

Goa 1961 and After: The Politics of Erasures

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This personal presentation based on my experience of living in Goa from Sept 1962 to Sept 1965 is an interface between biography and history. I have tried to relive those days to understand the spirit and ethos that prevailed during the transition from the stifling dictatorship of the Salazar regime to the fresh winds of freedom and expectation that followed in the wake of Liberation. The personal and historical perspective is revealed from the vantage point in which I found myself as the wife of a senior official of the Govt of India. However, I need to first explain my complex identity.

Both my husband and I are Goan. I belong to a Portuguese and Konkani speaking Goan family from Margao, in South Goa. This town with surrounding villages was home to an intellectual elite. It was once known as the Athens of the Estado da India. The voters of South Goa take credit for preventing Goa from being merged with Maharashtra through an Opinion Poll (1967). for the recognition of Konkani in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution (1992)- and leading the struggle to make it the official language of Goa (1987). My other identity is that I grew up in Dharwar in a Portuguese and Konkani speaking home - but within the cultural matrix of mainstream India.

After the military operation in December 1961, Nehru had to deal with a blast of criticism of the military action from within his party and the world press. He was concerned about the period of transition. The legal and administrative set up in Goa had to be brought to conform

to Indian systems. There was also concern about language, religion and culture what Nehru called the 'distinctive features - the individuality of each part of the country'.

Goa was liberated on 19th December 1961. A military Governor (Major General K.P.Candeth) was in charge . When the civilian Government was installed on 7th June 1962 it was decided to post an officer familiar with the culture who could inspire trust. My husband Alban Couto was at the time posted in Patna and was selected by the Central Government .We were young with a six month old son when we were thrust on the cusp of history. It was a paradoxical experience. Hopes were both fulfilled and belied.

There was I , both a government wife, and a daughter of Goa , living in a sense a double life, holding the flag aloft yet aware of insecurities, prejudice and absence of fairplay if not outright foul play at ground level. The most troubling were perceptions of Goa and decisions taken to do with language, religion and culture. In each of these areas there was grave misrepresentation, misreading of ground realities, and inability or unwillingness to try to understand the nature of Goan society. Hence both policies and public discourse that led to the birth of democracy, unleashed political groups that sought to obliterate the Portuguese language, malign the Catholic religion and belittle what was described as Goan culture.

Little thought has been given by Indian historians to the nature of 450 years of Portuguese colonialism which separated Goa in ethos and character from British India. While English became the language of the elite in greater part of India, Portuguese was the language of the elite of

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the Estado da India with Goa as the entrepot of a sprawling seaborne empire.

Both the streams - English and Portuguese,- brought in a distinctive culture. The former brought in utilitarianism, liberalism, and democracy. The latter brought into Goa the inheritance of Europe and the French Revolution, the humanism of equality, the Rights of Man as inherent and intrinsic in nature as illustrated in the Civil Code of 1867 modelled on the French Civil Code of 1804 (Code de Napoleon) a legacy of the French Revolution. The personal laws from this Code are still applied in Goa to all citizens irrespective of religion. Indeed it is often cited as a model for the rest of the country. Another law that is unique to Goa is the compulsory registration of births and marriages. Religious marriage cannot take place without civil registration. More importantly, inheritance laws ensure equal rights to women.

The denigration of Goan culture had begun with stereotypes imposed by British sources in the 19th Century. These disparaged Portuguese Goa as a miscegenated lotus eater's dead end, ignoring the fact that the substratum of Goan/Indian culture and its entrenchment of the caste system was alive and well. Nor were they aware of the *Comunidade* system. This is a unique and ancient system of collective land ownership (*gramasanthas*/ *gaunkari*) which has preserved the sense of belonging to a village. It is responsible for the Goan's deep sense of self as rooted in land .

After Liberation, when free movement to Goa became possible, there was a rush of visitors, both VIPS as well as visitors in search of foreign goods. Everything in Goa was seen as different including the 3 hour lunch break when all shops are closed. The 'difference' of Goa as distinct in so many ways from the rest of India, led to a perception of the Goan as 'other' thereby marginalizing the population from the cultural matrix of India. With an eye on the benefits of tourism, Goa began to be projected as a hedonistic paradise. Indeed we in Goa feel that Goa is perceived by the domestic tourist as a place for release of repressions and inhibitions.

So the first point I wish to make is to do with the perception and the marketing of a misrepresented culture through stereotypes that existed and continued to be embellished and imposed in the first flush of Liberation. Less than a decade after Liberation the tourist brochure was born, with a relentless flogging of so called Goan culture as showpiece. The Goan is now compelled to travesty and caricature. He performs for the neocolonising gaze of the mainland, abetted by Goans themselves - to entertain the outsider, with elements of

crude voyeurism.

