

The Mhalsa Temple of Mardol: A Socio- Cultural Study

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that the data presented in this Dissertation report entitled, "The Mhalsa Temple of Mardol: A Socio-Cultural Study" is based on the results of investigations carried out by me in the Master of Arts in History at the D.D. Kosambi School of Social Sciences and Behavioural Studies, Goa University under the Supervision of Dr. Parag Datta Parobo and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of a degree or diploma by me. Further, I understand that Goa University or its authorities will be not be responsible for the correctness of observations / experimental or other findings given the dissertation.

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COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

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PREFACE

I was interested in studying temple of Mhalsa located at Mardol due to its central role in the life of village. This study is an investigation on the Mhalsa Temple and its influences on the communities of Mardol. It examines how the temple affects the culture and daily life of the people in Mardol.

An attempt is made to explore temple's history, traditions, and current role of the temple in Mardol's community. Attempts are made to understand how the temple impacts things like the local economy, traditions, and social connections among residents. By examining these aspects, the study aims to provide insights into how the Mhalsa temple shapes life in Mardol and why it's important to the community.

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GLOSSARY

Arti- a ritual performed to the deity

Amrit- nector

Adhyayas- chapter

Amritpatra- pot of nector

Asuras- the demons

Alankar- ornaments

Antrala- vestibule

Agrashala- resting place for pilgrims

Abhishekh- Hindu ritual of bathing

Acca- payment of monetary grants

Bhat- the one who performs puja

Bhavinas- who sweep and wash utensils

Bailadeira- the female dancers

Bhajans- devotional songs

Bazaar- local market places

Compromisso- temple statues dealing with the temple management

Chousasta- yogini- parivar devta in Mhalsa temple

Chaturbhuji- four armed

Chandasur- a demon

Chauk- open space

Chhatri- umbrella

Devtes- the one who carries mashal at the time of arti

Devdasis- temple servants

Daitya- a demon

Deepstambh- pillar of lamps

Dnyandeep- brass lamp

Dhwaja- flag

Divaja- hindu ritual

Forais- the plural form of Foral

Foral- definitive document that had the status of law and dealing with regimes of land use and specified revenue obligations.

Foros- rent

Ghadia- the person who look after temple activities

Gaudes- the people who cleans the surrounding area of temple

Gotra- lineage

Garbhagriha- main sanctum of the temple

Garhane- a ritual invoking divine blessings to create an atmosphere conducive to worship.

Gaunkars- male members who headed village community

Hajam- barber, one who shows mirror to the deity at the time of arti

Inam- type of grant

Jayanchi puja- the festival preformed in the Mhalsa temple

Jai- jasminum

Kulavi- lineages of mahajans belonging to of Atri, Bhardvaj, Garguea and Kaushik

katkars- one who assist ceremony of arti

Kalavantinis- singers and dancers in service to God.

Kirtans- narrating stories in praise of the deity

Kadyes- one who carries palkhies

Kansar- one who repair the utensils

Kumbhar- pot makers

Khadag- a weapon

Kurma- Avatar of lord Vishnu

Konkankhyana- marathi chronicle of

Karanda mukuta- headgear

Kuvalo- ashgourd

Kaul-prasad- an oracle

Koyto- implement used in the fields

Mohini- the avatar of lord Vishnu

Mahajan- founders of the temple

Mrudanga- musical instrument

Mashal- firelight

Malas- necklaces

Mukhmandapa- entrance hall

Madval- the person who wash the clothes

Mahapuja- a ritual that involves worship of deity

Nupur- anklet

Nagara- the sound or rhythm produced by musical instruments such as drums, bells, or gongs during religious ceremonies.

Nirmalya visarjan- a ritual

Nall-vido- coconut and arecanut

Palkhi- palanquins

Perny- the person who organises Zagor

Puja samagri- items required to perform puja

Pakhwaaj- musical instrument

Pradakshina- walking around

Prasad- sacred food

Ratha- chariot

Rumdaped- a tree

Sevekaries- the temple servants

Sonar- the one who makes jewellery

Sutar- the wood repairer

Shaligrama- a rare stone

Samudramanthan- churning of ocean

Sabhamandapa- assembly hall

Shikhara- the towering that crowns the garbhagriha

Seva- service

Trishula- trident

Tulsi vrindavan- sacred structure found in front of the Hindu households and temples, dedicated to the worship of Holy basil plant.

Taal- musical instrument

Tulabhar- offerings made in temples

Vajantris- the people who plays musical instruments

Zatra- fair

ABSTRACT

The study focuses on understanding the social and cultural importance of the Mhalsa Temple in Mardol, Goa, going beyond its religious aspects. Through historical analysis, observing community practices, and engaging with locals, the research aims to uncover how the temple has evolved and its impact on local traditions and social ties. Additionally, it explores how the temple contributes to the local economy through tourism, supporting businesses, and preserving cultural practices. Overall, the study seeks to shed light on the enduring significance of the Mhalsa Temple in shaping Mardol's cultural identity and the lives of its residents.

Keywords: Mhalsa temple, *Compromisso*, temple economy, socio-religious life, mahajans, temple servants

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Chapter 1- Introduction

Goa, a kaleidoscope of different cultures, rituals, festivals, food, dresses, traditions and great historical heritages lies on the Western Coast of India. Goa is also known for temples and they are not only religious institutions but the important centres for developing socio-cultural landscape. The Hindu temple has been referred as *devgriha* /*devayatana* /*devalaya* in the Sanskrit, meaning 'abode of God' since the early first millennium CE.¹ Temples have been given importance by historians for various reasons. They enable us to understand the spread of the empire, its role in legitimisation of royal authority and spread of agriculture, trade and urbanism.² In other words, temples are discussed not only as religious institutions but as monuments commemorating economic, social and political life.

¹ Patrick Olivelle, ed., *The Temple in Sanskrit Legal Literature: Archaeology and Text: The Temple in South Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 192.

² Himanshu Prabha Ray, Salila Kulshreshtha, and Uthara Suvrathan, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Hindu Temples Materiality, Social History and Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2023), 1.

The study of temples provide valuable insights into religious, cultural, historical, social and architectural aspects. Temples serve as a hub for religious activities influencing social cohesion and community dynamics. Goa was ruled by many dynasties who have left behind their legacy on Goa. The Holy Office of Inquisition in Goa was a disastrous event for the Old Conquest where the temples were destroyed several deities were shifted from Tiswadi, Salcete and Bardez to neighbouring territories. Most of the deities were shifted to the New Conquests, the territories that were annexed by the Portuguese at the end of the seventeenth century.

This study is based on the temple dedicated to deity Mhalsa in Mardol. Studying the temple and the deity, attributes, rituals, and accounts of origin can provide insights into the local religious landscape. The temple as an monument may have gone and rebuilt at different times, yet it can offer a perspective of how social changes and cultural transformation happened.

Mhalsa temple is situated in Mardol about a distance of 22 kms from Panaji and 7 kms from Ponda. Mhalsa has been recognised as Mohini- the avatar of Lord Vishnu. Mhalsa is one of the prominent deities that was shifted from Verna to Mardol when the Portuguese captain Diego Fernandes destroyed Hindu temples in Salcete. It has

been estimated that were approximately around 280 temples were destroyed in 1567.³ As a result, the deity of Mhalsa was shifted to Mardol and a temple was built in 1567.

Beyond its architectural and historical dimensions, the temple plays a central role in the life of Mardol community. Daily rituals, festivals and cultural activities performed in the temple posed as a communal touchpoint fostering a sense of belonging among the residents. The Mhalsa goddess has noteworthy references in the *Sahyadrikhanda* of *Skandapurana*. *Sahyadrikhanda* says that Lord *Parshurama* created the land of Goa and settled Brahman families from northern India. In the *Varunapur Mahatamya* in *Sahyadrikhanda*, the origin of deity Mhalsa is mentioned. According to the verses, when the demon Chandasur was disturbing the harmony of people in Varunapur and Lord Parshurama requested the people to meet deity Mhalsa to seek her help and accordingly people did so. The deity blessed the people and killed the demon and restored peace in Varunapur.⁴

³ A. K. Priolkar, *The Goa Inquisition: The Terrible Tribunal for the East* (Bombay: A. K. Priolkar, 1961), 62-84.

⁴ Gajananshastri Gaitonde, ed., *Shri Skandapurana-Sahyadrikhanda* (Mumbai: Shri Katyayani Publications, 1992), 259, 263.

According to *compromisso*, the statutes of temple, the founders of the temple were *kulavi mahajan*. The right of the *mahajans* is hereditary and passed on from generation to generation allowing only males to become members of the *mazania*. All the rights and duties of *mahajan* are given in *compromisso*. The *sevekaries* of the *devasthan* are mentioned as *Bhata* (performs *puja*), *Ghadia* (one who cleans the temple utensils and light the lamps), *Katkars* (one who assist ceremony of *arti*), *Kalavantinis* (singers and dancers in service of God) *Vajantris* (who plays instruments), *Bhavinas* (sweep and wash cooking utensils) *Mrudanghi* (who plays the instrument *mrudanga* during the *kirtans*), *Gaudes* (one who cleans the surrounding of the temple area), *Madval* (the washermen), *Hajam* (it is the duty of *Hajam* to show mirror to the deity at the time of *arti*), *Kadyes* (one who carries the *palkhies*), *Devtes* (who holds *mashal* at the time of *arti*), *Sonar* (polishes the jewellery given to the deity by *mahajans*), *Sutar* (the repairer in the works of *devasthan*), *Perny* (one who organises *Zagor*), *Kansar* (one who repairs the metal utensils of the *devasthan*), *Loha*, *Kumbhar* (pot makers) and *Ilamtdar* (one who looks after the feast and festivals of the temple).⁵

⁵ “*Compromisso de Devalaia Xri Malsa e suas filiais Mardol*,” in *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 51, 27 June 1911, 89-102.

1.1 Research problem

There are significant studies on temples in Goa, but no much research is done on Mhalsa. This study is aimed at understanding the Mhalsa deity and temple within its region. It focuses on the intersection between the deity, culture and community in the context of Mhalsa temple, Mardol.

1.2 Hypothesis

The study hypothesizes that the Mhalsa deity and its temple at Mardol not only serves as a religious space but also as a social and economic institution that influence community identity.

1.3 Objectives

The present study is an attempt to deal with the following aspects of the research problem:

1. To examine the historical background of the temple.
2. To understand rituals of deity Mhalsa and her attributes.
3. To explore temple's role in social life and its economic networks.
4. To analyse the iconographical attributes, art and architecture of the temple.

