2016) It's now a union territory of India with an area of about 1,350 square miles, is some 200 miles south of Bombay. Despite its huge catholic community and Western influence in some spheres of life, it is more practical and accurate to think about Goa as an Indian state with an interesting past. (Newman, 1984)

Like other states in India, fine arts have a long history in Goa too. There was a time in history

when Goans were famous for their handicrafts. People of Goa have shown their deep interest in the field of different forms of visual arts like painting, sculpture, designing etc. and number of notable artists has arisen from the state. (J. Clement, 1997)

According to Mr. Mahendra Chodankar, Goa lacks its identity in fine arts compared to other states which are rich in cultural tradition in fine arts particularly in visual arts as it was dominated by several kingdoms like Bhojas, Shalivahanas, Rashtrakutas, Kadambas and finally the Portuguese who ruled Goa for 451 years. (Chodankar, 2018)

The impact of western culture can be seen in the paintings of various churches and convents like for example the Convent of St. Francis of Assisi and Convent of St. Monica at Old Goa. Angelo Fonseca, Gaitonde, Laxaman Pai and Angelo Fonseca are four Goan modern artists who have blended eastern and western styles in their works. (Fatima. 1997)

## Cultural influence in Goa

For 450 years Goa remained as Portuguese India. After the fall of the Portuguese and British empires, India became a republic, and Goa continued its peaceful existence. (Israel.R. 1990) Goa was ruled by many different dynasties prior to Portuguese rule, so we can see that Goa's culture is a fusion of different religions such as Jain, Buddhist, Muslim, and Hindu.

Goa, according to Ms. Parreira, is very different from the rest of India in terms of culture and identity (Fatima. 1997)

Goa is the smallest state of India, located in the Konkan region, was under Portuguese rule for four and a half centuries, so its cultural influence is the combination of Portuguese art and influence of religious traditions. Goa is considered as link



between the East and the West, and its unique combination of art, music, and architecture has made it famous tourist spot. Visitors to Goa come from all over the world (hinduscriptures). Visiting Goa as a tourist, on the other hand, is insufficient. There's more to this place than beaches and greenery; there's also a lot of culture which exist here. (Phaldesai, 2004)

Religion, for Goans, is an expression rather than identification. Their sense of identity stems from their specific cultural language, Konkani—a language of the heart that appears to stem from gratitude for belonging to such a beautiful land. (Dhume, 1986)

There are three types of views of the Goan people, First one who thinks there is no Portuguese influence at all on the Goan culture, second group of people thinks there is complete influence of Portuguese culture on the Goans and third group believe there is partial influence.

The Goans' frame of mind and day to day life have been influenced by Portuguese culture. Some works were encouraged or imitated by Goan artists by getting the models from Portugal and few art pieces were brought from Portugal. (Fatima, 1997)

### Art in Goa

Goa has a long and illustrious history. Goa's culture is a mash-up of all outside influences, as well as indigenous Konkani culture. The artifacts during Portuguese and British times can be seen in the museums of Goa. (Naik, 2012) Because of the zeal of propagation of Catholicism that the Portuguese brought with them, the demography of the state began to change after their arrival in 1510. Goa's art and craft forms demonstrate a fascinating blend of Portuguese and Indian civilizations. (Monteiro, 2020)

Different religious beliefs and life styles have merged into one distinct identity, which has evolved into Goan art. One can find Hindu artists shaping Christian motifs in cities and villages. This process of incorporation, need, and acceptance is seen in Goan art which was formed as per religious demands. (Royal Orient Train)

A very well said by Goa's iconic poet that Goa has a supernatural quality of refining the human mind and this helped the Goans to go into depth of creativity and spirituality. (Shirodkar, 1988)

Goa is honoured to be home to Asia's first Museum of Christian Art, which is located at Rachol Seminary in Salcete Taluka. Goa, like any other art-rich state in India, does not trail behind in terms of arts and crafts and has proven to be a strong

contender in this field. It's safe to say that art is practically in their blood. (Royal Orient Train)

### Wall paintings in Goa

In olden days when the leisure was ample and the living was booming, a few traditional families in Goa displayed the legacy of this beautiful land known for creative feelings by decorating their walls with paintings or miniatures. (Phaldesai, 2004)

Walls were painted richly to indicate the status of the residents. More better the wall paintings higher the status of the residents. These paintings depicted birds and animals, daily life scenes, festivals, and men's heroic deeds. Temple paintings were typically based on devotional and sacrifice stories from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. They were divided into three groups:

1. Paintings on plastered walls – These paintings were created using a combination of colour powder, vegetable dyes, and lead-based pigments.

