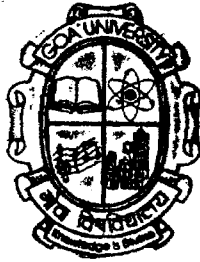


Goa Wins Freedom

Reflections and Reminiscences



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Freedom Struggle in Goa: Its Nature and Phases

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IN its broad sense the freedom struggle in Goa commenced only with the launching of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1946 under the inspiration of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. It was thereafter that the freedom movement acquired its mass basis in Goa and that the Gandhian technique of *satyagraha* came to be adopted by the Goan freedom fighters along with other ways and means. Nothing but total liberation of Goa from the Portuguese yoke was the goal of the freedom fighters now. It was also taken for granted that Goa would become a part of the Union of India on its liberation.

Earlier, from 1928 to 1946, the freedom struggle was marked by two important factors: (a) Fight for individual liberty in the face of the dictatorship of Salazar under which all freedoms were curbed; and (b) Greater participation for Goans, with more effective powers and functions, in the legislatures in Goa as well as in the Parliament of Portugal.

In these two phases of the freedom struggle in Goa, 1928-46 and 1946-61, both the major communities of Goa — Hindus and Christians — participated. On the other hand, during the previous liberal phase of the struggle, lasting over a century or so from about 1820 to 1928, mostly the educated Christians were found in the movement. The reason for this phenomenon was the fact that the Hindus were discriminated against in the spheres of education, training, job opportunities and other avenues of mental and material progress. The voting rights were also confined to those who knew Portuguese and owned

large estates or other sources of large income. Only Christians could meet these requirements, with the exception of a handful of Hindus.

By 1928 however the Hindus were ready to join the Christians in the freedom movement. In fact, the last phase of 1946-61 had many Hindu leaders. This was made possible because in 1910 a republican form of Government was established in Portugal. It had its impact on Goa and the Goans. Catholicism was no more the state religion; Hindus were placed on a footing of equality with the Christians as far as educational facilities and job opportunities were concerned; all Goans — Hindus, Christians and others — were granted individual liberty. Under these benign circumstances both the major communities of Goa were inspired by a liberal, secular and national spirit. They refused to accept lying down the dictatorship of Salazar when it was established in 1928, and more particularly under the Constitution of 1933.

The liberal phase of the period 1820-1928 was marked by three or four significant developments: (1) Appeasement of the Christian community. This was done by giving them job opportunities in civil, judicial and defence departments; by granting them the right to a limited franchise in electing the legislature of Goa; and by providing for more and more representation of Goans in this legislature and for some representation of Goans in the Portuguese Parliament. (2) The second noteworthy factor of the liberal phase was the continuation of the periodical revolts by the Ranes of Sattari. They were the traditional Desais of the region. In fact they revolted now and then ever since 1755 for a variety of reasons — economic, political, social and personal — as we shall see in some detail later on. They were finally suppressed in 1912. (3) Mutinies among the defence forces of Goa constituted another factor during the liberal phase. Mutinies occurred not only in Goa but also in Diu. (4) There was much agrarian discontent during this period. In fact, this type of discontent prevailed in Portuguese Goa throughout the period 1510-1961.

The period of three centuries preceding 1820 was marked by resistance movements against the Portuguese on religious, agrarian or other grounds. The Goans expressed their resent-

ment in the form of revolts against conversion; heavy land revenues and other taxes; racial discrimination; and other acts of tyranny. These, of course, cannot be described as constituting a national movement by the Goans. But these events certainly influenced and inspired the freedom fighters of the 20th century. Besides, some of the revolts which were planned but were suppressed before they could be launched, had grand schemes and visions of ousting the Portuguese from Goa and establishing a republican form of Government.

It is often repeated that there were 40 revolts¹ against the Portuguese during the first 400 years of their rule in Goa, the last being the Rane revolt suppressed in 1912. Details of all these revolts are not given, but some of them were certainly significant for their aims and impact.