The second point is to do with problems caused by the six months of the military government with its implications of conquest- which hurt the sensibilities of the average man on the street. Even today there are mixed feelings within Goa about Liberation through armed action .The scars can be seen in the occasional use, by a few of the older generation, of words such as 'occupation' and 'invasion'.

In the tense days after our arrival, local officers, shop keepers, and family friends greeted us with polite exchange of courtesies, circumspection, often only a studied monosyllabic response. The usual warmth was absent. Although we were Goans, we belonged to the new dispensation. Would we understand? Could we be trusted ? I had absorbed the world of my Goan Christian upbringing along with experiences of Dharwar and Patna; India and Goa had become indivisible for me. I belonged to both worlds, but they did not seem to be integrated in those around me in that initial period after Liberation. I sensed bruised sensibilities. Although the armed action had been brisk, a little over 36 hours, the military presence had unsettled the local population. Freedom, yes. But why accompanied by guns and uniforms still strolling along the streets? Although there was admiration for the precise and carefully planned manoeuvre with few casualties, the continued army presence, the prisoner of war camps, the future of the erstwhile civil administration - all these were questions waiting to be resolved. People were unprepared. They felt insecure.

Despite the care taken by those in charge, the army stride had the confidence of an occupying power. Besides, very few Goans were involved in decision making in the initial months. Hence the six months before civil administration took charge were a period of cumulative strain that my husband among others had to deal with. Whereas the Military Governor, General Candeth was admired, I have yet to hear a good word about G.K Handoo, the Inspector General of Police from Kashmir, specially deputed by Jawaharlal Nehru. He behaved like a conqueror. He had a few Goans, some who called themselves freedom fighters, by his side who claimed to know the inside story. Senior Goan officers were humiliated. I have spoken to some of them over the years; they bristle at the memory. One can only consider this as a part of the bluster and bravado of those in power during a vulnerable situation.

The Chief Secretary and the Chief Justice – both Goans-

had left for Lisbon. distressed by the absence of normal courtesy expected by officers whose integrity, sense of duty and patriotism was beyond question. What follows is an account by Carmo de Noronha who was the senior most bureaucrat from the Portuguese regime to stay on. Mr Noronha, relates his experience in his laconic manner:

On 15 December 1961. at noon the governor came out of a meeting of the general staff to meet us - members of the Governor's Council. My friend, Major—who was my colleague in the Civil Aviation Committee - came out also. He took me aside and told me in plain words that the city was going to be attacked and advised me to take away my family to some safe place away from the city. The same afternoon, I took my family and whatever belongings we could get hold of, - withdrew all my savings from the bank- and took them to the ancestral house of one of our close relatives in an interior village. On 18 December, the whole place shook with bombs right from 6.30 in the morning till nightfall, - a bomb exploding every fifteen minutes. On 19th morning we saw for the first time in our life - air force planes in formation flying over our heads. - On 21 December I went to my office after crossing thousands of soldiers and military vehicles at the jetty - Betim- and in the ferry to Panjim.

My office was guarded by heavily armed soldiers on all sides and 300 of my staff were all outside. There was a rumour and fear amongst them that the building had been filled with bombs by the departing Portuguese.

Later, I went to the palace (now Secretariat). As some of us were standing and waiting for our new authorities, I saw a man coming up the steep staircase with a white cloth bag in his hands. I was told he was a government secretary. We were a little surprised to see a high government official entering the government palace with a cloth bag in his hands. No doubt we ourselves used to carry our own files, but not this type of baggage.

Later in the day, we had a meeting with Mr Handoo, special adviser to the governor, a man wearing a white shirt and pant and having long uncombed white hair, tall and arrogant. He presided over a meeting of Goan civilian officers and told us something to the effect that: Your days of drinking beer in the office are over! You will have to work hard now.- The tone and content of this remark surprised and amused me. I had never even thought of taking beer in the office nor had I seen or heard of anybody else doing so. I wondered from where he had got the misinformation.

We were asked to sign a bond of loyalty, secrecy, etc., which I signed without hesitation as, with or without a bond, I would have observed the values anyway. Of the pre-Liberation officers

left, I was the senior most in rank and in salary. A lot of attention was focused on me. During this period of rumours, many people from the town rushed to me to find out whether I was going to Portugal or at least sending my family there since many of the other top government officials (disgusted by the way they were treated and fearing the future) had done so.

Such a course was out of the question for me. Five months earlier, while on an official trip to Portugal, the director general of my department in the overseas ministry had offered me the post of additional director general on promotion, which I had refused as I could not think of life in Europe.

Except for Handoo, whom nobody liked, I had no problem with any military or civil officer. The military governor himself was a perfect gentleman.

