THE TAIL WAGS THE DOG?*

COLONIAL POLICIES OF CONVERSION AND HINDU RESISTANCE THROUGH SYNCRETISM AND COLLABORATION IN GOA, 1510-1755**

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> There are a great many heathens in this kingdom of Goa.... Some of them are very honoured men with large fortunes; and almost the whole kingdom lies in their hands.... They have beautiful temples of their own in this kingdom; they have priests or Brahmans of many kinds. These Brahmans are greatly revered throughout the country.... They are clever, prudent, learned in their religion. A Brahman would not become a Mahommedan (even) if he were made a king.

Thus wrote Tomé Pires about the Hindus of Goa in the second decade of the sixteenth century. A quarter of a century later the scene had changed. The beautiful temples suffered destruction, the priests were banished from the islands of Goa and many a brahmin now accepted the religion of his Portuguese masters for administrative positions and pecuniary gains. The policy of religious persecution also led to the emigration of Hindus, the 'flight' of their deities and also direct resistance offered by them through non-payment of taxes and the use of violence. In the following pages an attempt has been made to argue that there was another kind of resistance that was offered by the Goans to the Portuguese policy of evangelization: to the Lusitanian cross through syncretic practices followed by the convert community and to the evangelist pursuits of the colonial regime by the Hindu elite through crucial commercial collaboration and involvement in the revenue administration as well as diplomatics of the *Estado da India*.

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* Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese in the Bay of Bengal* (OUP, New Delhi), title of Chapter 7, pp. 137-57.

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The battle for religious hegemony was fought through symbols on both sides. Although direct violent resistance was occasional in nature, the Hindus had not been cowed into submission. Instead, the Portuguese brand of Lusitanized evangelization, advanced through coercive methods, invited a Hindu response of "everyday resistance" and "avoidance protests" even when they had ostensibly succumbed to the pressures of proselytism, by accepting baptism or emigrating. How was this achieved?

The Goan diaspora culture is characterized by a periodic return to the roots, to their gods in Goa (rooted in the concept of *devak aylla*, or "have come to seek the blessings of our family God"). Gods, it is said, did not protect the Goans, rather the people saved their deities by shifting the idols to safer locales across the rivers. Incidentally, the transportation of the deity on logs of wood tied together or on canoes tied up in a similar fashion (known as *sangodd*) is even today celebrated by Hindus and Catholics alike (with the latter associating the festival of *sangodd* with festive celebrations in honour of St John and St Peter). The profits earned by the Hindu elite through their collaboration with the Portuguese were poured into the reconstruction of the temples of the migrant deities outside the reach of the missionaries, in the Antruz *mahal* (the present-day Ponda *taluka*) in particular. The Portuguese soon found their Christian Goa encircled by an arc of resurrected temples towards the construction of which they had indirectly contributed! Hence the third Provincial Council of 1585 resolved to request the King of Portugal to pass a decree banning the construction of temples by Hindu residents of Goa on the "other side" (*outro bando*). The vibrant presence of the temples right across the river encouraged the converts to continue with their resistance to the Lusitanian Cross, the resistance of syncretism as it were. Missionaries refer to such resistance (as also the direct opposition that was offered to their activities) as "the devil at work" for they were devoid of a mindset that was willing to accept other religions and cultures and also an acceptance that God could and did work in socio-cultural settings other than the European Roman Catholic one.

This was like a second triumph of the axe (or a *reconquista*?), both in its economic and religious contexts. If centuries ago, the *Gaud Saraswat Brahmins* (hereafter *GSBs*) had established their economic hegemony over Goa through the colonization of the low-lying saline *khazan* lands, now with renewed grit and determination, in the face of an aggressive proselytizing European colonial presence, they seem to

have 'captured' the two symbols of Portuguese colonialism, the sea and the cross. Dispossessed of the lands that they had developed, the *GSBs* assumed a controlling position in the coastal trade and further 'axed' the cross with the continuance of Sanskritic practices amongst the converts and the triumphant dotting of the Portuguese borders with temples.

"The Devil at Work" or The Axed Cross?

> Even where new customs and beliefs fully replace the old in the course of change, the deeper premises and values of the traditional culture may continue to shape a people's world view and orientation to life.
>
> - Roger M. Keesing

Cultural synthesis in the face of colonial subjugation exposes not only the capacity of the colonized to adapt to oppression, but also underlies the complexity of the cultural integration that has taken place. This is very true of Goa where, in spite of the historical influence of Christianization and Lusitanization, there is an underlying common Goan culture and identity. Goan culture may be approached from: (a) the "*Goa Dourada* – Rome of the East" viewpoint; (b) the "Konkan Kashi"[1] counterpoint which speaks of the need for recovering and emphasizing the 'real' Indian Goan culture which was suppressed by the 'denationalizing' policies of the Portuguese, that is, an Indocentric "*ghatward*-looking" image; and (c) the *Goa Indo-Portuguesa* argument which states that "the Indo-Portuguese encounter has resulted into a kind of cultural metabolism".[2] Before we proceed further, it would be pertinent to comment on the *Goa Dourada-Goa Indica* paradigm of viewing Goan culture.