1.4 Literature Review

A Socio-Cultural History of Goa from Bhojas to the Vijayanagara by V. R. Mitragotri gives the political, social and cultural history of Goa.⁶ It explains different types of worship prevalent in Goa. It is an important work to understand etymology of the deity. The author highlights different aspect like role of communities, customs, traditions, deities, education and society. Era of *Shakti* cult has been seen during the 900 A.D. to 1200 A.D. Mitragotri has described the deity giving different attributes. His work is useful in terms of understanding the deity. He has mentioned that Mhalsa is a folk deity and also he discusses about *Chousasta- yogini*, a *parivar devata* in Mhalsa temple that was transferred from Verna after the destruction of temples by Portuguese.

In *Devabhoomi Gomantak*, Vinayak Narayan Shenvi Dhume discusses about different temples that are present in Goa.⁷ It also describes the history of the temples and their management. It

⁶ V. R. Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural History of Goa from Bhojas to the Vijayanagara* (Panaji: Institute Menezes Bragança, 1999).

⁷ Vinayak Narayan Shenvi Dhume, *Devabhoomi Gomantak* (Mahim: All India Saraswat Foundation, 1988), 49-72

discusses history of the Mhalsa temple. It deals with the destruction of temples in Goa by the Portuguese and shifting of the gods and goddesses to New Conquest.

A. B. de Bragança Pereira's *Ethnography of Goa Daman and Diu* gives information regarding the Hindu religion and various castes associated with temple service.⁸ The meaning of the Mhalsa deity is given as the greatest deity. We get the brief ideas about the cult of Shaivism and Vaishnavism in Goa. Goa was a part of Satavahanas and in their inscriptions there are reference to Krishna indicating the cult of Vaishnavism.⁹ Some Hindu population of Goa followed the Shaivism of Shankaracharya and Vaishnavism of Madhavacharya. It is said that *Sashtikars and Bardezkar*s were followers of Vaishnavism.¹⁰

⁸ A.B.de Bragança Pereira, *Ethnography of Goa, Daman and Diu*, trans. Maria Aurora Couto (New Delhi: Penguin, 2008), 222.

⁹ Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural History of Goa*, 98-99.

¹⁰ Bragança Pereira, *Ethnography of Goa, Daman and Diu*, 30, 221-224.

Rui Gomes Pereira's *Goa: Hindu Temples and Deities* gives a brief history of most of the temples in Goa.¹¹ *Mahajan* are said to be the founders of the temple. *Maha* is 'great' and *Zan* is a 'person'. The *mahajan* of the Mhalsa temple belong to the Gaud Saraswat Brahmin caste and to Atri, Bhardwaja, Gargueu and the Dessais of Verna of Kaushik gotra. Oath taking rituals are mentioned.

Luis de Assis Correia's *Goa Through the Mists of History from 10000 B.C.- A.D. 1958: A Select compilation on Goa 's Genesis* discusses the Muslim rule over Goa and its influence on architecture of the temples.¹² The Safa Shaura masjid build by Ali Adil Shah in Ponda and the Namazga Mosque built by Akbar in Bicholim are an example of the Muslim architecture and influence in Goa.

¹¹ Rui Gomes Pereira, *Goa: Hindu Temples and Deities* (Panaji: Printwell Press, 1978), 190-191.

¹² Luis de Assis Correia, *Goa Through the Mists of History From 10,000 BC- 1958, A Select Compilation on Goa's Genesis* (Panjim: Maureen Publishers, 2006), 124-125, 168.

Narayan Bhaskar Nayak's *Gomantakiya Devalaye* discusses the temples of Shiva and Vishnu.¹³ It also explains how the temples were there in pre-colonial period. It also discusses the origin of the deity Mhalsa. In 1540, Fr. Minguel Vaz destroyed 160 temples in Tiswadi as given in Tombo da Ilha de Gôa e das Terras de Salcete e Bardez. In 1573, the Franciscan missionaries destroyed 175 temples in Bardez to carry the conversion process. The *mahajans* of the temples took the deity and fled to the Ponda in New Conquests which was under the rule of Adil Shahi of Bijapur.

Indra Prabhushastri's study "Image Worship of the Puranic Deities in Goa: A Critical Study" discusses the forms of image worship of Puranic deities in different parts of Goa from ancient times to the twentieth century. It also gives information on the history of the Mhalsa temple. It has highlighted different legends associated with the deity.¹⁴

¹³ Narayan Bhaskar Nayak, *Gomantakiya Devalaye* (Margao: Mitra Publications, 1958), 5-28.

¹⁴ Indra Prakash Prabhushastri, "Image Worship of the Puranic Deities in Goa: A Critical Study," (Ph.D diss., Goa University, 2022), 199-203

Shree Mahalasa Saunsthan, a temple book provides information about the temple, its management and different rituals that are performed. The deities which are present along with deity Mhalsa are also mentioned. The annual calendar of festivals is provided and discusses about the facilities available in the temple premises.¹⁵

Samita Gupta's article "Indo-European Temples of Goa" states that the temples in Goa are to some extent has influence of Muslim architecture.¹⁶ This is largely because Goa was under Adil Shahi rule. Gupta also discusses about the Portuguese influence on temples of Goa. Gupta highlights the unique synthesis that occurred during this period where local artisans merged traditional temple architecture with European styles including Boroque brought by the Portuguese.

Rajendra Kerkar's *Natural Heritage of Goa* focuses on the tradition of *Jayanchi Puja* a ritual performed by *Fulkar* Naik community of

¹⁵ *Shree Mahalasa Saunsthan* (Mardol: Shree Mahalasa Saunsthan, 2005).

¹⁶ Samita Gupta, "Indo-European Temples of Goa," *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute* 51/52 (1991): 479–88, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42930431>.

Mardol.¹⁷ The community grows *jai* (*Jasminum*) climbers on the slopes of Mardol. It describes how the festival is being celebrated and through which we get to know the profession of the village communities as this helps most of the women communities of Mardol by providing seasonal source of livelihood.

Goa by Romesh Bhandari is all about Goan history from pre-historic era to post-colonial Goa.¹⁸ It explores Goa before coming of the Portuguese and also after they went out. The spread of Christianity is discussed with the advent of the Portuguese. It gives details about the Portuguese architecture in Goa. The impact of the Portuguese conquest of Goa is discussed giving examples of temples being destroyed and effects on the society.

Padmaja Kamat's study "Ponda: A History of Temples" discusses about the temple of Mhalsa Narayani.¹⁹ It gives information on the

¹⁷ Rajendra Kerkar, *Natural Heritage of Goa* (Panjim: Broadway Publishing House, 2016), 47-49

¹⁸ Romesh Bhandari, *Goa* (New Delhi: Lotus Collection, 1999), 145.

¹⁹ Padmaja Vijay Kamat, "Ponda: A History of Temples" (Phd diss., Goa University, 2011), 273-347.

history of Salcete, a region where the temple was originally situated. It also highlights the cult of Mhalsa and the rituals of the temple.

V. Vaidya's *Shree Mhalsa Devasthan* is an important work that discusses about the Mhalsa temple and deity.²⁰ It gives details on the origin of the deity, shifting of deity and construction of new temple. Vaidya describes the deity and gives details on *mahajans* and the families involved in service to the deity. It is a good source for study of the *Mhalsa* temple as it contains relevant details of how the temple was earlier in Verna and what were the reasons for the shifting of the temple to New Conquests.

Anant Ramkrishna Sinai Dhume's *The Cultural History of Goa from 10000 B.C.—1352 A.D.* discusses about the Parshurama legend and reclamation of land from sea for establishing settlements of people.²¹ It explains the geography of Goa. It also gives information on the dynasties that ruled Goa and their inscriptions through which we can

²⁰ V. Vaidya, *Shree Mhalsa Devasthan* (Khanapur: Dhananjay Press, 1932), 1-26.

²¹ Anant Ramkrishna Sinai Dhume, *The Cultural History of Goa From 10000 B.C. to 1352 A.D.* (Panaji: R. A. S. Dhume, 1986), 183.

understand socio-political and economic life. The book provides insights regarding the early temple worship.

Goa: Land, Life and Legacy by Vinayak Vishnu Khedekar reveals the livelihood of Goan people along with their cultural identity.²² The book contains the information regarding the education, language, administration, culture, agriculture. It details about the gods and deities which are worshipped over years. It discusses about the societal patterns and different customs of people living in Goa.

A.K Priolkar's *The Goa Inquisition: The Terrible Tribunal for the East* primarily focusses on the Portuguese in Goa in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.²³ It has important details on Portuguese religious policy and the working of Holy Office of Inquisition. While the main focus of this work is on Christianity, it gives details on the temples destroyed in Salcete.

²² Vinayak Vishnu Khedekar, *Goa: Land, Life and Legacy* (Panaji: Directorate of Art and Culture, Government of Goa, 2016).

²³ Priolkar, *The Goa Inquisition*, 62-84.

The Tulsi and the Cross: Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter in Goa gives information about the Portuguese empire in India.²⁴ It deals with the Portuguese impact on the society of Goa and also the classification among the caste and class is discussed. The communities and their customs along with the deities are described. The book speaks about the age-old rituals in the temples which are specifically about the *devdasis*, *kalavantas* (female dancers) and *bailadeira*. It has a small paragraph where it mentions about the sculptor *Sahastrapall* who was appointed to make the sculpture of the deity Mhalsa.

Gazetteer of the Union Territory: Goa Daman and Diu edited by V.T. Gune discusses history of Goa from earliest times to the post-colonial Goa.²⁵ It gives the ethnographical details of the Goan territory. It details about the history and the culture of Goa. It gives information on the people, geography, industries, economy, administration, education and places. It explores different

²⁴ Rosa Maria Perez, *The Tulsi and the Cross: Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter in Goa* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2011).

²⁵ V. T. Gune, ed., *Gazetteer of the Union Territory: Goa Daman and Diu*, vol. I (Panaji: Gazetteer Department, 1979), 833-834.

occupations practiced by people in Goa. It is good source for the study of the Goan history and the three is a brief discussion on the deities.

Goa and Portugal: Their Cultural Links is a book that contained the articles by different scholars based on Goan history. It explores the socio-cultural life of the people.²⁶ It also includes Goa's relation with other foreign countries. The book speaks about impact of the Portuguese on the Goan culture. It gives information about the Christian architecture influence in Goa brought by the Portuguese. The scholars has identified the presence of the Portuguese language and culture in the traditions of the people of Goa.

