Caurem Village
(It's origin, social structure, culture, traditions, forests and livelihood)

The village of Caurem (or Cavorem) is situated in Quepem taluka, South Goa district, is nestled within the Western Ghats and is surrounded by three mountains and has its own unique history. It has a population of 920 of which over 80% are members of Scheduled Tribe community as per 2011 census as notified in Official gazette on 8 January 2015. With Ward No VI and Ward No. VII of Caurem village, the seven ward Village Panchayat Caurem Pirla is formed.

Caurem has a total of 11 wadas or mini wards. These are Velipwada, Gaonkarwada, Deulwada, Dessaiwada, Upatwada, Kasarwada, Kunella, Chichwada, Maddamol, Cauregotto, Bhindivolli and Yekshiramol. There are a total of five communities living in the village - Velip, Gaonkar, Gallakar, Dessai and Devidas. Two communities, Ohonshkaar and Satarkar, have disappeared over the period from the village as they had no descendants. All the Velip, Gaonkar and Gallakar belong to the Scheduled Tribe Community of Goa as notified by Govt of India in 2003.

All of the above mentioned communities are part of the cultural activities of the village. The major deities of the village are God Mallikarjuna, Goddess Mahamaya and tribal deity Kaashi Puris. Apart from this, there are other protectors (Rakhandars or Naas) deities who are the part of the tribal culture. They are Bhageli Paik or Paik Dev, Maangle Naas, Gallas Naas, Adoshi Naas and Talle Naas. As per the tribal belief, these protectors safeguard the village from all the evil forces - both within and from outside the village. The tribals living in Caurem annually offer them a coconut or a rooster or both. There are other tribal deities such as Kulgat, Gharvai puris, etc.

The Gods and Protectors of Caurem

The God Mallikarjuna

This God is the Kuldevata of villagers. There is a temple of this God at Velipwada, which is more than 1000 years old. All the major festivals like Shigmo, Mallikarjuna Jatra etc. are associated with this God. The Velip, along with Purohit pujari, perform pooja in this temple. This temple is surrounded by other deities.

The Goddess Mahamaya

This deity is believed to be older than the God Mallikarjuna. The temple of Goddess Mahamaya is located at the main road at the place known as Sarda. This goddess is also surrounded by other small deities. It is believed by the villagers that 60 Gods/Goddesses or Puravs live within this Goddess. This Goddess is known as the mother of the village. A tribal Gaonkar performs the pooja in this temple.

Deity Kaashi Puris or Khas Puris - The pure God of Tribals

This God was found by the ancestors while clearing the bushes for Kumeri Cultivation. He is situated on a small mountain exactly below the mountain of Survey Number 19. This mountain is
known as ‘Deva-Pann’ - A place where god resides. He is accompanied by his two guards and is placed in a small simple shelter. The rituals of this God are performed by only teenagers mostly up to the age of 14. This god is offered with coconut on every Monday and on specific occasions. This God is so pure that one has to enter this mountain with bare feet. One cannot spit nor can litter in this place. Neither bad words nor bad thoughts are allowed in your mind while you are at this place.

As said earlier, this god was found while our ancestors were clearing the bushes. The elders of the village always tell the story of this God to their children as follows:

One day, while clearing the bushes, a tribal villager found that a liquid of red color was flowing out from the bottom of a tree. He initially got scared and on careful observation he found that there is an idol at the bottom of a tree and that while cleaning the bushes, his Koyta (a knife), has hit the head of that idol and there is a wound on its head. To his further shock, he observed that there is a liquid flowing from that wound; the liquid flowing from one part of the wound was white in color whereas the red colored liquid was flowing from the other part. He immediately removed his towel which he was wearing on his head and covered the wound to stop the flow. The flow of liquid stopped. However, to his further surprise, he noticed a new spring emerging a few meters away. He then apologized before the god for his mistake and asked to be forgiven and he further prayed for the village to be blessed.