Goa Dourada-Goa Indica

This paradigm, suggested by Caroline Iffeka,[3] may be adopted to study the colonial impact on the Goan society. The *Goa Dourada* (Golden

1. This view contends that Goa had possessed in the past, before the evangelist onslaught of the Portuguese, considerable spiritual value for the Hindus of the Konkan region for whom and other Indians, it had served as an important place of pilgrimage, comparable with Kashi, a Hindu holy place situated in north India.
2. Verissimo Countinho, *Education and Development in Goa* (ICSS, Rome, 1987), p. 174.
3. Caroline Iffeka, "The Image of Goa", in T.R. de Souza, ed, *Indo-Portuguese History:*

Goa) component of this image essentially stresses on the much-touted thesis that Goa is culturally and emotionally Lusitanian: "The transplantation of the West into Eastern lands, the expression of Portugal in India".[4] The 'gold' of *Goa Dourada* refers not only to the sixteenth-seventeenth century glitter of the churches and the commercial prosperity of the City of Goa, but also to its being European – the "Rome of the East" possessing a "distinctly Portuguese flavour".[5] This has been a most compelling image for those Goans who believe that "theirs is a special land – not an Indian land but of India, not Hindu but really Catholic, a tiny piece of Catholic Portugal transplanted onto tropical soil".[6] Goa is projected as an European 'limpet' clinging to the west coast of India. In fact, the Portuguese have even been credited with coining the name Goa to rhyme with Lisboa, the capital city of Portugal, despite epigraphic evidence that speaks of the antiquity of this name.[7]

Goa Dourada is thus an outward-looking, seaward image, symbolizing the thalassocratic and the "extended *reconquista*" nature of the *Estado da India* with distinct Eurocentric and Christocentric dimensions.[8] The Indian base of the land and its people is summed up in *Goa Indica*, an essentially "*ghatward*-looking" mode of cultural expression which seeks religio-cultural and economic affiliation to mainstream India, lying across the Western Ghats (mountains) that separate Goa from it. However, in spite of its essentially Indian base which will be further elaborated in this article, today – more than forty years of existence as an integral part of India notwithstanding – Goa, the tourists' paradise of the country, is being advertised as a coastal pocket of Portuguese culture. Such an emphasis on Goa's cultural 'uniqueness' as stemmed from the Latin associations of its colonial past

Old Issues, New Questions (hereafter *IPH*) (Concept Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1985), pp. 181-95.

4. A statement attributed to Salazar, in T.B. Cunha, *Goa's Freedom Struggle* (Dr T.B. Cunha Memorial Committee, Bombay, 1961), p. 455.
5. Geoff Crowther et al, *India – A Travel Survival Kit* (Lonely Planet Publications, Victoria, 1984), p. 559.
6. Caroline Iffeka, op. cit., p. 182.
7. This territory was known as *Gove* in the twelfth century and Goa during the Vijayanagar rule. Sarto Esteves, *Goa and its Future* (Manaktalas, Bombay, 1966), p. 116. Also see, H. Yule and A.C. Burnell, ed, *Hobson-Jobson* (John Murray, London, 1903), p. 37 and Gerald Pereira, *An Outline of Pre-Portuguese History of Goa* (hereafter *OPPHG*) (Gerald Pereira, Vasco da Gama, 1973), p. 52.
8. It has been described as a "remarkably resilient ideology transplanted onto Indian soil by a Southern European civilization struggling for long against the Moors and an interventionist Castille". Caroline Iffeka, op. cit., p. 181.

is not of recent origin. While India's former Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had spoken of the "separate identity" given to Goa by "the course of History", the Portuguese dictator, Antonio d' Oliveira Salazar, was vehement in his assertion that Goans were "the Europeans of the East". The latter had refused to liberate Goa on the grounds that "... more than four centuries of life in common... of inpenetration of cultures...have created a thoroughly differentiated type" in Goa who "try as you may...cannot be confused with a native of the Indian Union".[9]

It is true that the centuries-long colonial sway of Portugal did leave its stamp upon the Goan way of life. The question that is being addressed to in the *Goa Dourada-Goa Indica* paradigm is to what extent did this acculturation take place? Was it assimilation or the transplantation, rather imposition, of an alien culture upon a colonized people in keeping with Portugal's spirit of *reconquista* and Counter-Reformation?

The contribution of the *Dourada* image to the denaturalization and subsequent 'denationalization'[10] of the Goans has been argued out by Tristão Bragança Cunha, the eminent Goan freedom fighter, thus:

> The Westernised habits imposed on Goans through the inquisitorial ways of the Holy Office and other means...endeavoured at their mental submission.... This forced Westernisation only sought to denationalise and to prepare submissive servants fit only for subordinate occupations.[11]

The Indian-Lusitanian, Hindu-Catholic background has thus created a common Goan identity in spite of the existence of two religious communities which exhibit distinct, and often described as opposite, modes of cultural expression (the 'seaward' *Goa Dourada*, and the '*ghatward*' *Goa Indica*). This is reflected in the sentiment of *niz goenkar*, a common, uniting Goan worldview, produced, among other things, by "commonly shared symbols and rituals". The impact of the colonial

9. Salazar's address delivered to the nation on 12-4-1954. Franco Nogueira, *Salazar* (O Porto, 1977-1985), Vol. IV, p. 87.
10. Verissimo Coutinho, op. cit., p. 17. The concept of denationalization can thus be described as "a historical process designed to systematically destroy the inherent culture of a people, and thereby render them either culturally bankrupt or as aliens in their own lands".
11. T.B. Cunha, op. cit., p. 96.

state-sponsored "cultural engineering"[12] on the popular culture was, thus, not an unidirectional influence of converting Goans to Lusitanian Roman Catholicism, but an interaction which cast the Goan social ethos in its present syncretic mould.