Goa Gold Goa Silver Her History Her Heritage: From Earliest Times To 2019 discusses Goa from its early period to the contemporary times. It explains the etymology of Goa, the people

²⁶ Charles J. Borges and Helmut Feldmann, eds., *Goa and Portugal: Their Cultural Links* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1997), 23-44.

and the land.²⁷ It discusses about the pre-colonial dynasties that ruled Goa. The socio-cultural history is explained in all phases that is Pre-Portuguese, Portuguese and Post Portuguese Goa. The book deals with the freedom movements and revolts against the Portuguese to free Goa. It also focusses on the impact of Portuguese on the socio-religious lives of the Goan people. It has reference to Mhalsa temple where it says that the temple was rebuilt under the patronage of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaja.

The Portuguese and the Socio-Cultural Changes in India, 1500-1800 contains the articles by the scholars which put focuss on the Portuguese conquest and the social changes that happened between 1500-1800.²⁸ It discusses the activities of the Christian missionaries in India. The contribution of the Portuguese in the education and literature is given. The book provides insights about the religious

²⁷ Prajal Sakhardande, *Goa Gold Goa Silver Her History Her Heritage: From Earliest Times to 2019* (Panaji: Broadway Publishing House, 2019), 108-130.

²⁸ K.S. Mathew, Teotonio R.de Souza and Pius Malekandathil, eds., *The Portuguese and the Socio-Cultural Changes in India, 1500-1800* (Tellicherry: Institute for Research in Social Sciences and Humanities, 2001).

policies of the Portuguese in Goa. In whole sense, the book focusses on how the Portuguese influenced in molding the socio-cultural pattern of India.

Apart from the above studies on history of Goa that gives details on temples there are important analytical works that has contributed towards our understanding of temple. Arjun Appadurai's *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule: A South Indian Case* explores the dynamics and religious practices of South India during the British period.²⁹ The book focusses on how the colonial rule influenced temple politics in the Madras Presidency. Appadurai explores the tensions and negotiations that took place between indigenous worship traditions, colonial administration and the claims over temple by communities. More importantly, it sheds light on the impact on local communities, intersection of religion, culture and governance in the South Indian context.

Joanne Punzo Waghorne's *Diaspora of the Gods: Modern Hindu Temples in an Urban Middle- Class World* explores contemporary Hindu temple construction and worship among the urban middle

²⁹ Arjun Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

class.³⁰ It examines how these temples adapt to the changing socio-economic landscape. Waghorne explains the architecture, rituals and community engagement of the temples providing information into the evolving religious traditions of the Hindu diaspora. The temple is not only the centre of worship but is also an institution for the growth of community and its cultural expression.

Himanshu Prabha Ray, Salila Kulshreshtha, and Uthara Suvrathan's edited volume *The Routledge Handbook of Hindu Temples: Materiality, Social History and Practice* is a comprehensive study on Hindu temples.³¹ It focusses on the multiple aspects of the temple, social history and various practices associated with them. It also examines the architectural features and provides insights into how the temples have evolved over time. More importantly, it explores the diverse rituals performed in the Hindu temples in several regions.

³⁰ Joanne Punzo Waghorne, *Diaspora of the Gods: Modern Hindu Temples in an Urban Middle- Class World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³¹ Himanshu Prabha Ray, Salila Kulshreshtha, and Uthara Suvrathan, ed. *The Routledge handbook of Hindu Temples: Materiality, Social History and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2023).

Pedro Pombo's article "From the Forest to the Valley: Temple Architecture, Landscape and History of Goa" provides an overview of the historical and cultural context of Goa during the Portuguese rule from 1510 to 1961.³² In the sixteenth century, Portuguese rule in Goa led to the complete destruction of local mosques and temples converting people to Catholicism. Temples were replaced by Churches and their assets were transferred. There were power struggles between Marathas and Mughals influencing the coastal regions. The king of Saundem became the ally of Portuguese in mid eighteenth century. The article has a subtheme of "travelling deities" which has reference to Mhalsa temple. The paragraph briefly mentions that the Christian visitors from deity's village of origin have precedence in rituals.

The article "Goddess Santeri and the Female Deities in Goa: Reaccessing the Pre- Portuguese Sacred Landscape Through the Earliest Forais" by Cibeale Aldrovandi explores the pre-Portuguese sacred landscape of Goa focussing on Goddess Santeri and other

³² Pedro Pombo, "From the Forest to the Valley: Temple Architecture, Landscape and History in Goa," in Ray, Kulshreshtha, and Suvrathan, *The Routledge handbook*, 433–455.

female deities.³³ The study reveals the Portuguese colonialism including mass destruction, conversion and deity migration. Overall, it shows how the worship of goddesses in Goa have evolved. The *Forais* of Salcete, Bardez and Ilhas are historical documents that details the properties of Hindu temples in Goa especially transfer of properties to Christians during Portuguese colonialism. The study looks at these documents emphasizing how they unintentionally help us to understand how the Hindu sacred places were like before the Portuguese.

“Shrines of Goa: Iconographical Formation and Popular Appeal” is an article by Alexander Henn explores the religious landscape of Goa, focussing on the different shrines that are there in the region.³⁴ The distinction between the temples, shrines and churches is

³³ Cibebe Aldrovandi, “Goddess Santeri and the Female Deities in Goa: Reassessing the Pre- Portuguese Sacred Landscape Through the Earliest Forais,” *Indian Journal of Archaeology* 5, no.2 (2020), 1333-1361, <http://ijarch.org/Admin/Articles/5-18thIssueIJA.pdf>

³⁴ Alexander Henn, “Shrines of Goa: Iconographical Formation and Popular Appeal,” *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 18 (2018): 1–17, <https://journals.openedition.org/samaj/4533>

explored revealing complexities rather than actual differences. The importance of deities and rituals is highlighted.

1.5 Methodology

The research is based on ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative interviews with the local people and the temple members. This study is also based on archival records for understanding the historical context.

1.6 Chapterisation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter One explains the research conceptualisation. It introduces the topic and mentions the aims and objectives and hypotheses of the research. It also states the research problem and methodology that has been used in the study. It also deals with the of literature review on this subject.

Chapter Two explores the origin of the Mhalsa temple. The chapter discusses the myths and legends that contributed to the cultural and religious significance of the temple. It provides an overview of historiography surrounding the Mhalsa temple. The chapter also identifies the religious and cultural significance of the deity. It discusses the attributes and roles attributed to Mhalsa in local

mythology. It studies the linguistic roots and meaning behind the name Mhalsa. It also studies the iconography of deity and art and architecture of the Mhalsa temple. It discusses symbolic gestures and attributes associated with the deity. It provides detailed analysis on the architectural features of the temple.

Chapter Three deals with the rituals of the temple and its social space. It explores how temple acted as gathering place for social activities. It gives details about festivals celebrated in the Mhalsa temple. It provides an overview of daily or annual rituals conducted in the temple exploring the importance to the community. The chapter discusses about the role of *mahajans* in the temple administration and the rules of the temple are examined.

Chapter Four is all about the temple and the village economy. It explores how the Mhalsa temple carried a significant economic function of production and redistribution of resources and contribute to the local community of the village. Chapter 5 is conclusion.

1.7 Scope and relevance

The present study has concentrated on the deity Mhalsa and her temple in Mardol. It will enable us to understand relationship

between deity, temple and communities and why it matters to different sections of society.

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Chapter 2- Historical Background: Origin, Legends,
Iconography and the Art and Architecture of the temple

Temples hold a special place in human civilization, serving as centers of spirituality, culture, and community for centuries. With their towering spires, intricate carvings, and serene atmospheres, temples offer a glimpse into history and religious devotion. From the grandeur of ancient temples built by powerful empires to the humble shrines tucked away in remote corners of the world, each temple tells a unique story of faith, tradition, and architectural brilliance. Throughout history, temples have been revered as sacred spaces where devotees seek solace, guidance, and divine blessings. They are places of worship where rituals are performed, prayers are offered, and festivals are celebrated with fervent devotion.

Beyond their religious significance, temples also serve as cultural landmarks, embodying the artistic and architectural achievements of their respective civilizations. The background of temples is diverse. Moreover, temples often serve as repositories of historical and mythological lore, preserving tales of gods, heroes, and epic battles

for future generations. This chapter examines history of temple, origin, legends, iconography, art and architecture.

The Mhalsa Temple in Mardol stands as a symbol of devotion and cultural heritage. The Mhalsa Temple is steeped in mythology and legend, with its origin dating back to ancient period. Located in the Ponda taluka, in the village of Priol, history of temple signifies its glory and also the resistance of building the temple at current place.

2.1 Origin of the temple

The Mhalsa temple of Mardol was originally situated at Verna in Salcete taluka. It has noteworthy references in *Sahyadrikhanda* of *Skandapurana*.¹ In this Purana, there are two *adhyayas* (Chapters) entitled “Varunapur Mahatmya” in the section of *Sahyadrikhanda* and the legend of Shree Mahalasa of Varunapur is narrated in these two *Adhyayas*. It reads as below:

Varunapur is a very beautiful, rich place abundant with precious gems. Once upon a time, the people of the place performed *Jyotistom Yadnya* to invoke divine blessings of Lord Parashurama for the welfare of the people. During the performance, Parashurama

¹ Gajananshastri Gaitonde, ed., *Shri Skandapurana-Sahyadrikhanda* (Mumbai: Shri Katyayani Publications, 1992), 259,263.

made an appearance before the devotees who were overjoyed at his sight. Parashuram then instructed Varuna to construct a beautiful temple at the place for him. Then Varuna created a beautiful temple studded with gold and precious stones and Lord Parshurama named that place after Varuna which came to be popularly known as Varuna Puri. Parshurama blessed all the Brahmins present there to share their knowledge of the Vedas and charity every day. The place prospered well.

V. Vaidya in his book *Shree Mhalsa Devasthan* discusses the history and origin of the deity.² He says that when the deity appeared in front of the shepherd, she told him to call his master. As master was not at home, shepherd talked about this incident to the son-in-law of his master whose name was Mhalsharma. He listened to the shepherd and went to the hills. To his surprise, the deity was still there with the rays coming out of her body. She told him that she wanted to reside permanently in that area and instructed him to dig in the area where she appeared and then disappeared at that moment. Mhalsharma spread this news to the entire village and the villagers came to the site where all this happened. They decided to dig the

² V.Vaidya, *Shree Mhalsa Devasthan* (Khanapur: Dhananjay Press,1932), 14-16.

ground where they found the *Chaturbhuji* idol of Goddess Mhalsa. One hand of the deity was carrying the *amritpatra*, so they thought that it was the Mohini avatar of Lord Vishnu and named it as Mhalsa. They decided to build the temple for her and accordingly donated the money. Mhalsharma donated his entire money in the building of the temple. The temple which was there earlier in Verna, that place is now called as Old Mardol.³ The idol of Mhalsa was carved out of rarest stone called Shaligrama. Varuna Puri, a place resided by the deity Mhalsa was regarded as very sacred and revered place during those days.

