

Shree Saptakoteswar Temple:
A Historical and Cultural Study



**Shree Saptakoteshwar Temple: A Historical and
Cultural Study**

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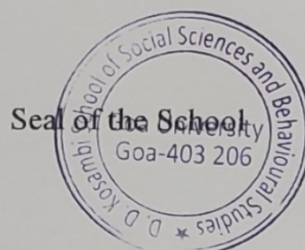


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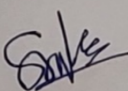
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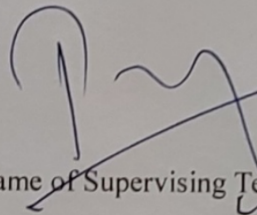
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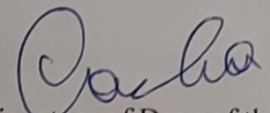
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This is to certify that the dissertation report "Shree Saptakoteshwar Temple: A Historical and Cultural Study" is a bonafide work carried out by Mr. Shreyesh Suresh Gaonkar under my supervision in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master in Arts in the Discipline of History at the D. D. Kosambi School of Social Sciences and Behavioural Studies, Goa University.

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Preface

From my college days, I was interested in studying history. So, after my graduation, I opted for post-graduation in history. I like to explore heritage monuments and this hobby motivated me to select this topic for my dissertation. Goan temples have a rich history, cultural and religious significance, and are integral to Goa's identity. They blend indigenous and Portuguese architectural influences and foster spiritual growth and cultural cohesion. Goan temples are spiritual institutions, fostering spiritual growth and cultural cohesion. They contribute to the region's cultural landscape, influencing art, music, dance, and festivals. They also attract tourists, promote tourism and cultural exchange.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the completion of this dissertation on the “Shree Saptakoteshwar Temple: A Historical and Cultural Study.” First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt thanks to my guide Dr. Parag D. Parobo, for his invaluable guidance, insightful feedback, and unwavering support throughout the research process. His expertise and mentorship have been instrumental in shaping the direction of this dissertation.

I am also deeply grateful to the faculty members of Goa University, whose expertise and encouragement have enriched my academic journey. Their constructive criticism and scholarly insights have been immensely valuable in refining my ideas and arguments.

I extend my appreciation to the staff and administrators of the History discipline at Goa University, for their administrative support and assistance in accessing resources essential to this research.

I would like to thank the libraries of Goa university and Central Library Goa, for their assistance in locating and accessing

relevant primary and secondary sources. Their expertise and willingness to help have been indispensable in navigating the vast repositories of historical and scholarly materials.

I am grateful to the residents of temple, particularly the devotees and custodians of the temples, for their hospitality, cooperation, and willingness to share their knowledge and experiences. Their insights and perspectives have enriched my understanding of the cultural and religious significance of Goan temples.

In last deep appreciation to all those who have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the completion of this dissertation. Their support has been valuable, and I am truly grateful for their contributions.

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Abstract

Temples have been an important part of Goan society and have often served the society in multiple faceted ways. More importantly temples have served as public spaces and has given rise to the material and non-material cultures around themselves. This dissertation studies cultural, historical, and religious features of Shree Saptakoteswar temple in Goa. The temple stands as a revered symbol of spiritual devotion and connecting with the divine, whether as an individual, group or community, is as personal as it is shared. An examination of the temple's social history and cultural life, it becomes evident that the site is deeply intertwined with the religious beliefs, traditions, and practices of the local community.

The deity and temple was patronised by different rules and plays a vital role in promoting cultural life. Annual festivals celebrated at the temple serve as occasions for fostering unity and highlight the diverse customs, beliefs, and practices that define the community's identity.

Keywords: Saptakoteswar, Narve, history, culture, community

Glossary

Slokas - a couplet of Sanskrit verse, especially one in which each line contains sixteen syllables.

Hones/Honns/honas – Gold coins

Garbhagriha - innermost sanctuary of Hindu temples sanctum sanctorum.

Shikhar - refers to the rising tower in the Hindu temple.

Deep Stamba - A lamp pillar located at the entrance of the temple.

Mahajan – descendants of the founding members of temples who manage temple administration

Sabhamandap – main assembly hall.

Mukhamandap - porch constructed in front of the doorway of the temple.

Suvasini – married women.

Gotra - lineage

Chapter I: Introduction

Saptakoteshwar temple is an important temple of Goa. It has century-old historical, spiritual, and cultural significance. This ancient temple has a glimpse of the profound traditions, legends, and social fabric that have shaped its identity over the centuries. This study is on the Saptakoteshwar deity and temple in Goa. It examines a complex relationship between faith, community, and cultural heritage within the framework of sacred temples by looking at the social history, cultural life, architectural features, mythological narratives, and festive traditions associated with this temple. This study explores how these sacred spaces shape and reflect the identities of the communities they serve, aiming to shed light on the broader significance of temples as cultural and social institutions through a detailed analysis of the Saptakoteshwar temple.

1.1 Research Problem

This study on Saptakoteshwar Temple in Goa focuses on different aspects of the temple, such as historical evolution, and its cultural impact on the community.

1.2 Hypotheses

Saptakoteshwar deity and temple has played an important role in the legitimisation of political authority and community life.

1.3 Objectives

- To examine history of the Shree Saptakoteshwar temple, tracing its origins, development, significant events and political legitimacy in early Goa.
- To study architectural style of temple.
- To examine the religious significance of temple and to investigate rituals and festivals and the role they play in the religious life of the community.
- To analyse the cultural impact of the Shree Saptakoteshwar temple on the local community and beyond.
- To investigate the temple's role as a pilgrimage site and its impact on local tourism.

1.4 Methodology

This study takes a broad approach. The research is based on archival sources, secondary sources and filed work.

1.5: Literature review

The Sahyadri Khand of The Skand Purana: A Mythological, Historical and Geographical account of Western India is a part of the *Skandapurana*. This copy was first edited by Gerson da Cunha in Sanskrit. It has references to the Saptakoteshwar deity.

This is in Sanskrit *shlokas*. It mentions the Puranic story of Sapt Rushis and how they prayed to God Shiva for seven crore years.¹ As a result it is believed that the god is called Saptakoteshwar, the Lord of Seven. Further, the Sapt Rushis explain how to pray to the Saptakoteshwar deity to get salvation.² Here again we see the importance of the seven and the Shivalinga is also made up of seven elements. This is the one of the earliest references to the Saptakoteshwar.

Gomantak Punyabhoomi by Vinayak Narayan Shenvi Dhume discusses about the temples of Goa. One of the chapters is based on *Shree Saptakoteshwar Devasthan*. It starts with the earliest history of the deity and temple. It also discusses history of different dynasties like the Kadamba, Vijayanagar, Bahmani and later the Portuguese.³ Kadambas were the devotees of Saptakoteshwar and the evidence for it is the coin of Jaykeshi II.⁴

¹ Jose Gerson da Da Cunha, ed, *The Sahyadri Khanda of the Skanda Purana: A Mythological, Historical, and Geographical Account of Western India* (Bombay: Thacker, Vining and Co., 1877), 287.

² Da Cunha, *Sahyadri Khand*, 287.

³ Vinayak Narayan Shenvi Dhume, *Gomantak Punyabhoomi* (Panaji: Department of Sports and Culture, 1981), 50-51.

⁴ Shenvi Dhume, *Gomantak Punyabhoomi*, 50.

At the side of coin there is a mention of Saptakoteshwar and Kadamb emblem. Dhume also discusses about various festivals and its income.

Rui Gomes Pereira's *Hindu Temples and Deities* discusses about the mahajans who are descendants of founders and have the surname, Surya Rau Sardessai. Here, the author mentions about how the temple was destroyed. Surya Rau brings the Shivling from Divar to Bhatagram on other side of river and placed it in a cave of a village called Hindalem later called Narvem.⁵ It is statged that later a temple was rebuilt by mahajans on the order of Maratha King Shivaji. A stone inscription mentioning the order is still there in the temple at Narvem. The king had also donated 700 gold *hones* (gold coins) which is worth of 2.52-kilogram gold.⁶ The old site of the temple is called the *tirtha*, a pilgrimage site and had a tank. Visiting that tank was later banned.⁷

Jose F. F. de Albuquerque's *Divar: The Iconic Island of Goa Dourada* discusses history of Divar and its religious significance.

⁵ Rui Gomes Pereira, *Hindu Temples and Deities* (Panjim: Printwell Press, 1978), 132-133.

⁶ Gomes Pereira, *Hindu Temples and Deities*, 133.

⁷ Gomes Pereira, *Hindu Temples and Deities*, 133-134.

Divar was a prominent site of pilgrimage and many temples were there. Shree Saptakoteshwar temple was the important one. Kadamb King Shivachitta patronise Saptakoteshwar as royal family deity. The temple was managed by *gaunkaris* who were its *mahazans* when it was there in Divar.⁸ The worship and maintenance work was done by *gaunkaris*. Other temple duties and work was given to others in category-wise. They are priest (*Bhats, Puzaris, Puraniks, Abhishekis*), *Devadasis* (Temple Dancers), *Kalavats, Gaikas* (singers), *Bhavins*.⁹ These services were hereditary and they were servants of *gaunkaris*. After the Portuguese conquered the island, the temples were destroyed and chapels were built on it. The temple was also place of learning but at the time of destruction manuscripts, records and important writings were lost.

