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# Overseas Migration from Goa – Past Trends and Present Scenario

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## Background

A significant portion of Goa's prosperity is accounted for by international migration (Goa Migration Study 2008: 19). A sizeable number of Goans have settled in other parts of the world and constitute the Goan diaspora, that is Persons of Goan Origin and also a significant number of Goans are working overseas on shore as well as at sea, who send remittances to their families left behind here. The latter is temporary migration but mostly of long duration. In order to trace the genesis of migration I have relied on secondary sources of documented data available from 16<sup>th</sup> Century onwards.

## The State of Goa – Description

Goa is a small State, the twenty-fifth of the Republic of India, formed on 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1987, following its dissociation from the Portuguese Administration on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1961 (Vaz 1997: 17). Goa remained a Portuguese colony for about 450 years i.e. from 1510 until 1961 and then it was incorporated into the Indian union. The enormous imprint on the character and attitudes on the people of Goa as a result of the Portuguese rule of over 450 years cannot be overlooked.

## Portuguese Influence

From the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Portuguese conquistadors appeared on the scene (Albuquerque 2012: xvii). The fusion of eastern and western cultures that Goans grew up with facilitated their migration, adaptation and integration into new and different cultural contexts (GMS 2008: 19). Goa for all practical purposes was a closed territory with little or no contact between the Goans in Goa and their fellow countrymen in the subcontinent of India (Vaz 1997: 20). Hence prior to attaining liberation Goans migrating to British India or to other parts of the world any was categorized as international.

## Old and New Conquests

The present territory of Goa consists of two divisions, called the 'Old Conquests' and 'New Conquests' that are a legacy of the varying histories of diverse parts of Goa. The 'Old Conquests' (Velhas Conquistas) of Goa, which are coastal territories, were conquered by the Portuguese from 1510 to 1543, and the 'New Conquests' (Novas Conquistas) were annexed and incorporated into Goa in the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century comprising the talukas of Pernem, Satari, Bicholim, Sanguem, Quepem and Canacona which have remained predominantly Hindu. Obviously the Portuguese influence on the Old Conquests (Bardez, Salcete, Tiswaddi and Mormugao) has been intense and significant, as is evident from a large Christian population living there. The majority of emigrants have originated from here. Obviously, the Old Conquests have been the scope of most studies on emigration (GMS 2008: 23-24, Mascarenhas 1990: 243, 2011: 42 & Larsen 1998).

## Lusitanization

The 'Old Conquests' which remained with the Portuguese uninterruptedly for a longer period of time than the 'New Conquests' felt all the more and intensively the impact of their influence in a process which may be called "lusitanization" (Gomes 1996: 3). On

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adopting the new faith, transformation had to be total. Converts had perforce to shed old loyalties and inhibitions and take on everything new: worship, personal and family name, dress, language, learning, diet attitude, custom and manner of life (Albuquerque 2012: xix – xx).

### **Causes of Migration**

Let us examine the various causes of migration during the different phases of recorded history.

#### **Conversion**

The intense missionary activity led the local Hindu population to convert to Christianity in large numbers, however, many Hindus resisted conversion and migrated to the neighbouring regions of Karwar, Belgaum, Mangalore, during the period of mass conversion movement initiated in the 1540s. Migration was preferred to abandoning traditional religious and cultural practice (GMS 2008: 23). Most of the Hindus unwilling to embrace the Christian faith, moved to surrounding places, outside the control of the Portuguese, all along the western coast, in Karnataka and Kerala, where they settled, carrying with them their language, usages and customs, which they maintain even to this day (Azevedo 1997: 29). Many of them had exiled themselves to neighbouring Indian areas in the earlier years of Goa's conquest in order to avoid harassment by Portuguese proselytizers (Rodrigues 2002: 181). Thus, the ruthless policy of conversion triggered off the first wave of migration.

#### **Inquisition**

Further, the establishment of the Tribunal of Inquisition in Goa in 1560 brought on an even more autocratic policy. To discourage public worship, in 1567 about 280 temples were deliberately destroyed by the Portuguese in Goa. A few Hindus dared to stealthily flee to neighbouring Hindu principalities, carrying their deities across the border and installing them in new shrines (Albuquerque 2012: xxv) and thus the second migratory wave was unleashed in 1560. With the introduction of Inquisition, besides avowed heretics, not only Hindus but even Christian converts, out of fear of relapsing into the old Hindu usages and customs, came within its purview, with the result that not only some more Hindus but also a sizeable number of Christians left Goa and settled in North and South Canara, from Karwar to Mangalore (Azevedo 1997: 30). The inquisition disturbed not only the Hindu majority, who were determined to resist evangelization, but also many Christians of Bardez who were deeply entrenched in Hindu customs (Albuquerque 2012: xxiii).