My husband was asked by several publishers to write on the Transition. It was felt that as a Goan and in a crucial position as administrator his insights would illuminate the period. He did not write. I think his double identity silenced him. As a Goan he could see and feel the problems that were being created, and the callous nature with which the Government dealt with such rapid change affecting lives in very serious ways. As administrator he also saw the inexorable march of political process and the need to deal with administrative imperatives.

*He did not restrain me, however, when I wrote *Goa: A Daughter's Story*. More than one senior officer in Delhi who read the book, said to me that they had not been aware of such dire constraints and wounded sensibilities at the time although they had Goan friends. But these friends, who happen to be friends of mine as well, did not live in Goa; those who did were industrialists or power brokers none of whom cared about the struggles at ground level.*

When I opened my husband's computer two years after he passed away, I found two documents : the first was titled HOMECOMING (4500 words); the second LIBERATION OR OCCUPATION. This latter document was abandoned after three sentences about the need to revisit the past. I am going to now read some paragraphs from the document titled HOMECOMING:

Home at last on 23 September 1962 . The streets were deserted, unusual from my memories of holidays in my childhood and as teenager, when the Panjim quayside used to be full of promenaders to the Miramar relishing the cool sea breezes not fully dry from the retreating monsoons.

The next day I accompanied the civilian Lt Governor, Shri T. Sivasankar to the Secretariat. There were crowds around Ö..

Some in cream linen suits, in what was the usual attire of the civil servants of the Portuguese regime, tried to approach the Governor, and they were rudely held back by the armed escort, pushed back by rifles with bayonets. The Governor ordered the guards to allow a few to approach him, and asked me to take them to my office..

It must have been a beautifully appointed office until a few months before. Vestiges were there in the richly carved desk and chair with carved leopards as arm rests. But there were heavy indentations on the wooden paneled floor on which a refrigerator and wooden carved almirahs had been pushed out for booty presumably - fair spoils of war. A brocade damask curtain, rich burgundy in colour, - hung loose and dangling from a carved pelmet, saved because it had not been fully pulled out. The other of the pair was missing. The tassels of the curtain hung forlornly like emergency chains in railway carriages.

The officers were reassured when I took them into my new office room. I was told later by one of the officers in my room, how Handoo, the Super Chief of Goa, had treated them. He had insinuated that Goans who worked in the erstwhile regime were and are traitors. Some of this humiliating treatment was recounted with increasing confidence by the officers in my room. They were joined by many others emboldened that an Indian Governor had intervened to give them justice. There were crowds that swelled and milled in the verandah creating a hubbub which caught the attention of others who had filled up the parallel passages leading to the rooms once occupied by Mr Handoo, and now Mr B.K.Sanyal, the designated Chief Secretary, an officer of the Indian Foreign Service, signifying that the liberated territory was to be looked after by the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India

The significance was that while the integration of Indian States including Hyderabad which was liberated by police action in 1948 was looked after by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Goa was given exceptional treatment since it was treated as foreign territory by Nehru's Government. Indeed the Goan struggle received its first blow when the Goa Congress Committee founded by TristGo BraganÁa Cunha in 1928 and affiliated to the Indian National Congress was disaffiliated on the grounds that Goans who were citizens (unlike Indians who were subjects) of a foreign power could not associate themselves with the Quit India Movement. Goan leaders were deeply disappointed and found themselves adrift. Braganza Cunha was compelled to disband the Goa wing of the Indian National Congress, that had over a decade taken up the cause of Goa, as an integral part of India.)

Governor Sivashankar alarmed at the hub, came through the

interconnecting door and asked me what the clamour was about particularly since the air was still thick with alarms and rumblings that military action had left a perilous disorder and simmering discontent.

I told him that around me were senior officers of the Goa Government - who said that they were made to feel that they were not fit to hold their posts, - in fact they were given the feeling that they were suspect - in spite of affirming their allegiance to India. They were made to wait outside their own offices - like under trial suspects. Some of them were insulted by a group of freedom fighters - and told to go to Portugal.

Governor Sivasankar, heard me and them. Only a slight tremor of the hand revealed his anger - which he hid beneath impassive composure. He spoke in measured words which I repeat, - the verbatim perhaps refracted by memory: Gentlemen : I am sorry for the wrong done to you. I know that you are all loyal and dedicated civil servants. - I was a civil servant during the British Raj, and I am an Indian. There were issues about our loyalty and allegiance which were settled by the Home Minister and Prime Minister soon after independence. They said that there were no doubts of our allegiance and loyalty. I say the same to you; on the contrary independent Goa requires all the more the services of dedicated and efficient civil servants .

Our Prime Minister asked us then to continue in service for the cause of the new nation of which we are a part. I have come go Goa with the same mandate.- I repeat the same assurance and request. I have every faith and trust in you. I urge you to go to your offices and we shall begin with your help the work of reconstruction and development of Goa which is free and sovereign under the constitution of the Republic of India.