In 1510, Afonso de Albuquerque conquered Goa with the help of Mhal Pai Vernekar and Timmaya. In the beginning Portuguese maintained peace of the region and did not interfere in the religious matters. Subsequently, in 1540, Portuguese started destroying the temples in Tiswadi and built churches in their places.⁴ Several temples were destroyed. In 1543, Portuguese captured Bardez and

³Vinayak Narayan Shenvi Dhume, *Devabhoomi Gomantak* (Mahim: All India Saraswat Foundation, 1988), 50.

⁴ Francisco Pais, *Tombo da Ilha de Goa e das Terras de Salcete e Bardez* (Notas Historicas Finais por Panduranga S.S. Pissurlencar) (Bastora: Tipografia Rangel, 1952).

Salcete and started destroying temples in these regions. Looking at the severe destruction caused by the Portuguese, some people of the village protected the idols and shifted them to the neighbouring Ponda region which was under the rule of Adil Shahi of Bijapur. More importantly, Ponda was ruled by the local feudal lords who were appointed by the Bijapur sultanate.

2.2 Legends

Before the widespread use of writing, societies relied on oral tradition to pass down stories and historical accounts from one generation to the next. Legends were an integral part of this oral tradition, serving as a means of preserving historical events, figures, and cultural practices. Legends often contain elements of historical events or figures, embellished with mythological or supernatural elements. Over time, these legends become part of a society's cultural memory, shaping its collective understanding of the past. Legends are often subject to interpretation and reinterpretation over time. As societies evolve and historical perspectives change, legends may be reinterpreted to reflect new understandings of the past. This ongoing process of interpretation helps shape and reshape historical narratives.

With reference to the deity Mhalsa, we can find that in the *Sahyadrikhanda* of *Skandapurana*, it was mentioned that the Lord Parashurama created the land of Goa and settled the Brahmins in the region along with their family deities.⁵ It is mentioned in the second *Adhyaya Mhalsecha Prabhav* that a demon called Chandasur was troubling and disturbing the harmony of the people of Verna. He was not allowing them to carry the religious activities. So, the people requested Lord Parashurama to protect their religious life. Parshurama told them to pray for Goddess Mhalsa to kill the demon. Accordingly, the people prayed to her. The deity appeared before them holding a *khadag*- a weapon to kill the demon.⁶ She beheaded him restoring the peace of the place. Mhalsa's intervention and subsequent defeat of the demon highlight her importance as a divine protector and guardian of religious faith. This narrative serves to reinforce the importance of Mhalsa as a revered deity in Goan mythology and highlights her enduring significance in the religious and cultural life of the region.

⁵ Gaitonde, ed., *Shri Skandapurana- Sahyadrikhanda*, 259, 263.

⁶ Indra Prakash Prabhushastri, "Image Worship of the Puranic Deities in Goa: A Critical Study" (Ph.D diss., Goa University, 2022), 198-203.

Another reference to the deity is mentioned in the *Bhagwat Purana* where Mhalsa is mentioned as the Mohini avatar of Lord Vishnu.⁷ As the story goes, it is said that during the time of *samudramanthana*, churning of ocean, all the Gods and demons were fighting to acquire the treasures from the ocean. A fierce conflict unfolded between the *asuras* (demons) and the *devas*, with the *devas* facing imminent defeat. Seeking a solution, the *devas* approached Brahma for guidance. Brahma advised them to churn the ocean of milk, where Vishnu resided, to obtain *amrit*, the divine nectar of immortality. Eager to save themselves, the *devas* embarked on this daunting task, using Mount Mandara as the churning rod and Vasuki, the king of serpents, as the rope. However, they soon realized they could not accomplish this feat alone. Desperate for assistance, they sought reconciliation with the *asuras* and asked for their help in churning the ocean. Together, they attempted to churn, but the mountain began to sink into the ocean. Vishnu then transformed into a colossal tortoise named Kurma and supported the mountain on his back, providing a stable base for the churning process to continue. As the churning resumed, the ocean yielded various treasures and blessings, including jewels, gold, the wish-

⁷ Padmaja Vijay Kamat, “Ponda: A History of Temples” (Ph.D diss., Goa University, 2011), 276.

fulfilling cow, and the goddess Laxmi herself. Despite these valuable discoveries, the churning continued.

After the *amrit*, the divine nectar of immortality, emerged from the ocean, the *asuras* immediately took possession of it. Sensing their intentions, Vishnu assumed the form of Mohini, a beautiful divine female. Unaware of Mohini's true identity but captivated by her allure, the *asuras* requested her to distribute the *amrit* among them. Mohini agreed but set a condition: they must not question her actions under any circumstances. Unaware of Mohini's identity and entranced by her charm, the *asuras* eagerly accepted her condition. However, she began by serving the nectar to the *devas* first, causing discord to erupt between the two groups.

Mohini, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, intervened to prevent the *asuras* from drinking the *amrit* and gaining immortality.⁸ Despite her efforts, one *asura* managed to sneak into the line and consume the *amrit*. Upon discovering this, Mohini swiftly severed the *asura's* head with Vishnu's *sudarshan chakra*. However, since the *asura* had already consumed the *amrit*, he became immortal. The severed head became known as Rahu, while the lower body portion became Ketu.

⁸Vaidya, *Shree Mhalsa Devasthan*, 1.

This transformative event is depicted in images of Mhalsa holding the *asura's* head and symbolizes the divine intervention of Mohini, revered by Hindus as a goddess. This Mohini avatar of Vishnu then came to be known as Mhalsa.⁹ It was also believed that Lord Shiva embraced the *Mohini* avatar of Vishnu. As Lord Shiva was very fascinated by the looks of *Mohini*, it was said that Goddess Parvati took the avatar of Mohini to marry Lord Shiva.¹⁰

In *Konkankhyana*, it is mentioned how the cult of goddess Mhalsa appeared in Verna.¹¹ It is the story which tells that the goddess appeared in front of the shepherd who was taking his cattle for grazing and in search of water. Suddenly the deity came in front and requested him to tell his master to meet her. The shepherd did not pay any attention to her request as he needed to do all his works before sunset. By looking at his efforts, the deity hit the ground with her anklet called as *nupur*, and suddenly a stream of water came out flowing on the ground. The shepherd got amazed and he realised that the lady is not any simple person, she might be a divine soul. So, the shepherd ran back to his master to convey the message given by the

⁹ Vaidya, *Shree Mhalsa Devasthan*, 1-2.

¹⁰ Kamat, "Ponda: A History of Temples", 285.

¹¹ Kamat, "Ponda: A History of Temples", 279-280.

deity. But unfortunately, the master was not at home, so he delivered the message to his son-in-law named Mhal Pai who belonged to the Kaushik *gotri* Brahmin. When he went to meet the lady, she expressed her wish to make a place for her worship.

Another reference is made in the *Sthalapuranas*, that the first temple of Goddess Mhalsa was built in Bicholim which was then destroyed by the Muslim influences.¹² During that time, the goddess wondered in form of a young girl to find a suitable place for her future dwelling. She arrived at Varuna Puri where there was no water facility. The deity appeared in the dream of a Brahmin where she requested him to find her a place for her worship.¹³ The goddess blessed the Brahmin with the water by hitting her feet on the ground and stream of water started flowing. Then the Brahmin conveyed this message to all the villagers and accordingly the temple was built.

Overall, legends serve as important sources of historical knowledge and cultural heritage. While they may not always provide accurate or verifiable accounts of the past, they offer valuable insights into how societies remember, interpret, and construct history.

¹² Kamat, “Ponda: A History of Temples”, 279.

¹³ Pai, *The Charitra of Goddess Shri Mahaalassa Naaraayani*, 170.

2.3 Iconography of the deity

We can see the *Chaturbhuji* idol of the deity Mhalsa made up of Shaligrama stone.¹⁴ The deity is in standing posture. The upper right hand of the deity is carrying the *trishula* (trident). In the lower right hand, the head of the demon and a sword is visible. In the upper left hand, the deity is holding a *Amrit Patra* as it reflects the Mohini incarnation of Lord Vishnu, while in the lower left hand she is carrying a severed demon head. At the left side, the animal is shown waiting to drink the blood which is dropping from the head. It was believed that in the lower left hand she is holding the head of *Chandasur* wherein in the lower right hand she is holding the hair of demon *Virochana*.¹⁵ The deity is standing on the body of the *Rahu*-a demon. The photo of the goddess worshipped in the shrine shows her wearing a *karanda mukuta*, *keyura*, three necklaces and the *malas* of flowers bangles and anklets.¹⁶ She adorns different *alankars* in the forms of Vishnu. She is the protector and hence the most important deity of the village community in Mardol.

¹⁴ Dhume, *Devabhoomi Gomantak*, 65.

¹⁵ Prabhushastri, "Image Worship of the Puranic Deities", 199-200.

¹⁶ Kamat, "Ponda: A History of Temples", 301.

2.4 Art and architecture of the temple

When going to the temple there is a small lane attached to the main road of Mardol. While passing through that lane we can see shops at both sides. When we enter through the main entrance, there is a huge *deepstambh*, standing before the temple. There is also an additional brass lamp pillar resting on the shell of a tortoise and with a figure of Garuda on the top. Temple was constructed in a rectangular form and it is consisted of *garbhagriha*, *antarala* and *mukhamandapa*. *Antarala* connects the main *garbhagriha* to the *chaul*.¹⁷ *Garbhagriha* is the auspicious place of the temple where the idol of Mhalsa is located. The temple has a huge *sabhamandapa* supported by the seven pillars on both sides with a wooden terrace on the top.¹⁸ The *sabhamandapa* is a place where the devotees meet. We can see the wooden carved pillars were standing in the mandapa. The sanctum had a domed *shikhara* and was capped with the *kalasha*. The niches in the *deepstambhas* showing the Portuguese architecture of the baroque style. The dome as a part of the architecture shows the influence of the Muslim architecture.

¹⁷ V. Gopala Rao, “Temples of Goa: An Architectural Study” (Ph.D diss., Goa University, 2003), 290.

¹⁸ Antonio De Menezes, *Goa: A Brief Historical Sketch Volume I* (Panjim: AMA Travels Publications, 1983), 21.

Dnyandeep is another unique feature of this temple. It is a giant brass lamp of height 12.3 metre.¹⁹ There is a *tulsi vrindavan* close to the temple. The roof of the temple is made up of copper sheets. In the *chauk* we can notice the motifs related to the mythological stories about incarnations of Lord Vishnu. The door between the *chauk* and *antarala* is carved out of silver plating. The rectangular layout and architectural features, such as the *deepstambh* and brass lamp pillar, signify auspiciousness and spiritual illumination. The presence of the idol of Mhalsa in the *garbhagriha* represents devotion to the deity and the fulfilment of religious practices.

