

## Chapter II

# THE EVOLUTION OF *GAUNCARIA* SYSTEM AND A LAND-BASED SOCIO-ECONOMIC ORDER

The socio-economic life of Goa for centuries revolved round the institution of *gauncaria*, which even today continues to exercise significant control over the structure and functioning of Goan society and economy. As an institution, which preserves the vestiges of the age-old practices of communal ownership in the country and as the best representation of village “republics” that once flourished in different parts of the country,<sup>1</sup> *gauncaria* evokes special interest among the historians. This chapter, being the background chapter, makes attempts to see the evolution, functioning and structure of *comunidade* system, which the Portuguese converted as the best institution for resource-mobilisation and rural-management in agrarian Goa after their conquest of this geographical space in 1510.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter attempts are made to see how *gauncaria* system evolved in Goa and how this communal ownership system turned out to be the part and parcel of Goan life. How far the Portuguese rule from 1510 to 1750 tried to preserve the *comunidade* system, when village communities disappeared from other parts of the country? Was this indigenous institution used as colonial instrument for rural-penetration and surplus extraction? In fact this chapter looks into the agrarian economy

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Sir Henry Maine opined that the village *comunidades* in India existed in one form or the other in various parts of India, but gradually disintegrated except in Goa where they survived the rule of successive rulers and still continue to occupy a unique role in the economy of Goa. Vidal De La Blache. “Village Community”, in R. A. Seligman (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 15. New York: the Macmillan Company, 1963, pp. 253-259; also see Daniel Thorner, *The Shaping of Modern India*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1980, pp. 257-272.

<sup>2</sup> Philippe Nery Xavier, *Defensa...* pp. 28-32.

and society centered on the institution of *gauncaria*, which is more a purview of its evolution, structure and function all through its history up to 1750.

### **A. Evolution of *Gauncaria* System**

It is the geophysical features of Goa that made its production activities, particularly the agrarian ones, revolve on communitarian basis. The origin and development of *comunidade* system is understandable only against the backdrop of the physical environments and the eco-systems of Goa, which played vital role in its formative phases.

#### **1. Goa and its Eco-Systems**

Along the western seaboard of India stretches a long strip of land known from time immemorial as the Konkan coast with seven divisions. Goa, which is the heart of this region and is sandwiched between Maharashtra and Karnataka<sup>3</sup>, is located in the centre of the west coast of India within the latitudes of 14° 53' 57" N and 15° 47' 59" N and the longitudes of 73° 40' 54" E and 74° 20' 11" E. Sandwiched between the Sahyadris (Western Ghats) on its eastern boundary, and the Arabian Sea on the west, Goa measures an area of about 3701 sq. kms.<sup>4</sup> Goa is blessed with a salubrious, sub-tropical, monsoon type of a climate. It is equable and humid all round the year. Goa gets rain both from the

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<sup>3</sup> Olivinho J.F. Gomes, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

South-West monsoon as also from the North-East monsoon. South-West monsoon brings rain from June to September, accounting for 90% of Goa's annual precipitation. North-East monsoon lashes Goa in October-November, bringing at times thunderous showers.

The average annual rainfall in Goa is between 2500mm to 3500mm. However, different regions receive varying amount of rains. For instance, while the annual average for the coastal belt is about 2500 to 3000mm, the villages bordering the Sahayadri region get an annual average of 3000 to 5000 mm.<sup>5</sup> Moderate rains coupled with the fact that high precipitation is limited to few months, have led to the developments towards the cooperative mode of life among the early settlers to use the limited water resources efficiently. Collective efforts were required to erect dykes and embankments in low lying areas and to make terraces on the hills of central uplands. This cut at the speed of the water flowing down the hill and helped to preserve and utilise to the maximum possible extent the limited water sources for the expanding agrarian activities. Tanks, ponds, lakes springs and wells, whose initial significance was determined by their communitarian usage by the early settlers, were considered as common property of the village and served to carry out efficient water management on the one hand, and on the other prevented ground water level from going down.

Occasionally, Goa is affected by cyclonic disturbances, which arise either in the Arabian Sea or in the Bay of Bengal, resulting in strong winds and subsequent outburst of thunderstorms. Goa's physical proximity to the Arabian Sea leads to only slight

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<sup>5</sup> V. T. Gune (ed.), *Gazetteer of The Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*. Vol. I, Panaji: Gazetteer Dept., 1979, pp. 2-3.

variations in the mean daily temperatures ranging from a maximum of 34° to 35° C and a minimum of 25° to 27° C. By and large, climatic conditions of Goa are moderate and enjoyable.<sup>6</sup> The only problem is the high humidity of the region owing to its proximity to the sea. The pleasant climatic conditions are responsible for the Goans developing an affable nature, which was a necessary condition, for preserving the cooperative nature of the village communities i.e., the *comunidades*, over the ages, tiding over many vicissitudes and obstacles that came its way.

Physio-graphically Goa's terrain may be conveniently divided into three distinct zones: 1. The Eastern Sahyadris, 2. The Central Uplands and 3. The Western Coastal Plains.

The Sahyadris on the eastern side of Goa cover approximately an area of 1724 sq. kms., and cover eastern parts of the talukas of Sattari, Sanguem and Canacona.<sup>7</sup> This region has high hills and steep valleys. Agricultural activities were just unthought of in this region. This is testified by the fact that the hold of village communities over these lands is minimal. However the waterfalls of Dudhsagar and Harvalem have changed the fate of Sanguem and Bicholim respectively, by providing water resource, required for agrarian activities, all through the year. This water flowing down the Central Uplands to the Western Coastal Plains, have been ingeniously used by the *gaunkars* of the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> *Western Ghat Region-Goa Sub Regional Plan (Draft)*, New Delhi: Town and Country Planning Organisation, Ministry of Works and Housing, Govt. of India, 1983, p.10

*comunidades* for carrying out agricultural operations, fishing, trading contacts, etc., over the centuries.<sup>8</sup>

The Central Uplands contain many hills with gentle to moderate slopes and long, narrow intermediate valleys. This transitional sub-mountainous region with undulating uplands runs from north to south and stretches across a width of about 20 kilometres, occupying about 35% of the total area of Goa.<sup>9</sup> This region also consists of laterite stones that have been quarried by the *gaunkars* of the region for setting up durable houses either on hill sides or elevated platforms in the plains. Quarried stone and rubble were perhaps used by the *gaunkars* in building dykes and embankments, wells, tanks, etc.<sup>10</sup>

The river valleys of Kushavati, Zuari and Mandovi in the central uplands have been supporting much the agricultural activities of the *gaunkars*. In fact it is this region that witnessed agricultural activity on a communitarian basis. Many springs have their origin in the gullies of this region, feeding an intricate network of rivers and rivulets. This region is also rich in iron deposits. The rock cut carvings at Usgallimal on hard laterite stone and at Kajur on the granite *dudanfator* (milk-stone),<sup>11</sup> make one conclude that the people of the region possessed strong iron instruments as to make carvings on the rock. The availability of rich iron ores in the region seems to have enabled the *gaunkars* to make iron implements and tools, to carry out hectic agricultural operations in these fertile

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<sup>8</sup> This is abundantly clear to anyone who is familiar with the terrain of the region which abounds in water resources that can be used for the purpose of agriculture.

<sup>9</sup> *Report of the Task Force on Eco-Development Plan for Goa*, New Delhi: Govt. of India, Planning Commission, 1982, p 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> This is evident from the extensive field studies undertaken in these areas.

<sup>11</sup> Pratima Kamat, *Farar Far: Local Resistance to Colonial Hegemony in Goa 1510-1919*. Panaji: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999, pp. 10-11.

regions. The later success of the settlers in the Coastal Plains was dependant on the continuous supply of iron tools and implements from the villages in the Central Uplands.

Similarly, the Central Uplands was also the pharmaceutical unit of Goa with its rich biodiversity. The *gaunkars* of these regions had acquired vast knowledge on the curative properties of the flora and fauna. The inhabitants of the region have secretly guarded this knowledge over the centuries. They supplied the required herbs and other medical plants to the inhabitants of the coastal plains. In this way there emerged a strong nexus between the settlers of Central Uplands and Coastal Plains, which was highly indispensable from the point of view of survival.<sup>12</sup>

The Western Coastal Plains cover about 22 % of the area of Goa. The area stretches for a length of 120 km. and has a width varying from 2 to 15 kms.<sup>13</sup> The region consists of long river basins, estuaries, narrow stretches of sandy beaches, lagoons, bays and islands.<sup>14</sup> The Western Coastal Plains perhaps have witnessed the full dynamism of the *gaunkars* who have subjected every bit of available land to diverse agricultural activity. Transformation of this land making it suitable for agriculture was relatively more difficult. Clearance of the tidal forest, preventing saline water from entering agriculture fields as also avoiding flooding of these low lands during times of high precipitation by developing good drainage system. etc., required superior knowledge of nature, the technology to control the same and above all communitarian efforts to succeed

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<sup>12</sup> This is evident from field study of the villages in these regions.

