

Chikhal Kalo – Goa's Unique Mud Festival

Chikhal Kalo is a local Goan festival – one of the many that you see only in Goa. The festival celebrates the naughty nature of Bal Krishna or the Baby Krishna. Those of us who follow Hindu scriptures and stories know that Krishna is known for his childhood antics with his mother and other people of Braj Bhumi. At Marcel, this very nature of Krishna is celebrated. On this day, every male – from a toddler to a senior citizen becomes a little Krishna. How they take the Swaroop of a Bal Krishna is something you have to see to believe.

Chikhal Kalo, literally meaning "playing in the mud" or "mud bath", is one of Goa's most distinctive and vibrant traditional festivals. Celebrated annually at the Shree Devki Krishna Temple in Marcel village of Ponda Taluka during Ashadhi Ekadashi (the 11th day of the Hindu month of Ashadh), the festival commemorates the playful childhood of Lord Krishna and reflects Goa's deep-rooted agrarian heritage.

The festival begins with religious rituals, bhajans, and prayers at the temple. Devotees then gather in the temple courtyard, transformed into a muddy field by the monsoon rains, to participate in traditional mud games such as chendu fal, gilli danda, tug-of-war, wrestling, and other folk sports. Participants joyfully immerse themselves in the mud, recreating the playful spirit of young Lord Krishna while celebrating unity, friendship, and the close relationship between humans and Mother Earth.

Beyond its religious significance, Chikhal Kalo is a celebration of Goa's rich cultural traditions and farming heritage. The festival symbolizes gratitude for nature, the arrival of the monsoon, and the hope for a prosperous agricultural season. Today, it has evolved into a major cultural attraction, drawing devotees, tourists, photographers, and cultural enthusiasts from across India and abroad.