This spring is now known as ‘Deva Panna Zor’. The tribals of Caurem strongly believe that by drinking the water of this spring, one remains healthy and no disease can touch you ever as this spring is blessed by the pure God Kaashi Puris.

The God Bhageli Paik - The Supreme Protector of the village

The God Bhageli Paik lives on the top of the mountain of village Caurem. He protects the village from all the evil forces that try to enter into the village. The annual offering of Rooster along with coconut is made to this God. This offering is done regularly before the commencement of Shigmo festival. The traditional ceremony of setting up a ‘Gaunv-Dhaddo’ is done after the offerings are made to the Bhageli Paik. The tribal Shigmo festival cannot start without doing the above offering. The place where these offerings are made is known as ‘Karyakade,’ named after a tree named ‘Kaaro’ and is located in Survey Number 19/0 of Caurem village. This place has a significant importance in the tribal culture of Caurem village.

There is a perennial spring which originates just below this place. This spring is known as ‘Paika Zor’ named after this tribal God Bhageli Paik. This spring is the origin of a stream known as ‘Zori Vol’. This stream then flows through Goghe (a waterfall), Kushakara Sarda, Pillale Baandh and finally joins to river Karka in neighboring Maina village.

Galla Naas - The Protector of Galla terrain

The place Galla or Galla-Mol, located in Survey Number 19 of Caurem village, is named after the protector of this place, Galla Naas. This entire place is dedicated to him and regular offerings are made to him just like God Bhageli Paik.
The Origin of Caurem

Caurem village must have originated more than one thousand years ago. The ancestors of tribals living here can be traced up to 600 years from now. They have lived in this village by converting the terrains into agricultural fields and designing their own water distribution system from the water available from the springs and streams. The practice of shifting cultivation was invented by the tribals during their time. This practice, of slash and burn, is known as ‘Kumeri’ in the local language.

Prior to the invasion of Portuguese and before the Portuguese laws became applicable, the village had its own ‘Gaunkari System’. No person was occupying the land privately but each piece of land was in the name of God and belonged to the entire community. All the affairs of the village were discussed at the place called ‘Maand’ and necessary decisions were taken to plan the activities of the entire year. Any disputes arising within the community were also settled at this place. This activity was called ‘Gaonv-Pan’.

As years passed, this Gaonkari System and the common lands owned by the community were taken over by the Portuguese by introducing a law Code of Communidade’. The Caurem village was not affected much by this law except for a few lands. Though the Gaonkari System discontinued, some of its activities still take place at the ‘Maand’ situated at Velipwada, Caurem.

The Livelihood

Caurem village is entirely dependent on agricultural activities for their livelihood. A total of 90% of the villagers and 100% of tribal families living here are into agriculture though they also engage in collecting minor forest produce available in nearby mountains. One of these mountains is located at Survey Number 19 of Caurem village.

The ancestors of Caurem tribals have also grown many crops like Nachani, Pakol, Varai, Kulid, Hudidh, Kolyo, Toar, Kaango, Teel on this land. These all crops were grown using the slash and burn or Kumeri technique. This activity starts at the end of the summer and continues throughout the rainy season till end of winter season. Though the practice of Kumeri has stopped today, the lands which were used by the ancestors are now planted with Cashew trees and other fruit bearing trees. A separate place is kept for carrying out the cultivation of Chillies (Dongri Mirchi), Ragi and groundnuts such as Kaate Kanga, Mulli, Maadi, Zhad Kandga, Chirco, Chunn etc. The Dongri Mirchi of Caurem is famous and has good demand in the nearby markets. This chilli is similar to that of ‘Dongri Mirchi of Khola’, for which GI tag can be obtained.