<sup>13</sup> *Report of the Task Force*, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

against all odds. It is mainly in these regions of Goa that one can witness the dominance of the *comunidade* system.<sup>15</sup>

The Western Coastal Plains are also noted for having good ports. The ancient ports of Gopakapattana and Ela are well known for students of history.<sup>16</sup> All weather port of Mormugao as also the seasonal ports of Betul, Terekol, Chapora, Talpona, etc., have perhaps played their role in inviting continuing new immigrants into the virgin lands and supported well the import-export activities of the *gaunkars* and made Goa into a very open maritime society as well.

The nature of the soil varies from place to place depending on various factors as geology, topography, drainage, vegetation and climate. There is laterite, alluvial, red loamy, mixed red and black soil, as also, sandy soils. Soil is protected in many ways by the villagers. The *gaunkars* put up dykes and embankments to prevent soil erosion. Besides they built long and elevated stretches in the middle of the agricultural fields, on which were planted trees to prevent soil erosion as also to supplement their agricultural income.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Filippe Nery Xavier, *Bosquejo Historico das Comunidades ...*, Part 1, pp. 1-4.

<sup>16</sup> These ports have however, been rendered unusable due to heavy deposit of silt in the last few centuries.

<sup>17</sup> The system of division of agricultural fields into elongated plots (*magoll*) and their sub division (*bandhi*) also prevented soil erosion. The grass growing wild during the non-agricultural season also helped to prevent soil erosion.

The coastal belt is favourable for the cultivation of rice.<sup>18</sup> Rice is grown, in the fertile *khazan* land, as also in the highlands (*marad*) where hillsides were terraced to enable optimum use of limited water resources, in well-drained alluvium *ker* lands, and in the high, forest-encircled *Kulne* lands.<sup>19</sup> The not so fertile *barad* lands, which are, however, rich in minerals, have been utilised by the *gaunkars* for the cultivation of secondary crops as *nachinni* (millets), and, pulses like *kulith*, *urd*, *mung*, etc. Besides, every bit of available elevated land in the Coastal Plains have been utilised for having the plantation of coconut and mango trees. Similarly, the valleys with perennial natural springs in the Central Uplands have been utilized for having coconut and arecanut plantations.

## 2. Peopling of Goa and the Corporate Way of Life

Goa has been inhabited since time immemorial. The vast grasslands of Goa might have attracted the *dhangar* or the *gonvlli* Community of shepherds. This seems probable on the basis of the etymology of the name 'Goa', which is said to mean the place that abounds in the wealth of the cows. Crawford holds the view that "the early inhabitants of Goa seem to be the *dhangars* who descended from the Ghats ..."<sup>20</sup> The *dhangars* are, in fact, concentrated in the foothills of Canacona, Quepem, Ponda and Sanguem taluka of

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<sup>18</sup> Production of rice in the low lying *khazana* lands has always been much higher than in the highlands (*marads*). This is due to the fact that while the *khazana* lands have abundant supply of water they are also rich in alluvium soil brought down by the monsoon rains every year.

<sup>19</sup> Pratima Kamat, "Historical Geography and Natural Resources" in Teotonio R. de Souza (ed.). *Goa through the Ages*, Vol. II, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1990, pp. 27-28.

<sup>20</sup> A. Crawford, *Legend of the Konkán*. p. 25, as partially quoted in J. A. J. Da Costa. *History of Goa*. Vasco: 1982, p. 25.

Goa.<sup>21</sup> In fact the *gonvlli* community has an important place in the peasant society of Goa<sup>22</sup>, as they seem to have shown the way to the later settlers. If it is accepted that Goa denotes abundance of wealth in the form of cows, then, it may also give some clue to the first agricultural settlers. The early settlers, who started agricultural activities, seemed to have followed the tracks of the *gonvllis* and grazing cattle in the grasslands to find the best fertile soil for cultivation. Large hordes of cattle required abundant supply of water and areas with thickly grown grass indicated fertility of the soil and availability of perennial source of water in the vicinity. The peasant communities, who followed the *gonvlli*, could easily subject the pasturelands that have been overgrazed and abandoned by the shepherds, for cultivation with the application of appropriate technology. The movements of *gonvlli* showed the way to sources of fresh water in the form of lakes, ponds, and springs that were later on used for agricultural purposes. It is here worth-noting that the link between the pastoral group of *gonvlli* and the peasant group of the *gaunkars* continues even today as is evident from the common property set aside for the shepherds, where the latter are free to graze their cattle without any hindrance from the *gaunkars*. It very often happens that now the land left in common for grazing cattle is more than the land-space that is subjected to cultivation. Besides, the cattle of the *gaunkars* are placed in the caring hands of the *gonvlli* during the farming seasons on nominal payment. Moreover the *gonvlli* supplied milk to the villagers as also the much-needed organic manure in the form of compost. Regular intake of milk gave to the villagers the much-needed proteins and the organic manure helped to maintain the productivity of the soil. However, though the *gonvlli* were one of the first to be in Goa,

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<sup>21</sup> Hrishikesh Mandal, "Dhangar", in K.S. Singh, P.P. Shirodkar and H.K. Mandal (eds.), *People of India, Goa, Anthropological Survey of India*, Vol. XXI., Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1993, pp. 70-75.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

they are *gaunkars* of not a single village. This is because of the fact that *gauncarias* are village communities of agriculturists that led settled life. On the other hand, the *gonvlli* by virtue of their profession as shepherds had developed semi – nomadic habits.<sup>23</sup>

It is generally accepted that the establishment of the village communities i.e., *gauncarias* is much before the entry of the Aryans and Marathas in Goa.<sup>24</sup> And as agricultural activities succeeded pastoral way of life round the world, it may safely be concluded that the *gonvllis* were the pioneers of agriculture, who ushered in settled life in Goa and established the Village Communities. George Moraes opines that Goans have lived in Village Communities from times immemorial.<sup>25</sup>

### 3. The Arrival of the Settlers

#### a. Gaudas.

Gaudas, who are the aborigines of Goa, are considered to be the first settlers of the land. They are currently divided into four categories: Kunnbi/Velip, Konkonn Gaudde, Kunbis/Gaudde (Christians), and Nav Hindu Gaudde. Their way of life, culture, modes of dress, food, rites and rituals of the four groups are almost similar and it is evident that they are of the same racial stock.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>24</sup> Rui Gomes Pereira, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>25</sup> George M. Moraes, "Presidential Address" in P.P. Shirodkar (ed.), *Goa's Cultural Trends*, Panaji: Directorate of Archives, Archaeology and Museum, 1988, pp. XXI-XXXII.

As per one tradition, the Gaudas are so called as it was considered that they had come from the Gauda Desh. However the origin of the term Gaudas has been linguistically traced to *Ganv*, which means village.<sup>26</sup> The exclusive use of the surname or family name *Gaunkar* both by Hindu and Christian Gaudas<sup>27</sup>, makes one believe that they were the founders of quite a few villages in Goa, which is also suggestive of their role in developing the *gauncaria* system in Goa.

Some scholars have ascribed the etymology of the word Gauda to a colloquial language once spoken by them, which is now extinct.<sup>28</sup> Certain words and phrases used exclusively by them also perhaps point fingers towards that direction. For instance, a male elder is addressed to as *ga*, a married woman as *ge*, and a young girl as *go*. These colloquial pronouns are used widely in rural Goa. Analysed against this backdrop, the etymology of Goa may also be traced to the process of subjugating this young virgin land of Goa, addressed as *go* (like a virgin girl) by the elders of the Gaudas, addressed as *ga*. Hence, one gets the name Goa.

The Gaudas are said to belong to the Munda section of the Astroid race.<sup>29</sup> And they are supposed to have migrated from South East Asia to Assam, Orissa, Bengal, Kerala and Goa.<sup>30</sup> The Gauda folklores give no indication as to where they came from.

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<sup>26</sup> V. T. Gune (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 233.

<sup>27</sup> Vinayak Vishnu Khedekar, *Loksarita* (Marathi), Panaji: Kala Academy, 1993, pp. 43-44. The Nav Hindu Gaudes were reconverted to Hinduism in 1927-28 under the initiative of Musurkar Maharaja whose Ashram was in Bombay.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Mahadevshastri Joshi, *Bhavatiya Samtrii Kosh*, Pune: Barratry Sanskriti Kosh Mandal, 1985, Vol.II, pp. 798-799.

<sup>30</sup> Subodh Kumar Biswas, "Hindu Gauda". in *People of India Goa*, p. 100. Some scholars have linked them to the Gauda Community of Bengal. In support of this they cite few customs and terms used by them which

They also do not remember where from they had migrated and from which direction.<sup>31</sup> However, in all probability the Gaudas came not by sea route, but by land route via the Ghat region as is evident from their life-style. The Gaudas have even now no boat maker amongst them, and, they neither engage in fishing nor consume fish in large quantities. However, they say that they are being called Gaudas as they reside in interior villages of Goa.<sup>32</sup> The Gaudas are found in the Central Upland Regions of Tiswadi, Ponda, Canacona, Bicholim and Quepen talukas of Goa.<sup>33</sup> The talukas of Satari and Sanguem also have substantial Gauda population.<sup>34</sup> The demographic distribution of Gauda community in these parts of Goa attests to the fact that they came via the Ghat region. Furthermore, in the past they used to have their huts on the eastern side of the hills,<sup>35</sup> possibly to prevent their thatched huts from being blown away by strong winds. Or this could be indicative of the route they came from.