Since in Goa the word of Christ was spread with the use of force, it was not fully understood and appreciated by the convert community to whom the ritualistic practices of their forefathers continued to have meaning in their lives. Hence, although Christians were forbidden from having any social intercourse with Hindus, as business partners and friends, and even to converse with them,[13] such 'promiscuity'[14] continued, causing considerable anxiety to the authorities of the Goa Inquisition. Thus, Roman Catholicism, as the latecoming 'intruding' religion, had to adapt to the existing beliefs and rituals. This has resulted in making the Catholic and Hindu transcendental/ textual and pragmatic/ non-textual aspects of the Goan ethos intricately woven into a syncretic culture that is visible even today.

As there was little understanding of the new religion, ritual practices of the pre-conversion Little Tradition continued, with the objects of devotion now situated in the Christian Greater Tradition. This is visible in the annual ritual cycle of the lower castes. While gods (the Christian trinity), spirits and ghosts (*bhuts* and the family dead) feature as personal powers of their religious world, the impersonal powers of spells, evil eye, black magic had to be dealt with by 'specialists' through breaking of coconuts and sacrificing cocks.

The Christian Little Tradition therefore stressed the worship of saints, souls and the Blessed Mother and practices like penances, processions, indulgences, passion plays (rather than the liturgical service), external symbolism of crosses (the wayside crosses bedecked with flowers), images, holy pictures, richly decorated churches, music, dance and drama, throwing of colour, bursting of crackers, penitential procession for rains...the list is endless! The enculturation-socialization practices of the people also continued the centuries-old attitudes of fatalism, familism and factionalism at the level of the village.

12. T.R. de Souza, "Goan Culture and Identity, Historically Speaking", *Boletim do Instituto Menezes Bragança*, No. 162, 1991, p. 57.
13. Paiva Manso, ed, *Bullarium Patronatus* (Lisbon, 1872), App. Vol. I, p. 33.
14. *APO, fasc.* VI, *supp.* ii, p. 95.

With evangelization becoming the *leit-motif* of Portuguese rule from the mid-sixteenth century, entire villages were at times converted to Christianity. The functions of the *gramadevata* (village deity) – of ensuring, for example, a bountiful harvest – now came to be appropriated by the parish church with the costs being defrayed by the *gaonponn*, as in the past.[15] The syncretic dimensions of theogony, visible particularly in the *Santeri-Shantadurga-Milagres* worship, and in religious festivals like the Hindu *zatras* and Catholic feasts, must be examined not only as cross-cultural meeting points between the two religions, but also as statements about the resistance offered by the Hindus as has been discussed above.

"In the beginning was the Earth Mother...the original creator". As in the rest of the country, in Goa too, "people usually turn to female deities to be healed, to assure an abundant harvest or for relief from all kinds of physical and spiritual suffering". The worship of the mother-goddess is a distinct dialect in the Goan ritual language, Hindu and Catholic. The *shakti-pitha* image of Goa continues in the convert community with the worship of local forms of the Virgin Mary, the Saibin Mai of the Goan Catholics.

Shantadurga, the all-powerful female deity, the earth mother as it were, is cast in the mould of the Holy Mother. Through Shantadurga the mother goddess and the Virgin Mary are linked. For example, *Santeri*, which had already assumed the Sanskritic *avatar* of Shantadurga, was now Christianized into Our Lady of Milagres, the only Christian female deity in the local Hindu legend of the seven sisters.[16] The destruction of their temple of Santeri can thus be said to have been resisted by the Hindus through the 'conversion' of Milagres Saibin, whose church was located on the site of the destroyed temple.

In addition to this, there are succouring forms of the Virgin Mary like Our Lady of Milagres, Our Lady of Good Health, Our Lady of Cures that attract the devotion of both Catholics and Hindus alike. Incidentally, in the Bassein-Bandra region of the former Portuguese Province of the North, there is a popular belief that even if Christ does

15. The most famous example of this is the annual harvest festival of the village of Taleigaon in Ilhas, which is celebrated by the church with the blessing of the first sheaf of the new crop.
16. M.S. (Mariano Saldanha?), "O Culto Cristão entre os Hindus", *O Heraldo*, Nova Goa, 24-7-1912.

not answer one's prayers, the Blessed Mother (cast in the traditional mother-goddess mould) would assuredly never disappoint!

Some Christian families continued to venerate their pre-conversion *kula* and *gramadevatas* like Damodar of Zambaulim, Kamakshidevi of Shiroda, Shantadurga of Fatorpa and Bhagavati of Mayem who makes an annual visit to her original home in Chimbel, as also the deities of the Little Tradition like the *rakhanno*. They not only subscribe to rituals like *prasad* (divine intercession) but, in some temples, enjoy certain votive privileges, at times in precedence over the Hindu devotees.

A mention has already been made of the Goddess Shantadurga-Cuncollekarin of Fatorpa. With the suppression of the revolt of Cuncolim in 1583, Shantadurga, the principal deity of Cuncolim, was shifted to the neighbouring village of Fatorpa. In spite of this, the martial spirit of the Cuncollekars may be said to have triumphed for even today this deity is worshipped by some Catholic families despite periodic clerical bans on the latter's faith. After her flight from Cuncolim, Shantadurga is said to guide her followers in their dreams!