#### **Harsh Laws and Taxes**

Goans felt that a great number of Portuguese laws, which were particularly harsh, forced them to emigrate (GMS 2008: 21 and Gracias 2007: 107). The worst hit by the blow was the landless laboring class, mostly illiterate individuals, weighed down for generations by the yoke of feudal servitude to the cruel landlords who had never been out of the village. Now confronted with the stark problem of starvation they had to venture out. Bombay, their El Dourado, beckoned (Albuquerque 2012: xxvii).

#### **Agrarian Economy**

The original inhabitants of Goa dwelt in harmony, linked to village republics (ibid 2012: ix). The major traditional occupation in Goa was subsistence farming of land owned jointly by native inhabitants and managed by the village communities, but soon after the arrival of the Portuguese a system of private property was introduced. The agriculturists,

who cultivated their rice fields, earned just enough to keep themselves and their families alive. At least 40% of the adult male population needed to migrate in order to earn a living (GMS 2008: 24-25).

### **Unemployment**

Thus, Goans had found difficulty in getting jobs in Goa before Liberation, because the economy was mainly agrarian and there were no industries of significance other than open-cast iron and manganese mines. The only solution was to migrate to British India in search of jobs. Migration for economic reason is believed to have had a beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The desire to attain a better standard of living and, lack of employment avenues in Goa compelled large number of Goans to migrate (Gracias 2007: 107). Inevitably a mass exodus to British India became the only solution to the grave problem of existence. The tiny trickle turned into a gigantic wave (Albuquerque 2012: xx) and thereafter migration became a solution to unproductive life and this perception holds true even now despite of the opportunities available in Goa itself.

### **Increase in Transport and Communication**

Prior to the introduction of modern means of transport, Goans who were desperate to travel for work braved the hazards of a prolonged coastal voyage in pattimars – crude country craft that depended solely on the wind to buffet their sails (ibid 2012: xxvii – xxviii). Later vast improvements in transport and communication by coastal steamer and railway facilitated and expedited their entry into Bombay as well as other distant places.

### **Education Prospects**

With the passage of time and the development of education in British India, Goans of higher castes also began migrating because of poor higher education facilities in their native country where the only two existing educational institutions were the Rachol Seminary and the Medical College (Azevedo 1997: 31). Bombay being the nearest to Goa became an attractive place to migrate. Others who could afford went to Europe, especially Portugal to continue their studies (Rodrigues 2002: 181).

Thus, emigration rose due to the scarcity of work, lack of industries and the disparity between wages and cost of living caused by the government's policy of high customs duties (Cunha 1961: 16). While the discovery of mineral deposits and the development of mining in the 1950s provided new employment opportunities, it failed to attract those who aspired to higher earnings and white collar professional jobs. Tourism industry in the 70s provided a huge relief (GMS 2008: 26) but that too did not stop sizeable emigration.

### **Trajectories of Movement**

#### **Colonial Period: British India and Asia, British Africa and Portuguese Colonies**

With the establishment of British colonial government in India in the early nineteenth century and the development of Bombay and other towns and cities in the vicinity of Goa, many new employment opportunities were created. Furthermore, Bombay as a port city, like Calcutta and Karachi, provided access to jobs on steam ships and in various parts of India, there was considerable demand for cooks, waiters, butlers, ayahs, tailors and musicians who could cater for European needs (Mascarenhas 1990: 244). The English education they acquired in Goa helped them to be well placed in the services of private companies and the British government. Many Goans, especially the younger, migrated for acquiring better qualifications. However, the majority of them went to

Bombay, Dharwad and Belgaum (Rodrigues 2002: 181). Other metropolitan cities, such as Madras, Calcutta and Delhi, as well as smaller urban centers near Goa, like Belgaum and Poona, also began attracting Goans who even migrated to Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon and Aden, all of which formed part of British India (Azevedo 1997: 31). Little by little they ventured farther, particularly to the African colonies of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, as well as to, while the Portuguese colonies of Macau, Timor, Mozambique, Angola, Cabo Verde and Guinea, proved no less powerful magnets to this “Wandering Jew” that the Goan had by then become (Azevedo 1997: 31).