The Gaudas might have been hunters, initially, as is evident from some of their rites and rituals. For example, in some villages, their *Kul-devatas*, which are mostly shapeless stones, are occasionally smeared with blood of slain cocks and goats. The Gaudas are non-vegetarian, but do not consume beef and pork. This could be due to the influence of Hinduism, as also more of Buddhism and Jainism, which had a strong

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are similar to the Hindus of West Bengal, such as, *nabanna* (first rice harvesting and taking ceremony), *paush sankranti*, worship of Durga and animal sacrifice in their own Mahadev (Shiva) temple.

<sup>31</sup> Subodh Kumar Biswas, *op. cit.*, p.100; Also see, K.C. Malhotra, "Micro – Evolutionary Dynamics Among the Gaudas of Goa." in R. J. Meier, C. M. Otten and F. Abdel (eds.), *Evolutionary Models and Studies in Human Diversity*, Hague: Mouten Publishers, 1978.

<sup>32</sup> Subhodh Kumar Biswas, *op. cit.*, 100.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>34</sup> Vinayak Vishnu Khedekar, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

presence in the interior regions.<sup>36</sup> However, wild boars were and are still hunted down and eaten with relish. Hunting was done by using the bow and arrow,<sup>37</sup> which indicates that the Gaudas had fairly good knowledge of iron. Old iron weapons are worshipped by the Gaudas in many of the villages. The use of iron tools and weapons might have helped the Gaudas to be the initiators of agriculture in Goan region. The Central Uplands and the Ghat region abound in numerous wild animals and birds. It must have been the abundance of wild fauna that might have attracted the Gaudas to settle in these interior regions. Hunting requires cooperative efforts and the Gaudas developed cooperative nature in order to survive and grow in numbers. This cooperative nature later on became more evident with the increasing practice and dependence on agriculture.

It is generally believed that the Gaudas introduced into Goa, a variety of crops as rice, coconut, areca nut, plantains, black pepper.<sup>38</sup> They also cultivated *nachni*, *tur*, *kulith*, etc.<sup>39</sup> Their staple food is rice, which was consumed four times a day in different forms till a few decades ago, and the same supplied the Gaudas with the required carbohydrates to carry out hard physical work, throughout the day, which began at 5 O'clock in the morning with the first chirping of the birds. The day ended with the daily meetings at the community square (*mandd*) with discussion amongst elders, singing folk songs, etc. The same fostered community feelings among the members of the village. The Gaudas initiated and practised *Kumeri* (burn and shift) cultivation, which marked the

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<sup>36</sup> Buddhism was widespread in this region as indicated by the discovery of the headless Buddha in one of the nearby fields in the vicinity of a natural cave at Rivona, which was used by the Buddhists. Similarly a Jain temple was discovered at Cudnem. The later excavation by the Archaeological Survey of India at Chandor has indicated the presence of a Jain temple on which later on a Hindu temple has been built.

<sup>37</sup> Vinayak Vishnu Khedekar, *op. cit.*, p.46.

<sup>38</sup> V.T. Gune, *op. cit.*, 234; Subodh Kumar Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>39</sup> Vinayak Vishnu Khedekar, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

beginning of agricultural operations in Goa. It is here worth-mentioning that the same form of cultivation was carried out even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the forested areas of Satari and Pernem.<sup>40</sup>

*Kumeri* cultivation signifies the shift of the Gaudas from hunting-gathering stage to settled life concentrating principally on agriculture. Man is noted for studying the intricacies of nature and imitating the same for mutual benefit. Initially, fire that broke out accidentally in the forests trapped and killed many wild animals, thus, making available to the Gaudas, large quantities of meat. Thereafter, the Gaudas probably used the same method of setting fire to the forests, which was full of dry foliage and grass to convert them into *Kumeri* lands, which in Kannada language would mean virgin, unploughed and uncultivated lands. They were created after denuding the jungles of trees. Such lands were there in several villages, among which Kumarmol in Collem is the most prominent. Burnt forested areas were then cleared of the wooden stumps that were used for making huts. The cleared area was made ready for cultivation of rice and other cereal crops. Carrying out *Kumeri* type of cultivation in the hinterlands of Goa was advantageous in many ways. The forests provided the Gaudas with timber and stumps for building huts and twigs to fence the agricultural fields. Moreover, the average rainfall near Ghats is almost double to what is received in the coastal areas. Similarly, the average number of rainy days is more in the eastern parts of Goa than in the Coastal Plains.<sup>41</sup> Thus, heavier rainfall spread over a longer period, helped the Gaudas to get assured returns.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 43-48.

<sup>41</sup> V.T. Gune, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

Moreover, animals like wild boars and deers that destroyed the standing crops, as also birds, were hunted down, and helped to supplement the diet of the Gaudas. However, crops like areca nut and coconut plantations that require regular supply of water round the year, made the Gaudas move towards springs, ponds and lakes. They dug up wells at the foothills and began to construct tanks. This becomes evident when one visits the rock-cut carving on the banks of river Kushavati at Usgallimall. P.P. Shirodkar states that the socio-economic as well as politico-ethnic history of an area can be reconstructed with a fair measure of accuracy by carrying out adequate research on the village and place names.<sup>42</sup> Usgallimall signifies a large field prepared by putting fire. This refers to the *Kumeri* type of agriculture, which was practised here. The large-scale concentration of Gauda-population in this area makes one conclude that the Gaudas were the initiators of *Kumeri* cultivation in this area, besides the etymology of the place name.

Continuous water supply in the form of rivers and rivulets, as also springs, ponds and lakes, might have prompted the Gaudas to burn the potential agricultural fields, so as to clear it of wild weeds, but the shifting process, slowly declined.<sup>43</sup> And the Gaudas started settling down and forming the villages, with which began the process of adding the titles of *gaunkars*.

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<sup>42</sup> P.P. Shirodkar, "Etymology of Village and Place Names of Goa," in *People of India Goa*, pp. 209-242

<sup>43</sup> Till today the *Gaudas* follow the method of cutting the wild grass that grows and burning it in the fields. Whereas in the coastal areas the method followed was totally uprooting the wild grass (*mugill*) and dumping the same on the elevated land-rows (*vollir*) which are there in the middle of the fields at regular distance

Villages like Van in Sattari Taluka, as also Shelvan, Santon, Rivona etc., indicate their connections with the forests.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly all these villages with the prefix or affix van (forest) were set up in the midst of the forests, within the natural boundaries, and centring on agricultural fields. There are other places as Malpan (Cotorem – Sattari), Monzonn (Curtorim), Volvonem (Tivim), Talpanem (Shiroda), Talpon (Canacona), Sarvan (Carapur), etc.<sup>45</sup> Most of these places are inhabited chiefly by the Gaudas. All these make us conclude that the Gaudas were the founders of *gau (ganv)* and *gauncaria* in Goa and the early formation of villages extended from the frontiers of forests on the eastern side to the Central Uplands. Gaudas are found in large numbers in villages like Carambolim, Chimbél, Nagzari, Odshel, Curca, Naushe, Caranzalem, Vadevle, Madkai, Kundai, Veling, Priol, etc., covering a protracted geographical space touching the fringes of Coastal Plains. At many places in Goa, the Central Uplands have jugged into the Western Coastal Plains, offering to the Gaudas an opportunity to settle there, bringing additional, new type of lands under cultivation and also engage in new occupation. In this fashion there are the villages of Betul, Britona, Batim, etc, that were inhabited by a large Gauda section on the Western Coast of India. At other places where they have large population, there are Gauda vaddas in Cumbarjua, Calangute, Tirrem, Navelim, Corgaon, Morgim and Mandrem. Velipvadas also exist in Balli-Adnem, Caulem, Curdi, Neturlim and Culem villages of South Goa.

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<sup>44</sup> P.P. Shirodkar, "Etymology of Village and Place Names of Goa," p. 219.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

Gaudas who established their first settlements were known as Gaunkars.<sup>46</sup> These Gaudas had the traditional right of exclusive occupation of land, both agricultural and non-agricultural, including the forested areas and grasslands. Such *gaunkars* could be from Gauda or Velip Community. The feeling of being the pioneers of settlement and ownership of *Gaun* is seen in their use of surnames as *gaunkars* and their Vaddes were also named as such. The Gaunkarvadas, also known variously as Gaunsabhat, Gaunsavada, Gaunchem-Bhat, Gaothan, and Gaunvada, could be traced to villages as Chodan, Cavambolim, Azossim, Mandur, Batim, Merces, Curca, Camurlim, Assanora, Varca, Siolim, Queula, Bandora, Velinga, Boma, Betque, Verem-Vagurbem, Curti-Khandepar, Betora, Nivankal, Usgaon, Advalpale, Mayem, Vainguinim, Arvalem-Virdi, Cudem, Navelim, Velguem, Pilgan, Mulgaon, Shirgaon, Dhargal, Tamboshem, Tuem, Malcornem, Deo, Varca, Mause, Cotombi – Chaifi and Dharbandoad.<sup>47</sup> The above discussion makes it amply clear that the Gaudas were the first founders of *Ganv* and *gauncaria* in Goa.