2. Fresco Buono technique – This European painting technique consists of a lime coat that has been thoroughly mixed with marble dust to prevent the colours from becoming dull and does not peel off. The painting is finished before the coat dries. The frescoes visible on the walls of several temples and palatial houses were executed during the historical period. Their style of preparing and characters painted suggest that they have not originated from Goa. Some elderly Goan artists are fully knowledgeable with fresco paintings. In spite of this no frescoes were made in Goa for significant period in past. (Khedekar, 2016)

3. Graffiti Art – This European-influenced art form appears to have emerged in Maharashtra which is one of Goa's borders, and can be found on the walls of various temples in Goa. The design is carved out on the wet plastered wall, and the exposed area is filled with a lime and red oxide mixture. Stencil designs are also used in various shapes and sizes and placed on the surface of the walls; colour is then filled in the cut out area. (Hindu Scriptures), (Chodankar.M.2018)

Goa is known for such creative activity through the books of artists and travellers and mendicants. Most of the early paintings and even the later creations use the subjects from Hindu pantheon, mythology and puranas. These paintings are hardly been seen due to the fad for the modern life which unkindly and cruelly destroyed these for plastering the walls for renovation of the houses. These creative works which were produced when the joint family system in Goa was deeply rooted in social and cultural life disappeared also because of decline in the system of joint living as well as dismantling of the family life.



But these creations still exist in a few traditional houses which are today almost in ruins or in tumbledown conditions. (Phaldesai, 2004)

'Kaavi' is the traditional art form of Goa. It's one of the most sacred and oldest art forms of the Goan cultural heritage. (Alam, 2017) It is considered to be Goa's gift to the world. It can be very rarely seen now on the walls of old Goan houses, temples, churches, and small shrines as it is vanishing with time and no necessary steps have been taken to revive it. Now this type of art can be seen in the neighbouring states like Maharashtra and Karnataka. Kaavi art is done on wet plaster in a manner similar to frescoes. (Gomes, 2014)

## Murals

### Introduction

The term mural is derived from the Latin word -"Murus" which means wall (Kaur, 2020). A mural is any work of art, painting, mosaic, collage relief, photograph (Kumar, (2020) that is painted or applied directly to a wall, ceiling, or other large permanent surface, whether inside (interior) or outside (exterior) of a building. Scholarly debates support the view that murals are both artistically and functionally important to society. (Poon, Stephen. 2016)

Space division is a very essential aspect in a mural design. The division of space has to coordinate as per the nature of the space available. The design is executed in accordance and in proportion to the space available so that it is befitting and creates a perfect harmony. Murals are created with consideration for the surrounding environment, architecture, sculpture, type of material and method, as well as distance, visibility, and light, as well as the amount of time spent by the public. (Appasamy, 1972)

As per the Philosophy of Susan Cervantes, "A mural is a bridge to the community. The artists communicate with the people; meetings are held to discuss the issues. The result is a reflection, a mirror of that community". (Cervantes,S.)