José Pereira and Pratapaditya Pal's edited *India and Portugal: Cultural Interaction* discusses evolution of Goan temples over several centuries.¹⁰ When the Marathas gained power, they rebuilt temples.

⁸ Jose F. F. de Albuquerque, *The Iconic Island of Goa Dourada* (Panaji: Broadway Publishing House, 2014), 59.

⁹ de Albuquerque, *The Iconic Island*, 62.

¹⁰ Jose Pereira, Pratapaditya Pal ed., *India & Portugal: Cultural Interaction* (Mumbai: Marg Publication, 2001), 91-93.

Kamla Mankekar's *Cultural and Religious Traditions in Temples of Goa* discusses about Saptakoteswar temple. This work makes connection with gods like Khandoba and Bhairav in Maharashtra and Karnataka.¹¹ The temple, which is the new one built at Narve, was earlier a Buddhist seminary because behind the temple the traces of Buddhist arches are still found.¹² This work also deals with important festivals and the assistance provided by king Shivaji and the Dessai family. In the last there is mention of Saptakoteswar *panchayatam* that includes deities like Lakmi Narayan, Bhagwati, Kal Bhairav and Moolpurush.

V. R. Mitragotri's *A Socio-Cultural History of Goa: From the Bhojas to The Vijayanagara* gives details on Saptakoteswar deity. Saptakoteswar is a translation of *Elukotimahadev* as he is known in Karnataka.¹³ Elu means lift, and Kottai means temple, which became lift the temple. This is mentioned in the Kudatani

¹¹ Kamla Mankekar, *Cultural and Religious Traditions in Temples of Goa* (New Delhi: Director Publishing Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2004), 76.

¹² Mankekar, *Cultural and Religious*, 78.

¹³ V. R. Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural History of Goa: From Bhojas to The Vijayanagara* (Panaji: Institute of Menezes Braganza, 1999), 159.

inscription.¹⁴ Further, it deals with various traditions like *Khandoba*, *Ekukoti*, and *Mailar* related to the states of Karnataka, Andhra and Maharashtra. The legendry story of *Sapt Rushi* is discussed on the Kadamba coins of Goa, Jayakeshi I to Jayakeshi II the legend of Saptakoteswar and the shikhara of the temple are found.¹⁵ Mitragotri also discusses about Madhavmatri and Shivaji. More importantly, it states that during the time of Kadamba to Vijayanagar, Guravas were associated with temple, but now Saraswats and Karhades are the priest.¹⁶

Jaywant Vinayak Suryarao Sardessai's *Shree Kshetra Narve Yethil Shree Saptakoteswar Devasthan: Prachin va Arvachin Itihas* is the most important work. The work is divided into five chapters. The first chapter discusses about the origin and the Puranic story. The deity of Saptarshi was originally installed on Diwadi island in front of Old Goa, and later in Narve, located on the banks of the Panchganga river. Vasistha Prabhruti Saptarishi performed austerities for seven crore years to have a vision of Mahadeva, who appeared before them. Saptarishi bathed in

¹⁴ Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural*, 159.

¹⁵ Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural*, 161.

¹⁶ Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural*, 162.

Panch Ganga and worshiped him.¹⁷ Mahadeva asked sages to ask for a boon, and Saptarishi agreed. He lived in Linga form, assuming the name Saptakoteswar, the lord of Saptarshi, also known as Saptanath.¹⁸ It is said that seven crore *Mahamantras* came out of his mouth, possibly resulting in his name. Second, deals with mahajans and has references to Kadambas. In the list of mahajans, Brahmins of Naidhruva or Kshyapanaidhruva, Bhardwaj carrying surnames like Suryarao Sardesai, Vishwasrao Desai, Diwadkar, Kamat and Narvekar are prominent. Apart from Brahmins, other people worship this god.¹⁹ There are people outside Goa also who worship Saptakoteswar and they travel from distant places like Konkan, Ghats, Karnataka and Malabar to temple. to take *Kaulprasad* and vows with great devotion. Around the 12th century AD, the Goa Kadamba kings began worshipping Saptakoteswar, a deity originating from the sweat on Shankara's forehead. Trinetra Jayant, the progenitor of this dynasty, was born from the sweat on Shankara's forehead, indicating a devotion to an awakened deity like

¹⁷ Jaywant Vinayak Suryarao Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve Yethil Shree Saptakoteswar Devasthan: Prachin va Arvachin Itihas* (Bombay: Gomantak Chhapakhana, 1931), 22.

¹⁸ Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 23.

¹⁹ Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 27.

Saptakoteshwar.²⁰ Sardesai mentions the words “*Srisaptakotiswar labdhavar prasad*” and “*Nijaradhya Srisaptakotisvaradeva*.” In 1174, Pattarani Kamaladevi of Sivachitta Kadamba gave the village of Degave in Palashika to some brahmins, leaving the pond at Diwadi “at the feet of Lord Srisaptakotisvara”. During Tisanya Jayakeshi's reign, he was referred to as “Srisaptakotishwar labdhavar prasad Srikadambavira Jayakesideva” and “Srisaptakotiswar labdhavar prasad Veer Jayakeshideva”. A gold coin in 1210 called Nishka or Padmatanka attributed him as “Srisaptakotislabdhavar Vir Jayakeshidev.” A copper plate dated AD 1247 glorifies Sri Saptakotisvara with the words “Sreya: Srisaptakotisho deyadvah sa yadagyaya. Bibhartyadivarahopit danshtragre mandalam bhuvah” and the titles “Srisaptakotisvar padmaprasad labdhashtira Rajya Lakshmi” and “Srisaptakotisvara labdhavarprasad”.²¹ This suggests that the temple was prosperous from the 12th century until the fall of the Kadamba power in the mid-fourteenth century. Sardesai also discusses destruction of temple by Muslim rulers. The Kadambas were followed by rule of Bahmani Sultan Alauddin Hasan Gangu in 1352.²² During the Bahamani rule Saptakoteshwar temple was destroyed. Sardesai

²⁰ Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 28.

²¹ Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 28.

²² Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 29.

says that to free Goa from the tyranny of Bahamani rule, Vasantmadhav and Mainshanai Wagle requested Vijayanagara ruler Bukka to defeat the Bahamani.²³ Madhav Mantri, marched on Goa, and defeated the Bahamanis and installed the seven deities of *Saptishwaradi*.²⁴ He assigned lands and 1,300 *honas* (four and a half thousand rupees) in cash. Sardesai highlights the Portuguese rule over Goa and destruction of temple and transfer of the deity to Bhatgram (now Bicholim). In the 16th century, Portuguese demolished all the temples in Salcete, Bardes, and Tiswadi, built Christian churches in their place, and gave the income from the temples to those churches.²⁵ In 1540, the Portuguese demolished all the temples in Tiswadi and nearby islands and issued an order not to rebuild them there. At that time, there was also destruction of Saptakoteswar. A lot of damage was done. The Portuguese left the Shiv Linga horizontally on a well, and people started drawing water from it. The marks of the attack on the Shivlinga are still visible. It is believed that a few years later, Sardesai of the neighbouring Bhatgram Mahal and Narayan Surya Rao, the *mandlik* of the Adil Shah of Bijapur, had a vision to remove the Shivling. Subsequently, it was shifted to a village called Lathambarse (Latambarthe), to the north-east of

²³ Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 30.

²⁴ Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 30.

²⁵ Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 32.

Diwadi. This work also discusses about the rebuilding of temple by the Maratha king Shivaji and early history of Bhatgram Mahal.²⁶

George M. Moraes's book *The Kadamba Kula: A History of Ancient and Mediaeval Karnataka* is main source to study about the Kadamba dynasty. It discusses Pre Kadamba period to origin of Kadambas, legend of Trilochan Kadamba and Kadambas of Hangal and Goa. It is significant for the study of Saptakoteshwar since there is mention of coins and inscriptions. The Royal Asiatic Society's Bombay Branch has many coins from this reign. One of them features a roaring lion staring forward, and before his lips is the phrase Pramodha, which refers to the cycle year of coinage in old Nagari. The back inscription reads: "Sri-Saptakotisa-labuha-vara vira-Jayakesideva- Malavaramari" (The brave Jayakesideva, the victorious ruler of the Malavas, who gained a boon from the holy Sapta kotia).²⁷ This is most likely Jayakesi II, who defeated the Malavas. The Indian Museum in Calcutta has a silver coin ascribed to Vishnuchitta, possibly Sivachitta's, with a roaring lion on the obverse and unreadable

²⁶ Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 46.

²⁷ George M. Moraes, *The Kadamba Kula: A History of Ancient and Mediaeval Karnataka* (New Delhi: Asian Education Service, 1990), 383.

letters below. Two coins have the name "Syi-dva or Söva-dva," possibly a new monarch identified as Tribhuvanamalla. Both coins show a lion holding a ball and the cycle year name Bahudhnya, corresponding to 1218-19 A.D.²⁸ The inscription on one-coin reads "Sri-Saptaktvara-charana-labdha-vara-vra-Sydva," referring to Soyi-deva who won born from the holy Saptakotvara's foot.²⁹ The other coin appears to be "Chara-dvashashtha-Svadeva," suggesting that Söva-deva and Shastha ruled jointly for a while. Jaykeshi III's inscriptions in the gallery of Prince of Wales Museum Bombay (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sagrahalay, Mumbai) line 18–20 mention Saptakoteshwar; it says, "The world says of him that he constantly worships Sri Saptakoteshwar, who is the First Cause, Beginningless, who has the daughter of the mountain by his side and Ganga and the moon on his lead, and he obtains from Him boons both high and low."³⁰

Gopala V. Rao's, "Temples of Goa: An architectural Study" is a Phd thesis that deals with the architecture of Goan temples. Earlier temples were made from bricks, mud mortar and brickbats, stone like laterite, basalt, schist and granite were used

²⁸ Moraes, *The Kadamba Kula*, 383

²⁹ Moraes, *The Kadamba Kula*, 384.