The tribes of Caurem, who have been successfully managing these forest lands since time immemorial, collect Minor forest produce such as honey, wild mushrooms, wild berries and wild leafy vegetables. Apart from collecting mining forest produce and growing crops on the mountains, the tribals of Caurem are also engaged in the paddy farming and have crops such as coconut, arecanut, black pepper, banana etc. They also grow cash crops such as chillies, vegetables etc. in their paddy field during the winter season. The irrigation water for this is supplied from the five springs that originate from the bottom of the mountain of Survey Number 19.
Most of these crops and minor forest produce collected are sold in the weekly Sunday markets at Quepem and Curchorem. The cashew nuts collected from cashew plantation are sold at ‘Adarsh Krishi Kharedi Vikri Prakriya Saunsthna Maryadi’ - a cooperative society at Balli. The average earning of a family per annum through the above agricultural activities is approximately between 3 lac and 4 lac due to a huge demand for organic products in the market since the last few years. Most of the crops grown on the mountain of Survey Number 19 are organic. The tribals could build their houses, educate their children and buy two wheeler vehicles with little savings only with blessings of this mountain.

**Importance of Mountain at Survey Number 19/0 of Caurem village**

The mountain at Survey Number 19 is divided into following places - ‘Karyakade’, ‘Atalemol,’ ‘Madhemol,’ ‘Gallamol,’ ‘Konimol,’ ‘Kasara,’ ‘Khanva’ and ‘Fanshi’. All these said places are partly forest and partly in possession of Caurem villagers having cultivation of cashew trees and other fruit bearing trees. These places are also known for their wildlife. The human and wildlife coexist at these places and there are no conflicts reported so far.

**Community Forest Right (CFR) claim of Caurem on land at Survey Number 19**

- Caurem village made its CFR claim in Form B and C on this land under Section 3 (1) of Forest Rights Act 2006.
- This claim was submitted to the Sub Divisional Committee (SDLC) on 23rd July 2015.
- The claim was later verified as per the provision of Rule 12 (1) of Forest Right amendment Rules 2012.
- The said verification report was tabled before the Gram Sabha and later submitted to the SDLC on 27.07.2016 by Secretary of V.P Caurem, Pirla.
- The SDLC has not decided anything on the said claim despite being sent reminders over the previous six years.
- The SDLC is also reluctant to provide the information about the status of the said claim despite being asked to through RTI Act, 2005.
- Apart from the CFR claim, there are a total 175 Individual claims which are pending for verification at Gram Sabha level. Out of these 175 individual claims, 149 claims alone are in the Survey Number 19/0 of Caurem Village.

**Water Resources**

Caurem village is blessed with perennial springs and streams which fulfill the thirst of the village. These springs and streams are also the only source of irrigation. The spring Paika Zor, Van Zor and Galla Zor are in the Survey Number 19. Whereas Panna Zor, Voile Pata Zor, Bulmya Zor, Ghogya Zor, Talye Paata Zor, Ramma Tali originate from the bottom of this mountain. The above-mentioned springs which originate from the bottom of the mountain form the perennial stream known as ‘Mauli Vol’. This stream is the main source of irrigation water supply that takes place post monsoon season.
Plants and Trees

- Medicinal Plants (all names in Konkani): Kudyache Zhad, Dhave Zhad, Ramlanka Zhad, Shant Kudaa, Balya Zhad, Arjun, Vaaye Zhad, Kevon, Thande Palyachr Zhad, Shivani Zhad, Hadde Zhad, Aamti Zhad, Chivar, Kangadil, Bailat, Goti Vaal, Dudhshire Vaal, Padvaal, Dhave Savor, Adam, Barke Yedu, Fatarfad, Tumo, Lazhe Zhad.


Wild Life

The commonly found wildlife on the mountain of Survey Number 19 are as follows:


- Fish (all names in Konkani): Kullyo, Vaalai, Thigoor, Sangtaa, Molyo, Telo, Vaaysole, Raalook, Poting, Chicalo, Haer, Pirttol.

The plants, trees and wildlife form the ecosystem of the mountain situated at Survey Number 19. Caurem village is entirely dependent on this mountain. Without this mountain, the traditions and culture of the village will come to an end. The entire village may become extinct if this mountain vanishes. Therefore, this sacred mountain should not be allowed to be touched for any industrial purpose nor the forest land be allowed for diversion.