In the 16th and 17th centuries the revolts were mostly in the form of resistance to either the conversion policy of the church and the state or the enhancement of the land revenues and other taxes. At the same time it should be noted that there was virtually no opposition to the Portuguese rule from within during the first three decades, 1510-40, on either count. It was because of the Portuguese policy of not disturbing the customs and usages of the Goans as long as they were loyal to the king of Portugal. In fact, the customs and usages, including agrarian relations, land tenure, and rate of land revenue, were codified in the *Foral* of 1526² and were upheld. However, in the 1540's and thereafter the Portuguese adopted and implemented a vigorous policy of conversion. At the same time drastic changes were made in agrarian relations, land tenure, agricultural and other taxes. The people of Goa did not accept these changes without putting up a challenge. However they could not resist long in the face of the superior force and ruthless tyranny of the Portuguese rulers. On the failure of their resistance they were left with only two alternatives: to migrate or to stay back and face the acts of persecution. Thousands preferred to leave their native land to other parts of India; but thousand others remained and suffered.

Among the cases of resistance to conversion the most interesting is that of the people of Cuncolim and its neighbouring villages in 1583. Cuncolim is in Salcete which was a

region acquired by the Portuguese in 1543 from the Adil Shah of Bijapur. Some Jesuit missionaries who were bent upon converting the people of Salcete went to Cuncolim, killed a cow, smeared the idols of the village temple with the blood of the cow, and threw its carcass into the tank. The angry *gaonkars* of the village community met in their assembly and resolved to resist the missionaries should they resort to further insults. A message was sent to the Jesuit headquarters in Chorão not to take recourse to such offences. However, the missionaries did not care. Some went to Cuncolim again and desecrated the temples. The villagers resisted. In the skirmish many villagers and five missionaries, including Father Acquaviva, were killed. From the point of view of the Church the dead missionaries became the martyrs of Cuncolim. The Government decided to punish the people of Cuncolim for their resistance. A posse was sent by land and a fleet by river Sal. Surprisingly the villagers gained a victory over the Government forces, but the arrival of re-inforcements undid the victory. The people were punished cruelly; their lands and other properties were confiscated; the village community (*comunidade*) was suppressed; the villagers were murdered and plundered freely.

The policy of conversion included westernisation of the converts and creation of many socio-economic disabilities for those who refused to be converted. We need not go into the details of these issues, but note that non-Christians were subjected to numerous persecution laws the net result of which was that they could not hold public offices; they were excluded from the membership of the village assemblies where the Christian *gaonkars* were in a majority; they were prohibited from possessing idols of their deities, holy books, etc.; public performance of various socio — religious functions was banned; Hindu priests were ousted from Goa and those who refused to go within a month were enslaved and their properties were confiscated.

A vigorous implementation of these persecution laws resulted on occasions in economic instability. The farmers took to the good old form of resistance of simply abandoning their homes and lands. The fields remained uncultivated for several seasons; commercial and other activities came to a stand still;

Government lost much of the revenues. As a result the Government preferred to be moderate in implementing the laws. It called back the absconding farmers, promising to return their lands.]

By the 17th century the Goans had another grievance against the Portuguese. It was the policy of racial discrimination against native Christians vis-a-vis White Christians. It may be noted here that the Portuguese had shown job incentives to attract Hindus to Catholicism. However, the converts were recruited only for lower jobs in civil, revenue, judicial and defence services. Higher offices were reserved for Whitemen only. This discrimination was applied to the Church hierarchy also. The converts could not tolerate this for long. During the course of a century or so after the 1540's a large number of converts had joined the seminaries and had become priests. Some of them were as intelligent, efficient and learned as any White priest. However, they were not appointed to higher benefices even when they were eligible by seniority and merits. The native Christian clergy was very unhappy over this situation. Father Mateus de Castro Mahale threw the first important challenge to the Portuguese on this count of racial discrimination⁴.

The racial tension continued and flared up again in the next century in the form of the Revolt of the Pintos or the 'Conspiracy' of 1787⁵. To be sure some attempt had been made by the Government of Portugal in the meantime to reduce racial discrimination. Marquês de Pombal, liberal prime minister of Portugal (1750-77) had issued orders to the Viceroy of Goa that the European and the Goan Christians should be treated on a footing of equality, that the recruitment to civil, judicial and other services should be on the basis of merits, not on the basis of colour or race of the candidates for the posts⁶. These orders however were not implemented by the Viceroy and their top aides as they were Whites in power on the spot. The Goans however could not tolerate this indifference for ever. The Goan Christians who held minor positions in the various government departments, including the military services, and in the church, decided to strike particularly when their attempt to get their grievances redressed by the authorities in the metropolis failed.