³⁰ Moraes, *The Kadamba Kula*, 472.

for icons, doors, lintels columns and ceilings.³¹ Temples were constructed mostly of laterite and wood, although new materials including lime, sand, cement, tiles, and wood were also employed. Excellent woodwork was produced by carpenters for use in temple art, and new materials like wood, cement, lime, and sand altered the layout and elevation of temples.³² Temple design was inspired by a combination of new materials and architectural elements starting in the late 16th century, including wood, tiled roofs, laterite stone, and lime mortar. A big rectangular layout with three divisional sanctums, a transept, and a massive *sabhamandapa* with a *mukhamandapa* entered the architecture. The plan and elevation of the temples also experienced alterations. The elaborate carvings and divisions resemble those seen in early era stone columns. Large *sabhamandapas* and *mukhamandapas* with transepts were examples of new architectural characteristics that resembled church design and could accommodate larger crowds.³³ Temples' vertical superstructure also changed over time, including slant-sloping tiled roofs and domical *sikharas* with octagonal bases. In the construction of modern temples, neighbouring buildings have

³¹ V. G. Rao, *Temples of Goa: An Architectural study* (PhD diss., Goa University, 2003), 186.

³² Rao, *Temples of Goa*, 186.

³³ Rao, *Temples of Goa*, 187.

given way to storerooms, guesthouses for pilgrims, and offices for temple committees. Large *sabhamandapas* were given apsidal ends to commemorate significant events and festivals in the area.³⁴ Temples in Goa need two tiers of slanting tile roofs to facilitate the easy removal of rainwater due to the region's high rainfall. Further it deals with available remains region's mediaeval art and architecture is showcased by intact basalt fragments of Hindu sculptures, some in poor condition. However, no reliable historical context or documented evidence can place them in chronological sequence. Many Goa temples were destroyed, and the original materials were removed for other buildings, making it difficult to place these temples in chronological sequence. Then well-preserved temple of Shree Saptakoteshwar at Opa Khandepar is mentioned, Saptakoteshwar temple has gained significant significance for the Hindu religion as it is closer to Srikshetra Khandepar, a particularly sacred location for adherents of the Hindu faith.³⁵ Similar to Mahadev Temple in Curdi, this temple is simple with a square garbhagriha and porch. The 13th and 14th centuries saw the popularity of *tri-saka-dwara*, which is an arched entrance for the safety. Similar to the Mahadev temples in Curdi and Tambdi Surla, a *Chandrasila* slab also contains *shankavartha* in its body.

³⁴ Rao, *Temples of Goa*, 187.

³⁵ Rao, *Temples of Goa*, 231.

However, the domical *sikhara*, which has an octagonal base, a vaulted ceiling, and a porch, is newer and from a later era.

1.5 Chapterisation

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1. Introduction will have the introduction, deals with research problem, objectives, literature review, methodology, schemescheme of chapters and scope and relevancerelevance.

Chapter 2 discusses about the origin of the deity, tracing its roots back to ancient times. It explores the legends and myths surrounding the deity Saptakoteswar, symbolizing the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment and divine grace..Through sacred narratives and rituals, the temple continues to inspire generations to seek the divine within themselves.

Chapter 3 analyses the royal patronage to the Saptakoteswar temple and deity and sheds light on the rich history of support and contributions from various kings, rulers, dynasties, and empires. From the Kadamba dynasty to the Vijayanagar Empire and the Maratha Empire under Shivaji, each patron left a unique imprint on the temple's legacy. Their patronage not only influenced the temple's construction and maintenance but also shaped its spiritual ethos and cultural significance. Through their devotion and contributions, these rulers ensured the preservation

of Goa's cultural heritage and promoted religious harmony, making the temple a timeless beacon of faith and devotion in the region.

Chapter 4 analyses social and cultural life. Saptakoteshwar temple has played a central role in fostering community ties and shaping the cultural life of Goa. The temple serves as a focal point for social gatherings, religious festivals, and cultural events, creating a sense of unity among the local residents.

Chapter 5 deals with architecture and renovation of temple. Chapter 6 is conclusion.

1.7 Scope and Relevance

There are few works on temples of Goa and they have not given much attention to Saptakoteshwar temple. This study makes an effort to close this gap by undertaking a thorough investigation of the subject. An attempt will be made to understand Saptakoteshwar temple as a centre of social and cultural life. Understanding the temple's evolution and socio-cultural impact provides insights into Goa's heritage.

CHAPTER II: ORIGIN

Shiva is usually worshipped as a *linga* that is set on a foundation. A *linga* with facets is called a *dharalinga*. At Narve, the Saptakotishwara *Linga* is a *dharalinga*. Saptakoteshwar's origin story is interconnected with devotion, penance, and divine blessings that transcend time and space. A legend associated with origin goes back to the Sapta Rishis, when the seven revered sages of Hindu mythology, embarked on a profound spiritual journey to seek the divine grace of Lord Shiva. Their quest for a glimpse of the God led them to the peaceful banks of a sacred river, where they engaged in rigorous penance for seven crore years. The legend of Saptakoteshwar, rooted in time and steeped in devotion and piety, has endured through the ages, inspiring generations to seek the divine within themselves and to walk the path of spiritual enlightenment and liberation.

Saptakoteshwar temple of Narve is a *jagrut devasthan* of Goa. This temple was very prosperous during the reign of the Kadamba dynasty. Later, the Bahamani sultanate demolished the temple and the kings of Vijayanagar rebuilt it. After that, when the Portuguese conquered Goa they also destroyed it but later it

was rebuilt by Narayan Surya Rao Sardesai, who was the *inamdar* of Adilshahi and Marathas.¹

2.1 Ancient Legend

The original temple of Saptakoteswar was in island called Diwadi (Deepavati). The similar kind of folk-deity is found in Karnataka. According to Mitragotri Saptakoteswar was taken in into Brahmanism between 1300 and 1400 A.D.² ElukotiMahadev is known in Karnataka as Saptakoteswar, which is a liberal translation of Elukotimahadev. Elukotimahadev is mentioned in the inscription for the first time in Kudatani village in the Bellary area.³ It is explicitly mentioned in the inscription that Shaiva Gana was present with the Elukoti. The devotees of Khandoba give cries like Kathi Uchala and Elakoti Mailar which means that Karnataka, Andhra, and Maharashtra have close ties to both of

¹ Jaywant Vinayak Suryarao Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve Yethil Shree Saptakoteswar Devasthan: Prachin va Arvachin Itihas* (Bombay: Gomantak Chhapakhana, 1931), 2.

² V. R. Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural History of Goa: From Bhojas to The Vijayanagara* (Panaji: Institute of Menezes Braganza, 1999), 159.

³ Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural*, 159.

these deities.⁴ The deity is also worshiped in other forms like Khandanatha, Malhari, Mailal, Mailar, Martanda-Bhairava, Yella-Koti-Mahadeva, Mallukhan.⁵ His human form, which consists of four arms with swords, *trisula*, kettle drums, and cups in each, is similar to that of the folk god Ravalnatha, who is primarily worshipped by people from all castes in Goa. Due to his alleged battles with the demons Mani and Malla using his army of seven crore soldiers, he was given the name Yella-Koti-Mahadeva.⁶ Thus, he was Yella-Koti-Mahadeva's lord of seven crores. This is called Saptakotisha or Saptakotishvara in Sanskrit.

2.2 Mention in Sahyadri Khand

The *Sahyadri Khand* was edited by the Gerson da Da Cunha in the late nineteenth century. It has a chapter on the Saptakoteshwar deity. It starts with the mentioning of the Sapt Rishis and praising of Lord Shiva. Sapt Rishis controlled their senses and did

⁴ Kamla Mankekar, *Cultural and Religious Traditions in Temples of Goa* (New Delhi: Director Publishing Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2004), 76.

⁵ V T Gune, *Ancient Shrines of Goa: A Pictorial Survey*. (Panjim: Department of Information Government of Goa, Daman and Diu, 1965), 14.

⁶ Gune, *Ancient Shrines of Goa*, 14.

penance to praise Shiva.⁷ Later Lord Shiva came there to give Sapt Rishis a boon. The rishis said that they had done penance for seven crore years with seven crore *Maha mantras* coming out of their mouth, so with that name, he should stay in *linga* form there in Gomatak.⁸ He was called Saptanath or Saptakoteshwar. It is mentioned in Sahyadri Khand that one who does a *pooja* of Saptakoteshwar with all rituals perfectly his wishes come true. One who praises the *linga* gets free from the material world.⁹ According to the text in *Sahyadri Khand*, the deity is called Saptakoteshwar because of the significance of the number seven crore (*Saptakoti*). The term "*Saptakoti*" refers to seven crores, which is a large number signifying a vast and infinite quantity. Therefore, the designation of the deity as Saptakoteshwar in *Sahyadri Khand* underscores the deity's exalted status as the ruler or lord of seven crore entities.