My next task was to call in the PWD to take up the work of repair—a formidable task since there were no replacements in the market for the damask embroidered curtains and the pelmets that were taken away, some literally torn from the sockets leaving gaping holes in the woodwork. Crockery, plates and cups from Macao which were kept in the offices of the principal heads of departments were also missing; it was not necessary to replace them since in any case tea and coffee for distinguished visitors could be served from the canteen that had been set up on the ground floor for the freedom fighters and other advisers that used to crowd MrHandoo's office

Important tasks were waiting - arising from plans for reconstruction of the economy and the restoration of normalcy. In being of effective assistance to the civilian Lt. Governor I had to tread warily between the self assumed Administrator Handoo whose wings had been clipped by the firm declaration

of Mr Sivasankar that Goan officers were to be received with the same fraternal embrace as Vallabhai Patel had done to the Indian Civil Service.

There was the further distinction which Governor S. made that all members of the Goan administration were Indians first and foremost and they continued to be civil servants in terms of the governance, laws, allegiance and loyalties of the Indian Constitution.

For officers who had been made to stand in queues, pass an interview board in which some of the representatives of freedom fighters would tell the police chief, Mr Handoo, that they were guilty of anti-national activities and collaborators. It must be clarified, however, that the leaders among freedom fighters were not guilty of such conduct. For the Goan officers, the Lieutenant Governor's intervention came as long awaited release. As one of them said 'they could give no evidence to accuse us; equally there was no evidence for defence. The integrity of men who had headed departments and worked for the good of Goa was in question. And then, - overnight - they had to function in a new language.

Now that the decks were cleared - and the Goan civil servants were allowed to enter their offices in the full discharge of their responsibilities - and I may add in the full enjoyment of their salaries and emoluments there were problems. The specifics had to be solved in the context of the general situation which had resolved into another place with the intervention of Governor Sivasankar. He had clarified Goan officers had to return to their positions. The clearance which Handoo was loth to give was subject to a cabal of freedom fighters, the CID, the Maharashtra Police, the Ministry of External Affairs who had taken from the Ministry of Home Affairs what came to be a dirty word with the Goans, an officer on deputation, to give it its full twang, the deputationist.

The deputationists which included a half outsider like myself, and full outsiders who came from Delhi and the neighbouring states of Maharashtra and Karnataka were the object of scorn and ridicule - but they fulfilled an essential purpose; they gave skills and filled up posts grafted as they were from the British type of administration from the rest of the country. Deputationists from the State Police services mainly from Maharashtra and Karnataka were to fill up more than 100 posts, - ten of which were of the higher ranks of Inspector General, and Dy Inspector General.

To the core of Goan officers were added senior specialists who were brought on deputation from the adjoining States and from the Central Government. They established the new departments

of Irrigation, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Electricity, Co-operation, Panchayati Raj, Elections, Planning., Information and Publicity. The deputationists did excellent work in laying the foundations of professional and quality oriented disciplines essential for the many and varied responsibilities for the development process. Despite the efficient transition in this regard, however, Goans, irrespective of class, caste or religion, did begin to feel that they were being ruled by outsiders.

In keeping with the intention of the Union Government not to put an end to the individuality of Goa and to maintain its special features, the civil administration set in motion the two-tiered pattern of elections to panchayats in villages, to municipalities in the towns, an elected Legislative Assembly, and two Members of Parliament. Yet no thought was given to policies to preserve this individuality. Whereas there is restriction on sale of land in Kashmir and small states including Himachal Pradesh, no such laws to protect Goan identity were enacted so that Goa has emerged without frontiers, as it were, with a significant influx of those seeking a second home or an investment, tempted perhaps by perceptions such as Khushwant Singh's who wrote at the time: Goa is the place to go to if you do not wish to travel to Europe. An early example of the 'othering' of Goa.

Whereas leaders of the National movement had ensured an absence of antagonism towards the erstwhile rulers, and their language, - those who came to power in Goa lacked vision. Those who did have vision lost in the first election (December 1963) which was fought on the issue of merger with Maharashtra, with the subtext as caste and religion.

In the early days the Catholic in particular felt threatened. Religion and language, which gave him security, were now powerless. Even conversing in Portuguese, the main language of communication among the middle classes, was suspect. The 'Indians' have arrived, said the Goans. The feeling of confusion and insecurity, intense among Christians, was felt by every Goan, though not everyone will admit to it today. Political correctness constrains them.