However, it is a mistake to think that the leaders of the 1787 revolt were moved only by the discriminatory policies of the government. It must be added that they were inspired also by the French enlightenment and liberal political thought. It is evident from the fact that the ultimate goal of the rebels was to establish a republican form of government in Goa after expelling the Portuguese. A governing council was to be elected by the people for carrying on the administration of the territory. The liberal thought was imbibed by the Goan Christians who had gone to Europe, particularly for higher education. It may be mentioned here that Marquês de Pombal had liberalised the educational institutions of Portugal during his premiership. Some Goan students who had returned from Portugal participated in the 'Conspiracy'. Even the Goan priests, who were in Europe, were influenced by the prevailing liberal thought.

The revolt was led by two priests, José Antonio Gonçalves and Caetano Francisco de Couto. In all 56 were suspected and booked for arrest, but only 47 were actually arrested, and imprisoned; among these 47 were 17 priests, 4 lieutenants, 6 captains, 1 sergeant, 3 makers of nets (fishnets), 1 servant of the Archbishop of Cranganor, 1 surgeon, and the rest were residents of various villages and towns such as Chorão, Honavar, Saligão, Candolim, Moira and Ponda. This analysis shows that the revolt was not confined to priests but it included civilian and defence personnel and ordinary residents of Goa and other places (Honavar is in South Kanara). It also included a student and the Desai of Ponda, Naraba Naik. The latter was released subsequently as he was adjudged not guilty.

The name of the 'Conspiracy', "The Revolt of the Pintos", was derived from the fact that the rebels used to hold their meetings at the palacial house of the Pintos in Candolim. However, the whole plot was revealed to the authorities by a traitor on 5 April 1787, confirmed by others subsequently. The Governor took quick action and most of the suspects were arrested, imprisoned, prosecuted and sentenced. The punishments were cruel and inhuman. David Francisco Viegas, chief surgeon of the legion of Ponda, who was accused of provoking other members of the legion to join the 'Conspiracy', was sentenced to be hanged to death; his hands were cut off before hanging. Nicolao Luis da Costa and Ignacio Caetano Toscano,

lieutenants of the legion of Ponda, who were accused of spreading rebellion among friends and acquaintances and of planning to weaken the legion by poisoning their bread, were sentenced to be hanged to death. The servant of the Archbishop and several others were whipped through the streets and enslaved for life. The properties of all the sentenced rebels were confiscated. Fourteen of the 17 priests were deported to Portugal; the others were released as not guilty.

The Governor of Goa feared that Tipu Sultan of Mysore might get involved in the plot of 1787. Therefore he acted swiftly with all secrecy in suppressing the revolt. However, there is no proof to show that Tipu was approached by the rebels, though it was suspected that they might have done so.

The seeds of liberalism sown by Marquês de Pombal could not be prevented from sprouting and growing in spite of the cruel suppression of the 'Conspiracy' of 1787. Portugal herself could not help but come under the growing influence of liberal political thought of Europe following the French Revolution and the revolutionary wars of Europe under Napoleon Bonaparte. There was a growing demand for a constitutional monarchy, if not a republican government, in Portugal. Finally a constitutional monarchy emerged in the 1820's. It had an immediate impact on Goa. In fact the next hundred years were marked by a growing sense of liberalism among Goans which prompted them to demand liberal political institutions.

The 19th century political scene of Goa was marked by the following features: (1) The Goans were given a share in the governance of their own land under the constitutional charter of 1826 and subsequent laws in varying degrees. They were given representation in the legislative council of Goa as well as in the *Cortes* (Parliament) of Portugal. However, the franchise granted to the Goans to elect their representatives was extremely limited. Knowledge of Portuguese and payment of heavy taxes were necessary for voters. Nevertheless, at one stage a native of Goa, Bernardo Peres da Silva, of Neura, Ilhas, was elected deputy of Goa to the Parliament of Portugal, was appointed to the highest office of governorship in 1835. Great liberal thinkers of Goa like Francisco Luis Gomes (1829-69) and Luis de Menezes Bragança (1878-1938) represented their

fellow Goans in the Parliament and told the Portuguese that they were proud to be Indians and that Goa should be liberated from Portugal. Gomes anticipated Bala Gangadhar Tilak when he wrote, "I ask for India freedom⁷". Bragança was more explicit: "Portuguese India does not renounce the right of all peoples to attain the fulness of their individuality to the point of constituting units capable of guiding their own destiny, for it is a birth right of its organic essence ... Yes, I consider it the most fortunate moment of my public life when the inexorable determination of facts imposed on me the duty of revindicating for my country the right to decide its own destiny, by repelling the absurd pretension of perpetual subjugation⁸. By implication both appeared to be in favour of the freedom of Goa and ultimately its integration with other parts of India.