Syncretic worship is most notably exhibited in the *zagar* of Siolim and the *mell* of Baradi. The cross of Our Lady of Baradi, a syncretic version of the Baradkarin, the female deity of the Hindu Little Tradition, is sacred to the *mell* celebrations as also places of Hindu, Christian and Islamic worship. An attempt to trace the ethnogenesis of this community through its living archives is replete with references to the Baradkarin, the Sanskritic Pandavas, the Muslim *Pasha*, European *Paklo*, Chatholic *Goencho Saib* and finally, the liberation of the territory.[17]

The *zagar* of Siolim, a night-long dance-drama based on continuous narratives, is performed on the first Monday after Christmas. One of the twelve traditional *zagars* of Bardez, banned by the Inquisition and reinstated through public demand in 1865, is an occasion for Hindus and Catholics to seek the blessings of not only *zagaryo*, the deity of the Little Tradition, but also *Santeri*, *Ganapati* and the Holy Trinity. The modes of worship differ with the Hindus making offerings of coconut oil and the Catholics lighting candles, but the faith is one.

17. Bernadette Gomes, "Ethno-medicine and Healing Practices in Goa: the Kunbi Case", Ph.D. thesis in Sociology, submitted to Goa University, 1993.

The transculturalism of the *nav-hindu gaudde* (converted to Christianity in the sixteenth century, but returned to the Hindu fold early this century through *shuddhi* or the purification ceremony) exhibits social and ritualistic features of Hinduism and Catholicism with equal ease. Today, they use both European as well as Indian names, and, in some families, celebrate Christmas and *Ganesh Chaturthi* under the same roof.

The traditional Goan caste system was integrated into Christianity in spite of its tenet of universal brotherhood of man. The marginalized castes within the traditional Hindu social hierarchy accepted the new religion with hopes of social and economic upliftment, while the elite caste groups did so with a view to protect their lands, privileges and even status. The missionaries who meddled furiously with local customs in a bid to weed out 'paganism', were apparently helpless to eradicate casteism which characterizes the Catholic Goan community even today.[18] Their caste as well as *gaonkari* status constituted the official identity of the converts,[19] indicating a kind of resistance that they offered even after conversion and also probably the divide and rule policy of the colonial rulers.

Thus, syncretism has produced a common meeting point between the Hindu and Catholic communities of Goa in matters of devotion and ritualistic practice. While requests for miraculous cures, *prasad*, vows, offerings, temple feasts, local festivals of the Little Tradition, primacy in ritual status, the worship of pre-conversion *kula-* and *gramadevatas* draw a section of the local Catholic community to Hindu temples, miracles, vows, church feasts are responsible for a reciprocal gesture on the part of the Hindu community. St Francis Xavier, for example, is *Goencho Saib*, the patron saint of Goa, for Catholics and several Hindus as well, and way-side crosses, bedecked with garlands of flowers, attract the devotion of the faithful from both the communities. These crosses, often located at accident-prone zones, are considered to be the Catholicization of the local tradition of appeasing the spirits of those who had met 'bad' untimely death – the *khetro* (the spirit of a young man who met with a fatal accident) and the *alwantin* (the spirit of a woman who died during her pregnancy).

18. Adelyne D'Costa, "Caste Stratification among the Roman Catholics of Goa", *Man in India*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (October-December 1977), pp. 283-92.
19. In official records they were identified as *bragmane* or *bragmane e gancar*, as the case may be.

The once-holy sites that suffered destruction at the hands of the Portuguese and subsequent conversion into Catholic places of worship, too, attract devout Hindus. Mention may be made of the Hindu participation in the feast of Our Lady of Candelaria on the site of the destroyed sacred Hindu shrine of Saptakoteshwar on the island of Divar. Similarly, the site of another destroyed temple, the Holy Spirit Church, Margão, attracts the devotion of the Hindu brahmin *gaonkar* Ghode family in its liturgical services.

Syncretic influences are also visible in the religious art and architecture of Goa, with Hindu and Christian artisans being involved in the construction and decoration of each other's shrines.[20]

In the context of the recent socio-economic transformation of Goa – the emergence of a political culture which is unscrupulous in its misuse of language, religion and caste; the presence of regional variants of the policies of *Mandir* and *Mandal* (referring to the increased communal and casteist politics that reign supreme in India today); the carnavalization of Goan culture for touristic gains; the emergent Goan-*bhaylo* (non-Goan) tension; and the consequent crisis of Goan identity – a search for such syncretic aspects of Goan culture located in the Little Traditions of both Hinduism and Christianity becomes a meaningful assertion of the common identity of Goans. However, historically, in the context of forced conversions, such syncretic practices can be regarded as forms of resistance offered by the Hindu community to Christianization, by appropriating the Catholic 'replacements'; and to Lusitanization, by continuing with some of the customs of their forefathers.

As has been discussed above, the temples "across the river" that provided Goan Christians with opportunities to offer "everyday resistance" of a syncretic kind were built by *GSBs* with profits earned through trade with the Portuguese. Thus, it may be said that another manner in which the Hindus warded off the threat of conversion was through initiating a practice of the collaborative commerce with the Portuguese as has been elaborated in the following paragraphs.