The sad fact is that in the flurry to impose English in government offices and as medium of instruction in all schools no attention was paid to Konkani, the mother tongue, The Portuguese Lyceum (1854) was closed in 1963 in two years which allowed for time to establish Arts and Science Colleges. Contentious debates and contradictory policies with reversals of decisions to ban or retain English still plague our educational system in most states. Yet English is there to stay. But Portuguese was killed off from the start. Was it killed by the need for economic

survival? - Perhaps some Goan leaders saw no future in pursuing Lyceum studies or preserving Portuguese even as a second language in English schools. Very soon children at school stopped choosing Portuguese as a third language; they just abandoned it. There was clearly an element of opportunism; English was the language of employment and power in India. Portuguese, the language of power in Goa, was suddenly bereft of power, quite the reverse of what happened in India after 1947 or indeed in Pondichery.

For the Catholic, conversion had entailed inculturation: Portuguese was made compulsory and impacted the entire social fabric from marriage vows to legal action. Hence Portuguese was inseparable from identity for middle and upper class Catholic Goans in particular. For the Hindu it was the language of employment and social intercourse. Even today when I meet some of my husband's colleagues they talk to me in flawless Portuguese with an accent that I cannot match.

After Liberation, this knowledge became a liability. To speak Portuguese in public life, it appeared, was an act of treachery. I would not have believed it - had I not witnessed it myself. Why did people automatically break into English. Why, why did they do it? Tell me, my Hindu friends ask me. Why were they afraid? What can I say, except that the air must have been sufficiently vitiated to create tension around the use of the language? The upper class Catholic spoke Portuguese at home in the way middle classes in India use English. No such taboo was declared in India against the language of the departing colonizer.

An unspoken, unwritten code came into operation. Portuguese was perceived as the language of the oppressor: to speak it meant that you were either pro Portuguese or anti national. For the Catholic middle classes in particular, this became unendurable specially for school going children who were instructed not to speak Portuguese among themselves without quite understanding why. Now in their fifties they recall their childhood, the discomfort and self consciousness imposed on the use of a language which was intrinsic to their sense of self as was the case with upper and middle class children speaking English in the 1940s in urban India. .

However, enterprising middle class Catholics, though predominantly Portuguese speaking, had long grasped the value of the English language for employment. Migrants to British India realizing the instrumental value of English several decades before Liberation, had paved the way for English education. The first private schools were opened at the end of the 19th Century.

By mid 20th century there were more children studying

English in fee paying schools than Portuguese in Govt schools. However Portuguese was compulsory up to elementary level and many pursued it as second language. Since English schools already had a good base in Goa it was thought that the switch over would be easy. But the whole ground work had to be laid. - Suresh Amonkar, then Secretary of the Headmasters Association - recalls how relieved he was when he walked into Alban Couto's office and found someone to whom he could explain the problems and find not just a patient hearing but solutions worked out involving Suresh in the administrative process. "We were at sea," he said, "until then." Setting up courses for higher education and professional courses was the next big step.

As there was a shortage of experienced staff for the newly opened Dhempe College of Arts and Science, I was requested to teach. Such was the climate at the time that my husband whose brief as Development Commissioner extended to education, refused to let me join until he had got it cleared by the Lieutenant Governor who felt that Mr Couto was being over cautious but recognized his reasons for doing so. In fact my husband insisted I should not take a salary - and after much firmness from the Principal, he agreed to on an honorarium !The atmosphere of suspicion, of misuse and over reaching of power for personal gain by some in the new dispensation had to be countered with utmost care. My students of the time who are now in their late fifties tell me how difficult it was for them as seventeen year olds to move from the Portuguese system to English medium and what a relief it was to find that I could speak Portuguese and ease their discomfort.

Other factors also ensured the quick demise of Portuguese. Apart from the main leaders, most of the freedom fighters were not fluent in Portuguese; besides, none of the bureaucrats deputed to work in Goa (from Maharashtra and Karnatak) knew the language. The Goan middle class is now predominantly English-speaking while Konkani and Marathi are engaged in battle on the political front, although Konkani is the official language. Things might have been different if Salazar had agreed to peaceful negotiations. His repressive dictatorship and intransigence created an acrimony which soured relations in ways that affected Goan life as also the years of transition. A certain trust was destroyed among one's own.

Culture apart, the professional world we straddled confused me. The top layers were composed of enterprising businessmen and mine owners, almost all of them Hindu, except for one pharmaceutical company. All of them were gracious hosts in the best traditions of Luso Indian culture: thirst was quenched with wine. The

men were fluent in Portuguese and were used to conducting all business in their offices in Portuguese. Yet most of them chose to speak in English now. I, Maria, the official's wife, enjoyed surprising them by being Aurora, breaking into Portuguese, which came to them as a relief. Or so I thought. It may well be that I was wrong. Here was a world which welcomed Liberation with no anxiety about religion or culture. They seized the opportunity for releasing pent up energies for education and industrial development.