What was the need for such cooperative behaviour on the part of the Gaudas? As of hunting, the successful carrying out of agricultural operations requires acquisition of vast knowledge of the intricacies of nature. It is a known fact that the Arabs studied the phenomenon of monsoon winds to sail via the Arabian Sea to the shores of India. The monsoon winds were also studied by the early inhabitants as is clear from the naming of the different phases of the monsoons during the year. Precipitation differs in quantity and quality in these different phases, thus affecting agricultural production. That stars were

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

watched and observation on nature was carried out is evident from the rock cut carvings at Usgallimall where many stars and constellations were carved.<sup>48</sup> Even today when the Gaudas carry out agricultural operation in their fields, their talk mostly revolves round the different phases of monsoonal winds. Thus understanding the forces of nature and utilizing the said knowledge for community benefit might have compelled the *gaunkars* to form co-operative units. The attempts to keep the operating costs minimal might have also compelled the *gaunkars* to form co-operatives. For instance, optimum use of available water, both of rain water in the terraced fields on hill sides, as also from natural and artificial reservoirs like springs, tanks, ponds, wells, lakes, etc., was possible only with the help of cooperative effort, among the founder settlers, which was followed uninterruptedly by succeeding generations. Effective water management saved for the *gaunkars* much time and energy, that was most valuably utilized for bringing additional land under settlement and cultivation. As has been mentioned, the forested areas provided for easy availability of stumps and twigs for carrying out fencing. Common fencing reduced the cost and effort for the *gaunkars*.<sup>49</sup>

Similarly, common threshing and winnowing grounds, etc, went on to keep the operating cost to the bare minimum thus making available for each *gaunkar* a larger share of profit in the form of dividends that were divided usually amongst each (*jonn*) of the twelve elders (*barazann*). *Barazann* is named after the twelve ancestors who founded the agricultural village and inhabited it for the first time. In fond memory of these elders

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<sup>48</sup> One can see at Usgallimall petroglyphs of objects like the spear and the harpoon, human figures and the local fauna such as the zebu bull, the deer, the antelope, wild goat and deer, etc.

<sup>49</sup> F. L. Gomes, *A Liberdade da Terra e a Economia Rural da India Portuguesa*, pp. 17-20; José Maria Teixeira Guimarães, *As Comunidades Indianas Das Velhas Conquistas – Projecto de Reforma*. Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1885, pp. 7-9.

there exist places as Barazan in Surla and Usgaon. At other places with due respect to their pioneering role in founding settlement they are worshipped in the form of twelve stones buried in front of temples like Sristhal in Gaondongrem. They were also worshipped in temples as well as in villages like Chodan, Panelim, Chicalim, Dabolim, Davorlim, Mormugaon, Nagoa, Pale, Vaddem, Naroa, Poirra, Alorna, Chandel and Neturlim.<sup>50</sup> In Gauda populated village of Kajur, in an agricultural field in front of the local Paikdeo temple, lies a big, oval granite stone surrounded by a circle of stone “seats”, about four meters in diameter, referred to by the local people as the venue of panchayat meeting of the *Barazann* in the past.<sup>51</sup> These places, in all probability, could be the ones where the village community council, i.e., the *gaumponn*, met to decide about the matters concerning the welfare of the *gauncaria*.

*Gaunkars* also formed themselves into co-operative units for the purpose of defence against wild animals that infested and destroyed the fields. The wild boars that are ferocious and deadly were a constant threat to the standing crops. Dealing with this menace required co-operative effort on the part of the *gaunkars*, who set out at night-time with fire torches and armed with bow and arrows, to hunt them down. Even today the Gaudas set out in groups to hunt the wild bears and eat with great relish the dish prepared from the game. The rock cut carvings at Usgallimall have many carvings of wild boars with hunting marks on it, pointing possibly to the fact that agriculture had made a beginning here.

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<sup>50</sup> P.P. Shirodkar, “Etymology of Village and Place Names of Goa,” p. 234.

<sup>51</sup> Pratima Kamat, *Farar Far...*, pp. 10-11.

The *gauncarias* might have also been formed as defensive units against encroachment by the neighbourhoods. It is commonly held that *cott* means fortification and one can detect such fortifications in the place names as cotta in Chandor-Covorim, Cottamorod in Cuncolim, Cotta in Davorlim-Dicarpale, Cottar in Cansaulim – Cuelim and Cotta in Velim.<sup>52</sup> Many of these places have substantial Gauda inhabitants, which is suggestive of the fact that the early settled-agriculturists resorted to some sort of protective arrangements carried out by them collectively.

Gauda life and culture is run on a communitarian basis. All the members of the community, with no sex and age bar, participated in the socio economic activities. For instance, while the men folk toil on land to eke a living out of it, the women contribute in no fewer ways towards the same. The children pass the day looking after the cattle, collecting the fruits and nuts, from the wild, thus, ensuring the family with the daily requirements of vitamin and proteins in the form of fresh fruits and nuts.<sup>53</sup>

Communitarian way of life is also evident in the ownership of village land. The village land is owned jointly by the village and placed in the hands of village deities like Bali and Bhima. Many of them worship Mallikarjun at Canacona. Their family deities (*kul-devatas*) include Mahalsa, Kamakshi, Betal, Shivaikar, Folkar, Shantadurga, Mahadev, Boma, Kamaleshwari, Nagueshi, Lohanai, Nava Durga, Mahalaxmi, Chamundi, etc.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> P.P. Shirodkar, "Etymology of Village and Place Names of Goa," p. 238.

<sup>53</sup> Extensive field trips to the areas dominated by the Gaudas make one to come to such a conclusion.

<sup>54</sup> V. T. Gune, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

Female deities predominate among the Gauda communities. Probably, the Gauda communities were, for all purposes, not patrilineal societies, as the worship of mother goddess in the form of fertility cult was widely practiced in the areas which are inhabited now by the Gaudas. Their women enjoyed no inferior position in the family and society, which is also evident from the various practices regarding marriage and wedding ceremonies amongst the Gaudas. Moreover, the wife inherits moveable property after her husband's death among the Gaudas. And when she dies, the property is shared equally between sons and unmarried daughters. As far as the land holdings are concerned it may be noted that only the produce is equally shared among all members of the village, because the land belongs to the *kul* or clan as a whole.<sup>55</sup>

#### **b. Entry of New Groups**

Goa has a caste called Mithgavde or Mith Gavdas, who were engaged in manufacture of salt. The Mith Gaudas claim to be higher than the Gaudas/Velip in the social hierarchy and belong to the Kshtriya Varna.<sup>56</sup> They are found mostly settled in Pernem block of North Goa district. Though the Mith Gaudas are not of the same racial stock as the Gaudas/Velips, their history is significant. Firstly, according to the Mith Gavdas, 'Gauda' means a village and therefore the villagers who are salt-makers by tradition are called Mith Gaudas. The Mith Gaudas are distinct from the Gaudas, who were the first settlers. What is significant is that the later settlers in Goa all preferred to be called as Gaudas. For instance, in later times somewhere around the beginning of the

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<sup>55</sup> Subodh Kumar Biswas, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>56</sup> Hrishikesh Mandal, "Mith Gauda," in *People of India Goa*, pp. 163-166.

Christian era, when the new Brahmin settlers arrived they preferred to call themselves as Gaud Saraswats. It is true that until a few centuries ago the Saraswats stressed more on their being called as Gauds than on being addressed as Saraswats and thus also perhaps wanted to be identified as founders of villages.<sup>57</sup>

Second, panning salt along the Arabian Sea coast was possible only through a co-operative effort on the part of the villagers. Besides, the villagers had to learn to control the flow of salt water in and out of the saltpans. Dykes and embankments served the purpose admirably. Well-maintained dykes and embankments are the lifelines of the agricultural community that settled along the Western Coastal Plains. The settlers of these plains i.e., the *gaunkars* mastered the technique of regulating the flow of salt water during tides from the Mith Gaudas. Once this technique was mastered, then large tracts of land was made available to the *gaunkars* of these regions for successfully carrying out agricultural operations. It may also be mentioned that these saltpans, called *mith-agors* in Konkani, also served another purpose. They offered to the inhabitants of the region a good catch of fish, which at times when the water is too less could be caught even with bare hands. Similarly, even the *khazana* lands are breeding grounds for fresh water fish and can be just collected in plenty in the months of August – September, by just draining the fields of the excess water. This abundant availability of fish, in these regions, explains as to why the inhabitants of Coastal Plains including the Saraswat Brahmins consume fish both fresh and dried in large quantities. In the initial years of settlement, when experiments were on to transform low-lands that were inundated by salt water into

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<sup>57</sup> In some villages like those of Verna and Margao in Salcete taluka the respective *comunidades* were composed exclusively of Brahmin *vangores* (clans) to the exclusion of other communities.