The earliest reference to the deity is found in *Sahyadri Khand* of *Skanda Purana* and *Saura Purana*. Saptakoteshwar has two

⁷ Jose Gerson da Da Cunha, ed., *The Sahyadri Khanda of the Skanda Purana: A Mythological, Historical, and Geographical Account of Western India* (Bombay: Thacker, Vining and Co, 1877), 539.

⁸ Da Cunha, *The Sahyadri Khanda*, 540.

⁹ Da Cunha, *The Sahyadri Khanda*, 541.

shrines in Goa, the first is located in Narve, and the other at Opa-Khandepar. There are two other shrines of Kotishawara are present in India, one is in Bhuj in Gujarat and Udipi in Karnataka.¹⁰ But they had the name Kotishwara and not Saptakoteshwara. This means the deity mentioned in *Saura Purana* is not from Goa. Another legend is that the Saptakoteshwar was brought by Parshuram in Goa with other main deities like Sri Mangiris Shiva, Mahalakshmi, Mhalasa, Shantadurga and Nagesh.¹¹

In difference with *Sahyadri Khand*, Saptakoteshwar is praised to a far greater extent in *Saura Purana*.¹² According to the latter Purana, one can obtain the fruits of *godana* (donating cow) by uttering (*japa*) the name of Saptakoteshwar.¹³ According to the *Saura Purana*, one can reap the rewards of a thousand *godanas* for performing the same deed. It goes on to say that the devotees

¹⁰ Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural*, 160.

¹¹ Vinayak Narayan Shenvi Dhume, *Gomantak Punyabhoomi* (Panaji: Department of Sports and Culture ,1981), 48.

¹² Sushant Pradhan, “Poetic Value of Saura Purana” International Journal of Sanskrit Research 6(1), (2019):185-190, <https://www.anantaajournal.com/archives/2020/vol6issue1/PartD/6-1-6-645.pdf>

¹³ Da Cunha, *The Sahyadri Khanda*, 541.

reap the benefits of a thousand *raja suya* sacrifices by chanting the name of the deity. This *Purana* also suggests taking a sea bath, practicing *Pitru-tarpan* (a ritual in which homage is performed for the souls of dead ancestors), and giving charity. This ritual which performed during the Gokulashtami at the Saptakoteshwar temple Narve is similar.

In ancient times, *Sapta Rishi* performed *tapasya* on the banks of this river for seven crore years to see Shiva. Later Shiva became overwhelmed by their compassion and appeared before them. That sage saw the marvellous form of Shiva. It was a five-faced figure with three eyes and ten arms. The Ganga was on top of Shiva's head and the crown was decorated. There was a blue-coloured throat. A moon rested on the head. The *sarvaj* idol was adorned with offerings of snakes, tiger skins, *kamandals*, *stash-malas*, *bishals*, resplendent ringlets, jades, and ashes.¹⁴

Who are these Sapta Rishis? The Saptaa Rishis, also known as the Seven Sages, hold a revered and prominent position in Hindu mythology and ancient Indian scriptures. These seven sages are considered to be born from head of Lord Brahma, the creator of the universe, and are believed to embody wisdom, knowledge, and spiritual enlightenment. Each of the Sapta Rishis plays a

¹⁴ Da Cunha, *Sahyadri Khand*, 285.

significant role in shaping the cosmic order and upholding the principles of righteousness and dharma.

Sapta Rishi then bathed in the Panch Ganga, worshipping and praising him, which pleased Shiva and prompted those sages to ask him a boon. At the time, they said, we have performed severe *tapasya* for seven crores of years in order to see you, so, in his memory, you should remain here forever with the same name.¹⁵ Shiva agreed, and he began living there in Linga form, taking the name Saptakoteswar, which means the Lord of the *Sapta Rishis*. Hence, he is also known as Saptanath.

It is also claimed that seven crore *Mahamantras* erupted out of his mouth. As a result, he may have derived the title of Saptakoteswar from the meaning of the Lord of Seven Crore *Mahamantras*.¹⁶ The names between Saptanath and Saptakoteswar are more popular. The *linga* of Saptakotishwara is made up of gold, silver, copper, iron, tin, lead, and bronze.¹⁷ In every name, the word or number seven, or *sapta*, is common.

2.3: Krishna worship and Saptakoteswar

¹⁵ Da Cunha, *Sahyadri Khand*, 286.

¹⁶ Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 3.

¹⁷ Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 4.

Saptakoteshwar is found to be associated with Lord Krishna in the *Dwapara Yuga*. After killing Kansa, his father-in-law Jarasandha made eighteen raids on the city of Mathura to avenge Krishna, but after failing so many times, he had to retreat. However, his vengeance did not dissolve. Determined not to rest until Krishna was killed, he decided to attack Mathura again. So, just because they should go somewhere far away for days so that the city of Mathura is not destroyed and the people are not harmed Krishna thought that he should go and stay, and so he, along with his brother Balaram, went and stayed at the peak called *Gomant* on the island of Sahyadri.¹⁸ It had twenty-five village that makes the Gomant mountain. That place is the peak of Kuvashi Ghat in Hemadbarsya.¹⁹ Jarasandha met Krishna there as well. As he is a great devotee of Shiva, we should also earn the grace of that god and then face Jarasandha. According to the mythological story, Krishna decided to do so, worshipped Saptakotishwara, and obtained his lordship. In the fierce battle on *Gomant* Peak, Jarasandha finally lost and had to flee.

In Konkan, it is believed that Shiva has ten *poonyachhetras* (shrines).²⁰ Out of which six are prominent and one among them

¹⁸ Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural*, 161.

¹⁹ Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 5.

²⁰ Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 5.

is Narve. It is believed that bathing in the temple tank or *tali* (*Pancha Ganga*) and worshipping Saptakotishwara there fulfils all desires and attains wealth. A large fair is held during the *Gokulashtamis Srikshetra* Narve during the month of *shravan* each year. A lot of devotees travelled specifically to the temple tank shrine at that time to take a bath.²¹ A huge fair is held there. This is how the temple diety is originate from ancient, legends and myths.

²¹ Sardessai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 6.

CHAPTER III: ROYAL PATRONAGE

Saptakoteshwar temple at Narvem in Goa stands as a revered symbol of devotion and traditional architecture attracting pilgrims. Since the early medieval period, this temple has been patronized by many rulers and dynasties each leaving a unique imprint on its legacy. From the early rulers of the Kadamba dynasty to the mighty Vijayanagar Empire, and later the Maratha empire under Shivaji, Saptakoteshwar temple has been a focal point of religious and cultural significance. These patrons not only contributed to the temple's construction and maintenance but also played a pivotal role in shaping its spirituality and architectural splendor. The patronage extended by rulers to the Saptakoteshwar temple reflects attempts to deepen the roots of their legitimacy. This chapter analyses the politico-dynastic association of temples and emphasizes on the importance of royal patronage of the Saptakoteshwar temple.

3.1: Kadambas and Saptakoteshwar

The Kadamba rulers who ruled over Goa were a prominent dynasty in the Deccan region. The first ruler of the Goa Kadambas was Kantakacharya, also known as Shashthadeva I. The prominent rulers included Nagavarmma Guhalla-deva I, Chaturbhuja, Guhalla-deva II, Shashtha-deva II, Jayakesi I,

Guhalla-deva III, Vijayaditya I and Jayakesi II.¹ The cultural and political history of Goa was greatly influenced by the Kadamba dynasty. Due to their skill as a marine force and their impact on the cultural history of the area, the Kadamba rule over Goa was significant.

Goa gained greater prominence under Shastadeva II's rule since he had a powerful marine force and had defeated the Shilahara power.² Goa's position was further strengthened by his son Jayakeshi I, who established commercial links, moved the capital to Gopakapattana, and built a strong navy.³ By overthrowing several upcountry kingdoms, the Kadambas increased their sphere of influence over the Deccan region and extended their dominion to Konkan under his rule. Jayakeshi I also played a crucial role in maintaining diplomatic relations.. His reign also saw the commercial prosperity of the city of Gopakapattana, which had trade relations with numerous countries, indicating the maritime and economic significance of the Kadamba rule under

¹ P. S. Pissurlencar, *Inscricoes Pre-Portugesas de Goa* (Bastora: Imprensa Nacional, 1938), 23.

² V. T. Gune, *Ancient Shrines of Goa: A Pictorial Survey* (Panjim: Department of Information Government of Goa, Daman and Diu, 1965), 3.

³ Gune, *Ancient Shrines of Goa*, 3.

Jayakeshi I. Through their dynastic dominance, the Kadambas also had a considerable impact on Goa's cultural development and history.

The Kadambas' strategic significance and power as rulers are demonstrated by their ability to maintain control over Goa in the face of pressure from rivals in the Deccan. Their coins, inscriptions, and memorial sculptures provide more evidence of their importance in forming the history of the region and culture. All things considered, the Kadamba dynasty's dominance over Goa played a significant role in the development of the area's cultural heritage, commercial success, and status as a maritime power.