There was another world, the one I knew and belonged to. It was inhabited by landlords, professionals and civil servants whose entire education had been in Portuguese and their identity inspired by European liberalism. They yearned for a sense of this identity to be recognized. Salazar believed in Lusitanisation whereas this society in Goa had resisted Lusitanisation. Indeed, from the first stirrings in the 19th century, Goans were very conscious of a composite identity rooted in Goan soil with deep European influences. My father's world, the world I cherished and was a dimension of my own personality, struggled with a self that had matured in Dharwar and Patna. I recall my ambiguous feelings at the time: sympathy and exasperation, memory of a way of life and an ethos that must yield to the intractable course of political process.

Sentiment and wounded pride left little room for realism. There was sullen foreboding in MargGo among families who were not pro-Portuguese, as was popularly claimed, but whose security lay in four centuries of a culture and language which was now suspect. I recall a particular incident when a 65 year old cousin from MargGo rang the door bell early morning. A single woman, she was a member of one of the oldest families of the town. She lived alone in a large house; some of her family lived in Brazil, others in Lisbon. There was some question of transfer of money : either she had received money from relatives or she had to send money to them. There had also been a bomb scare in the area. It is not clear why she was hauled to the police station for questioning, she who could speak little English, who had no one at the time at home who could accompany or advise her. She was terrified.

She rushed to our house to ask Mr Couto to advise her as she had no idea what she was supposed to have done. Such was the atmosphere of suspicion and distrust at the time that even he who was a senior member of the establishment found himself having to act with great caution for fear of being accused of harbouring a Portuguese agent. Another incident closer to home amused and yet saddened us. Although belonging to the

new dispensation, no one, it appeared, was above suspicion.

My father in law who lived in Mumbai used to come regularly with a couple of his rummy companions. They played usually till eleven o'clock at night in the dining room which was situated at the rear of the bungalow facing the back garden. My sister in law was at the time being courted by Erasmo de Sequeira (who was subsequently a Member of Parliament for two terms). He was the son of Dr Jack de Sequeira, Leader of the Opposition. He used to escort my sister in law back home after dinner and sit down to chat. His car used to be parked at the gate. The Lieutenant Governor at the time was Mr K.R. Damle ICS . One evening, in conversation, he reported to us that he had received a note to say that a plot to overthrow the Government was being hatched at the residence of Mr Couto. The note provided some details : The room at the back is lit till late at night; everyone talks in whispers no voices are heard (clearly because they were concentrating on their cards!). A car belonging to the Leader of the Opposition is parked outside the gate.

When Mr Damle heard from us of the courtship- he had a good laugh and said : If the Central Government could survive the marriage of Sucheta and Acharya Kripalani, there is no reason why your sister cannot marry the son of the Leader of the Opposition. We spent some amusing moments trying to guess the source for this information. Our neighbor on the right was the Chief Minister and leader of the Maharashtra Gomantak Party. On the left was Mr Chowgule an IAS officer from the Maharashtra cadre deputed to Goa. Beyond that was the residence of the Speaker of the Assembly. These personal experiences reveal the climate of distrust and misinformation that prevailed at the time.

An amusing instance of the excessive care taken by my husband created minor complications. We were acutely aware of another notoriety more directly relevant to the new dispensation: in the few months after Liberation cases of liquor had been commandeered or requisitioned free from shops. I was instructed not to buy any liquor. My overcautious husband gave himself a reputation which the locals found even more distasteful. Liquor became taboo and friends and visitors were served plain *nimbupani*- until his mother and mine arrived to end this betrayal of Goan hospitality

Liberation unleashed forces that threatened to wreck a world of peaceful coexistence, a value system, and

cosmopolitanism that the vast majority of Goan Hindus, apart from Goan Catholics are proud of. In their campaign for power, some of these forces indulged in propaganda which branded those who believed in a composite identity as anti-national. The pity of it is that even today there are small yet powerful groups usually led by a handful of freedom fighters that resist and try to prevent any cultural programmes that connect Goa with European culture. Those who truly suffered the most as political prisoners are long dead and would not have supported such chauvinism. Needless to say such action feeds into political movements which wish to homogenise Indian culture.

Although the Catholic community welcomed Liberation many had sunk into deep insecurity not least because in the last months before the army action, Salazar propagated the myth that he was fighting to save Christianity. To which Nehru had replied that Christianity existed in India several centuries before the Portuguese sailed in search of spices and souls. He also pointed out that India had a Goan, Cardinal Gracias, at the highest level of Catholic hierarchy whereas Portugal had yet to appoint a Goan Bishop. The first Goan bishop was appointed after Liberation.