*khazana* fields, the rice bowls of Goa, it was fish that saved the Brahmins who have moved over from Saraswat regions to the Coastal Plains of Goa from extinction. Fish was available in abundance in the coastal belt and might have been the important diet of the settlers on the coast. At a later period, when rice became the staple diet, fish continued to be the unavoidable part of the Goan food.<sup>58</sup>

#### **4. Settlements along the Western Coastal Plains:**

Though there is a large section of Gauda population in the Coastal Plains, especially along the hillsides, the remaining population conveniently categorizes themselves as Brahmins, Kshatriyas (including Christian *Chaddes*), Vaishyas and Sudras (*Sudhirs*). The Brahmins and the Kshatriyas claim descent from the Aryan and Maratha stock. It is not certain as to when and from where these northern people, migrated into Goa. However, they preferred to concentrate on the vast Coastal Plains, which then remained as almost abandoned and unattended areas by the early settlers, despite the fact that some of the settlements of the Gaudas touched upon the fringes of this region.<sup>59</sup>

The Kunbis and Gaudas were followed by the Aryans and Marathas or *chaddes* (as they are called in Goa) into the virgin Coastal Plains. The origin and migratory routes and patterns of the Aryans have been well researched and theorised upon. Some scholars

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<sup>58</sup> This is clearly evident from the food habits of the people along the coastline in Goa as of today. *Nit-coddi-rice* is the favourite of any Goan and he cannot do without the same for more than a few days.

<sup>59</sup> This is also evident from the demographic and settlement pattern of the people in the villages along the coastline specially in the Old Conquests region of Salcete, Bardez, and Ilhas.

have placed the Aryan migration to Goa as late as 1100 A.D.<sup>60</sup> It can safely be presume that the Aryans were here around the beginning of the Christian Era<sup>61</sup> and that the Aryans did not arrive at just one point of time but there were different successive waves of migrations into Goa.<sup>62</sup>

## 5. Early places of Habitation and Cultivation of the Aryans

D.D. Kosambi and Teotonio R. de Souza state that the Brahmins usurped the rich estuary lands, pushing lower caste Kshatriyas (the *Chaddes*) into less productive coastal and hilly areas. Indeed Brahmins predominated in the general assembly of the village communities before the arrival of the Portuguese and even thereafter.<sup>63</sup> The Parashuram legend throws light into the problems connected with the entry of the Brahmins into Goa. Parashuram is said to have shot an arrow that is supposed to have struck at Banauli (Benaulim) in Salcete taluka of Goa. P.P. Shirodkar, states that before the arrival of the Portuguese Banauli was known as Baneli derived from *Banvalli* or *Banhalli* i.e. a village

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<sup>60</sup> Gururaj Bhat, *Studies in Tuluva History and Culture*, published by author, 1975, p. 240, as partially quoted from V.R. Mitragiri, "Cultural Contacts of Goa with North and South India", in ed: P.P. Shirodkar (ed.), *Goa's External Relations* (Seminar Papers), Panaji: Rajhauns Vitaran, 1992, pp. 13-21.

<sup>61</sup> Rui Gomes Pereira, *op. cit.*, pp 10-11; Also read, R.G. Bhandarkar, *Early History of Dekkan*, Vol. 1. 1884, p. 47. Bhandarkar opines that the first batch of the Saraswat Brahmins arrived in western India at about the 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Based on this the advance of the Aryan into South Konkan is fixed to the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century B.C.

<sup>62</sup> B. G. D'Souza, *Goan Society in Transition: A Study in Social Change*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1975, p. 14. Also see, N.K. Wagle, "The History and Social Organisation of the Gauda Saraswat Brahmins of the West Coast of India," in *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XLVIII, Part I & II, Sr. Nos. 142 & 143 Trivandrum: University of Kerala, 1970, pp. 7-25 and pp. 297-333. Here it is said that though the first migration was from Bengal to Goa, bringing perhaps the Rice cultivation into Goa, it is opined that subsequent migrations might have been directly from Kanauj in North-West India to Goa.

<sup>63</sup> D.D. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1962, p. 169; Also see, T.R. de Souza, *Medieval Goa*, pp. 56-58; Filippe Nery Xavier, *Bosquejo Historico das Comunidades*, Part II, Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1852, pp 24-25. Brahmin-Kshatriya and Brahmin-Chadde rivalry was evident even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

covered by forest.<sup>64</sup> Benauli which is lapped by the waters of the Arabian Sea was surely covered with tidal forests. Clearing these tidal forests required stronger weapons and the axe (*parashu*) served the purpose adequately. Secondly, as the legend goes, Lord Parshuram is said to have shot an arrow to create a new land from the high mountains. This clearly indicates that the route adopted was initially the land route, same like the ones used by the Gaudas in coming to Goa. However, there might have been no conflict between the Gaudas and the Aryans. The Gauda folklore which has a lovely and piquant humour does not contain any memories of any bitter class conflict or the link of any lingering memory of times when their lordship over the land was cruelly deprived of by later immigrants.<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, multiple explanations regarding the origin of the first settlers (i.e. the *gaunkars*) in different villages, as indicated by the various folklores, spontaneous and distinct, vouch for more than one set of original settlers.<sup>66</sup> Multiple roots of the original settlers is also indicated by the fact that though Konkani is spoken by all Goans, the different intonation in its accent is enough to tell from which part of Goa and villages one comes from. Moreover, the Gaudas who had inhabited and well settled on the hillsides of Goa might have happily allowed the later immigrants to occupy the then inferior lands along the Coastal Plains. The Coastal Plains were considered as inferior then because of the following reasons: These areas were fully under forests cover. These forests were the wet tidal forests and could not be burnt down for having *kumeri* cultivation and could not have been useful for any productive purposes. Thus the Gaudas perhaps had nothing to loose in happily allowing the later immigrants in occupying the hitherto unoccupied lands in the Coastal Plains. The migrating Aryans possessed strong

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<sup>64</sup> P.P. Shirodkar, "Etymology of Village and Place Names of Goa," p. 214.

<sup>65</sup> Antonio Mascarenhas, *Goa from Prehistoric Times*, Vasco, 1987, p. 20.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

weapons, like the axe (*parashu*), did clear the lands of the tidal forests and put up embankments and constructed dykes to regulate the flow of salt water during tides. In this way they succeeded in cultivating the *Kharjan* (salty lands) and changed them into *Khazana* lands (i.e. wealth producing fields).

The arrival of the Brahmins is significant to Goan history in many ways. The historical period of Goa can be said to begin with the arrival and settlement of the Brahmins into this territory, as there are written sources only from this period onwards. The various land grants given to the Brahmins in the form of Copper plates have been the earliest source materials to reconstruct the agrarian as well as political history of the Goa region. These grants also supply us with a rich information on the settlements pattern of the Brahmins and their relation vis-à-vis the state up to the arrival of the Portuguese.

#### **6. Grant of *Khazana* Lands to the Brahmins**

The Bhojas, who ruled over Goa from 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. onwards, were the first known rulers of Goa and they had made grants to various people including the Brahmins. For instance, the king Devaraj in his Shiroda copper plate gave some tolls from the village Thanniyarka kottiha kayya to two Brahmins namely, Govindswami and Indraswami along with house sites and pasture land for cows. The village has been identified with Thana in Cortalim of Salcete Taluka.<sup>67</sup> Similarly a grant of Bhoja king Prithivimallavarman, found at Bandora in Ponda Taluka, refers to the grant of a field

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<sup>67</sup> P. S. S. Pissurlencar, "Goa Ha 1500 Anos", in *O Oriente Portuguesa*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, No. 6, pp. 392-99; also refer to, *Epigraphica Indica*, XXIV, p. 143; *Epigraphica Indica*, XXVI, p. 337; and, *Epigraphica Indica*, XXXIII, p. 61.

surrounded by blue hills from a village Bhagala-pallika to a Brahmin Madhavarya of Agrivahya Gotra.<sup>68</sup> Another grant of Prithivimallavarman issued from Prithiviparavato, identified with the Parvat part of Chandor, records the grants of a field named Kapoti Khajjana situated in village Malar, to a Brahmin Damarya of the Bhardwaja Gotra.<sup>69</sup> What is significant is that this happens to be the first known grant of *Khazana* land to Brahmins. Such grants would follow later giving the Brahmins a control over the prime rice producing area of Goa, leading to the emergence of the Saraswats as a dominant force in the socio-economic life of Goa. In later times the Brahmins would prefer grant of *Khazana* lands as is evidenced from the grant of Bhoja king Kapaljarman issued from his camp at Pause-Kheteka and which records the grants of the Pukkoli – khajjana from the village Sivapuraka to Swamikaraja for religious purpose as required by the latter. Swamikaraja in turn made over the same *khazana* fields to a Brahmin Bhavarya of Kaundivya gotra with libation of water so that merit might accrue to him.<sup>70</sup> On the whole the Bhoja kings seem to have taken a very keen interest in the development of agriculture by granting marshy lands on the seaside (*Khazana*) to the Brahmins and others, who in turn converted them into cultivable lands with collective efforts.