Mural is a painting or drawing on a wall as a media or a surface that is eternal. Besides being able to beautify the environment mural art is used as an effective medium to deliver or send message to the public. (Sakip et al. 2016)

In an interview with Satish Gujral in Lalit Kala contemporary no.-14, he has rightly said that, - "People has a wrong notion that any painting enlarge on a wall can be described as a mural. A short story cannot turn into a novel. Technically,

mural painting is a category in itself. It is neither a part of painting nor of architecture or sculpture, though it employs elements of all the three. Like for instance, a film which may be based on a short story, on music, on a play, but which in uniting all three produces an art form that is essentially cinematic". (Appasamy, 1972)

### Indian Murals

Mural painting in India can be traced back to pre historic and proto historic times. The earliest specimen was found in caves and rock shelters. These paintings are dated from 1200 BC to the tenth century AD. Mural paintings depict Indian spirituality as seen through the lens of ancient mythology and spirituality. There are thousands of wall paintings stretching from prehistoric times to the current day in various parts of India. Apart from the well-known mural paintings of Ajanta, Ellora, and Bagh, there are thousands of additional mural paintings that are extremely valuable but less well-known. (Kaur, 2020)

### Western Murals

Mural paintings, without a doubt, have been around as long as people, as a form of valuable testimony of life from prehistoric times to the present. People have left signs of their own existence in many places around the world, from the cave paintings at Lascaux Grottes in southern France to the street art murals of today. Many painters, including masters like Leonardo Da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti, favour this technique. (Kordic, 2015)

Tempera was used to create all of the Egyptian wall paintings. (Hamilton, 1904)

Lascaux is one of France's oldest Palaeolithic cave paintings. It is thought to be 20,000 years old, and the paintings depict mostly large animals that were once native to the area. (Bradshaw foundation, 2003)

Mural artists have developed several techniques to adapt to their canvases because murals cover quite large surfaces that may be of varying texture, constitution, and attributes. A fresco painting is without a doubt one of the oldest methods. Tempera, oil painting, acrylic painting, and painting with a brush, roller, or airbrush/aerosol are other materials commonly used in mural paintings. (Kordic, 2015) Marouflage was the most well-known. Westerners were the first to use this technique. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mural>)



### Murals in Goa

The practise of painting on walls began when cave people used charred twigs from their fires creating large sweeping strokes on the cave walls. Religious symbols or tribal records could have been depicted in the drawings of animals and hunters. Cave dwellers who lived possibly twenty-thousand years ago, these drawings undoubtedly created a new atmosphere. They were murals as well as wall paintings.

Murals on the walls of hotels, guest homes, and railway stations in the festive and peaceful state of Goa depict a complicated storey formation battle with daily happenings. At first view, these murals appear to perfectly integrate the Catholic and Hindu essence of the location. These paintings effectively show the dispersion within Goa, as they are connected to the emotions and sentiments of the residents and their blossoming culture. These murals depict individuals (both residents and outsiders), their attire, and behaviours, sometimes blending into the background and sometimes gently emerging to give visitors a fresh sampling of the essence of the location. Buildings (churches, cathedrals, huts, homes), beach life, and Goa's historical history are all on show as anecdotes.

Mario Miranda, the famed cartoonist and illustrator, was born in Goa. Murals are executed using his paintings and caricatures throughout the state. One can see his work at Madgaon railway Station, hotels, markets, cafés, bars, colleges and shacks. His animated group of forms excite the surrounding with love, filled with colour and narration of story on plain walls. Modern and recent things that come out from such recreations, has a mild influence of foreign wanderings into the fabric of real Indian identity.

One can find interesting works of artist Trindade on the walls of Casa De Povo, a community hall. Many hotels have various themes which depict stories related to Goa, such as wall painting remembering the Portuguese arrival in Goa executed in Hotel Mandovi, Panaji, and some attractive paintings on the walls of Mandala House in Mandrem.

St Monica and St Francis of Assisi's murals recall the combination of Indian and Western ingredients. They leave one with stories and memories gleaned from a rich heritage. (Bhattacharya, 2014)

Vishnu Kunkolienkar known for the striking murals on Hotel Mandovi in Panaji as well as another relief on the Mapusa Market Complex

done in Terracotta. His works exemplify the typical aspects of Goan life. This mural work was completed in 1960. (Chodankar, M. 2008)