Although the Hindu community was jubilant, no one was quite sure how things would turn out with so many contrary voices and conflicting groups elbowing their way to power. Land reforms initiated were yet another reason for insecurity. Although the landholdings in Goa were much smaller than in states in which the zamindari system prevailed, the reforms in Goa were far more stringent and have caused among other disasters the sale of agricultural land for development, by tenants who benefitted from the reforms.

Conversations with my father's generation stifled my exuberance. I could not mitigate their incomprehension, their exasperation and palpable insecurities. Could a way of life be threatened by 'outsiders' on shopping sprees for imported goods- in a din of unfamiliar languages? Their homeland was up for grabs, some thought, in despair. For a people nurtured in old world courtesy and elegance, and an unique blend of formality and cordial ease, the shirt-sleeved presence of the new rulers became symptomatic of a world irrevocably lost to the 'bushcoatburrocrata', a term coined by local journalists to describe the new breed, *burro* being Portuguese for 'ass'.

I could sense the hierarchical differences in official life because of my exposure in Bihar. Courtesy was ingrained in the Goan, but accompanied by an easy informality; there was no overt deference and obsequiousness. A not

so subtle official gradation has been a legacy of Mughal and British times when the bureaucracy represented the sovereign - and subjects had to pay homage. Not so in Goa.—Although the Portuguese language itself can be, like French, excessively formal, Konkani is not and I have friends who tell me that they cannot understand how Konkani does not have a clear equivalent for *aap* as a term of respect. Such informality, often misconstrued as disrespect by officers deputed to work in Goa led to misunderstandings, - even animosity.

(Of course, fifty years after Liberation, status seeking has crept into our way of life; the humblest minion in the state government and village panchayat demands his share.)

In the years between 1962 and 1965 political expediency created an atmosphere - which branded Catholics as the community which had prospered under the Portuguese. This proposition is not entirely right: under the Portuguese the Catholics did gain in social status and education, but not economic power. For many centuries a small Hindu elite engaged in trade, while Catholics were employed in and later in the 1950s with the mining many prospered and diversified. However, in the charged scenario of the time, there was no space for such subtle but significant distinctions.

Some Catholics were part of a landed elite, who had retained their land through conversion. Later, through a Portuguese government policy called *arrematação*, they had added to their holdings with long-term leases which led to virtual ownership. - This policy created bigger land holdings in both the Christian and the Hindu community. The Portuguese also gifted land and bestowed titles for valuable services rendered to the state. This was patronage first extended to some converts, and later to some from the Hindu community as well. So at the time of Liberation, for instance, there was Baron Vasantrao Dempo and Viscount Deshpabhu. - But there were no titled Catholics alive. - It is quite clear that individuals in both communities benefitted through leasing. The Hindu community, in the main, spurned Portuguese education until 1910. - However, some became traders since 17th Century and did so well for themselves that they are said to have been moneylenders to the Government.

The converts did not participate in business enterprise; - they became professionals and took up lower order government appointments - except for a few stars who shot up very briefly through a largely clouded firmament.

There was intellectual life and cultural vibrancy among them, yet this had little to do with government preferment - and more to do with the ambitions of individual families. They benefitted from the cultural dimensions of colonial education which created a cohesive, powerful, intellectual elite. - Few Goan Catholics in the early 20th century thought of integration with the mainland. Goa was distinct for this small elite, a self-contained world. Hence they struggled for autonomy. And those who had espoused it were branded traitors after Liberation.

Such a turn of events was incompressible, ironic and indeed tragic since Catholics had been at the forefront of revolts since 1654 led by Mathew Castro, a Roman Catholic Priest who had fought for the rights of the native Christian. The most famous of these revolts was the Pinto Rebellion or Revolt of 1787. Spearheaded by prominent native priests who were protesting against racial discrimination in the church hierarchy, it was crushed with relentless violence. The main objective of this group was to overthrow the Portuguese and establish a new republic.

There were rebellions led by the Ranis in the 19th Century, against the Portuguese authorities who sought to control their territory through taxation but these were not comparable to the Pinto Rebellion. The Anti Salazarist press was led by Catholics. In fact Salazar tried to muzzle the most powerful political voice in the first decades of the 20th Century, that of Luis de Menezes Braganza by destroying his press which published *O Prakasa*. He signed his columns Mephistopheles and Lucifer.. However Menezes Braganza could not be silenced – he contributed a column *Pradipa*, published *O Debate* and managed to restore *O Prakasha*. More significantly TristGo Braganca Cunha, known as Goa's First Nationalist and other leaders of the time worked ceaselessly to fight for self government and autonomy. In 1928 he founded the Goa Congress Committee but this was disbanded in 1942.