## 7. Land-Grants and Expansion of Agriculture

Mauryas of Konkan who ruled over Goa from the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century A. D. were noted for their land grants to the Brahmins. The Shivapur plate of the king

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<sup>68</sup> V.T. Gune, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>69</sup> *Epigraphica Indica*, XXXIII, pp. 61-65.

<sup>70</sup> *Bombay Gazetteer*, Vol. I, Part II, p. 288; also see. *Epigraphica Indica*, XXXI, p. 232: see *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. VIII, p. 161.

Chandravarman, records the donation of some land to the Mahavira i.e. monastery situated in Shivapur (Shiroda). The boundaries of the land grants are specified in the charter.<sup>71</sup>

Similarly, the Bandora plates issued by Maurya king Anirjitavarman from Kumardvipa i.e. Cumbarjua in Tiswadi Taluka, is addressed to the inhabitants of twelve village desh, as well as present and future officials. The king granted one *hala* of Khajjana land, a house-site, garden and a tank to a Brahmin Mastarya of Hariti Gotra. Moreover the Brahmins were also granted land that is to be reclaimed by clearing forests with the help of four batches of workers. The donee Mastarya was to enjoy the produce of the land by putting up a bund to prevent the salt water from entering the field on the seashore. Further the gifted land was free from payment of all taxes.<sup>72</sup> This grant is significant in many ways. Not only was *khazana* land allotted but also residential area with rights over the adjoining tank. Bamanwadas i.e., hamlets or wards of exclusive Brahmin residential areas which are prevalent in many villages might have come up in their fashion of allotment of land by the ruling dynasties.<sup>73</sup> The *khazana* land was to be enjoyed tax-free on the obligation of putting up a bund to prevent the salt water from entering the fields. In this fashion the king followed the age – old dictum which enjoined on the Indian kings to add to the happiness of their inhabitants by aiding reclamation of land. The physical efforts required to reclaim the land and make it cultivable might have made the grants tax-free in nature. And the fact that the grant is addressed to both the

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<sup>71</sup> *New Indian Antiquary*, Vol. IV, p. 181; also see *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, Poona, Vol. XXIII, pp. 510-513.

<sup>72</sup> *Epigraphica Indica*, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 293-294.

<sup>73</sup> P.P. Shirodkar, "Etymology of Village and Place Names of Goa", pp. 209-242.

inhabitants of the village as well as the officials is significant in the sense that it is indicative of the existence of intermediaries to collect land tax from the people. Therefore, it may be assumed that agricultural produce was taxed as far back as the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. Moreover the putting up of bunds to prevent salt water from entering the field required collective efforts, with the help of which land-reclamation and expansion of agriculture were carried out on a relatively large scale.

#### **8. Land grants and the Temple centered Agrarian Settlements:**

The land grants and settlement patterns in Goa under the Chalukyas of Badami (540 – 757 A.D.), assume different proportions as during this period whole villages were granted to Brahmins. For instance, the Nerur grant of the king Mangalesha dated 601-02 A.D., records the grant of the village Kunderataka, identified with the village Cudnem in Bicholim taluka, to a Brahmin Priyaswami. Similarly, the land grants of Indravaraman of the early 7<sup>th</sup> century mention the grant of village Kavillika in Khetaharadesh to a Brahmin.<sup>74</sup>

During the Chalukya rule, the queens and princes also made grants of whole villages to Brahmins. For instance, the Verur inscription of Vijayamahadevi, the queen consort of Chandraditya, dated 659 AD., records the grant of a village named Tarakagara to a Brahmin Aryaswami Dikshit. The village Parishvasu, mentioned to be on the borders of the village that was granted, is identified with the village Parcem in Pernem taluka.

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<sup>74</sup> Refer to the, "Goa Plate", in *Journal of Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. X, p. 348; see also, *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XIX, pp. 11-12; *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XIX, p. 745; *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. VII, p. 161.

Another inscription of Vijayamahadevi found at Kochre on the borders of Goa, refers to a grant of *Khajjana* land to a Brahmin. Under the Chalukya it is seen that whole villages are made over to the Brahmins.

Hinduism was on its revival path during the Gupta and post Gupta periods. To encourage this revivalism Hindu Goan kings and their feudatories made over to the Brahmins whole villages. Villages as Siridona, Shirodem, Shiroda, Shigaon, Chandrapur, etc., which are named after the Hindu deities, might have emerged during this revivalist phase<sup>75</sup>. This also may indicate the emergence of temple-centered agrarian settlements, in the newly granted territories. However, the grant of villages did not mean new settlements by doing away with the original settlers. However, on the contrary, such grants might have been an attempt to bring the *gauncaria* under the control of the temple trust as it functioned under the *mahazania* system.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps, the *mahazania* system was devised to pull in the agricultural surplus of the village for the propagation, maintenance and sustenance of the Hindu Cult. The Portuguese would later on introduce the system of confraternities in similar fashion to aid extraction of rural surplus.

## 9. Expansion of Agrarian Villages

The number of agrarian villages increased with the introduction of corporate ways of production, which got accelerated following the land-grants made by the Silaharas of

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<sup>75</sup> P.P. Shirodkar, "Etymology of Village and Place Names of Goa", p. 217: Siridona comes from *Sri* i.e. Goddess Lakshmi the goddess of wealth. The second part refers to Vardhan or growth

<sup>76</sup> Under the *Mahazania* system the *gaunkars* of the village became the founders of the temple and functioned as its *mahazans* i.e. the trustees. in perpetuity.

South Konkan or Goa (750 to 1020 A.D.). There are three copper plate grants given by the Silaharas of Goa: the Chikodi or Pattanakudi grant of Arasara III dated 988 AD.; the Kharepatana grant of Rattaraja dated 1008 AD.; and the Valipattana record of the same Rattaraja dated 1010 AD. The Kharepatana grants record the grant of three villages, Kushmandi, Asavanire and Vadagule, to a Brahmin Atreya, belonging to the Karkaroni branch of Mattamayura clan of Saiva sect for the worship of God Aveshvara.<sup>77</sup> This grant is a clear departure from earlier land grants. One, now kings grant a group of villages to the Brahmins of one temple. It was mainly because of this fact that land grants by this time attained a full fledged nature and the kings were not averse to even granting a group of villages to one particular temple, in this case it was three in number. Besides, subjecting the surplus of these villages to the service of the said temple, it was also decreed that ships coming from foreign land had to pay for the worship of God at the rate of one *Suvarna Dharana*. However what is significant is that the king Rattaraja obtained the permission of the *gaunkars* and his ministers and *Amatyas* before issuing the said grant.<sup>78</sup>

The Valipattana grant of King Rattaraja dated 1010 A.D. records the grant of a plot of land named Kalvala (perhaps Colvale) from the village Bhaktagrama and a garden of betel nut to the Sankamaiya son of Brahmin Senavi Bagamaiya. This is probably the first known reference to Shenvi Brahmins of Goa.<sup>79</sup> The Shenvi Brahmins would henceforth go on to dominate the socio-economic and religious sphere of Goan life. The

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<sup>77</sup> *Epigraphica Indica*, Vol. III, p. 299; God Aveshvara seems to have been named after Rattaraja father. King Avasara II.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> For further details see, *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta, Vol. IV, p. 203.

Silahara rulers employed their administrative machinery for the construction of temples propagating the Shaiva cult in Goa.<sup>80</sup> The Silaharas provided for the full maintenance of their temples. For instance, there was an oilman to supply oil for the temple lamp, a gardener to supply fresh flowers for the worship of the deity, a potter to supply pots for serving dishes in the temple, a washerman (*Dhobi*) for cleaning the clothes, a courtesan for performing arts and dance to please the deity etc. In this may be seen the first recorded attempt to secure from the villagers the maintenance for the temple servants. Henceforth, these temple servants would be allotted lands for residential purposes in almost all the villages of Goa. They would also be granted rent-free land for agricultural activities, which they could hold in perpetuity, subject to the carrying out of duties assigned to them. This can be seen as an attempt on the part of rulers and Brahmins to draw on the surplus of the village community for the maintenance of the cult. This policy enabled the rulers to settle the new immigrants who came in as landless people in the different villages of Goa as temple servants. The Brahmins got in this fashion new adherents to their cult. The *gaunkars* had no options but to accept the settlements of the new immigrants on the hitherto unoccupied lands. Being the *mahajans* i.e. the trustees of the village temples, the *gaunkars* accepted the entry of these new immigrants in the sphere of agriculture. However, in their attempts to maintain their own status as founders of villages and village temple, the *gaunkars* denied to the later entrants the right to

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<sup>80</sup> The Shiva temple at Curdi (Sanguem) seems to be the best specimen of the structural remains of the Shilhara temple architecture in Goa. It may be noted that to prevent the submergence of this temple under water due to the construction of the Selaulim Dam in this area, the said temple was dismantled stone by stone and reconstructed on one of the hillocks at Selaulim

manage the *gaumponn* (the village council), as also, never allowed them to be the *mahajans* of the temples.<sup>81</sup>

## **B. Gauncaria in the Process of Transition**

### **1. Winds of Change**

The structure and the functioning of the *gauncaria* underwent significant changes by the time of the Kadambas of Goa, who ruled from 1008 to 1300 A.D. Over three centuries of their rule over Goa the Kadambas made lot of land grants to the learned Brahmins, whose records enable us to study the transformation process involved in the *gauncaria* system. The Sawai-verem land grant records the grant of a village Savoi from the Ponda taluka by Guhalladeva to the family preceptor Narayan Bhatta Pattavardhana.<sup>82</sup> The Copper plate grant of Kadamba King Viravarmadeva (circa 1042 to 1054 A.D.), records the grant of a piece of land named Tundukapur, situated in the Kudatarika – grahara of the Chhatsathi desh. The place has been identified with the Vaddo of Tambeti in Curtorim in Salcete taluka.<sup>83</sup> The said land was granted to a learned Brahmin Madhavarya, and was exempted from all taxes. The kings of Goa were eventually imitated by the *gaunkars* of the villages in making land grants to the Brahmins for construction of temples and maintenance of the cult. For instance, according to tradition

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<sup>81</sup> *Regulamento para o Governo Administrativo e Economico das Mazanias dos Pagodes das Novas e Velhas Conquistas*, Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1878, pp. 133-230; also *Regulamento das Mazanias das Devalayas do Estado da India*, Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1933, pp. 1-144.