(2) The second result of liberalism of the 19th century was the growth of the press in Goa.⁹ The Goa government itself started a periodical, *A Gazeta de Goa* (The Gazette of Goa), in December 1821. This was followed by a number of private periodicals and dailies during the course of the next 100 years. As could be expected almost all of these were in Portuguese. It is only in the Republican period, 1910-61 and after liberation that some periodicals and dailies in Konkani, Marathi and English came to be published in Goa or by Goans in Bombay and other places.

The 19th century journalism revealed an over growing consciousness of individual freedom and spirit of nationalism. Informed editors, journalists and writers became aware of India's past achievements. Wrote Francisco Luis Gomes of Navelim: "I was born in India ... I belong to that race which composed the Mahabharata and invented the chess — the two conceptions of their intellect which bear in them something of the Eternal and of the Infinite ..."¹⁰ In fact the role of journalism in defending individual liberty and in getting political institutions of Goa liberalised was significant.

(3) Education by itself is a great liberalising force. A process of modernizing and secularising the educational institutions of Goa was commenced by Marquês de Pombal in the latter half of the 18th century. The monopoly of the church in education was curbed and the state began to acquire a greater

control over educational institutions and the courses taught therein. During the 19th century scientific and technological courses came to be introduced along with courses in oriental languages, including Konkani and Marathi. Though there was no provision for higher education in Goa after the total suppression of the institutions of higher education controlled by religious orders in the first half of the 19th century, many a Goan went out to Bombay and other places of India, and to Lisbon, London, Paris, etc. in Europe, for higher education. The net result of receiving such education, particularly higher education outside Goa, was that the educated Goans became aware of the western liberal political thought and political institutions in operations. They were thus equipped to influence fellow Goans, to assert individual freedom, and to demand greater participation for Goans in the governance of their own land¹¹.

(4) During the 19th century the Portuguese were confronted not only by the growing demands of liberalism but also by the revolts of the Ranes of Sattari.¹² The latter rebelled violently against the Portuguese on account of various reasons. The first recorded revolt was in 1755 against an enhancement of a tobacco levy. Since then, until 1822, they revolted 14 times in defence of their right and privileges. The Portuguese preferred to be lenient during those years. However, they suppressed the 15th revolt of 1823 with a heavy hand. 296 of the sepoys of the Ranes were disbanded; the latter were forced to pay their land revenues to the Portuguese exchequer. This merely served to provoke the Ranes to revolt again (1824). The Portuguese put it down, imprisoned the leaders of the revolt, and appointed an administrator for Sattari. A little later a compromise was reached which however did not last long. A six-year conflict ensued in 1845-51. In 1852-5 Dipaji Rane led a major rebellion. It was in protest against the new levies imposed by the Portuguese on agricultural lands and restrictions on Hindus. Dipaji captured the fortress of Nanuz and attacked Portuguese villages now and then. The Viceroy pacified him at last by reversing the levies, etc. Besides, Dipaji was appointed a captain in the Portuguese army.

Another revolt (1869-71) was launched by Kustoba Rane when he was falsely implicated in a rape case and was accused of a murder. He pillaged Portuguese lands and killed the actual

rapist when the latter fell into his hands. He proved a real terror, but was finally shot dead in 1871. The revolt subsided on his death.

The Ranes launched upon another major revolt in 1895 taking advantage of the mutiny of the Maratha sepoy in the Portuguese army that year. The sepoy mutinied when they were ordered to go to Mossambique to put down a native rebellion there. Dada Rane backed the sepoy. Besides, he was aggrieved by the unjust distribution of the Rane lands among the Nadkarnis. With 900 men he attacked churches and village communities looting their treasuries. However, the arrival of reinforcement from Portugal enabled the Viceroy to put down the revolt with a heavy hand.

After a couple of minor revolts, the last Rane revolt took place in 1912. In a well planned move, the Ranes launched a two pronged attack on the Portuguese. Morya Sawant attacked the northern regions while Gil Sawant invaded the southern areas. However, the Portuguese succeeded in beating off the attacks. In fact this time the Ranes were totally suppressed.)