The *sabhamandapa* serves as a gathering place for communal worship and social interaction. The tradition of keeping oil lamps burning continuously dates back to ancient times when electricity was not available. By keeping the lamps lit, the temple ensures that devotees have a clear and uninterrupted view of the idol, allowing for a deeper and more focused experience. This practice symbolizes the eternal presence of divine light and signifies the perpetuity of devotion to the deity. Additionally, keeping the lamps burning serves as a security measure for the valuable ornaments and offerings stored

¹⁹ Kamat, “Ponda: A History of Temples”, 304-305.

in the *garbhagriha*. In the absence of modern security systems, the constant illumination provided by the oil lamps acts as a deterrent against theft or tampering with the sacred objects kept within the sanctum. Overall, the practice of keeping oil lamps burning in temple *garbhagrihas* serves both symbolic and practical purposes. It ensures a continuous connection to the divine and provides security for the sacred belongings housed within the temple premises.

Chapter 3- Social Space and the Rituals of the Temple

Temple is a complex and multifaceted religious institution and is the center of tradition, spirituality and community. Beyond its architectural magnificent, temple serves as a hub where worshippers come together to engage in rituals and deepen spiritual bonds. Temple plays an important role in uniting people by providing common ground where individuals from diverse background come together and worship and celebrate.

3.1 Managing the Temple

The administration of the temple is important and it necessary to understand the administration of temple. *Compromisso* of Mhalsa temple was approved by the colonial state in 1911 and is an important source to understand administration, worship and the role of communities. It provides valuable insights and shows that the *mahajans* of Mhalsa temple belong to the Gaud Saraswat Brahmin caste comprising of four *gotras* namely *Atri*, *Bhardvaj*, *Garguea* and *Kaushik*. *Mazanias* are the association of people who were the

founders of Hindu temples.¹ According to Rui Gomes Pereira the word *mahajan* is derived from two words, *Maha* meaning big and *Jan* a person—meaning the prominent person.²

3.2 Mahajans and their rights

Mahajans of the temple have their rights hereditary in nature which are passed from generation to generation. According to the Article 7 of the *compromisso*, no person is allowed to become the *mahajan* of the temple other than the *gotras* mentioned above.³ Only the *kulavis* are allowed to become the *mahajan*. All the *mahajans* have equal rights in the management of the temple and in religious rituals. They elect the management committee who look after administration of the temple. The rights that are passed on from generation to them are stable and they enjoy special privileges in the temple matters.

The *mahajans* are responsible for governing Hindu temple bodies in Goa. Their role includes membership oversight, administrative

¹ Rui Gomes Pereira, *Goa: Hindu Temples and Deities* (Panaji: Printwell Press, 1978), 1.

² Rui Gomes Pereira, *Goa: Hindu Temples*, 1.

³ “*Compromisso de Devalaia Xri Malsa e suas filiais Mardol*,” in *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 51, 27 June 1911, 90.

control, legal representation, and safeguarding temple assets. They ensure proper temple governance, protect temple interests, and adhere to legal protocols. The *mahajans*, as governing bodies of Hindu temples, have the authority to temple properties, and manage temple finances. They must follow specific guidelines and obtain authorization for certain actions, ensuring transparency and compliance with legal regulations.

The *mahajans*, as governing bodies of Hindu temples are responsible for maintaining a catalogue of temple members and overseeing their enrolment and revision processes. They handle appeals, deliberations on budgetary matters, and election of managing committee members. They have the authority to impose penalties on members and associates for any violations. Members, in turn, have responsibilities such as participating in meetings, voting on important matters, and reporting any issues or grievances to the managing committee.

The *mahajans* have right to warn the *sevekaries* of the temple for their misbehaviour or the unfulfillment of their work. It is noted that all the *Mahajans* have the rights to check the financial stability of

the temple funds.⁴ Overall they play the important role in administering the temple. They also play key role in decision making.

3.3 Temple and social space

The temple stands as a timeless monument not just of religious devotion, but as a hub of social interaction. The temple evolved into social spaces. It facilitated people to perform rituals and provided an opportunity for people of various castes to interact. The social space includes the temple areas where people interact with each other and shares their stories while performing through cultural activities. These are the places where bonding occurs among people and there is sense of togetherness. These places include corridors, *mandapas*.

Agrashalas play a vital role in temple communities by providing accommodation for visitors and *mahajans*, fostering a sense of community cohesion. *Mahajans* often contribute funds for the construction of *agrashalas*, which are also used for hosting various community events such as weddings and religious ceremonies.

⁴ “*Compromisso de Devalaia Xri Malsa e suas filiais Mardol*,” in *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 51, 27 June 1911, 91.

These spaces serve as hubs for social interaction, facilitating the exchange of ideas and fostering a sense of belonging.

3.4 Sevekaries and their duties

The *sevekaries* which were in the duty of the deity includes *Bhats*, *Puranics*, *Ghadis*, *Katkar*, *Kalavantinis*, *Vajantris*, *Bhavinias*, *Mrudangui*, *Kirtani*, *Gaudes*, *Madval*, *Hajam*, *Kadyes*, *Devtes*, *Sonar*, *Sutar*, *Perny*, *Mahar*, *Kansar*, *Lohar*, *Kumbhar* and *Ilamtdars* as mentioned in the *compromisso*.⁵ Each members had to perform their duties failing which they would have to pay the fine or had to transfer their position to other. The *sevekaries* are the true source of energy that makes the temple alive by performing *kirtans* and *bhajans*. They provide major services to the temple. Their duties were highly specialised and were allotted traditionally to the specific caste of people who have performed these services from generations.⁶ At present times, the following *sevekaries* performed their duties in the Mhalsa temple of Mardol.

⁵ “*Compromisso de Devalaia*”, 94-98.

⁶ Saryu Doshi and P.P. Shirodkar, “Temple Sancturies: Expressions of Devotion” in *Goa Cultural Patterns*, ed. Saryu Doshi (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1983), 60.

Bhats-The person who performs the *Abhishekh* to the deity. All the ritual works are done in the presence of Bhat. It's his duty to see that all shlokas and mantras are covered while carrying the *puja*. They also have to perform *Ashta-vadan seva* on the festive occasions. It is the duty of *Bhats* to look after the arrangement of *puja samagri* which will be useful.

Ghadis- According to the *compromisso*, the person who cleans the temple premises and keeps the area clean. He was doing the duty to wash the silver, copper and brass utensils used in the temple. He was to look after the lamps throughout the day. He has to attend on all the occasions. It's his responsibility to look after all the lighting of the temple and also watch over the temple belongings. *Ghadis* were now not a part of this temple. As the old practices being modernized, they stopped the practice of sacrifice of animals. Instead the temple started new practice of cutting *Kuvalo* (ashgourd) as the minds of the people changed according to the contemporary thinking.

Puranic- The person who reads puran on the festivals and the one who assists the *arti* and *garhane*.

Katkar- The one who plays nagara and calls the devotees for the *arti*. He acts as a mediator between the *Mahajans* and the debtors of the temple. He attended all the temple ceremonies. He tells all the *sevekaries* the decisions made by the *Mahajans*. They are the one who takes the initiative during the time of *palkhi* procession.

Kalavantinis- They are the singing and dancing women who dance in praise of the deity. Their singing and dance was accompanied by *mrudang*. They dance on the eve of festivals and processions. They show their immense faith through their dance. It is noted that the house of the *Kalavantinis* was close by to the temple area. According to the oral interviews, it is said that the temple gave land to build the house for her to stay there. On the festival occasions, she comes and sing in praise of the deity. She was paid a fee by the temple authorities as a respect of her work.

Vajantris- They looked after all the instrument played in the temple during *arti* or any festivals. They used to play the *Pakhwaaj*, *taal*.

Bhavinas- They sweep and cleaned the entire area surrounding the temple on every Sunday. It's their responsibility to wash the cooking utensils.

Mrudangui- They played the *mrudanga* on th every occasion of *arti* and even gave accompany to the *kalavantinis* by giving them beats to dance and to sing

Kirtani- It is clearly impossible to see the absence of *kirtans* and *bhajans* in the temples. The people who are indulge in praising the god in their rythmic *abhangas* are known as *Kirtankars*. They performed the *kirtanas* on all religious occasions.

Gaudes- They carried the *Lalkhi*, during the festivals till the end of the ceremonies and to bring it back. They were given responsibility to build the *mandapa* of the areca nut trees by spending their own money.

Madval- All the clothes of the temple are washed by *Madval*. It's their duty to extend *payaghadi* when the *palkhi* enters the temple.

Hajam- *Hajam* was the barber who stands outside the *sabhamandapa* to show mirror to the deity. At the time of *arti* the sunlight which flashes on the mirror directly reflects on the deity. The deity can be seen properly with bright face and we can see the rays reflecting through the mirror.

Kadyes- They carry the *palkhies* of Mhalsa to Shantadurga on the festival days. They decorate the *ratha*, and bring it near the *Rumdaped* where the ladies of *Khadyes* made the offerings to the deity.

Devtes- They carried *mashal* in their hands at the time of *arti* and during the *palkhi* of the deity.

Sonar- The goldsmith is known as *Sonar* in Marathi. All the jewelleries of the deity are designed by *Sonar*. They were called on the occasion if the committee decided to make the new jewellery to the deity.

Sutar- He was hehe carpenter who looked after the repairs of the temple. He performed the duty to decorate the *Lalkhi* on the festive occasions.

Perny- His duty was to plan the performance of Zagor in the *sabhamandap*.

Kansar- He was the one who repairs the temple utensils by cotling it with tin.

Lohar- He used to do all the work of the temple mentioned by the committee.

Ilamtdar- They carried the divine *Chhatra*, *suryapan*, *toran*, *dhwaja*.

3.5 Exploring the temple rituals

Temple worship is about creating a sacred space where the divine presence can be experienced. Rituals play a crucial role in this process transforming ordinary places into divine grace. Through the performance of rituals, the worshippers see the temple with immense faith. They express their devotion by reciting the mantras and offerings prayers. Rituals also play an important role in preserving the age-old traditions.

Michael Willis discusses the concept of how *puja* evolved from Vedic rituals transitioning from domestic settings to public temple spaces.⁷ He explores the evolution of *puja* from its origins in Vedic rituals, which were initially conducted in domestic settings, to its transition into public temple spaces. This transition signifies a shift

⁷ Michael D. Willis, *The Archaeology of Hindu Ritual: Temples and the Establishment of the Gods* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 100.

in the focus of worship from private households to communal areas dedicated to religious practices. By moving rituals from homes to temples, puja became more accessible to a broader community, fostering collective participation in religious activities. This transformation not only democratized access to spiritual practices but also enhanced the social and cultural significance of temples as central hubs of religious life and communal identity.