<sup>82</sup> V.T. Gune, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-98. Here it is worth mentioning that the etymology Goa has been traced by some scholars to Kadamba King Guhalladeva

<sup>83</sup> Kadamba King Viravarmadeva identified from the said record shifted the Kadamba Capital from Chandrapur to Gopakapatana i.e. modern Goa Velha

the old Hindu temples were constructed by the village communities who used to contribute towards the maintenance of their cult and granted *nomoshins* i.e. rent-free lands to the servants of the temple.<sup>84</sup> This in turn brought to the *gaunkars* social recognition and pre-eminence amongst the inhabitants of the village.

The Kadamba period is also noted for a lot of land grants being made by different rulers in setting up centres of learning. For instance Kadamba King Guhalladeva III in a grant dated 1106 A.D., established a Brahmapuri of twelve Brahmin families with an image of Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of learning and wisdom, in Gopaka the Capital.<sup>85</sup> The Nigadi stone inscription records the grant of land by Guhalladeva to a *matha* or monastery.<sup>86</sup> Kadamba queen Kamaladevi was also very much interested in the spread of learning amongst the subjects. For this purpose she invited learned Brahmins from all over India, set up *agraharas* and made land grants to them. The Brahmins from the *Agraharas* gave instruction in Vedas, Dharmashastra, Vedanta philosophy, Sahitya, Nitishastra. There is also an inscription dated 1174 A.D., issued at Sampagaon, which records the grant of village Deganve to thirty Brahmin families of different Gotras made by the Queen Kamaladevi in the presence of God Saptakoteshwar.<sup>87</sup> Other Kadamba Kings also donated land for the promotion of learning. The inscription of Jayakeshi III (1186-87 to 1216 A.D.) records the grant of a piece of land measuring eight *maltaryas* situated to the west of Unkal Village and south of Brahmapuri at Ela to God Shrinigeshwar by the *Mahajans* of the place. Besides a piece of land measuring 26 hands

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<sup>84</sup> Rui Gomes Pereira, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43

<sup>85</sup> *Epigraphica Indica*, Vol. XXX, pp. 71-78.

<sup>86</sup> V.T. Gune, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>87</sup> John Faithful Fleet, "Inscriptions relating to the Kadamba Kings of Goa", in *Journal of Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. IX, p. 274.

long and 21 hands broad was donated in the precinct of the temple of God Shrinigeshwar for the construction of the school building.<sup>88</sup>

The land grants by the Kadamba kings led to a marked change in the structure and functioning of the village communities. It was perhaps during the reign of the Kadambas that the Kulkarnis (accountants and secretaries who kept records) of the village communities started assuming importance. With the kings depending on the land revenue as a source for carrying out their administration, they were very much interested in bringing the village economy under their control. It started with the encouragement given to learning, which enabled the learned people to take up position of Kulkarnis of the village communities.

The Kadamba kings gave a lot of importance to the spread of learning among the people. Primary education was imparted through the village *pathashalas* that were housed in the precinct of the village temple. To avail of higher learning students went to the *Agraharas* and *Brahmapuris* that taught the people the Vedas, Upanishads, Shastras, Smritis and Puranas.<sup>89</sup> From the inscription of the Kadamba king Tribhuvanamalla dated 1106 AD., it is known that the king established a Brahmapuri at Gopaka, i.e. modern Goa Velha. For the support of the said institution of higher learning was allotted coconut gardens and cultivable land from the villages of Nerur, Pal, Marcaim, Cortalim, Raia and Margao.<sup>90</sup> The Brahmapuri established by the Kadamba queen Kamaladevi at Degamve, though not in Goa, was significant, for it brings out the real nature of the establishment of

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<sup>88</sup> V.T. Gune, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.

<sup>90</sup> *Epigraphica Indica*, Vol. XXX, pp. 71-78.

Bhramapuris. For smooth functioning and carrying out of yearly religious festivals, as also for maintaining the full complex, the Brahmapuri was on the whole allotted fifty shares of revenue from the *comunidade*.<sup>91</sup> Similar practice might have been prevalent in Goa also as is indicated by the fact that the *gaunkars* used to give a share of the annual surplus of the village to temple authorities for the maintenance of the cult.

Allotment of shares (*tangas*) for the maintenance of the centres of learning as also for maintaining and promoting the cult might have started for all practical purposes during the Kadamba period, if not earlier. The practice of allotment of shares underwent different changes over time. The oldest system of division of the annual agrarian surplus of the village communities was its division into the number of *vangods* or clans and then its sub division per stripes.<sup>92</sup> Subsequently, as some communities adopted the system of possessions by dividing land among the *vangods*, the new divisor of the surplus came to be the *tangas*. In fact *tangas* became a uniform measure to divide the surplus of a village community. As by medieval times the village communities had already become heterogeneous with different types of members with claims of varying interests in the agrarian surplus, the rulers might have felt the need to come out with a uniform system. And so, after fixing its share to one-sixth of the produce of land, the Kadamba kings allotted to the maintenance of the cult the remaining agrarian surplus that was available at the village level. The allotment of the *tangas* to the *Brahmapuris* should also be seen in the context of the desire of the rulers to value agricultural production in money terms.

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<sup>91</sup> John Faithful Fleet, "Inscriptions relating to the Kadamba Kings of Goa", in *Journal of Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. IX, pp. 266-287.

<sup>92</sup> Rui Gomes Pereira, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

## **2. Gauncaria under the Vijayanagara Kings and the Bahmani Sultans.**

The second half of the fourteenth and the fifteenth century witnessed Goa becoming a pawn in the power politics of the Vijayanagara kingdom and the Bahmani Sultans. Goa had by then emerged as a good port for the import of Arabian horses. So these kingdoms vied with each other for its possession.

Land grants for setting up *agraharas* continued under the Vijayanagara rulers. For instance, the Brahmapuri of twelve Brahmins well versed in Rigveda was established at the village Govali Mauli and it was named as Mancalpur in 1391 A.D. An embankment to prevent salt water from destroying fields was also built on the banks of the sea and was called as Manchalasangamudra.<sup>93</sup>

From 1472 AD., Goa came under the possession of Muslim rule. It continued to remain so till the Portuguese occupation in 1510, and the latter took advantage of its strategic location in controlling the maritime trade of the east.

The second half of the fourteenth and the fifteenth century, which witnessed the perpetual hostility between the Vijayanagara rulers and the Bahmani Sultan, were significant as far as the changes in the village community system are concerned. First, land grants to Brahmins became very few in numbers during this period, possibly because of the constant wars between the Vijayanagara rulers and the Bahmani Sultans for the

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<sup>93</sup> V. R. Varde Valaulekar, *Goenkaranchi Goeyanbhayli Vasnik*, Bombay: Gomantak Printing Press. 1928, p. 104.

possession of Goa. This might have affected the Goan rural economy and under impoverished rural conditions the villages were not in a position to finance the promotion of the cult in a significant manner.<sup>94</sup> Secondly, the land revenue was increased to one-third under the Adil Shahi rule.<sup>95</sup> This was a cataclysmic change in an agrarian society. There were other changes in the land revenue system, as well, which affected the power structure in the rural economy. Land revenue became payable in cash and the village was made the unit of assessment as a whole, a factor which might have dramatically increased the power of the village leaders i.e., the *gaunkars*.<sup>96</sup> The Adil Shahi rulers increased taxes in order to teach the villagers a lesson for refusing to admit Muslims as members of the village communities. The villagers unitedly resisted Muslim encroachments in the village communities.<sup>97</sup> This collective resistance might have compelled the Muslim rulers to make the village as the unit of assessment for land revenue and in the event of default the entire village could be held responsible and punished by carrying out confiscation of property that was, in turn, given to the followers of Islam.<sup>98</sup> There were also attempts from the part of Adil Shahi rulers to alter agrarian relations, which caused a lot of tensions among the villagers.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> War and aggression are abnormal situations that badly affect the economy.

