



**XIX<sup>th</sup> Local History Seminar 2016**

**Goan Diaspora through the Ages**

**Symposium**

**Gramdevata Worship in Goa**

Editor

**Smt. Blossom Medeira**

**DIRECTOR**

**DIRECTORATE OF ARCHIVES AND ARCHAEOLOGY  
GOVERNMENT OF GOA**

**2016**

# Trajectory of Goan Diaspora through the Ages

Dr. Sonal Thakker

Migration from Goa has been a long standing phenomenon for which documented data, at least from the 16th century onwards exists (De Souza, 1979: 54). A sizeable number of Goans have settled elsewhere and constitute the Goan diaspora. Also, a large number of Goans are working overseas, on shore as well as at sea, and who send remittances to their families left behind here. This trend of going overseas is the outcome of a migration culture, which has seeped into the Goan milieu.

## Goa as a Portuguese Colony

After Portugal conquered Goa in 1510, the colonial government made a rigorous effort to create a citizenry that would be loyal to its rule. Mendes (2014: 19) remarks “the rationale was to create a Goan society and culture that mirrored Portugal’s own and be more amenable to the foreign ruler and its culture mores”. The Portuguese were the first European colonial power to come to India and the last to go. Thus, Goa experienced 451 years of Portuguese rule; the longest spell of colonialism on the Indian sub-continent.

Since Goa was the earliest territory in the non-western world to be exposed to western culture and values, it witnessed a rich cultural syncretism of eastern and western cultures. This endowed the Goans with a more inclusive identity and encouraged the acquisition of new knowledge and the spirit of discovery; which provided them with a distinct advantage wherever they went and facilitated their migration, adaptation and integration into different cultural contexts (Albuquerque, 2012: xvii; Goa Migration Study [GMS], 2008: 19).

## **Methodology**

In order to trace the genesis of migration and to explore the changing aspirations among Goan migrants, I have relied on secondary sources data sought from Census Department, Regional Passport Office, NRI Cell Goa and Goa Migration Study Report 2008.

## **Causes of Goan Migration**

The first recorded wave of Goan migration is traced to the 16th century when the Portuguese rule began in Goa. Since Goa was a Portuguese enclave for over four centuries, with clearly demarcated political boundaries, migration to destinations outside Goa involved crossing national boundaries. Obviously, any out-migration to India before Goa's integration into the Indian Union as well as outside India was perceived as international (GMS, 2008: 20; Mascarenhas, 1990: 243).

Gracias (2007: 107) notes that "during the early centuries of the Portuguese rule a large number of Hindus left Goa to escape conversion". Later, the new converts fled Goa to escape the terror of the Inquisition put forth in the late 16th century. Goans also migrated to the neighboring regions because of various incursions, recurrent epidemics and high taxes imposed by the Portuguese rulers. However, these movements were not induced by employment considerations.

Later, the agrarian economy, harsh taxes, unemployment and lack of educational prospects led to migration. Moreover, increase in modern means of transport and communication facilitated migration. It is important to note that the above causes of migration do not apply to the present reasons for overseas migration.

## **Shift in the Locus of Destinations**

The trajectory of Goan diaspora according to destination could be broadly illustrated in chronological order as follows: British India

and Asia, Africa, America, Canada and United Kingdom and the Gulf.

With the establishment of British colonial government in India in the 19th century and the development of Bombay and other towns and cities in the vicinity of Goa, many new employment opportunities were created. Goans migrated to the metropolitan cities such as Madras, Calcutta and Delhi; and also to smaller urban centers near Goa, like Belgaum, Dharwad and Poona. Others went to the British colonies along with their masters or on their own.

With the departure of the British from India in 1947, Goans who were employed in considerable numbers in British firms lost their jobs, which resulted in their return home from 1948 to 1959 (Mascarenhas, 1990 cited in GMS, 2008: 26). Subsequently in the late 19th century, many Goans who had gone to British Africa in search of jobs had to return to Goa as the colonies reverted to indigenous rule in the Sixties. Only a few Goans chose to stay behind while others sought new places for settlement with new avenues of employment and shifted to greener pastures in Australia, America, Brazil, Canada, the U.K, New Zealand and so on (Fernandes, 2007: 46); while those who go to the Gulf, do not settle there, but eventually return to Goa to lead a retired life (Azevedo, 1997: 32). This period coincided with the era of decolonization and the attainment of freedom from the British rule in 1947 and the Portuguese rule in 1961.

After the liberation of Goa in 1961 the trend of emigration continued. Rodrigues, (2004: 180) writes “the generality of descendents and *mesticos* (persons with mixed Portuguese and Indian blood) living in Goa opted for Portugal”. She opines that the *mesticos* felt that they “might be ill-treated and there would be no scope for them and their families in Goa”. Their departure acted as a catalyst for many Goans, who also migrated to Portugal, also a small percentage migrated to the United State of America and the United

Kingdom. This was mostly to pursue higher studies. Some opted to stay on and acquire British nationality or to get Portuguese citizenship.