The *pradakshina* around the sanctum allows the devotees to see the architectural significance of a temple as a whole. The temple rituals start with the lighting of 24 *nandadeeps*. A signal is given by beating the drums to start the rituals. First of all there will be *Nirmalya visarjan* where the old flowers are removed and *abhishekh* is done followed by the *kumari pujan*. After that the deity is dressed and then *mahapuja* is performed. *Garhane* is said for the betterment of the devotees. After that one can enjoy the flavour of *prasad*.

In the evening, there used to be the programme of *kirtan* where the Purana is read. Followed by the dance of *kalavantinis* but now it seems to be disappeared. During the *palkhi* time, the *Kalvantinis* sings in front of the deity. *Arti* is first performed for Sateri. On every Sunday there used to be the *palkhi* procession where the large numbers of *mahajans* and villagers participate in the procession. On

that occasion we can see all the *sevekaries* of the temple present for the occasion.

Mhalsa regarded as the Mohini avatar of Vishnu is dressed up with different attires and ornaments on the festivals. We can see the different dressing style during the Navaratri where the deity is adorned with different colour attires and given certain posture. She is dresses up as Vithoba on *Ashadhi* and *Kartiki Ekadashi*. On *Anant Chaturdashi*, the deity is dressed as *Sheshashayani* Vishnu.

Temple tanks are also important source for temple rituals as it provides water to perform *abhishekh*. We can see the sacredness of the water through myths like churning of the ocean and descent of Ganga River. This reflects the connection between the deity, the land and the people.

3.5 Oath under the Bell

The *Carta Regia* of the municipality of Ilhas issued on 26 March 1532 had officially given recognition to the oath to be taken under the temple bell.⁸ In the past, seeking justice under the "bell of truth"

⁸ "Mahalsa's Bell of Truth" *Goa Today*, March 1996.

at the Mhalsa temple was a customary practice, where conflicting parties agreed to resolve their disputes. Non-Brahmins were permitted to take oaths. The accused would take bath in the temple tank, wore a garland around their neck, and carry a symbolic lump of rice called a "nall-vido" in their hands, accompanied by drum beaters. After their statements were recorded, authorities would release them. It was believed that if the accused lied during their confession, the deity would punish them within a few days.

3.6 Kaul-prasad- A divine answer

It is the way of getting words from the god through *prasad*. When the persons are caught up in difficulties they go to God and pray. People sought answers to their questions by directly conveying to the god, where the priest places the *pakali* before the deity. If any *pakali* fell immediately, its significance was interpreted by the worshippers. The recipient of the *prasad* understood the meaning and named the petals. In the Mhalsa temple, the priest accepts the *prasad* by placing the *tulsi manjiri* at 54 locations.⁹ This ritual is performed early in the morning, typically between 4 to 6 a.m., and is not done thereafter.

⁹ Vinayak Narayan Shenvi Dhume, *Devabhoomi Gomantak* (Mahim: All India Saraswat Foundation, 1988), 67.

3.7 Jayanchi puja

In the Mhalsa temple of Mardol there celebrates a famous festival like ritual known as *Jayanchi puja*. According to the local legend, it is said that at one time Priol was hit by famine and to change the situation for better, the villagers started worshipping and decorating Mhalsa' and its affiliated deities with *Jayo*. Soon the famine disappeared and from there on the people started this ritual. *Jayo*, a small size flower very well known for its fragrance is grown on the hill slopes of Mardol where the Fulkar community is celebrating this tradition. Once in year this tradition of *jayanchi puja* is celebrated and lots of garlands were made by using banana leaf thread which were then used to decorate the temple of Mhalsa. On the second day of Bhadrapada the community offer the garlands to the deity. On that day no person from the community participates in selling the flowers and all are used in the offerings of deity.¹⁰ These *jayo* plantations provides the women of Mardol to earn their seasonal livelihood. The temple is adorned by *jayo* garlands and now they are making the tableaux based on various themes to gain more attraction.

¹⁰ Rajendra Kerkar, *Natural Heritage of Goa* (Panjim: Broadway Publishing House, 2016), 47-49.

3.8 Temple Festivals

Temple festivals represents a blend of cultural heritage and religious devotion that includes the essence of communal celebration and spiritual progress. These are the special occasions where the people from the community come together to celebrate their culture and beliefs. They are the opportunity for the people to connect with their faith. Festivals contribute to the local economy by attracting visitors and supporting artisans and vendors who sell their goods during these festivals.

The *compromisso* discusses all the temple festivals which are according to the Hindu calendar.¹¹ In *chaitra*, the ceremony is performed starting with the *Shatakalasharchana*- the bath is given to the deity by pouring 100 *kalashas*. Another festival that is celebrated in the temple is Ramanavami. It is the birth day of Lord Rama. On that day small idol of Rama is worshipped in the cradle decorated with flowers. The devotees celebrate the festival by singing abhangas and narrating the stories. A special puja is organised in *chaitra poornima* where every night Vasant *puja* is carried in the *chauk*.

¹¹ “*Compromisso de Devalaia*, 93-94.

In *vaishakh*, there is another festival is celebrated and that is *Akshay Tritiya*. This is considered as a very auspicious day for the Hindus. This day is seen as the installation day of the pedestal of the deity. In *vaishakh poornima*, both the Mhalsa and Sateri are taken for the procession. It's called the *Vanavihara*, when they are spent the whole day roaming in the jungle and in the evening the *palkhi* enters the temple. At that time the *Vasant puja* is carried.

Jyeshtha is the month when the Lutti puja is the only ceremony carried. In Hindu religion, the month of *Shravana* is considered as auspicious as it is known as the month of Lord Shiva. *Rangapuja* is being performed on every Sunday of this month. On every Monday there used to be *abhishekh*, *puja* and *naivedya* performed in the afternoon by aging the musical instruments. On *Shravan Shuddha Dashami*, *Pavitra ropan* is performed from *dashami* to *poornima*.

The month of *Ashwin* is full of holy rituals when the *Mahajans* of *Atri gotra* and *Kaushik gotra* perform the *puja* of *Ghatasthapana* or the consecration of *Kalash* in the *antarala*. At night there used to be a *Chatushasthi puja* and after nine days from *puja* there used to be *Havan*. During all nine days, there used to be *Kirtanas* and *bhajans* sung all over night and the deity is worshipped in the *Makhara*. In

this month of Saraswati *pujan* is celebrated. The *Kojagiri poornima* is celebrated in the temple by engaging *kakad-arti* and *Harijagor*.

In *Kartik Shuddha Dwadashi*, the Tulsi Vivaah is celebrated. On *Shuddha Poornima*, both the Mhalsa and Sateri go for *Vanvihara*. In that they do the *Vanabhajana* where they enjoy the greener of the forest. On their way back coming in the *palkies*, the villagers light the earthen lamps in the honour of the goddesses. *Dashavatari kala* and *Gaulan kala* were the two arts performed in the temple.

In *Margashirsh*, the rituals are performed in the honour of Devi Santeri. In *Magh*, there celebrates the festival of Rath Saptami followed by the *divaja*. During this time, the deity was sitting in the *rath*. Both side of the *rath* there used to be the *jamun* leaves spread mixed with the steamed rice. This ritual is followed by pulling the *rath* forward celebrating the festival. This is known as “Mardolcho Ker”. This ritual is followed on the second day of the *jatra*. Also, the Sangod is celebrated where the deity is taken for *naukavihar* in the temple tank. In Falgun, Shigmo is celebrated with huge excitement. On *Chaturdashi*, the villagers from different wards assemble in Mardol to put *naman* to Mhalsa, from where the Shigmo begins. They take the blessings of the deity to start the occasion of Shigmo and they roam villages to villages to put *naman*.

The Mhalsa Temple of Mardol serves as a focal point for the community not only as a place of worship but also as a symbol of cultural identity and historical significance. The rituals performed in the temple including *pujas* and annual festivals like *zattras* shows the cultural participation of the people. These rituals not only honour the deity but also serve as an occasion for social interaction and community life.

Chapter 4- Temple and Village Economy

Temples, as religious institutions, exert considerable influence on the local economic activities, playing multifaceted roles as both spiritual centers and economic drivers within village settings. Temples serve as focal points of economic activity, particularly during festivals and religious gatherings. The temple generates economic opportunities for the local community through tourism, trade, and associated businesses. Temples often act as economic anchors in villages by stimulating economic activity, providing employment opportunities, and fostering entrepreneurship. In this work, we will do a systematic inquiry into the intricate relationship between temples and village economies, particularly within the context of Mardol in Goa.

The town of Ponda developed as urban space after the Portuguese took over the area in 1791 from the Raja of Sonda and annexed it along with the Quepem, Cancona and Sanguem making it a New Conquest.¹ It became as an administrative centre and a commercial

¹ Padmaja Vijay Kamat, “Ponda: A History of Temples” (Ph.D diss., Goa University, 2011), 329.

centre. Most of the area which is today what we know as Ponda was part of the Quela village and it was connected to the neighbouring state of Karnataka through a highway. We can understand from this that the village economy in Ponda is basically a temple centred economy where most of the locals were dependent upon their traditional local produce selling in the bazaars surrounding the temple.²

4.1 Role of Temple in the Society

The Mhalsa temple is a repository of cultural heritage, preserving traditional rituals, customs, and practices that are integral to the identity of the village community. It serves as a symbol of the village's rich cultural legacy and historical continuity. As a place of worship dedicated to the deity Mhalsa, the avatar of Lord Vishnu, the temple provides spiritual solace and guidance to villagers. It serves as a sanctuary where devotees gather to offer prayers, seek blessings, and participate in religious ceremonies, fostering a sense of spiritual fulfilment and well-being within the community.

The Mhalsa temple acts as a focal point for social interaction and community bonding. It brings villagers together for religious

² Kamat, "Ponda: A History of Temples", 329.

festivals, cultural celebrations, and social gatherings, strengthening social ties and fostering a sense of belonging among community members. The Mhalsa temple also has economic significance for the village. It attracts pilgrims, tourists, and visitors, leading to increased economic activity in the area. Local businesses, vendors, and artisans benefit from the inflow of people, contributing to the economic support of the village. By promoting cultural tourism and supporting traditional artisans, temples contribute to the preservation and promotion of the village's cultural identity. The temple often plays a role in community development initiatives, using funds from donations and offerings to support various welfare programs, and infrastructure projects in the village. This contributes to the overall well-being and development of the village.

