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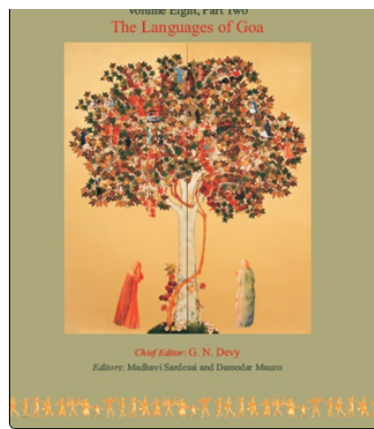
People's Linguistic Survey of India
Volume Eight, Part Two
The Languages of Goa



Chief Editor: G. N. Devy

Editors: Madhavi Sardesai and Damodar Mauzo





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INTRODUCTION

Tiatr is the most popular form of modern Konkani theatre. It is unique, as its structure contains songs, known as *kantaram*, between the scenes or *pordde* (literally meaning curtains). Songs that are integral to the play are called *kant*. Comic interludes are also an essential feature of tiatr.

Easter Sunday, 17 April 1892, is generally regarded as the date on which the first documented performance of a modern tiatr was staged at the New Alfred Theatre in Bombay. This play was composed by Lucasinho Ribeiro who had landed in Bombay from Goa, in search of employment. He was a good composer and singer, could play the violin, and was proficient in English. Hence, he could understand and appreciate operas being performed by an Italian opera company whose tour coincided with his arrival in Bombay. Impressed by the presentation, he attempted to obtain a job as a stagehand with the troupe and succeeded through the recommendation of a prominent Goan. He travelled with this Italian opera company to Poona, Madras, Simla, and Calcutta. When the troupe proceeded to Burma, Ribeiro parted company and returned to Bombay, keeping in mind one of their operettas. While leaving the job he purchased the velvet costumes of the opera company with the hope of utilising them in his own venture. He composed *Italian Bhurgo* on the basis of the Italian operetta and staged it as a *teatro* with the assistance of João Agostinho Fernandes, Caitaninho Fernandes, Agostinho Mascarenhas, and one more (unidentified) person. However, this performance was not the fruition of just a random creative impulse of Lucasinho's. He had an abiding interest in drama from his childhood.

EUROPEAN INFLUENCE ON GOAN THEATRE

Goa has had traditions—imported and native—of festivities associated with religious celebrations. Such festivities included the staging of plays of a spiritual, moral or secular nature. Just as Mystery and Miracle plays or Morality plays, Passion plays and Biblical or Lenten enactments were performed in Europe, they were performed in Goa too. Just as emigrants or missionaries generally carry some facets of their culture with them, the Portuguese colonists and religious emissaries also brought along their cultural, spiritual and catechetical practices. The earliest documented evidence of a performance comes