#### **Seamen (Tarvottis)**

The migratory situation took a different turn in the early twentieth century when Goans began to take up employment on ships as tarvottis (seamen) in the passenger and cargo liners on the ships anchored by British India and worked as ship hands, sailors, stewards and cooks.

#### **Post Decolonization and Post Liberation: Portugal, U.K., Brazil, Australia, Canada, U.S.A. and the Gulf**

With the ushering in the era of decolonization and the attainment of Independence by the Portuguese and the British colonies, Goans had sought new places for settlement with new avenues of employment not only in Portugal and the United Kingdom, but also Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States of America. The Persian (now Arabian) Gulf countries, with their petro dollars, have proved the present El Dorado for the Goans, but this, as the former British and Portuguese Africa, cannot be mentioned in terms of diaspora for (Azevedo 1997: 32).

However, in the late eighties and early nineties, the first choice of emigrants was Canada followed by Australia, United States of America and New Zealand (Rodrigues 2002: 181). This constitutes the Goan diaspora and became permanent in nature.

Thus, Goans working in foreign countries were divided into three main categories – Africanders, Sailors and Gulfees. While most Africanders were from Bardez, sailors were from Salcete and Gulfees were a mixture from all over Goa, mainly consisting of Christians (Fernandes 2007: 41). This constitutes a large number of Goans who work overseas but return to their families who have been left behind.

A principal feature of international migration from Goa was that it did not become a temporary phenomenon to meet short term goals although initially many migrants planned to go ‘out’ for a few years. Rather the prospect of long term, relatively secure and better paid employment encouraged many to remain ‘out’ for their whole working life, returning to retire in old age (Mascarenhas 1990: 246). Also the Gulf countries do not allow naturalization.

Gracias (2007: 107) has aptly classified Goan migration into three main phases: First, migration in the early centuries of the Portuguese rule to the neighboring kingdoms when a large number of Hindus left Goa to escape conversion. This was followed by the new converts who fled Goa to escape the terror of the Inquisition put forth in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. (We can say that this constitutes the “ilee syndrome” of migration as it was forced and involuntary.)

During the second phase, Goans migrated to British India and Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The regular practice of going ‘out’ to urban areas to seek a livelihood has been pursued by increasing numbers of Catholic and Hindu Goans, particularly the

former (Mascarenhas 1990: 242). Once the British left Goa, they began recruiting Goans in increasing numbers, first as cooks, butlers and stewards and then as clerks, accountants and so on. This was the beginning of Goans emigration to the then British India, males being followed soon by females as ayahs, maid servants, governesses and the like (Azevedo 1997: 31). Goans took up the jobs of sailors, stewards and cooks in the passenger and cargo liners on the ships anchored by British India. Women too began to migrate independently, mostly unmarried women or widows from lower classes. They worked as domestic staff in British families, while some took the jobs of nurses and secretaries (Gracias 2007: 107 & Mascarenhas 1990: 245). This can be described as the “flock syndrome of migration” as the “pull” was monetary in nature.

The third phase of Goan migration started in Post – Colonial times in the 1960s as a large number of Goans began to migrate to the Middle East, Europe, America, Australia, Canada and more recently to New Zealand. Goan migration to the Middle East is mainly a post – colonial phenomenon of socio - economic nature (Gracias 2007: 107). There was also a small percentage of migrants to the United State of America and the United Kingdom, most of the latter for higher studies, some opting to stay on and acquire British nationality or rely on the other option they had; to declare themselves Portuguese citizens (Rodrigues 2002: 180 – 181).

### **Geographic and Occupational Mobility: Religion and Class Religion of Migrants**

Christian (Catholic) Goans had a higher geographical and occupational mobility, because of their easy adaptability to any environment, their cultural openness and liberal attitude (GMS 2008: 20). The Goan Christians who were influenced by the Portuguese culture had opted for western dress, food, drinks; social customs etc. became the Britisher’s best choice as no other community of natives in India had assimilated so well the western culture (Rodrigues 2002: 181). Unlike the case of their Hindu counterparts, for Christians there was no restricting bar to cross the kala pani or any prohibitions in their diet and from eating and preparing non – vegetarian food (Albuquerque 2012: 25). Initially, the Hindus did not migrate, probably due to restrictions imposed by caste and traditions (Gracias 2007: 108) and so have been somewhat reluctant to sail due to old religious and cultural prejudices or due to attachment to joint family, bound together by traditional values (GMS 2008: 23).