The Kadambas ruled over the region of Goa from around 950 CE to 1350 CE.⁴ They played a pivotal role in the patronage, of the Saptakoteswar deity and temple. Their reign marked a period of cultural flourishing, religious tolerance, and architectural innovation. Understanding the historical context of the Kadambas is crucial to unravelling their motivations for patronising and contributing to the Shree Saptakoteswar deity and temple. The temple of Saptakoteswar was originally

⁴ S. G. Kadamb, *The Kadambas of Goa* (Panjim: Broadway Publishing House, 2010), 1.

situated on island of Diwadi.⁵ Shivachittadeva Kadamba also worshipped Saptakoteshwar. His wife, Kamaladevi also worshipped Saptakotishvara.⁶ An important historical record that sheds light on Goa's prehistoric past is the Vimana Mantri inscription 1271. Though inscribed in Marathi, the Vimana Mantri inscription makes use of Old Kannada characters (*halekannada*), which were widely employed in Goa before the 17th century. It also mentioned about temple of Saptakoteshwar at Naroa.⁷

Kadambas were the devotees of Saptakoteshwar the evidence for it is the coin of Jayakeshi II. The Royal Asiatic Society's Bombay Branch has many coins from this reign. One of them features a roaring lion staring forward, and before his lips is the phrase *Pramodha*, which refers to the cycle year of coinage in old *Nagari*. The back inscription reads: "*Sri-Saptakotisa-labuhavara vira-Jayakesideva- Malavaramari*" (The brave Jayakesideva, the victorious ruler of the Malavas, who gained a

⁵ V. R. Mitragotri, *A Socio Cultural History Of Goa: From The Bhojas to The Vijayanagara*, (Phd thesis, Goa University, 1992), 39.

⁶ Gune, *Ancient Shrines of Goa*, 14.

⁷ Pissurlencar, *Inscricoes Pre-Portuesas*, 30.

boon from the holy *Sapta kotia*).⁸ Their patronage extended to various religious institutions, including temples dedicated to Hindu deities like Lord Shiva.

3.2: Vijayanagara empire and Saptakoteshwar

Goa was ruled by the Vijayanagara dynasty, which had a profound impact on the region's culture and social structure. The Saraswat Brahmin families of Goa were part of the administrative structure of the Vijayanagara kingdom.⁹

The Vijayanagar empire, known for its military prowess and cultural patronage, expanded its influence into the Konkan region. Goa, strategically located on the western coast of India, attracted the attention of various rulers due to its port towns of Gopakapattana, Ela (Old Goa), and Chandrapur's strategic

⁸ George M. Moraes, *The Kadamba Kula: A History of Ancient and Mediaeval Karnataka* (New Delhi: Asian Education Service, 1990), 383.

⁹ Pedro Pombo, "From the Forest to Valley: temple architecture, landscape and history of Goa," *The Routledge Handbook of Hindu Temples: Material, Social History and Practice*, ed. Himanshu Prabha Ray, Salila Kulshreshtha and Uthara Suvrathan (New York: Routledge, 2023), 435.

importance.¹⁰ When Malerajya and Palasige, which had previously been a part of the Goa Kadambas, were merged into the Vijayanagar empire in 1347 A.D., Vijayanagar rule was established in Goa.

Goa became a province (*rajya*) of the Vijayanagar empire in 1378.¹¹ Demands from Goans like Vasant Madhav and Mai Sinai Waglo, as well as the port's rich trade in Arab horses, were the driving forces for this shift in rule. Under the name *Govapuradhash*, or the Lord of Goa, the Vijayanagar general Madhav Mantri transformed this region into a lively entrepot and a center for Vedic study and worship. Jaywant Sardessai's history of Saptakoteshwar temple has details on Madhav Matri. More importantly, Madhav Matri is claimed to be a prominent Kashmiri Saraswat Brahmin.¹² Known for his military acumen and strategic vision, Madhav Matri played a crucial role in the

¹⁰ Pratima Kamat, *Farar Far: Local Resistance to Colonial Hegemony in Goa, 1510-1912* (Panjim: Institute of Menezes Braganza, 1999), 9.

¹¹ Kamat, *Farar Far*, 21.

¹² Jaywant Vinayak Suryarao Sardessai, *Shree Kshetra Narve Yethil Shree Saptakoteshwar Devasthan: Prachin va Arvachin Itihas* (Bombay: Gomantak Chhapakhana, 1931), 30.

capture of Goa from the Adil Shahi.¹³ Bahamani Sultanate during their reign had destroyed temples. The destroyed Saptakoteshwar temple was re-built in 1391 A.D. by Madhav Mantri after the linga which was kept hidden in the fields by devotees were found and established in temple again.¹⁴

Madhav Matri made significant financial contributions to the construction and maintenance of the Saptakoteshwar temple. These contributions not only enhanced the temple's grandeur but also solidified its status as a prominent religious and cultural centre in the region. The contributions made to the Saptakoteshwar temple by Madhav Matri and the Vijayanagar empire ensured that their legacy would be carried on. They had a long-lasting effect on the temple's religious rituals, religious freedom and cultural importance.¹⁵

3.3: Marathas and Saptakoteshwar

The Maratha empire under the rule of Shivaji emerged as a formidable power in western India. Shivaji was a visionary ruler

¹³ Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 30.

¹⁴ Gune, *Ancient Shrines of Goa*, 6.

¹⁵ V. T. Gune, ed., *Gazetteer of Goa, Daman and Diu, vol. I* (Panjim: Gazetteer Department, 1979), 129.

who captured the Bhatgram from the Adil Shahi Sultanate.¹⁶ Shivaji's patronage of local deities reflected his commitment to preserve indigenous traditions. When Shivaji was in Bhatgram in 1668, he came to know about the greatness of Saptakoteshwar and he went to Narve for worship. During this time, Shivaji saw that in front of the sanctum sanctorum of God, there was no area for shelter and only a shed made of palm leaves was present. As Shivaji was worshipping God one of the palm leaves fell. After the worship, he gave the order to construct a temple, believing that it was God's wish. Under Shivaji's patronage Saptakoteshwar temple was rebuilt on 13 November 1668.¹⁷

Shivaji made substantial contributions to the maintenance and development of Saptakoteshwar temple. Financial support of 700 honnes, land grants, and other resources were allocated to ensure the temple's prosperity and continued reverence among devotees.¹⁸

¹⁶Sardessai, *Shree Kshetra Narve*, 21.

¹⁷ Pissurlencar, *Inscricoes Pre-Portuguesas*, 70.

¹⁸ Rui Gomes Pereira, *Hindu Temples and Deities* (Panjim: Printwell Press, 1978), 133.

CHAPTER IV: SOCIAL HISTORY AND CULTURAL LIFE

The social history and cultural life of the Shree Saptakoteshwar temple in Goa are deeply connected with the religious beliefs, traditions, and practices of the local community. This historic temple is very important as a site of worship as well as a meeting place for festivals, social events, and customs that have been carried down through the ages. The history of the temple reflects the region's unique cultural past and is woven with strands of spirituality, dedication, and community involvement. The building and growth of the temple over time bear witness to the changing social structures and religious beliefs of the surrounding population.

The temple serves a purpose in the community's social life that extends beyond religious devotion. The temple hosts annual fairs, processions, and ceremonies that are not only religious in origin but also provide opportunities for cross-cultural interaction and communal integration. The rich cultural legacy of the area is reflected in the complex mix of music, dancing, art, and rituals that make up the Shree Saptakoteshwar Temple's cultural life.

The temple serves as a hub for the promotion and preservation of traditional arts and crafts in addition to being a place of prayer.

The region's creative expressions and cultural variety are on display throughout the temple's festivals and celebrations. The temple's cultural life reflects the longstanding traditions and practices of the community, from elaborate processions and ceremonies to traditional music and dance performances.

Beyond its religious significance, the temple is significant because it is a symbol of social unity and cultural identity for the neighborhood. The temple remains a living historic site, linking the past and present and safeguarding the customs and values of previous generations for the benefit of present and future generations, via its festivals, ceremonies, and creative representations.

4.1: Social Life at Temple

A subfield of history called "social history" is concerned with the social structures, daily activities, and lived experiences of historical societies. Its goal is to comprehend how people have interacted, arranged themselves, and moved through social settings throughout history. Social history delves into the various aspects of human society, including social classes, gender roles, family structures, labor relations, cultural practices, *jati*, Varna,

caste, and power dynamics.¹ Social historians seek to understand the basic social forces that formed historical events, impacted societal norms, and influenced individual actions by looking at these components. Highlighting the experiences of common people, marginalized groups, and those who have historically been ignored in historical narratives is one of the main features of social history.

The lives of common people, such as peasants, laborers, women, children, immigrants, and minorities, are examined by social historians as opposed to just concentrating on political figures, military battles, and significant events.² Social historians can learn more about the general social, economic, and cultural patterns of a given era by examining the viewpoints and behaviors of various groups. The structures and institutions that regulate society, including governments, legal structures, institutions of higher learning, and economic systems, are also examined in social history. Social historians may learn how power was allocated, how social structures were upheld, and how people interacted with these institutions by examining these institutions. Furthermore, social history investigates how societal

¹ Sheela Srinivasan, *Goa: A Social History* (Panaji: Rajhauns Vitaran, 2012), 1.

² Srinivasan, *Goa: A Social History*, 2.

norms, values, and beliefs impact individual conduct and created group identities.