Law on Diversion of Forest land for non-forest use like mining

1. The Central Government passed the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 to overcome:

   “Historical injustice to the forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers’ whose ‘rights on ancestral lands and their habitat were not adequately recognised in the consolidation of State forests during the colonial period as well as in independent India.”
This law allows us, in every Gram Sabha, to claim CFR rights over our forests. We have already done this in 2016.

2. Further, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (FC Division) in its 3 August 2009 circular says that no diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 may be done without completing formalities/processes under Forest Rights Act. The relevant portions of the order are reproduced below:

“[T]o formulate unconditional proposals under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980... enclosures of evidence shall be in form of following:

(c) a letter from each of the concerned Gram Sabhas indicating that all formalities/processes under the FRA have been carried out, and that they have given their consent to the proposed diversion....”

Formalities of securing our CFR and IFR have not yet been completed.

3. Moreover, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs issued a letter dated 7 March 2014 to Chief Secretaries of all States to clarify the position of law in relation to:

“1. ... the circular dated 3 August 2009, issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (FC Division), Government of India, regarding compliance of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 while proposing for diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes under the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980....”

The MoTA, in this letter, states:

“2. In this connection, the correct position of law is given as under:

(i) ... provisions of FRA 2006 need to be strictly construed keeping in view the legislative intent of the said Act and primacy of the Gram Sabha in democratic governance.”

While clarifying the position of law in relation to diversion of forest land for non-forest use and the Forest Rights Act, the MoTA further refers to the Niyamgiri judgment of the Supreme Court of India under Paragraph 2 (v) saying that::

“The role of the Gram Sabha in this process has received affirmation from the Supreme Court in... Orissa Mining Corp. v. Ministry of Environment and Forest & Others, 2013 (6) SCALE 57, wherein the Apex court has foregrounded the central role of Gram Sabha in entertaining and determining upon community and individual forest rights claims. To be specific, at para 59 of the judgment, the Hon’ble Supreme Court clearly states that: The Gram Sabha is also free to consider all the community, individual as well as cultural and religious claims over and above the claims which have already been received from Rayagada and Kalahandi Districts. Any such fresh claims be filed before the Gram Sabha within six weeks from the date of this Judgment. State Government as well as the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, would assist the Gram Sabha for settling of individual as well as community claims.”
Thus, the Supreme Court of India, allows the Gramsabha of Caurem to protect not only their CFR and Individual claims, but also our Gods, Protectors and springs associated with them.

4. The Guidelines on implementation of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 issued by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs emphasize the above-mentioned 3 August 2009 circular of the MoEF. It states:

“v. Protection against Eviction, Diversion of Forest Lands and Forced Relocation:

(b) The Ministry of Environment & Forests, vide their letter No.11-9/1998-FC(pt.) dated 30.07.2009, as modified by their subsequent letter of the same number dated 03.08.2009, has issued directions, requiring the State/UT Governments to enclose certain evidences relating to completion of the process of settlement of rights under the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, while formulating unconditional proposals for diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. The State Government should ensure that all diversions of forest land for non-forest purposes under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 take place in compliance with the instructions contained in the Ministry of Environment & Forest’s letter dated 30.07.2009, as modified on 03.08.2009.”

5. Finally the diversion of such land for non-forest use goes against the Goa Mineral Policy 2013 - specifically Paragraph 11, last bullet point:

“No Diversion of Forest Land for Mining except those earlier permitted.”

Thus, our lands cannot be taken away without the consent of Gramsabha, and without settling the CFR and IFR claims.

This report was prepared by following village elders of Caurem village on 31.03.2023.

Gurudas Shanu Velip
Uttam Arjun Velip
Gokuldas Raghu Velip
Kusta Yesso Velip
Babuso Laxman Velip
Prabhakar Zolpo Velip
Anand Gaonkar
All residents of Caurem village.

The contents of this report were told and explained in Konkani and written down in English.

This report was tabled in the Gram Sabha of village panchayat Caurem Pila held on 2nd April 2023.