The wall of Goa Chamber of Commerce & Industry (GCCCI) building features a massive and fantastic mural depicting Goa's industry and social life. The Chamber considered mosaic tiles and terracotta – a traditional Goan art form in options. Justin Lobo, a graduate of Goa College of Arts' first batch, was chosen to translate GCCCI's imagination on paper. Justin had previously worked for a private advertising agency before joining the police force as a photographer. He now works as a designer for the Goa government. Justin created a lovely collage that depicts the beauty and industry of Goa in perfect harmony. Finally it was executed by Master craftsman, Vilas Mandrekar, in fibre-glass keeping in consideration its long lasting and safe properties. (Goa Chamber, 2019)

Azulejo are hand-painted ceramic tiles that are pronounced in Portuguese as 'ah-zoo-le-zhoo'. These enticing and shiny tiles are the result of a great deal of hard work and dedication. It is Goa's hidden gem that deserves to be known and celebrated.

While Goa is well-known for its beaches, Azulejos should be recognised for their contribution to the state's exceptional beauty. It continues to be an important part of culture, architecture, and interior design.

It is becoming common to see attractive tiles with caricatures and religious themes on Goa's street. During the rule of Portuguese, they built many magnificent structures that we can observe even today. Azulejos is one of the significant contributions by the Portuguese in the art world. (Velha Goa, 2019)

Solomon Souza, an Israel-based artist; grandson of great artist F.N Souza has painted very large murals of few unsung heroes on the walls of the villages and towns. (Neurekar, 2019)

He was called by the serendipity art foundation to transform Goa's cityscape in 2019.

Solomon's work is described by Gonsalves as- "Solomon's work is unpredictable, free, and impulsive. He has mingled his style with the Goan style; his earlier works are completely different. The work he did here would fool anyone into thinking it was created by a Goan. He painted portraits of icons such as FN Souza, poet Eunice de Souza, jazz musician Chic Chocolate, and many others. Bright murals are now appearing in villages throughout North Goa". (Das, 2019)





Okuda San Miguel, a Spanish artist, painted two murals on the streets of Panjim which brought life and energy to the surrounding environment. Two beautiful murals full of the spectrum of light now support the walls of the city and even the hearts of the people. (Start Goa, 2019) Okuda was born in Santander, Spain in 1980. He currently resides and works in Madrid. He is known for his geometric structures and multicoloured patterns. His active participation in major social projects has elevated him one of the most recognized, liked and respected artists. (Ink and Movement, 2021)

Unlike paintings in galleries and museums, street art has a greater impact on daily interactions with people than the extensive documentation that often accompany institutionalised acts. However, because muralists are frequently underpaid, it is even more important to give them their due. (Greenberg,D., Smith,K., Teacher,S.)

## II. Conclusion

In introduction itself an attempt has been made by the researcher to explain that the people in Goa have a deeper interest in different types of arts but Goa does not have any unique identity in visual arts and that's because it was ruled by various dynasties in different parts of Goa before the arrival of Portuguese for dissimilar periods. (Khedekar,V. 2016)

It is very rightly and beautifully explained by the author Dhume about Goa that, "Traditions from a land where civilizations have collided have a certain soulfulness. The pot has been stirred, and the result is a lively brew with a thick consistency and plenty of flavour. As it lies in the sun, bathed by the sea, all religious rulers have touched this little piece of paradise". (Dhume, A.1986)

Different styles and mediums are used by the mural artists not only from Goa but around the world to execute their murals. Murals in Goa mostly have a Portuguese influence as they ruled Goa for 450 years. You can see tile painting (Azulejos) and mosaic work all around the state as this is was one of the things that Portuguese left behind. You will even find Terracotta works in many places like Ravindra Bhavan, Hotels, market places, offices etc both interior and exterior so it can be said that the murals in Goa are the mixture of both western and Indian culture.

Mosaic, hand tile painting, terracotta, broken tiles are in great trend in mural execution. Apart from these mediums, wall paintings are also in demand. Israel based artist Solomon Souza and

Spanish artist Okuda have also left their marks on the walls of Goa during Serendipity arts festival.

This research is the first attempt to study the historical background of the murals across the state and there is no much prior data available on this topic. There are many murals executed but very few artists have been mentioned.

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