Before a proper road was built, the shrine's path was quite isolated, bordered on both sides by dense forests and other vegetation. There is still a forest behind the temple. Just behind the temple is evidence of laterite remains, it is believed to have once been a Buddhist seminary or religious institution. There is a myth that a cave at the entrance was once connected to a tunnel that led to the far-away Ratnagiri. However, it appears that the tunnel has vanished. Before it was renovated, the structure was simple and sturdy. Although there is no longer a forest area close to the temple, the area is still hilly, has a valley-like feel, and blends in beautifully with the surrounding greenery.

Two windows that lead onto the courtyard flank the shrine's arched entryway. Musical instruments like as the *dhol* and *tasha*, which are used daily at certain hours for early *jagaran*, *abhishek*, and *arati*, are stored on one side of the square-shaped *mukhmandapa*. There is a rectangular *sabhamandap* (a large hall with a sloping roof) next to the *mukhmandapa*. Above the entrance is a stone tablet with devnagiri phrases engraved on it, stating that Raja Shivaji ordered the temple foundation to be placed on the fifty-fifth day of *Kartik*, *Samvat* 1570 (November 13, 1668). Similar to the Kailash cave at the Ellora rock temples,

the *garbhagriha*'s dome is made of a single piece of rock that has been hollowed out from the inside to house the god. The linga in the *garbhagriha* is a *dharalinga*, or shaft-type linga.³ Daybreak marks the start of the shrine's daily *dharma kritya* and rites. Before the major *arati* and *archana*, which include the recitation of *mantras* and music, there is *bhog naivedya*, which is rice covered with *ghee* and plain dal without any spices, at midday. The god is given a selection of fruits at night, but grains is not offered to god.⁴

4.2: Mahajans and temple heads

In 1886, the Portugese government introduced *Regulamento das Mazanias*. It is the law governing all the Hindu temples in Goa. The temples in Goa has *compromisso* which are temple statutes approved by the government. For establishing the mahajans and the administration of temples bye-laws must be approved by the government. These bylaws must include details on the mahajans, rituals of the temples, festivals and temple servants.⁵

³ Kamla Mankekar, *Cultural and Religious Traditions in Temples of Goa* (New Delhi: Director Publishing Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2004), 79.

⁴ Mankekar, *Cultural and Religious*, 80.

⁵ *Devasthan Regulation* (Panaji: Govt. Printing Press, Government of Goa, 2010).

The term "*mahajan*" carries a deep-rooted meaning in the context of Indian culture, signifying individuals who are entrusted with responsibilities related to religious, social, and community affairs. In the case of the Saptakoteshwar temple, the *Mahajans* are integral to the smooth functioning and preservation of the temple's traditions, rituals, and customs. The role of the *Mahajans* encompasses a wide range of duties and responsibilities that are essential for the upkeep and operation of the temple.

Saraswat Brahmins are the mahajans and accordingly has right over management of the temple, which has been in their hands through family tradition. Among the *Mahajan* class are Brahmins of gotras like Naidhruv or Kashyapanaidhruv, Bharadwaj and their names are Surya Rao Sardesai, Vishwas Rao Dessai, Divadkar, Divekar, Kitturkar, this two are Kurade Brahmin Bhat Zodye, bhat Mahajan and this one is vaishvani Divkar.⁶ They are responsible for the contribution of expenses of maintenance, and conservation of temple building.

Mahajans should strictly follow *Devasthan* regulations with administration and functions like electing committees, leasing

⁶ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da India*, no. 74, 16 September 1936.

land, changing priests and such others mentioned in laws by the government.⁷ The right of *Mahajani* is hereditary to the male of the family. The members of the family who lived outside also had equal rights. The Kulkarni Gaonkars and other Brahmin inhabitants of Narvem and Dessai of Haturli, Akadkar, and Shudras are considered as *bhajak* and they have their work to performed.

4.3: Duties of Sevekaries

The temple has many temple servants. First are *Abhisheki* and *Puranic*, to perform the full *Panchamruta Abhishek* and *Rudrabhishek* every day before the *puja* additionally. He must perform the *Abhishek* of other *mahajans* and devotees at their expense each *Abhishek* or other cult to present lamps and *artis* every night to Saptakoteswar and to *Palki Murti* in all *Palki* procession occasions to chant *Mantrapushpa* daily at the time of *Arti* and *Mangalastaka* during the *Palki* procession. The practice followed till today, jointly with other *puranik* on all the occasions of Mondays, *Ekadashi*, and other festival days.⁸

⁷ *Devasthan Regulation* (Panaji: Govt. Printing Press, Government of Goa, 2010).

⁸ Jaywant Vinayak Suryarao Sardessai, *Shree Kshetra Narve Yethil Shree Saptakoteswar Devasthan: Prachin va Arvachin Itihas* (Bombay: Gomantak Chhapakhana, 1934), 32.

Second is *Puajaris* of Shree Saptakoteswar, to do daily *puja* by making *Nirmalya Visarjan* before 7:00 am and giving *bel*, *tulsi*, and flowers until midday. The daily tasks include cleaning *garbagraha*, offering *naivedyha* (rice offerings), handing Abhishek Patra and filling it with water, preparing and offering *Naivedyha* before daybreak, bathing Linga, keeping *Palki Murti* in *Palki* company, singing *Mangalastakas* in harmony with other *bhaktas*, taking and distributing *Prasad* to *Mahajanagalastakas* in harmony when they are in the temple, accepting offerings and *Navas-bhet* from the temple's guards and keys, and being present from sunrise to eight in the evening. To see that the celebration will held properly he should be stay there and see that every property or belongings of temple are safe.⁹ To perform the *puja* of Shree Bhagvati, Shree Gopinath, Shree Vithoba, and other deities present in the Saptakoteswar temple by following the customs still in place there as well as those of the *Kerode* Brahmin temple. To protect the resources charged to him to supply the deities' *Vesh*, *Shringal*, and *Alankar garments* for everyday wear. He is accountable for everything that falls within his purview.

⁹ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da India*, no. 74, 16 September 1936.

Then the *Pujari* of Kalbhairav, to carry out Shree Kalbhairao's puja, maintain the cleanliness of the *Garba Griha* from morning to noon, and at night, *Dhuparati*. The tasks assigned to him include hanging *Abhishek Patra*, bathing the idol with water after it has been painted, guarding the *garba-griha* of Shree Kalbhairao, opening and closing the temple's doors, being in charge of all the work that needs to be done, helping out at *Palki utsav* for both this and Shree Saptakoteswar, and helping out at all the festivals and procession of Kalbhairao during *Simollanghan*, *Cartik Poornima*, and *Mahashivratri*. *Gokulastami* in *Sravan*.¹⁰ To travel to *Tirth* and carry out more services in accordance with protocol, to carry out all services at his own expense, and to be compensated for his services by the rent of the field or property. *Gokulastami* in *Sravan*, to travel to *Tirth* and carry out further services in accordance with norms, to execute all services at his charge, and to be compensated for his services by the rent of a field or property under No. 18, in addition to the amount specified in the yearly budget.

After that *Haridas* of Saptakoteswar, every Monday, *Ekadashi*, and all other temple festivals are dedicated to *kirtan* decorating idol and placing them in *Palkis* for procession; singing *abhangas* to accompany the *palki* procession reciting *mangalastakas* in

¹⁰ Vinayak Narayan Shenvi Dhume, *Gomantak Punyabhoomi* (Panaji: Department of Sports and Culture ,1981), 55.

usually places and daily reciting *mantra-puspa* during the arti of Saptakoteshwar and undressing the Palki.¹¹ Accompanying the procession to the birth on Gokulastami, he performed kirtan and other timeless services under his char after removing the ornaments of the idol and putting everything back in its rightful place, giving flowers and food to each devotee this work should be done by him.

4.4: Arrangement Panel of Sevekaries

All Brahmin *sevekaries*, such as *Abhishek*, *Pujaris*, *Haridas*, *Puranic*, and others, who are employed by organisations, as well as musicians, *Devli*, *Mrundangvadak*, *Palki vahak*, and *zalmi*, shall carry out their duties according to their skill and competence and be paid according to the terms set forth in temple byelaws. They shall also utilise (enjoy) the properties of *Devasthan* that are applicable to them in order to fulfil their respective services.¹² All devasthans items are prohibited from being removed from the temple grounds for private use by *sevekaries*, with the exception of musicians and performers, who may do so with management's permission. No *sevekari* may miss

¹¹ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da India*, no. 74, 16 September 1936.

¹² *Boletim Oficial do Estado da India*, no. 74, 16 September 1936.

more than six months of work in a year without the committee's previous approval. Nor may he assign a substitute who is not only well qualified but also approved by the committee. A suitable *sevekari* will be retained in his place, subject to the general body's approval, if the outsider is known to *Mahajan Mandal* and it is determined that he is unable to perform the duties on a daily or periodic basis.

When it finds that a *sevekari* is no able to carry out the tasks assigned to him, he will be suspended and replaced by another qualified person, chosen by the appointed *devasthan* committee. The provisions of the *Devasthan* Regulation in effect will govern the imposition of fines, penalties, and other sanctions on *sevekaries* for missing work. Each member of the workforce and *sevekari* will be required to attend. When doing their tasks at the temple on the designated days, they must not lose any objects while performing their duties. Under no circumstances may *Devasthan's* property be sold, mortgaged, subleased, or otherwise alienated by any third party, allowing him to keep the product.¹³ In the direction of providing services charged with a crime and have to pay for all the inequalities they create. The total amount charged for cult services and additional rituals should

¹³ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da India*, no. 74, 16 September 1936.

equal one tenth of the predial of the properties indicated in these bylaws. Books of deed, registration and other accounts in accordance with the current *devasthan* regulation should be kept within devasthan members. No *sevekari* is allowed to plant trees in the *devasthan* building's surrounding premises.