### **Dual process of In-migration and Out-migration**

The assimilation of Goa into the Union of India led to heavy influx of other Indians into Goa, especially during the first decade of Liberation (Rodrigues, 2002: 181). However, agriculture has suffered from the huge out flow of local labour. Further, extensive construction activity has resulted in the massive inflow of migrants into Goa from other states of India (Gracias, 2007: 112). Many Goans express concerns about the migrant influx and how it can destroy the unique fabric of Goan society.

However, not all Goans are troubled by the influx of migrants. Those who have rooms to rent see them as a source of income and also help them to get ration cards. But there are others who are worried about added demands on infrastructure, rise in crime rate, change in demography etc.

The real estate which had made a beginning in the late sixties/early seventies got a fillip and many new housing projects started. Many old colonial houses were demolished and gave rise to the apartment culture. The concomitant was that land prices shot up manifold and had a disastrous effect on the agricultural land which was converted for housing projects (Rodrigues, 2002: 182).

Overseas migration created a vacuum in Goa which is filled by migrants from other parts of the country. In smaller states like Goa, in-migration is beginning to alter the demographic structure to a point where the host population feels vulnerable as it is perceived as a threat to their identity and demography. However, the State needs workers at lower level to keep the economy growing. There are hardly or rather only a handful of Goans who can do jobs of carpentry, tile fitting, masonry and plumbing. Thus, when man-power

is not easily available locally, migrant labourers come in and it is difficult to find young skilled people for these jobs as they mostly go to the Gulf or take up jobs on ships. This is because the 'social acceptance' of the job is important to them. It is the law of nature that any vacuum that is created, gets filled up. Thus, a dual process of out-migration and in-migration is occurring in Goa. Ruiz (2009) calls this Goa's experience of a 'labour paradox'.

A new elite of well off Indians, film actors, sports personalities, writers etc. have made Goa their second home and retirement home as they find property prices lower here. They have purchased old Goan homes, renovated and refurbished them as well as built their own homes, purchased apartments while some have settled here for permanent domicile.

In-migration has altered the demographic profile of the state and triggered a demand for special status to Goa, under Article 371 of the Constitution of India for regulating ownership and transfer of land especially with respect to sale of land to non-residents/foreigners to conserve the limited land resources available for development. There is a deep concern that Goa's identity is getting diluted. However, the popular rhetoric prevalent in Goa is that the Goans themselves are selling off their land and migrating abroad.

### **Trajectory of Goan Diaspora through the Ages**

The causes of migration today are different from those during the early Portuguese rule in Goa. In the early phase of colonial rule, conversion, inquisition, poverty of the family, harsh laws and taxes led to rampant migration. Generally the 'fleet' and 'push' factors (Ravenstein, 1889), that is, unfavourable conditions were the dominant factors of migration that literally 'pushed' people out. There was not much thinking or planning and most who wanted to migrate, followed the herd. Later, agrarian economy, unemployment, lack of education prospects and intolerance of political subjugation gave a further fillip to migration.

In earlier times, families were large and sustaining so many members with meager income from agriculture, led to a 'hand to mouth' existence. Therefore, in order to elevate their miseries; men with 'altruistic motivation' (Solimano, 2010: 146) migrated to fetch the much needed resources for their family. Poverty was the primary motivating factor and for the households it was a survival strategy. A large number of dependents benefitted due to the migration of their family members. Thus, by and large, 'flock' and 'pull' factors (Ravenstein, 1889), that is, favourable conditions in an external location attracted workers overseas and were more influential in the decision to migrate. This constituted the 'flock syndrome' of migration.

Thus, we note that earlier migration was mostly involuntary with the subjective factors more dominant than the objective factors; some sort of 'push factors' influenced the decision to migrate and gradually the 'pull factors' which were voluntary in nature affected the rationale for migration. We can conclude that earlier migration from Goa was more out of compulsion than free will, but now it is a well informed decision by taking into consideration the benefits to be accrued compared to the former venture into the unknown and faraway lands.

### **Lure of the Portuguese Passport**

During the last decade and a half, migration from Goa has entered a new phase. Larsen (1998: 272) opines that "For Goans, Europe is likely to remain on the employment radar and Portugal a convenient gateway to get there". A number of Goans have acquired Portuguese passport and even citizenship since the Portuguese Consulate started functioning in the state. In the last couple of years, on an average around 600 persons per month are surrendering their Indian passports on obtaining Portuguese citizenship. In 2015, about 2,158 people (upto September, 2015) have surrendered their Indian passports at the Regional Passport Office at Panaji. In 2014, about



1,660 persons surrendered the document. According to the Portuguese nationality consultants, now persons in their forties and fifties are also migrating, whereas earlier it was mainly those between eighteen and thirty five years of age who used to migrate overseas. Further, 70 per cent of the applicants are Catholics, 20 per cent are Muslims and 10 per cent are Hindus.