(5) Apart from the Rane revolts, the Portuguese had to face a couple of mutinies in their defence and police forces in the latter half of the 19th century.¹³ In 1870 the government of Goa decided to disband some of the units of the army for economic reasons. The financial position of the Portuguese was in a poor shape indeed. Besides, it was also thought unnecessary to have a large force as the British in India were the traditional friends from whom no danger was expected. However, the army did not want to be disbanded. The affected soldiers took to armed resistance. But when reinforcements arrived from Portugal the native soldiers surrendered without much resistance.

The Marcela police mutinied in 1871 though its cause is not clear. The 1895 mutiny of the Maratha sepoy and its consequences have already been noted.

A republican government was established in Portugal in 1910 in place of the constitutional monarchy. It was welcomed by the Goans with enthusiasm as it meant the dawn of a new era for them. Individual freedom, equality and secularism were

guaranteed. Hindus and Christians were placed on a footing of equality. Hindus were made eligible to join educational institutions freely; they could train themselves in various skills and thus qualify themselves for recruitment in civil, judicial and other Government departments; Catholicism was no more a state religion; Hindus were free to practice their religion openly, to preserve and promote their language and literature, and to establish their own schools and temples. The net result was that within the next three or four decades an enlightened Hindu leadership emerged, ready to take over the struggle for freedom along with the enlightened Christian leadership which had already been carrying on a struggle on liberal lines as already noted.

In the meantime republicanism ran into trouble in Portugal. There was no stable Government which resulted in economic bankruptcy. The outcome of these unfortunate developments was the establishment of the dictatorship of Antonio Oliveira de Salazar in 1928, more particularly after the promulgation of the Constitution of 1933. He curbed all freedoms of speech and expression, of association and assembly, of the press and the parties. These curbs were particularly oppressive in Portuguese colonies including Goa.

Tristão de Braganza Cunha (1891-1958) pioneered the challenge against the fruits of Salazar's dictatorship in Goa. Cunha organised the Goa Congress Committee in 1928 and got it affiliated to the Indian National Congress¹⁴. However, the affiliation was discontinued from 1934 when the Indian National Congress decided to disaffiliate all such Committees and branches in foreign lands like the U. K. and the U. S. A. Nevertheless some prominent Goans in Bombay carried on the struggle against Portugal on the lines of the Indian National Congress in British India since 1936.

In Goa itself some political groups were organised. One of them was the Gomantakiya Tarun Sangh of Margão founded by a Royist, Shamrao Madkaikar, in 1937. Another group was led by Pandurang P. Shirodkar in Karmali since 1939. A third one, Goa Seva Sangh, was formed in 1945 in Margão, its founder leader being Purushottam K. Kakodkar¹⁵. The Goan Youth League was established in Bombay in 1945. The National Congress (Goa) and four other parties were formed outside Goa.

In 1937 the Portuguese imposed a law in Goa whereby the freedom of the press, speech and assembly was suppressed. The press was subjected to a severe censorship. No political party other than the official National Union was allowed to function. No assembly or public meeting could be held without three day's notice and prior permission of the authorities. Heavy punishments were laid down for any violation of the law. The right of the Goans to be represented in the Parliament of Portugal was taken away, but was restored in 1945. ¹⁶

Two more noteworthy observations may be made here. First, the Goans obtained the right to elect their representatives to the *Cortes* (Parliament) of Portugal with effect from 1822. Though this provision was not allowed to the Goans perpetually, it was a privilege which the fellow countrymen in British India never had. They could never elect their own representative to the British House of Commons.

Second, the Goans were privileged to elect their own representatives to the legislature of Goa right from the year 1821-22. In British India the principle of election was introduced only under the Indian Council Act of 1892 and was actually implemented under the constitutional reforms of 1909.

Finally, I was convinced during the course of my study for the purpose of this paper that no comprehensive, critical, work on the freedom struggle in Goa existed. The extant works were piecemeal accounts of this even or that, this period or that. No single work in English explains the genesis, growth and fruition of the freedom movement of this territory, in all its nuances. A Marathi work has been published recently containing a great deal of facts; but it suffers from methodological lacunae and inadequate appreciation of certain events, particularly of the pre — twentieth century developments. At the same time it may be observed that the 20th century events have been written about comparatively extensively by other authors also. The development of the earlier centuries have yet to find their qualitative authors.

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