20. The employment of Christian masons in the construction of Hindu temples in Ponda was reported to the king by a Jesuit missionary in 1712. *APO*, *fasc.* VI, p. 142.

You cannot have the Goods of both the World and Religion!

> You cannot have the goods of both the world and religion!
> When deprived of the former, you cannot acquire the latter
> - Sharaf al-din Yahya Maneri[21]

In the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, deprived of "the goods of the world", the Portuguese adopted the ideology of *nay virra kachi kulaikkatu*[22] (that money is unconcerned with the means through which it is obtained) and compromised with their religious policy to acquire wealth through the agency of the Hindus. On the other hand, *GSBs*, *vanias* and *shets*, with the bargaining power of "the goods of the world", obtained concessions from the *Estado* and retained and "acquired religion", so to speak, even in the flight of their deities as has been argued earlier in this article.

Given Portugal's meagre population when it launched its search for "Christians and spices", it is obvious that the conquest, administration and expansion (both territorial and commercial) of its 'shoe-string' Asian empire[23] would not have been possible without indigenous aid. Its empire-building enterprise in the East was not a creation of the Lusitanian genius alone, but a collaborative effort, especially in the commercial arena. This is exemplified by Goa, where Hindu commercial, administrative and diplomatic inputs served as the 'pillars' of an empire[24] which was otherwise seeped in religious intolerance.

The coercive and enticing instruments of proselytism ought to have wiped out the Hindu presence from the Goan soil. Did this really happen?

The seminal contributions of Pissurlencar, Pearson, D'Souza and Scammell – all refer to "Hindu collaborators", "indigenous dominance",

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21. Words of the medieval Indian Sufi saint, Sharaf al-din Yahya Maneri, *Letters from Maneri – Sufi Saint of Medieval India*, tr. by Paul Jackson (New Delhi, 1990), pp. 285, 307, as quoted in Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ed, *Money and the Market in India, 1100-1700* (OUP, New Delhi, 1994), p. 22.
22. Tamil proverb which means that money from the sale of a dog does not bark (money is unconcerned with the means through which it is obtained), ibid., p. 4.
23. C.R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825* (Hutchinson, London, 1969), p. xi.
24. G.V. Scammell, "The Pillars of Empire: Indigenous Assistance and the Survival of the '*Estado da India*', *c.* 1600-1700", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 1988, pp. 473-89.

and "Hindu dominance" of the colonial economy.[25] Did the Portuguese seaborne empire really rest on "the cooperation, or at least acquiescence, of its native population"?[26] If so, did the entire Hindu population come under the purview of this policy of collaboration, or just an elite few? A closer examination of such indigenous inputs reveals the nexus between colonial rulers and the Hindu elite, with the rest of the population being subjected to the fury of the evangelization drive.

Pearson has stated that despite discrimination, "Hindus held an important place in the Goan, and indeed the Portuguese Indian economy".[27] The decrees which debarred non-Christians from administration and commerce were not scrupulously implemented with regard to those who rendered service to the Indian Ocean trade as brokers and as commercial agents of Portuguese officials, raised loans for the *Estado* and were awarded government contracts despite the 1595 ban on the same.[28] This was also in contravention of the 1567 proscription on monetary dealings between Christians and Hindus. The latter seemed to have convinced the Portuguese, through the sheer control that they wielded over the economy, to side-step the Church-induced persecutory legislation.

In fact, it was inevitable for a small country like Portugal which had ventured to operate in alien tropical waters, to seek local collaboration in order to augment its commercial gains. The arrival of

25. P.S.S. Pissurlencar, "Agentes da Diplomacia Portuguesa na India (Hindus, Muçulmanes, Judeus e Parses)" (Governo Geral do *Estado da India*, Bastora, 1952); idem, "Agentes Hindu da Diplomacia Portuguesa na India I, Cotthari", *O Oriente Português*, No. 5, 1933, pp. 1-46; idem "Servidores Hindus do *Estado da India*: Seculos XVI-XVIII", *Defesa Nacional*, Lisbon, *ano* XVI, No. 187, November 1949, pp. 126-30; idem, "Migalhas da Historia da India, I, Colaboradores Hindu de Afonso de Albuquerque", *BIVG*, No. 49, 1941, pp. 22-42; G.V. Scammell, "Indigenous Assistance in the Establishment of the Portuguese Power in the Sixteenth Century", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 14, No. I, 1980, pp. 1-11. G.V. Scammell, in John Correia-Afonso, ed, *Indo-Portuguese History: Sources and Problems*; M.N. Pearson, "Indigenous Dominance in a Colonial Economy: the Goa Rendas, 1600-1670" (hereafter "Goa Rendas"), in J. Aubin, ed, *Mare Luso-Indicum* (Librairie Droz, Geneva, 1973), *tomo* II, pp. 61-73; T.R. de Souza, "Glimpses of Hindu Dominance of the Goan Economy in the Seventeenth Century", *Indica*, Vol. 12, No. I, March 1975, pp. 27-35; idem, "Mhamai House Records: Indigenous Sources for Indo-Portuguese Historiography", *Actas* (Instituto de Investigação Cientifica Tropical, Lisbon, 1985), pp. 933-47; and G.V. Scammell, op. cit.
26. "Goa Rendas", p. 73.
27. Ibid., pp. 61, 63.
28. Ibid., p. 62.