Loyola (2000) noted that in Goa's case, it was the individual who migrates and not the family. He adds that Goan migrants "continued to keep the bond with the native land and retained their blood and economic ties". However, Loyola has made this observation as early as 1960s, and since then, the migration scenario has undergone a radical change. Now the Goans are no longer single males alone, but entire families are migrating to European countries. This is attributed to a change in aspirations among the Goan population. These are recent developments occurring in the migration scene in Goa, the repercussions of which are yet to be experienced.

### **Locked Homes, Empty Church Benches**

Now, Colaco (2015) notes, "With more and more *Goenkars* leaving their homes to pursue better prospects abroad, leaving behind empty homes and Church benches". She points out "the local Church priests are stepping in to curb the widespread migration". Further, overseas migrants come to Goa and build a house which is locked up throughout the year now, since the whole families are migrating.

Abraham H. Maslow (1943) spoke of the hierarchy of needs of a man in his famous work, "A Theory of Human Motivation". When one need is satisfied, another one surfaces and man is in a never-ending quest to satisfy his needs. The changing trends of migration from Goa seem to indicate that Goans are seeking different avenues of employment. Certainly there is a shift in the locus of destination from British India to European destinations. Goans seeking Portuguese passport and going to Europe is a continuity of the legacy

of migration since the Portuguese rule in Goa, particularly among Catholics it has become a part of their cultural habit.

### **Conclusion**

The trajectory of migration is a clear indication that Goans want to move in a different direction as compared to the preferred destination of their predecessors. This reveals the changing aspirations of Goan migrants. This is at a nascent stage, a transitional period, showing greater dynamism, generally for the state and in particular to the families.

Thus, it is noted that over time the reasons for migrating, as well as the preferred destinations, have varied. Goans have an advantage of acquiring Portuguese passport and many have resorted to the same as it allows them to travel freely within the European Union. However, with the recent exit of Britain from the European Union, 'Brexit', as it has come to be known - could have far reaching ramifications on Goans who may have to relocate to Goa. Getting gainful employment may pose to be a big challenge. Also, coping with a fall in living standards due to less salary would be another pitfall. It would mean a return to a life from which many have severed their umbilical ties. Those who opt to travel to seek employment in other European countries will have to start afresh and probably face the problem of getting a foothold in alien lands. The ramifications expected of this 'Brexit' shall be borne not only by the migrants themselves, but also their families. The issue of 'dual citizenship' is not yet resolved. This situation is a challenge for the Goan immigrants in particular and the Goan society in general.

### **References**

Albuquerque, T. (1997). *Goa: The Rachol legacy*. Mumbai: Wenden Offset Pvt. Ltd.

----- (2012). *Goan pioneers in Mumbai*. Goa: Goa 1556 & Broadway Publishing House.

Azevedo, C. (1997). Goan diaspora. In Vaz, C. J. (Ed.). *Profiles of eminent Goans: Past and present*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing House.

Colaco, K. (2014, August 26). Priests Join Band of Voices Against Migration. *Times of India*.

De Loyola, J. I. (2000). The Problem of Emigration. In Borges, C. J (Ed.), *Goa's foremost nationalist: Jose Inacio Candido De Loyola*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

D' Souza, B. G. (1975). *Goan society in transition: A study in social change*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan Pvt. Ltd.

Fernandes, D. (2007). *Domnic's Goa*. Goa: Abbe Faria Productions.

Government of Goa. (2008). *Goa migration study report*. Department of NRI Affairs.

Gracias, F. S. (October, 2007). Goans away from Goa: Out - migration to the Middle East. In *Parmal*, Vol. 6. Porvorim: Goa Heritage Action Group.

Larsen, K. (1998). *Faces of Goa*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

Mascarenhas, S. K. (1990). International migration: Its development, reproduction and economic impact on Goa up to 1961. In De' Souza, T. R. (Ed.), *Goa through the ages: An economic history. (Vol. II.)*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Co.

----- (2011). *Colonialism, migration and the international Catholic Goan community*. Saligao. Goa, 1556.

Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper.

Mendes, S. S. (2014). *Luis De Menezes Braganca: Nationalism, secularism and free thought in Portuguese Goa*. Panaji, Goa: Directorate of Art and Culture.

Rodrigues, M. L. Bravo, Da Costa. (2002). Goa: Four decades of freedom. In Cabral, M. (Ed.), *Redefining horizons*. Panaji, Goa: Dept. of Information and Publicity.

Solimano, A. (2010). *International migration in the age of crisis and globalization*. Newyork: Cambridge University Press.

Sumner, W. G. (1940). *Folkways*. Boston: Ginn & Co.

Vaz, C. J. (1997). *Profiles of eminent Goans: Past and present*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing House.