### **Class of Migrants**

If in the beginning the emigrants were only of the laboring class, like waiters, butlers, cooks, ayahs, musicians etc. later on they were of the educated class (Rodrigues 2002: 180). Goans who have migrated to the Gulf in the last few decades belong to all classes of society. In the early stages of post colonial migration, a majority of those who went to the Middle East were Christians, underprivileged and from old conquest talukas (Gracias 2007: 108) but of late Hindus are also seeking careers abroad. While in the beginning emigration was confined to only people taking up jobs on board ships as ‘seaman’ mainly in the saloon wing, now it has increased in respect of the white-collared class as well, with clerks, teachers, domestics and helpers going abroad, especially to the Gulf countries (Gomes 1996: 362 - 363).

### **Migration of Men as a Way of Life in Goa**

There are many villages in Goa from which a considerable number of male members have sought jobs overseas. They live away from home, leaving behind members of

their family in their village. Employment abroad is a symbol of high prestige and connotes some prosperity. Working overseas, the emigrants have invested money at home in building fashionable houses in the village (Gomes 1996: 360). This has given rise to emulation and imitation of the success stories by visiting migrants by those aspiring to go abroad and thereby raise their status.

This suggests that people consciously plan their migration well in advance, acquire the appropriate skills, cultivate and nurture relevant contacts etc. to achieve their aims. In other words, it is possible that people can be proactive rather than reactive with respect to migration or that migration from a geographical area may start off by being largely reactive but subsequently become proactive (Mascarenhas 2011: 9).

#### **Present Scenario of Migration: Dual process of 'into' and 'out' of Goa**

The assimilation of Goa into the Union of India led to heavy influx of other Indians into Goa (Rodrigues 2002: 181). Further, extensive construction activity has resulted in the massive inflow of migrants into Goa from other states (Gracias 2007: 112). There are hardly or rather only a handful of Goans who can do jobs of carpentry, tile fitting, masonry, plumbing etc. Thus, when man-power is not easily available locally, migrant labourers come in and it is difficult to find young skilled people as they mostly go to the Gulf States or take up jobs on ships. This is because "the social acceptability" of the job is important to Goans.

While outsiders from other parts of India come to settle in Goa they demand higher wages, the better educated Goans are moving to the bigger metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore. Also many Goan students go to pursue their studies in Pune which is considered as an education hub and later also choosing to settle there after getting employment. Many who can afford go to Europe, Canada, Australia and even United States of America to make their fortune.

Now let us examine the popular rhetoric/sentiment prevalent here. On the one hand while many of our youth look at careers abroad or on ships more lucrative, many migrants feel that coming to Goa is more lucrative. Gone are the days when our own Gawdas and Kunbis would do such jobs. Though we may be opposed to migrants entering Goa, the ground reality is that while our youth seek careers abroad, migrants look at construction sites and other works as their gateways of entering Goa. 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. Migration leaves behind a vacuum 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 threatened. Post liberation, successive governments introduced various self employment schemes and small scale industries. In spite of the numerous opportunities many continue to opt to emigrate.

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

In the last couple of years many Goans have surrendered their Indian passports on obtaining Portuguese citizenship and on an average around 600 persons per month are applying for a Portuguese passport. The youth dream of going to Portugal as they can then easily go to any of the European countries.



Many Goans express concerns about the migrant influx and how it can destroy the unique fabric of Goan society. The Goa government is pursuing the matter of granting 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 in order to conserve the limited land resources available for development and to ensure that the state preserves its unique identity. There is a deep concern that Goa's identity is getting diluted, however, it is Goans themselves who were selling off their land and migrating abroad.

### Conclusion

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. Also the negative perception and derogatory attitude towards migration and migrants has changed considerably. Thus, 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 considerations the benefits to be accrued compared to the earlier venture into the unknown, exotic faraway lands with a prayer on the lips and hope in their hearts. Now technology has simplified the entire procedure and eased the process of migrating to another land. Further, the migration wave has affected the 'New Conquest' talukas as well, whereas earlier it was mostly confined to the 'Old Conquest' talukas. Also the destinations chosen by a migrant have varied. Now we have professionals who choose to work and subsequently settle elsewhere. Women too migrate independently without inhibitions.

This paper began with examining the culture of migration existing in Goa which began more as a survival strategy to either escape conversion, terror of Inquisition and later due to socio - economic reasons such as unemployment and education prospects, highlighting the various trajectories of movement during different phases revealing the past trends and culminating in the present scenario of acquiring a Portuguese passport which entails a sacrifice of surrendering the Indian citizenship. Voices of protests have risen, however, they seem faint in the larger region of ideas of 'achievement' and 'progress' that are associated with the much coveted Portuguese passport.

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