4.2 Revenue of the temple in the early twentieth century

The *compromisso* is an important source that deals with the landed properties and income and expenditure of the temple.³

The *mahajans* of the temple looked after the movable properties and immovable properties that includes jewellery, gold, utensils, dresses

³ “*Compromisso de Devalaia Xri Malsa e suas filiais* Mardol,” in *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 51, 27 June 1911, 91-92.

and other objects. The temple got rent from the immovable properties such as land. The growth of a temple and the expansion of local landowning are often interlinked through historical, socio-economic, and religious dynamics.

As temples grow in prominence and religious significance, they attract endowments and donations from devotees, local elites, rulers, and benefactors. These endowments often include land grants, which contribute to the expansion of the temple's landholding. Land endowed to the temple becomes part of its assets and is managed by temple authorities. Temple lands are often used for agricultural purposes, such as cultivation of crops, orchards, or grazing pastures. The revenue generated from these lands sustains the temple's operations, including maintenance, rituals, and support for clergy. The expansion of temple landholding thus reflects the temple's economic influence and its integration into the local agrarian system.

The growth of temple was related to the expansion of the local landowning of the temple. The growth of a temple often correlates with the expansion of local landownership associated with the temple. As temples become established centers of worship and cultural activity, they attract devotees, pilgrims, and donations. With increasing patronage and offerings, temples acquire more resources,

including land and wealth. This accumulation of resources allows temples to expand their physical infrastructure, such as constructing additional buildings, shrines, and facilities. Additionally, the revenue generated from the temple's landholdings can be reinvested into further development and maintenance of the temple complex. Thus, the growth of a temple is intricately linked to the expansion of its landowning and resources, enabling it to serve its community more effectively and sustainably over time.

The growth and management of a temple often involve various aspects, including landed property, moneylending, auctioning of temple lands and buildings, and dealing with *comunidades*. Temples often acquire land through donations and endowments from devotees. This landed property forms a significant part of the temple's assets. It includes agricultural land, residential properties, or commercial spaces. Proper management of these properties ensures the temple's financial stability and provides resources for its upkeep and expansion.

Temples engage in moneylending activities, where they lend money to individuals or businesses in need. The interest earned from these loans contributes to the temple's revenue stream. However, temples

must carefully manage these financial transactions to ensure responsible lending practices and avoid exploitation of borrowers.

Comunidades are traditional village institutions in Goa that manage common lands and resources. The fundamental function of *comunidades* of Goa as agricultural associations was to take measures necessary for the agricultural development of the area under their jurisdiction.⁴ The Portuguese encountered the *comunidade* system already established in the villages they conquered and recognised its importance in sustaining the rural economy. They initially pledged to maintain the *comunidades* intact and preserve the rights and privileges of the *gaunkars*, or village elders. However, over the centuries of Portuguese rule, the *comunidade* system underwent restructuring to align more closely with the goals of the Portuguese *Estado do India*. This restructuring aimed to integrate the *comunidades* into the administrative framework of Portuguese colonial rule, ultimately serving the interests of the colonial state.

⁴ Remy Antonio Diano Dias, “The Socio-Economic History of Goa with Special Reference to the Comunidade System: 1750-1910,” (Ph.D diss., Goa University, 2004), 264.

In some regions, especially in areas influenced by the *comunidade* system like Goa, temples came to own lands through a collective ownership structure. The *comunidades* were traditional village assemblies or communities that collectively managed land and resources. Over time, these *comunidades* granted or allocated land to temples as part of their social and religious responsibilities. In the *comunidade* system, the village community collectively managed agricultural lands, pastures, forests, and other resources for the benefit of its members. Temples were often considered integral parts of the community, and the *comunidade* members allocated lands to temples for religious activities, maintenance, and sustenance. This allocation of land to temples by *comunidades* was often a form of patronage, where the community recognized the importance of temples in religious and social life and supported them by providing resources. As a result, temples owned lands within the *comunidade* territory, and the income generated from these lands contributed to the sustenance and functioning of the temple and its activities.

The *comunidades* played a vital role in the overall development and welfare of the community. Their contributions were diverse and encompassed various aspects of social infrastructure and support. They participated in building roads, assisting destitute women, widows, and orphans, constructing dykes and embankments for

flood control, establishing schools and supporting teachers, providing medical facilities during epidemics, and maintaining religious institutions. This multifaceted involvement highlights their commitment to the well-being and progress of the society as a whole. The *comunidades* were made responsible for creating various infrastructural facilities to promote the smooth functioning of the local economy.⁵

Interests on loans were given based on mortgage of property and land. Loans against rural properties were granted up to 50% of the property's appraised value, while loans against urban properties were limited to 25% of the appraised value. The property's value was determined by experts appointed by the loan applicant, the attorney of the Committee, and the administrator. The administrator holds the casting vote in case of any disagreements. Undivided properties were not be mortgaged unless all co-owners agree. Similarly, properties with separated usufruct (beneficial use) from ownership require consent from both the usufructuary and the proprietor for mortgage. The committee cannot approve loans exceeding specified amounts without prior authorization. Loan applicants were provided various documents, including certificates from the "Comunidade" clerk,

⁵ Dias, "The Socio-Economic History of Goa", 271.

fiscal register, land register office, and proof of ownership registration. Loans had a minimum duration of one year and cannot exceed five years. Overall, these regulations ensure that loans secured by mortgage of immovable properties are granted and managed within specified limits and under stringent documentation and approval procedures.

The following were the key points that constitutes the economy of the temple: -

- *Acca* and *Inam* from the *Comunidade* of Priol of the title of Mhalsa. They hold the title of Mhalsa, which likely signifies a position of authority or responsibility within the temple context. *Accas* payment of monetary grants or pension and *Inams* payment to the Dessais for the services rendered by way of tax-free land grants.⁶
- *Acca* from the *Comunidade* of Priol of the title of *mahajans* of Vernekar.
- *Foros* of the properties were given on long lease. The rent paid by the gaunkars for utilizing the rented lands and the dues or *foro* (rent) paid by those who took *comunidade* lands on long lease, constituted the revenue of the *comunidade*.⁷

⁶ Dias, “The Socio-Economic History of Goa”, 185.

⁷ Dias, “The Socio-Economic History of Goa”, 127.

- Pension received from the *Comunidade* of Ponda in the name of *Fulvide* that constitutes to the temple economy.
- *Mahajans* and devotees donated the financial assistance to the temple so that it can be used for temple works and for the development surrounding the temple.
- Offerings were made to celebrate the cultural programmes of the temple and any other rituals that contains the donations made by the worshippers.
- The value of Rs.1 was distributed among all the sevekaries.
- The *Tulabhar* or offerings made in form of jewellery, metals, gold, pearls was became the part of the temple treasury wherein the foodstuffs which were given in terms of rice, fruits, sugar, coconuts were distributed among the sevekaries by taking two *Annas* from them and adding it into the temple treasury.
- The materials which were found unnecessary to the temple were sold in the auction where the money acquired was added in the temple fund. So, these auctions were held at the time of *Zatras* where they were finding more people to buy their objects.

Temple expenditure is not merely a matter of financial transactions; it is a reflection of the values, priorities, and responsibilities entrusted to temple authorities. From the daily rituals of worship to the grandeur of festive celebrations, expenditure shapes the sacred

space of the temple and influences the experiences of devotees who visit its hallowed halls. The Mhalsa temple carried their expenses in terms of maintenance of the temple. The fund was used for the conservation of the temple and the buildings that were in relation to the temple. The expenses were made on the daily rituals and the festivals of the temple. Even the temple organises any cultural programmes, the expenditure is looked through by the temple fund. Expenses were made on the alms and the other acts made in the beneficence of the budget. It also looked after the improvement of the properties of the temple that gave the financial support. Expenditure was made on the smooth functioning of the temple and for the better management. The temple gave the salaries of the *sevekaries* that worked in the temple.⁸

⁸ “*Compromisso de Devalaia Xri Malsa e suas filiais Mardol*,” in *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 51, 27 June 1911, 92.

The income of a temple is vital for its functioning and sustainability for several reasons. Temple income is used to maintain the infrastructure and premises of the temple. The annual income of the temple in 1913 was as follows: -⁹

	Rupees	Annas	Paise
Hakka from the <i>Comunidade</i> of Priol	144	14	3
Income from properties	1442	4	9
Rent of shops	87	4	9
Interests	1091	14	3
Rituals	404	13	6
Dues from the <i>Comunidades</i> of Borim, Kavle, Bandora, Madkai, Kundali, Priol, Keri, Vere, Shiroda, Talauli, Vadi, Velim, Cuncollem, Bhoma, Adcona, Khandola, Betki, Valvai, Bethora, Nirankal, Tivre, Vargaon, Curti, Vaghurme, Khandepar, Panchavadi and Malkarne.	37	14	5
Total	3205		

Table 1.1 Annual income of the temple in 1913

⁹ Kamat, "Ponda: A History of Temples", 322.

The financial information of the temple in rupees from 2007-2011 can be understood while looking at below table.¹⁰

	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011
Income	1,44,01,228.00	1,96,91,228.00	3,46,89,644.09	3,58,91,228.00
Expenditure	1,43,22,228.00	1,96,09,728.00	3,46,18,416.09	3,57,00,000.00
Balance	79,000.00	81,500.00	71,228.00	1,98,228.00

Table 1.2- Financial information of the temple from 2007-2011

In Salcete, traders used to make good profit of their products and their part of income was given to the temple. When this came in the notice of the Portuguese, they decided to stop the merchants from selling their goods in the locality.¹¹ The *mahajans* of the temple used to contribute their money to buy new lands for the temple activities.¹²

The temple also serves as a medium between the devotees and itself. The temple listed the names of the *sevas* which the devotee wanted to perform. The temple earns maximum income from these rituals constituting in the temple economy.

¹⁰ Kamat, “Ponda: A History of Temples”, 324.

¹¹ V. Vaidya, *Shree Mhalsa Devasthan* (Khanapur: Dhananjay Press, 1932), 23-24.

¹² Vaidya, *Shree Mhalsa Devasthan* Devasthan, 23-24.