the Portuguese in the waters of the Indian Ocean did not dislocate the local merchants who, on the contrary, used their wherewithal to expand their commercial activities. While Hindu merchants were "verie rich... verie cunning and naturally subtill...", Goan Christians and the Portuguese lacked the requisite capital, skills and contacts. Albuquerque had complained about the "commerce-unworthiness" of his factors, and decades, and even centuries later, things did not seem to have changed much; when they raked in profits through private trade, it was courtesy Hindu middlemen.[29] Since merchants from the convert society were few in number, and their own countrymen being devoid of requisite contacts and entrepreneurial skills, the Portuguese actually encouraged Hindus to trade in a bid to dislodge the Muslim hold over Asian commerce.[30]

Hounded by fervid evangelization which made serious encroachments on their rights in land, several *GSBs* took advantage of the new business opportunities and established themselves in business and trade.[31]

Who were the *GSBs*? According to the *Sahayadri Khand* of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, which chronicles the *GSB* migration to and achievements in Goa,[32] the *GSBs* constitute the *saraswat* branch of the *panch gauda* brahmins of north India. They had migrated to Goa from the region of the Saraswati river.[33]

The Parasuram legend symbolizes the process of the creation and the agricultural development of the unique ecosystem of Goa, the low-lying, reclaimed coastal *khazans*, through the agency of the brahmins. The reclamation and development of the fertile *khazans* had created a

29. Bulhão Pato, ed, *Cartas de Affonso de Albuquerque* (Lisbon, 1884), Vol. I, pp. 404-05; Boxer, op. cit., p. 327.
30. In Malacca, for example, the Hindu Tamil-speaking *keling* merchants, like Nina Chatu and Nina Suryadeva, were treated by the Portuguese with friendship and respect. Inducements were offered to attract the settlement of Coromandel Hindus and encourage their commercial forays into the interiors of the archipelago by providing them with armed naval support. Hindu, Muslim and Jew merchants from the Malabar and Coromandel coasts rendered invaluable assistance to the Portuguese in the supply of commodities on credit, advance of loans, renting of ships, business and political intelligence and even, protection. *IPH*, p. 60; Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Maritime India in the Seventeenth Century* (OUP, New Delhi, 1994), p. 49 and *IPH*, pp. 3-7.
31. DAAM, *MR* 58, fl. 365; *MR* 59, fl. 27-28; T.R. de Souza, "Xenddi Tax", op. cit., p. 467.
32. Paul Axelrod and Michelle A. Fuerch, "The flight of the Deities: Hindu Resistance in Portuguese Goa", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 1996, pp. 387-421.
33. S.S. Talmaki, *Saraswat Families* (S.S. Talmaki, Mumbai), p. 1.

regional coastal society characterized by the administration of their lands within the village communities through coparcenary cooperatives, the *gaunponns* (later christened *communidades* by the Portuguese) and the *mahazania* management of temples of the traditional brahmanical deities as well as of the 'Parasuised' or sanskritized versions of the deities of the Little Tradition.

Control over both these institutions was assumed by the *GSBs* who established their hegemony over the economic resources and socio-ritual practices of the coastal society. The *khazan* lands were developed through the institution of the *bous* controlled by the *GSBs* who also administered the temples and their assets through managing committees or the *mahazanias*.[34]

In the village communities, land was owned in common by the *vangodds* (clan lineages) of *gaonkars* (descendants of the original settlers of the village) who were chiefly *GSB*. The majority Hindu community was divided into the traditional *jati* system, with its accompanying ascriptive codes of socio-ritualistic behaviour and economic occupations. In this heterogeneous social set-up, norms of restricted commensality and endogamy were rigidly adhered to. Any transgression from tradition invited social opprobrium and even ostracism.

The profits accruing from the cooperative coparcenary cultivation of land were divided among the *gaonkars* as *jono* which even today (or rather, especially today, in the context of the surfacing *goenkar/bhaylo*, Goan/non-Goan, tensions) is an important constituent of the Goan identity. The 'Parasuisation' of this society enabled the *GSBs* to establish their hegemonic control over the institutions of land and the temple, typifying sustenance and faith. Thus, as *gaonkars* and *mahazans*, the *GSBs* controlled the *gaunponn* and *devasthan* (the temple) to establish themselves as the dominant caste in Goa in 1510.

Initially, on account of their fluency in the local languages and customs, the *GSBs* were recruited as translators and revenue-farmers.[35]

34. Refer to: D.D. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality* (Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, 1994 reprint); T.R. de Souza, *Medieval Goa* (Concept Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1970); Rui Gomes Pereira, *Goa*, Vol. II, *Gaunkari – The Old Village Associations* (A. Gomes Pereira, Panaji, 1981) and B.H. Baden-Powell, "The Villages of Goa in the Early Sixteenth Cenury", *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, April 1990, pp. 261-91.