4.5: Festivals

Annual festivals play a significant role in the cultural and religious life of communities around the world. These festivals are celebrated with great enthusiasm and fervour, bringing people together to commemorate important events, honour deities, and uphold traditions passed down through generations. From vibrant street processions to elaborate rituals and ceremonies, annual festivals offer a glimpse into the rich tapestry of customs, beliefs, and practices that define a community's identity. These celebrations serve as occasions for joy, reflection, and spiritual renewal, fostering a sense of unity and connection among participants. Whether marking harvest seasons, religious observances, historical milestones, or cultural heritage, annual festivals provide a platform for people to express their faith, creativity, and collective spirit in a colourful and festive manner.

Many festivals are celebrated in this temple annually. Festivals mentioned by the Sardesai are Samvatsara-pratipada, Jirnodhar Palkhi, Vasant Puja, Archaashuddhi, Pavitraaropan, Shibikotsav,

Ghatsthapana in the temple of Kalbhairava during Navratri, Shimolagghan, Harijagar, Kalashtami, Sri Vadhdivas, Palkhi Miravanuk, Tulshi Vivah, Vaikuntha Chaturdashi, Tripuri. Maharudra, amla Bhojan and Palkhi, Kalbhairavajayanti, Rath Saptami, Mahashivratri, and Holi. And by compromisso are Chaitra Suddha Pratipada, Sravan Suddha Pournima, Sravan Arch Suddhi, Ashvin Suddha Pratipada, Dashmi Navratri, Vijaya Dashami, Kartik Shuddha Chaturdashi, Pousha festival, Magh Suddha rath Saptami, Mahashivratri, Falgun Suddha Poornima, Sravan Vadya Astami Gokulastami, Falgun Suddha Paksha, Margashirsha Kalastami and Palki. Some festivals are missing earlier and some may be spell different but they are same festivals.

The *Palki Miraunuk* of Shree Saptakoteswar and that of Shree Kalbhairav, along with all the *sevekaries*, *Mahajanas*, *Bhajakas*, and devasthan musicians, will proceed up to the limits of Pilgaon or *Kalamba Vriksha* on the tenth day of the aforementioned temple ceremony of *Jevni*, *Navchandi*, and other acts as per style, and at 3 p.m., the *Palki Miraunuk* of Shree Saptakoteswar, accompanied by that of Shree Kalbhairav, will proceed jointly with that of Shree Saptakoteswar, where the members of the Divkar family shall make puja, terminating the acts with *Ashirwad* and distribution of food. Ashwin in this month's visits to the *taranga* Gramdevi, Shree Saptakoteswar, and Shree

Ravalnath of *Vanjuem*. *Kartik Shuddha Chaturdashi Vaikunth Chaturdashi* is observed by Mahajana Divadkar, who also provides *Panch Khanddhya*, a *prasad* of flowers, to the present devotees. On the second day, *Santarpan* is given to sixty *Brahmin Buashri* along with *Devasthan*.¹⁴ There is a Harizagor ritual from *Ashwin Shuddha Dwadashi* to *Kartik Shuddha Dwadashi*. *Kirtan* is performed, and devotees who are present get *poha*, or *churmure*. *Kartik Suddha Dwadashi Tulsi Viviah*, *Churmure* distribution following custom.

During the *Tripuri Poornima* *Maha puja* is performed and *Mahanaivedhya* is given to devotees. *Kirtan*, *deep aradhana*, *atisbaji* (firework), and *nrityagayan* (dance and music) of *Kalavantini*, as well as early morning *rath miraunuk* with *Palki miraunuk* of Kalbhairao go up to the Shree Laxmi Narayan temple and back, will conclude in *Ashirwad*, when devotees get food and flowers as *prasad*. On *Kartik Poornima Gaulan Kalo* is performed on the second day, along with *Puran*, *Kirtan*, and the light of *Deep-Stambh*. *Vadvoll Pousha* festival including nine Brahmins and one *Suvasini* in *samaradhana*, as well as *dakshana* with *kankade* in some locations following customs and other acts of practice. In *Magh Suddha Saptami Rath Saptami Rath*

¹⁴ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da India*, no. 74, 16 September 196.

Miraunuk of Shree Saptakoteshwar and *Palki* of Kalbhairav, Mahapuja, *Maha Naivedya*, *Puran*, *Kirtan*, and other customary deeds, it concludes with *Ashirwad* and *Bhuishri Dakshana*, *panchakhadhya* and *prasad* distribution.¹⁵

On *Mahashivratri*, the day of *Amavashya*, *Chatur Prahari Yampuja* is held with five pujas offerings of 5000 bel, *Mahanaivedya*, *Santarpana*, *Puran*, *Kirtan*, *Atishjbaji*, *roshanai* (lighting), *nrutya-gayan*, *rath miraunuk*, *pratakale palki miraunuk* of Shree Kalbhairav, and *Suvarivadan* of *Haccadhar* to the temple of Shree Laxmi. After that, Narayan went back to the temple and finished the ceremony with *Bhuishri Dakshana*, giving *Panchakhadhya* and *Prasad* to the current devotees.¹⁶ All of the *bhat*, *sevekaries*, and *Mahajanas* must be present before beginning *rathosava*. *Falgun Suddha Poornima Holi* will be presented before the main temple in accordance with long-standing traditions, with help from the village's *Gaonkars*, *kulkarnis*, and *Mahajan*. The Areca tree for Holi will be brought from *Devasthan's* property by the *Zalmi*, who will use it for themselves.

¹⁵ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da India*, no. 74, 16 September 1936.

¹⁶ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da India*, no. 74, 16 September 1936.

Sravan Vadya Astami Palkyutsava of Shree Saptakoteswar *Gokulastami*. The produce obtained on this occasion shall be distributed according to the put-together observations; one-sixth portion of it shall be used for the improvement of individual *palki*. Vithoba and Kalbhairao, up to *Tirtha*, escorted by *Haridas* and *Bhavina*, return before sunset. *Falgun Shuddha Paksha*, the local *khelgadi*, will visit the temple, where the *pujari* will offer *tirth prasad* in accordance with custom. *Margashirsha Puran*, *Kirtan*, lighting, and other customary ceremonies are observed on *Kalastami* at the Shree Kalbhairao temple. Every Monday, as well as the *Ekadashi* days of *Suddha* and *Vadhya Paksha*, the *Palki Miraunik* will take place. It will feature *puran*, *kirtan*, *bhajan*, and *mangalastaka*. The *Palki utsava* will begin at 9.30 p.m. from temples, be carried by *Bhat*, all *sevekaries*, and *vazantri*, and conclude with a round trip to the temple that includes stops and *pendes* in accordance with style.¹⁷ Afterwards, the current devotees will receive a *prasad* and *katle shirni sugar prasad*. *Sevekaries* and *mahajanas* alike are forbidden from entering the temple during the *Palki Utsava* and *Miraunik* festivals.

¹⁷ *Bolteim Official do Estado da India*, no. 74, 16 September 1936.

This is how the different festivals are celebrated in temple. The rituals are different which are unique from other temples of Goa. Many devotees also visit the temple during this festivals. These celebrations, with events such as *Gokulastami*, *Rathotsava*, and *Mahashivratri*, are not only times for joy but also chances for devotees to construct links within the community, maintain holy customs, and develop a closer relationship with the divine. The celebrations are held with respect, pleasure, and devotion to traditional practices because of the Mahajans' and the temple staff's rigorous planning, devotion, and commitment. The Saptakoteswar temple continues to be a lighthouse of spirituality, providing followers with a place for prayer, meditation, and peaceful coexistence via these yearly events. The festivals encourage followers to uphold the customs and ideals contained in these holy events for future generations by serving as a reminder of the temple's rich cultural heritage and spiritual legacy.

CHAPTER V: ARCHITECTURE OF TEMPLE

This temple, which is located in the peaceful village of Narve in North Goa, is a fusion of traditional Hindu architectural styles with elements from many historical and cultural eras with a centuries-long history. The Saptakoteshwar Temple's architecture is an interesting mixture of several concepts that reflect the vitality of Goa's multiculturalism. Areas within the temple are a monument to the creative genius of the artisans who created them with great attention to detail. The strength of the followers and their unwavering dedication to the temple and its precious artifacts assured their survival despite hardships. The temple is subject to periodic maintenance and restoration work.

5.1: Goan Temple's Architecture

Goan temple architecture reflects the region's rich cultural history and diverse heritage, with an incredible fusion of indigenous Hindu styles, Islamic influences, and European components.¹ Goan temples are striking examples of blending several creative traditions, drawing inspiration from traditional Hindu temple construction and combining elements from Islamic and Portuguese styles. The architecture of Goan temples has changed

¹ V. G. Rao, *Temples of Goa: An Architectural study* (PhD diss., Goa University, 2003), 186.

over the centuries due to numerous historical events and cultural exchanges. These temples display a variety of architectural elements that reveal the region's cosmopolitan past and the blending of various artistic traditions. From the creative Maratha and Goan designs to the addition of European Neo-Roman elements, Goan temples provide a curious insight into the region's architectural diversity.² Goan temples have a unique architectural style that differs from the typical tripartite layout of Hindu temples.