The following table shows the list of the *sevas* offered to the willing devotees showing the fee of each ritual as follows:-

Table No. 1.3- Shree Mahalasa Saunsthan, Mardol

Sr.	Seva Name	Amount in Rupees
1	Panchamrut Abhishek Naivedya to Shree Mahalasa	20.00
2	Panchista Panchamrut Abhishek	20.00
3	Sinhapurush Abhishek	20.00
4	Shree Mahalasa Pooja	50.00
5	Shree Santeri Pooja	50.00
6	Anantshayan Pooja	201.00
7	Kaliyamardan Pooja	201.00
8	Laxmi Alankar Pooja	201.00
9	Shree Ram Alankar Pooja	201.00
10	Shree Balkrishna Alankar Pooja	201.00
11	Murlidhar Alankar Pooja	201.00
12	Narayan Alankar Pooja	201.00
13	Yenkatesh Alankar Pooja	201.00
14	Shibikotsav of Shree Mahalasa Sunday	101.00
15	Shibikotsav of Shree Santeri Panchami	101.00
16	Rang Pooja of Shree Mahalasa	301.00
17	Panchishta Rangpooja	201.00
18	Sinhapurush Rangpooja	101.00
19	Ashtottar Kumkumarchan	20.00
20	Kumkumarchan	20.00
21	Sahasra Kumkumarchan	30.00
22	Tulasi Archan Kanuk	20.00
23	Nandadeep @ per month (One deity)	100.00
24	Nandadeep of ghee @ per day One deity)	300.00
25	One day seva	2,001.00
26	Khichadi Naivedya to Upadevata	201.00

4.3 The Bazaars

Bazaars were vibrant marketplaces that played crucial roles in economic, social, and cultural life. The *bazaars* served as centers of trade, where merchants from different regions gathered to exchange

goods, ideas, and culture. *Bazaars* flourished along trade routes, including the Silk Road, facilitating the exchange of commodities between distant regions. These markets not only facilitated economic transactions but also served as hubs for cultural exchange, as travellers, traders, and artisans meet at a point, bringing with them languages, religions, customs, and traditions. The *bazaars* or the market places provided the framework in which exchange of commodities took place.¹³ These marketplaces facilitated the buying and selling of goods and services, serving as crucial nodes in economic networks.

The market serves as a vital economic hub where local producers, artisans, and vendors gather to sell their goods and services. It provides a platform for farmers to sell fresh produce, artisans to showcase their crafts, and entrepreneurs to offer various products to the community. The market contributes to local economic development by generating income, employment opportunities, and business growth. The market facilitates the exchange of

¹³ Vaidehi Vasant Pujari, "Some Aspects of 'Bazaar' In Early Medieval Deccan: Glimpses from Contemporary Marathi Literature." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 62 (2001): 218–26. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44155765>.

commodities, enabling villagers to access essential goods and services. Residents rely on the market for everyday necessities such as groceries, clothing, household items, and agricultural supplies. It serves as a convenient and accessible shopping destination for the local population.

In Mardol, the flower sellers make the beautiful flower garlands and sell them for their livelihood. Outside and inside the temple most we can see were the flower sellers who sell different types of flowers which were bought for the worship of the deity. Mardol is famous for *Jayo* and the locals cultivated the *Jayo* climbers on the slopes of hills. In the month of Bhadrapada, *Jayanchi Puja* is celebrated by the Fulkar Community where they decorate the temple with the flowers. On that day they do not participate in the selling of the flowers.

4.4 Role of Jatra in economy

Fairs have a long history dating back to ancient times when they served as gatherings for trade, commerce, and social interaction. Over time, these gatherings grew in size and importance, attracting merchants, traders, and visitors from far and wide. Fairs provided opportunities for economic exchange, allowing merchants to showcase and sell their goods to a large audience. The concentration

of buyers and sellers at fairs facilitated transactions and market activities, laying the groundwork for the development of permanent marketplaces where trade could occur regularly.

The annual *jatra* of Mardol began in the month of February where huge number of devotees gather to experience the divine blessings of the deity Mhalsa. This *jatrotsav* lasts for almost 8 days having different rituals performed in the name of the deity. It was the time for the local vendors to put their stalls and sell their produce in the market where they acquire good profit because of the crowd and easy customers. Even the local handicraftsman participates in the *Jatra* to make their profit as many people were fascinated towards the handicrafts. During these days the people who owns the shops or sell their products gets huge income on their sell due to coming of the devotees in the temple. They offer an opportunity for the local farmers, householders to shop for the essential implements and tools that were used in household activities or in farms¹⁴ such as *Koyto*, hammer and utensils.

¹⁴ Vinayak Vishnu Khedekar, *Goa: Land, Life and Legacy* (Panaji: Directorate of Art and Culture, Government of Goa, 2016), 385.

The Mhalsa temple serves as a cornerstone of the local economy by driving tourism, fostering entrepreneurship, preserving cultural heritag. Its influence extends beyond religious worship to encompass various aspects of village life, making it a vital economic and social institution in the region. Overall, the Mhalsa temple of Mardol, Goa, plays a significant role in fostering the economy of the village by attracting tourists and pilgrims, creating market opportunities, supporting community events.

Chapter 5- Conclusion

Temples in Goa serve as significant markers of its rich cultural, religious, and historical heritage. They not only represent places of worship but also embody the socio-economic and political dynamics of the region. Throughout history, temples have played a crucial role in shaping the social fabric and community cohesion in Goa.

The study of temples, such as the Mhalsa temple in Mardol, provides valuable insights into the religious landscape of the region. It sheds light on the shifting dynamics of religious practices, cultural traditions, and historical events such as the Portuguese Inquisition in Goa, which led to the destruction and relocation of temples and deities.

The Mhalsa temple, dedicated to the deity recognised as Mohini, serves as a testament to the resilience of Goa's religious traditions despite adversities. Its relocation from Verna to Mardol highlights the enduring devotion of the local community and their efforts to preserve their religious heritage.

By studying temples like the Mhalsa temple, we gain a deeper understanding of Goa's cultural continuity and resilience amidst historical upheavals. These sacred sites not only reflect the spiritual beliefs of the people but also offer valuable insights into the broader socio-cultural landscape of the region. The Mhalsa temple in Mardol serves as more than just a religious institution; it is a central institution for the local community. The temple's daily rituals, festivals, and cultural activities foster a sense of belonging among residents, strengthening community bonds.

The origin of the deity Mhalsa, as mentioned in the *Sahyadrikhanda*¹, adds to the temple's significance, connecting it to ancient mythology and the cultural history of Goa. Moreover, the statutes outlined in the *compromisso* detail the roles and responsibilities of various members, including the hereditary mahajans and the diverse sevekaries who contribute to the temple's upkeep and functioning.

The temple's origins, rooted in local folklore and mythology, reflect the enduring power of religious beliefs in shaping human societies.

The temple's relocation from Verna to Mardol, amidst the turmoil of Portuguese conquests, underscores the resilience and determination

¹ Gaitonde, *Sahyadrikhanda*, 259-263.

of the people to preserve their religious traditions and cultural identity. The Mhalsa Temple stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of devotion and the cultural heritage of the Mardol community.

The legends surrounding the deity Mhalsa blend mythological elements with historical events, offering profound insights into the cultural and religious beliefs of the region. These legends, passed down through generations via oral tradition, play a crucial role in shaping the collective identity and spiritual heritage of the community.

The stories of Mhalsa's divine intervention in defeating the demon Chandasur, her role in the churning of the ocean, and her transformation into the Mohini avatar of Vishnu highlight her significance as a protector, nurturer, and divine consort. These legends not only celebrate Mhalsa as a revered deity but also underscore the enduring power of faith, devotion, and the triumph of good over evil.

The various versions of the legend reflect the diversity of cultural influences and historical contexts in which they originated, demonstrating how myths evolve and adapt over time to resonate with changing social and religious dynamics.

The iconography and architecture of the Mhalsa temple in Mardol provide fascinating insights into the religious and cultural heritage of the region. The *Chaturbhuj*i idol of the deity Mhalsa, made of Shaligrama stone embodies the divine attributes and mythological significance associated with the goddess.² The intricate details of the idol, including the weapons and symbols held by the deity, symbolize her role as a protector and divine consort, revered by the local community.

The temple's architecture, with its rectangular layout, *Deepstambh*, and *sabhamandapa*, reflects the spiritual significance and communal gathering aspect of the temple. The presence of unique features such as the *Dnyandeep*, *tulsi vrindavan*, and silver-plated door adds to the sanctity and grandeur of the temple complex. The practice of keeping oil lamps burning in the *garbhagriha* not only symbolizes the eternal presence of divine light but also serves practical purposes such as security for the sacred objects housed within the temple. The architectural influences from Portuguese and Muslim styles highlight the cultural diversity and historical context of the region, showcasing the amalgamation of different traditions and architectural aesthetics.

² Dhume, *Devabhoomi Gomantak*, 65.

The administration of temples, as outlined in documents such as the *compromisso*, sheds light on the intricate governance structures and financial management systems in place. Mahajans, belonging to specific caste groups, play a pivotal role in temple administration, exercising hereditary rights passed down through generations. Their responsibilities include overseeing membership, managing finances, and ensuring compliance with legal regulations, thus ensuring proper temple governance.

Temples serve as social spaces where interactions among devotees foster a sense of community cohesion and togetherness. Corridors, mandapas, and agrashalas within temple complexes facilitate social interaction, allowing people to share stories, participate in cultural activities, and strengthen communal bonds.

The *sevekaries* of the temple play crucial roles in maintaining the sanctity, cleanliness, and vibrancy of the religious institution. Each *sevekari*, with their specialized duties passed down through generations, contributes to the smooth functioning and spiritual ambiance of the temple. From performing rituals and reciting purans to playing musical instruments and cleaning the premises, each *sevekari* fulfills their designated tasks with dedication and reverence. Their collective efforts ensure that the temple remains a sacred space.

where devotees can connect with the divine and partake in religious ceremonies and festivities.

Furthermore, the evolution of temple practices reflects the changing societal norms and values. As seen in the case of *Ghadis* transitioning from animal sacrifice to present practices, temples adapt to contemporary times while preserving age-old traditions. The relationship between the temple and its surrounding community is evident in the roles of sevekaries. Whether it's the Kalavantinis dancing in praise of the deity and the Sonar crafting intricate jewelry for the idol, each sevekari contributes to the cultural richness and communal harmony of the temple.

The temple's festivals are outlined in the *compromisso*, serve as occasions for cultural celebration, community bonding, and spiritual renewal. From the elaborate ceremonies of Jayanchi puja to the joyous festivities of Shigmo, each festival reflects the cultural vibrancy and collective spirit of the Goan people.

Economically, the temple serves as a driver of local economic activity, attracting pilgrims, tourists, and visitors, thereby stimulating trade, supporting local businesses, and providing employment opportunities for the villagers. Additionally, the temple

contributes to the preservation and promotion of the village's cultural identity by promoting cultural tourism and supporting traditional artisans.

The temple plays a pivotal role in community development initiatives, utilising funds from donations and offerings to support various welfare programs and infrastructure projects in the village, thereby contributing to the overall well-being and development of the community.

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