35. *Rendas* were the non-agricultural sources of government revenue like customs duties, port as well as inland, taxes on food shops, on tobacco, spice sales, that were farmed

The profits which revenue-farming earned for the *GSBs* were ploughed into coastal trade, the calling of another's caste. Thus, past positions of "confrontation and separation between politics and commerce" were substituted "by a search for cooperation and interaction".[36]

The Camotim Mhamai (Mhamai Kamat) family typifies the tale of the persecuted *GSBs* who were initially forced to emigrate in defence of their religion, but later returned as revenue-farmers, opium and slave traders, provision-suppliers to the *carreira da India* and the *cabotagem* trade, shipyard contractors, brokers, marine insurers, diplomatic agents and owners of a palatial mansion in the new capital town of Panaji, right next to the viceregal palace, today the seat of the State Legislature. Their economic status enabled them to wield considerable political clout with the Portuguese government.[37]

Brahmin Kamats (Camotims) had in the pre-Portuguese period diversified into occupations other than the traditional socio-religious and political ones; for example, they had taken up the agricultural development of *khazan* lands. In the sixteenth century they took advantage of the new opportunities in trade and business and established themselves in a leadership position in that sector. In spite of their numerical weakness, they commanded wealth, expertise, skills, regional contacts and institutional support (of guilds, caste collectivity, family agency houses and trusts and business 'captains' who negotiated with the Portuguese).[38]

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out by the Crown to the highest bidder for an average period of three years ("Goa Rendas", p. 63, fn. 4). Pearson tells us that for the period 1600-70, the average annual value of all the *rendas*, 344,400 *xerafins*, was a substantial contribution to the state income (ibid., pp. 63-66). This meant that those who controlled a majority of the *rendas* wielded a position of wealth and importance. While the Hindu share of the *rendas* for this period was four-fifths of the total, in terms of value, it was almost two-thirds (*saraswats*, 44.9 per cent, other Hindus, 20.3 per cent and Christians, 34.8 per cent). It may be mentioned that although the average value of a *renda* held by a *saraswat* was less than that of the *chatims* or *shets* (goldsmiths) and the Portuguese Christians in the seventeenth century, the former soon overtook the latter two through their superior business acumen and expertise.

36. Sinnappah Arasaratnam, op.cit., p. 175.
37. T.R. de Souza, "Mhamai House Records", op. cit., pp. 933-47; G.V. Scammel, op. cit.
38. In 1644, the goldsmiths assumed collective reponsibility for each other's work. The Gujarati *vanias* in Goa, Diu and Ormuz had appointed a 'captain' to negotiate with the Portuguese on their behalf. *ACE*, Vol. VI, 131r-132.

Therefore, the Portuguese decided not to expel the local Hindu elite from Goa as they "provide us with all our revenues", but to deprive them of "too much freedom" and their places of worship.[39] Therefore, even dominant *saraswat* families, like the Mhamais, were forced to devise alternative methods of worship like the paper Ganapati that is venerated even today. Similarly, the image of Mahalaxmi, the principal Hindu deity of Panaji, during the course of its 'migration' prompted by Portuguese persecution, was forced to take refuge in the stable of the Mhamai Kamat house. Incidentally, the oral tradition of the Mahalaxmi temple narrates the tale of the dilemma of defending their religion while at the same time pursuing their economic interests that the Hindus encountered during this period.

The legislation that banned non-Christian festivals and ceremonies and destroyed the vestiges of their religion, was not bent to make an exception of Hindu collaborators,[40] though at times concessions were granted to the latter. For example, they were permitted to perform their "abominable practices" on the island of Cumbarjua where, needless to say, a majority of the merchants resided. Interestingly enough, for this reason, the otherwise dreaded and hated *Paulista* (Jesuit) *padre* is venerated as *Shri Paulista* by the Hindu inhabitants of this island![41] As petitions to the government testify, Hindu businessmen used to seek permission for the public performance of their ceremonies which was granted to a wealthy few like Suba Camotim Mamay.[42] Similarly, the exceptions to the 1563 list of Hindus to be expelled from Goa were longer than the list itself and included those whose services were considered to be indispensable to the *Estado* and whose expulsion tantamounted "to destroying the state"![43] Since the Hindus were regarded as being 'beneficial' to the state, the king had even decreed that "they be favoured so that they will be encouraged to keep serving me...".[44] Their dominance of "the commanding heights" of the economy enabled the Hindus to avail of certain privileges reserved for the Portuguese, for

39. DAAM, *MR* 68, fl. 71.
40. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, op. cit., p. 4.
41. T.R. de Souza, "Paulistas in Kumbarjua", *Goa Today*, Vol. XI, No. 7, February 1977, pp. 14, 22.
42. DAAM: loose and unclassified document dated 24-3-1781, *GI*, pp. 118-21.
43. DAAM, *MR* 68, fl. 71.
44. AHU, India, Caixa 5, No. 6; R.A. de Bulhão Pato, ed, *Documentos remettidos da India ou Livros das Monções* (Lisbon, 1880-1935), Vol. IV, p. 18.

example, the right to travel in a palanquin and be governed by the law of the rulers.

Every time the *Estado* was caught in a paroxysm of intense evangelization, the Portuguese, faced with the consequent spectre of economic ruin and administrative disarray, resorted to tactical retreats of legislation with a view to secure the return of the *emigrés*. By 1734, even the king was forced to admit that the Portuguese "cannot live without the Hindus".[45] In spite of legislation that prohibited business deals amongst Hindus and the local converts, the two stood surety for each other. The Municipality also frequently issued licenses to Hindu professionals. Even missionaries employed Hindu artisans to prepare objects of Christian worship although this was banned at that time. In fact, Jesuit priests even furnished Hindu artisans with testimonials with which they applied to the Municipality for licenses. Similarly, Marques de Pombal's ban on the Society of Jesus was not an occasion to celebrate for some of the *saraswat* families who now lost the money that they had lent to the *Paulista padres*.[46]

The relations of the Portuguese with non-Christian Goans were thus marked by a curious paradox. The *Estado da India*, it appeared, was prompted by the crusading spirit of its ecclesiastical character, to 'cleanse' the local society of 'paganism' while availing of the services of the 'heathens' in deference to its commercial and financial compulsions.