The usual layout consists of an entrance (ardhamandapa), a hall (mandapa), and a sanctuary (garbhagriha). Since the Vijayanagar era, domes have been a characteristic of Goan Hindu temples; nevertheless, they were first noticed in later structures around the 17th century.³ The high octagonal base with corbelled arches, domical sikhara, and curved arches are examples of Islamic architectural influences.⁴ The design of Goan temples was influenced by the use of materials such as wood, tiled roofs, laterite stone, and lime mortar.

² Jose Pereira, Pratapaditya Pal ed., *India & Portugal: Cultural Interaction* (Mumbai: Marg Publication, 2001), 90.

³ Pereira, Pal, *India & Portugal*, 90.

⁴ Rao, *Temples of Goa*, 295.

The evolving social and cultural dynamics of the Goan region are also reflected in the architecture of the temples. The architecture of temples built in the late 16th century and beyond illustrates a variety of design concepts and new materials that were used to produce larger, more elaborate constructions. Larger assemblies and more complex religious rituals were made possible by the addition of sabha mandapas, and mukhamandapas to temple plans.

During the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries, architects created the Goan Hindu style, which integrated neoclassical features with traditional designs to create a style that is both elegant and timeless. Temples such as Saptakoteshwar and Navdurga Kamakshi are perfect examples of this stage of architectural development, combining European influences with local and palace designs.⁵ These temples stand as a testament to the rich cultural heritage of Goa and are a must-visit for anyone interested in architecture and history. The architecture of Goan temples is a testament to the region's rich cultural legacy and the intermingling of various artistic influences. Hindu temples, which have a classic tripartite design, are fused with other forms of architecture that reflect the area's cosmopolitan past. These influences include European, Islamic, and Portuguese, among

⁵ Pereira, Pal, *India & Portugal*, 94.

others. The evolution of Goan temple architecture is a remarkable demonstration of the ingenuity and flexibility of the designers and craftsmen who have contributed to the region's diverse and vibrant architectural heritage.

5.2: Architecture of Saptakoteswar temple

The Saptakoteswar Temple, located in Narve, Goa, is a remarkable historical and architectural marvel that over time has undergone numerous renovations and modifications, all of which have contributed to its unique architectural features. Although the lamp tower is distinctive, the temple was constructed along the lines of Goan architecture in the 17th century.

In 2003 Fundacao Oriente undertook renovation of Saptakoteswar temple to protect its heritage.⁶ The second renovation was started in 2019 when the temple marked the completion of 350 years of *jeernodhar* (renovation) by King Shivaji.

5.3: Newly Renovated Temple

The newly renovated Saptakoteswar temple at Narve is a was inaugurated on 11 February 2023. It has white color in major with golden, yellow, and red. Earlier this temple was in blue with

⁶ de Albuquerque, *The Iconic Island*, 81.

yellow borders (figure 1.0 & 1.1). The outside area around the temple is tiled with laterite stone. While entering the temple we can still see the stone inscription of King Shivaji which is placed at the top of the entrance of *Mukhmandap* temple (figure 1.2). Inside the temple has a white color with beautiful different *Kavi* art designs, the pillars and Borders also have this design (figure 1.3, 1.7 & 1.8).

In the temple in *Garbhagriha*, we can see the Shivling of Saptakoteshwar with other *murtis* of deities and Nandi in between. On top of *Garbhagriha*, we can see a humanized murti of a deity placed in a *Makhar* (figure 1.3 & 1.4). Outside of *Garbhagriha* at the right, a small *Shivling* is kept which for devotees to do *pooja*. The ceiling of the temple is wooden with old-style lights (figure 1.6). Earlier the deity was worshipped in a cave and that is still seen at the backside of *Garbhagriha*, which is now protected with glass covers (figure 1.5).

The windows of the temple still have that old look and design. At the backside of the temple, we can still see the old laterite remains of the temple, this was also said to be remains of buddhist shrine (figure 1.9, 2.0, & 2.1). Overall, the temple is beautifully maintained and renovated without causing damage to the original architectural design.

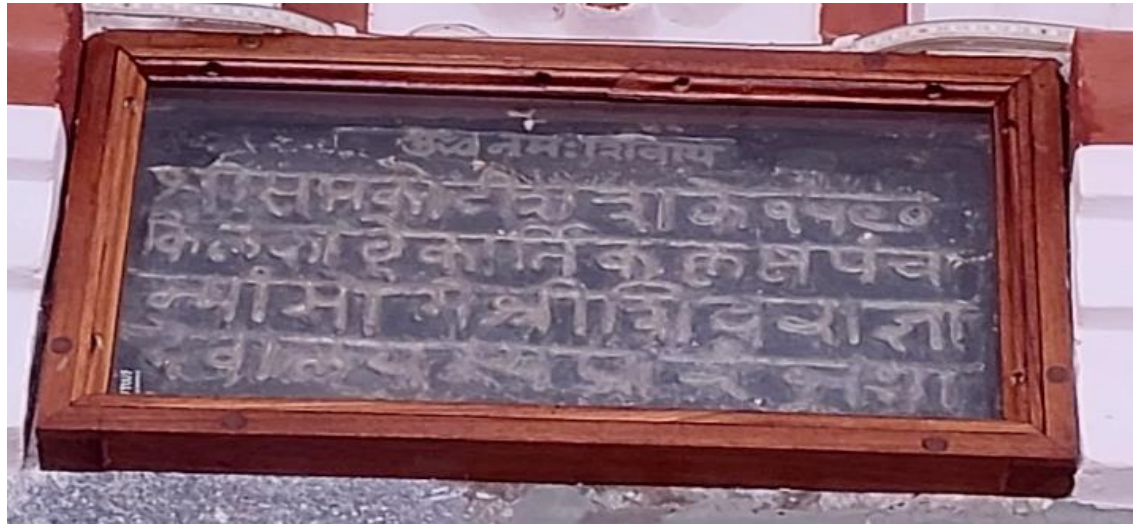
List of Photographs



(figure – 1.0 - Sapatakoteswar temple before renovation in 2023)



(Figure 1.1 - Sapatakoteswar temple after renovation in 2023)



(figure 1.2 - Inscription of King Shivaji)



(figure 1.3 - Murti of Saptakoteshwar in Makhar)



(figure 1.4 - Garbhagriha of Saptakoteswar temple)



(figure 1.5 - Cave behind Garbhagriha)



(figure 1.6 - Ceiling of temple)



(figure 1.7 - Kaavi Art)



(figure 1.8 – Another Kaavi Art)



(figure 1.9 - Old laterite remains)



(figure 2.0 - Another old laterite remain)



(figure 2.2 - Old laterite decoration)

Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

The Saptakoteshwar temple in Goa is important from a cultural, historical, and spiritual perspective. The temple is a center of activity for the community, acting as a venue for festivals, social events, and cultural pursuits in addition to being a place of worship. The temple's physical structure has been improved over the years by the contributions of its mahajans, but they have also given it a spiritual energy that inspires fascination and devotion in pilgrims and visitors.

The temple serves as a center for cross-cultural interaction and societal unity in addition to serving as a place of religious devotion. The varied series of dance, music, art, and rituals that are an essential component of the temple's cultural life reflects the cultural legacy.

The mythological account connected to the establishment of temple has influenced the temple's identity. The temple's relationships with different rulers and dynasties throughout history signify the importance of the deity. The deity was patronised by the Kadamba dynasty, Madhav Mantri of the Vijayanagar Empire and the Maratha King Shivaji. The rulers' attempts to retain their authority and promote religious harmony

were reflected in their royal patronage of the Saptakoteswar temple.

The temple of Saptakoteswar also unites communities. It is a centre for the social meetings, religious celebration and cultural events. Further in terms of the temple services there are different roles assigned to various communities. The architecture of any temple plays a very important role in its beauty. The Goan temples had its own features, which make them unique from other parts of the country.

The original Saptakoteswar temple which was in Divar island had destroyed twice. Today one can see ruins of temple tank and some remains which are housed in ASI museum at Old Goa. The present temple at Narve was built by the King Shivaji. The present temple was renovated two times. More importantly, the renovated temple look like a old temple and has artistic feature of *kaavi* art.

The Saptakoteswar temple is administered as per *Regulamento das Mazania* which was introduced by the Portuguese government in 1886. The *compromisso* of the temple was approved by the colonial state in 1936 and gives details on the *mahajans* and rituals and festivals of the temple. Rights of *mahajans* are based only on *compromisso*. It is important to note

that every male descendant, by masculine lineage, has the customary right to become its member on attaining the prescribed age. *Compromisso* is in other words a private statute which defines who has the right to become *mahajan*, the honours, prominence, rights and duties of its members. It also gives details on the festivals and the daily and periodical rites. In the *compromisso* duties of each class of servants are mentioned.

The Saptakoteshwar temple and village of Narve constitute a cultural arena, a lived, dynamic space where both sacred and secular activities occur. Moreover, the temple space is not just confined to the temple and village alone, it is a network that ties communities across the state of Goa.

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