Divisions that came after Liberation resulted in the contributions of several truly great Goans being ignored or belittled and others whose contribution was forgotten because they belonged to the Catholic elite. I have read about these men who lived in Goa and in Portugal and interacted with British India and Europe—scholars, intellectuals, writers with political commitments: the maverick personality of the lawyer Jose Inacio (Fanchu) Loyola, Telo Mascarenhas, the poet and activist Adeodato Barreto, who died in his thirties, and Lucio de Miranda, professor of humanities who passed away in London in his fifties two weeks before he was due to arrive in newly liberated Goa. He lived in self imposed exile in England

when his political work created problems. All these men took pride in their Indian heritage. All of them could be variously described as having been more than one of the following : poet, journalist, polemicist, lawyer, thinker, freedom fighter. There were many Catholics who joined the freedom struggle; some went to jail; others spoke out or acted in conscience against the repressions of Salazar.

In the first heady years of democratic freedom in Goa much of this was erased from public memory; political expediency created a black and white world in which the Catholic community and the Hindu Brahmin suddenly found themselves at a disadvantage; and this although the leadership of the Goa Congress consisted of Hindu Brahmins who had worked long years for the cause of freedom. And there were Catholics who had lost their positions, and many who had been uncompromising critics of Salazar. None of this was given its due recognition.

As equations changed I had an anguished sense- of a whole aspect of Goa's society and history being shut out in the post Liberation scenario. However, a new party came into being before the first elections. And the cause of Konkani, of Goan identity,- as also a sense of confidence for the Christian community was restored by Dr Jack de Sequeira, who founded the United Goans Party. It was a composite party which cut across the caste and communal divide. But for this party Goa might well have become an appendage of Maharashtra.

As is well known the Congress Party suffered a rout in the first election wiping out those who had fought for freedom from having a voice in policy making or administration at the time. Much of the thinking was led by politicians from Maharashtra who wished Goa to be merged with their state. Indeed 'Black Portuguese' was the term Y.B. Chavan coined for Goans who did not wish merger with Maharashtra. Hence the attempt to homogenise, integrate, and define nationalism by marginalizing sections of the population went against the very spirit of Nehru's vision for Goa. It is the people of Goa rather than policies that are responsible for the fact that the State is often cited as an example of communal harmony the country should emulate. As in the rest of the country, electoral politics has created major rifts in society..

Mr. Couto had to push through plans to start arts and science colleges affiliated to the University of Bombay; also to upgrade the Escola Medica, the oldest medical college in Asia (established in 1842), to be granted equivalence with the MBBS degree of the Bombay

Medical College. Experts arrived from Delhi and Bombay to help the process. Discussions which started at the secretariat, on arrival from the airport, carried on past the midnight hour in our cosy living room, all problems resolved and digested with the choicest wines and spirits.

My youthful self was dazzled. I sat transfixed by the eloquence, erudition and wit of minds sharpened, it seemed, as the night wore on, the heart more generous for allocation of funds. They were great men—Dr M.S. Thacker, a scientist, member of the Planning Commission, Dr G.D. Parikh, a disciple of M.N. Roy and rector of Bombay University, and Prof. G.C. Banerjee, scholar in English literature and principal of Elphinstone College, Bombay. They brought a deep humanism and added zest to our lives. I cannot forget this great goodwill towards Goa and Goans, irrespective of language and religion. The divisions were created by us, Goans, in a power grabbing exercise as usually happens at such times, polarizing communities.

Colonial politics divided Goan society on religious lines. This past history is now being aired by some groups and used to marginalize and affect the lives of Goan Christians today. To Goa that has been 'othered' as was argued in the earlier section of this paper, there is an attempt to use the purity pollution principle to further distance the Goan Catholic in political discourse. In my book I had written that the convert became the outcaste. The politics of identity, and definitions of nation today

do create insecurity and a sense of being an outsider in one's own home.

If the situation is not worse it is because the Goan Catholic is literate and upwardly mobile through education and migration; there is a constant struggle for social space, for language, for Konkani in Roman script (not only devnagri as officially decreed). The playing out of the democratic process has thrown up new power formations in a volatile political scene.

An appreciation of the historical-cultural ingredients that have created the distinctive personality of Goa, and an understanding of the processes of transformation that have created Goan identity would help place Goa within the Indian historical imagination. In some senses, Goan society is in tumult. For instance despite objections by some freedom fighters, Indo Portuguese culture is celebrated every other year for a whole week sponsored by businessmen with their eye on opportunities in the EU via Portugal. Portuguese is now being studied at undergraduate and postgraduate level. It is too soon to judge if these varied dimensions will coalesce into a significant direction. What needs to be said, however, - is that despite the problematic years of the transition, Goa is a vibrant society where issues of identity, language, and culture are contested in the press, in academic circles, on blog sites as well as on the *balcGo*, the porch of the traditional Goan house. Hence one such discussion group calls itself the Friday *BalcGo*.