However, while the Hindu elite minority could transcend the rigours of proselytism, the subaltern majority who did not possess the bargaining power of the former, either succumbed to the proselytizing pressures of the Portuguese or emigrated with their deities. Hence, at a time when the *saraswat* domination of the Goan economy was at its peak, the total Hindu population of Goa declined.[47] Religious persecution, thus, left the Hindus numerically weak, but economically very potent.

The *mercado* of the City of Goa was controlled by Hindu shop-keepers, brokers and merchants. We have it on the testimony of European

45. APO, Vol. VI, p. 88.
46. AHU: India, Maço 1, doc. 46.
47. This has been argued out by T.R. de Souza in "Glimpses of Hindu Dominance of the Goan Economy in the Seventeenth Century", *Indica*, Vol. 12, No. 1, March 1975, pp. 27-35.

travellers that the *Estado da India* was dependent for its very survival, for food, money, human-power and trade on Hindu merchants who "traffique much" and whose commercial knowledge and skills were held in high esteem by the Portuguese.[48] *Saraswat* brahmins, along with the *vanias* of Gujarat and the *konkanis* of Kanara, partook of a large share of the *cabotagem*/country trade at the port of Goa. They were involved with the trade in essential commodities like rice, as well as supply of cargo to the *carreira da India.*

GSBs and *shets* also provided the Portuguese with troops, ships and crew. Paradoxically, Portugal, whose 'Navigator' Prince had set up a nautical school that had designed the *caravel*, and whose king had assumed the grandiose title of the "Lord of the Conquest, Navigation and Commerce" of the lands of Asia and Africa, was in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries reduced to the state of utter dependency on indigenous non-Christian traders, shipwrights and *nakhudas.*

Conversely, in spite of the destruction of their temples and the ban on their ceremonies, Hindus lived and transacted business in Goa because it earned them richer dividends than enterprise in the neighbouring territory. Hence, when he introduced the *xenddi* tax, the Viceroy was confident that it was not a disincentive to the Hindu merchants in Goa.[49]

The local goldsmiths, *shets* or *chatims* as they are referred to in the Portuguese documents, constituted a powerful economic presence in sixteenth century Goa, for the exquisite expertise of their craft had earned them accolades at home and abroad. Some of them like Raulu Shet,[50] even went to Portugal, worked there for the king, and returned home to their land, religion and caste. Today it is virtually impossible to find a traditional Christian Goan goldsmith, while all the other castes find representation in the convert society. This is probably because the economic power that the *shets* wielded in the sixteenth century enabled them to live and work in Goa on their own terms, or emigrate with

48. Linschoten observed that in Goa as in other parts of the coast, brahmins maintained themselves by "selling of spices and [other] Apothecarie ware (org. Dutch: 'by retail')".
49. T.R. de Souza, op. cit., p. 469.
50. "A Ouriversaria em Goa em 1510", *O Oriente Português*, Nos 3 and 4, 1913, pp. 110-11. Souza Viterbo, "Os Ourives Indigenas de Goa", *O Oriente Português*, Nos 3 and 4, 1910, pp. 65-68. Nuno Vassallo e Silva, *A Herança de Raulu Chantim* (Museu de São Roque, Lisbon, 1996).

their religion left intact. This, then, seems to have removed the *raison d'etre* for embracing the religion of the rulers.

Hindus served as advisors, military captains, diplomats, revenue-farmers, commercial brokers, money-lenders, accountants and interpreters. Pissurlencar has highlighted the role played by Goan Hindus in the diplomacy of the *Estado da India*[51] where they served the political interests of the *Estado* with "unremitting constancy and zeal". These diplomatic agents of the Portuguese government used their standing at the neighbouring courts to further their economic interests or obtained such positions on account of their commercial contacts.

Hindu inputs existed not only in the Portuguese Goan economy, administration and diplomacy, but also lingered on as symbols of resistance in the lusitanized Christian culture prescribed to the converts.

By way of a conclusion

It was in search of God and mammon that the Portuguese had ventured eastwards in the fifteenth century. Later, having established themselves in India, they compromised with God, in dedication to mammon. In this article an attempt has been made to analyse the reactions of syncretism and collaboration offered by the converts and Hindus to Portuguese colonialism in Goa. It is a typical case of "the tail wagging the dog" with the persecuted community refusing to be entirely marginalized. Instead, its elitist sections, deprived of land-owning rights, took to business and trade, in contravention of the traditional casteist demarcation of occupations. They proved their potency in this field, as also in revenue administration and soon established themselves in a position of bargaining power vis-à-vis their European masters.

51. P.S.S. Pissurlencar, op. cit. (see fn. 25 above); G.V. Scammell, op. cit. (see fn. 25 above); and N.B. Nayak, *Gatkalin Gomantakiya Mutsaddi* (Rivona, 1962).