<sup>95</sup> B.H. Baden-Powell, "The Village in Goa in the early sixteenth century", in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Calcutta, 1990, pp. 261-91; see also M.N. Pearson, *The Portuguese in India*, Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd., 1990, pp. 88-89

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> After Albuquerque's conquest of Goa, the properties of the Muslims were seized and given to *casados*. This indicates that the Muslims had come to possess large landed properties in Goa in spite of the fact that they were not admitted as *gaunkars* in any village community. Celsa Pinto, *Goa: Images and Perceptions*. Panaji: Rajhauns Offset, 1996, p. 43.

<sup>98</sup> V.T. Gune, *op. cit.*, p. 124

<sup>99</sup> B.G. D'Souza, *op. cit.*, pp. 25 - 26.

The practice of making land grants to people other than Brahmins started much earlier. For instance King Bhimapal, a local chieftain in his Cargao Copper – plate grant records the grant made to Lakshmana Thakur from the locality known as Bhagaravati from the village Pendina i.e. modern Pernem taluka, in the year 1351 A.D.<sup>100</sup> Adil Shahi rulers appointed Desais and Sardesais to collect the revenue of certain lands. These men began to demand exorbitant amounts from the peasants and used a part of it to satisfy their own avarice. Moreover, in taxation abuses were rampant as the tax collectors, being the privileged class, sometimes demanded more than what was stipulated and remitted to the king only after retaining a sizeable portion for themselves. Eventually both the Ranés and Dessais emerged as land controlling agents, especially in those parts of Goa that were not under Portuguese dominations till 1750's. The grant of villages to the Kshatriyas led to the decline of the village community system in the New Conquests, for these donees were not interested in agrarian operation as the early settlers were.<sup>101</sup>

### **C. Village Communities under the Portuguese from 1500 to 1750**

Europeans were known in Asia and Asians in Europe long before Vasco da Gama's voyage to Calicut in 1498.<sup>102</sup> It was the officials and people of Goa, who invited the Portuguese to invade Goa with a view to freeing the people who were struggling under the yoke of their Muslim suzerains. Goa, in the decades immediately preceding the Portuguese conquest in 1510, was subjected to more stress and change than at any time

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<sup>100</sup> V. T. Gune, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-124.

<sup>101</sup> F. L. Gomes, *A Liberdade da Terra e a Economia Rural*, pp. 51-53 and 67.

<sup>102</sup> G.V.Scammell, "After Da Gama: Europe and Asia Since 1498", in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 34. Part 3, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 513 – 543.

later in the century.<sup>103</sup> Afonso de Albuquerque, being given to understand the internal dissensions of the villagers against their Muslim overlords, exploited the situation to his advantage by conquering the city of Goa in 1510.<sup>104</sup> With the conquest of Goa by the Portuguese began a very definite and significant phase in the history of Goan *comunidades*. Written records are available in abundance for the Portuguese period from the sixteenth century onwards,<sup>105</sup> whereas for the pre-Portuguese period the historian has to glean information from scantily available documents and grants pertaining to Goan history, and so has to depend a lot on oral tradition to reconstruct the history of the evolution of the structure and functioning of the *comunidades*. Goa was conquered because of its strategic location being midway on the West Coast of India so as to suit the expanding trade of the Portuguese. To concentrate fully on reaping the benefits that trade offered, the Portuguese realised the need to win over the loyalty of the Hindu inhabitants of Goa so that the former could be free from any internal revolt. It was mainly because of this fact that Albuquerque upon the conquest of Goa announced remission of one – third of the land revenue and gave an assurance to the natives that their customs and traditions would be honoured and respected by the Portuguese masters. The people were also promised that the Portuguese would not increase any taxes on the *gaunkars* of Goa.<sup>106</sup> The promise made by Albuquerque should be viewed from the point that many times administrators being ignorant of ground realities often allow prevailing situations to continue so as to take time to study.

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<sup>103</sup> M.N. Pearson, *op. cit.*, pp. 88–89.

<sup>104</sup> It may be noted that the city of Goa conquered by the Portuguese in 1510 comprises only the modern Taluka of Tiswadi of the State of Goa. The Taluka of Tiswadi was earlier known as Ilhas.

<sup>105</sup> The Historical Archives of Goa, Panaji, contains thousands of documents on the Goan *Comunidades*.

<sup>106</sup> João de Barros, *Asia, Decadas, Livros II*, chapter V; see also for more details Rui Gomes Pereira, *op. cit.*, pp. 77 - 78

The move of Albuquerque in remitting a fraction of the land revenue may also be due to several other factors. Monetisation of the Goan economy was not yet being achieved and the land revenue was still paid at that time in kind. Against this backdrop, the Portuguese with no storage facilities had no option rather than to announce the remission. Secondly, as the Portuguese *Estado da India* was for all practical purposes a military establishment and an elaborate civil government was yet to be established. So the Portuguese expenses were relatively less and could be met with reduced income and particularly with the money coming from Portugal. Albuquerque, practical minded as he was, might have also wanted to be free from any internal revolt on the Isle of Goa, so as to enable them to establish the Portuguese colonial empire on the littoral of the Indian Ocean for the king of Portugal. However, it may be noted that no remission was granted consequent upon the second conquest of Goa in November, 1510.<sup>107</sup>

The Portuguese found the *comunidade* system prevailing in all the villages, which they successively conquered. They found the village community system quite appropriate to sustain the rural economy and that was one, if not the only reason, which led them to maintain the *comunidades* in tact.<sup>108</sup> The *gaunkars* were found to be enjoying certain rights and privileges, which Albuquerque promised not to change. Moreover he also promised not to alter the constitutions, i.e., *mandavolli*, of the *comunidades*. However during the four and a half centuries of Portuguese rule in Goa the *comunidade* system would be streamlined in a manner as to make it function more as an appendage or organ of the Portuguese *Estado da India*. Meanwhile, the Portuguese

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<sup>107</sup> Filippe Nery Xavier, *Bosquejo Historico das Comunidades das Aldeas dos Concelhos Ilhas. Salcete e Bardez*, edited by José Maria de Sá, Vol. I, Bastora: Tipographia Rangel, 1903, Doc. 1, pp. 186-187.

<sup>108</sup> Rui Gomes Pereira, *op. cit.*, pp. 24 –25.

effected a re-structuring of the *comunidades* by the mid-1520s to achieve their motives of carrying out state formation in Goa.

### 1. The Charter of Afonso Mexia 1526

The relative non-interference of the Portuguese government in the functioning of the *comunidades* ended with the promulgation on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1526 of the charter titled *Foral dos Usos e Costumes dos Gaocares e Lavradores das Ilhas de Goa e Outros anexas a Ela* also known as *Foral de Afonso Mexia*. This Charter codified the rights, privileges and customs of the *gaunkars* and is considered as the best document on the state of affairs in the *comunidades*.<sup>109</sup> The Charter had forty-nine clauses and was considered by many as the ‘Magna Carta’ for the *comunidades*.<sup>110</sup> The Charter gives valuable information on the origin and functioning of the *comunidades* in Tiswadi Taluka.<sup>111</sup> It also clearly shows the initial steps taken by the Portuguese to transfer the surplus from the village communities for the building up of the evolving Portuguese state.

The Charter of 1526 decreed that the thirty-one villages of Tiswadi Taluka had to pay to the government the *renda* (rent), irrespective of gains or losses.<sup>112</sup> The members of the eight principal villages, namely Neura o Grande, Ganssim, Ella, Azossim, Calapur.

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<sup>109</sup> J. H. da Cunha Rivara, *Arquivo Portugues Oriental*, Fasc. 5. Part 1, Doc. 58, pp. 118-133.

<sup>110</sup> Carmo D’Souza, “Village Communities – A Historical and Legal Perspectives”, a research paper presented at the International Seminar organised by Xavier Centre of Historical Research, Porvorim, 1999.

<sup>111</sup> The Charter says that four men set out to make use of an island, which was lying unused and wild which they transformed into a prosperous land which later on became populous. The pioneers because of their good governance were named as *gaunkars*. Then came the overlords to whom the *gaunkars* agreed to pay rent i.e., *coxivorodd*, so that they might be left free to carry out cultivation.

<sup>112</sup> However, if the said loss was due to war then it would be made good (refunded) to the *gaunkars* proportionately. But this promise was not to be kept by the Portuguese in the centuries to come.

Morombim o Grande, Carambolim and Batim, which were known for their antiquity and pre-eminence, were to be held responsible to pay the dues of any defaulting village. Moreover the defaulting village could be leased temporarily until it pays its dues; but the *gaunkars* of the said villages would not lose their rights and privileges and could terminate the lease by paying the dues to the State. Similarly, if any *gaunkar* absconded on non-payment of his rent then in the first place his heirs would be asked to take over the estate and pay the rent. However, if his heirs refuse to do so then the *gaunkars* could give the estate to whomsoever they wished to upon payment of government dues.<sup>113</sup>

The Charter of 1526 made a provision that whenever the *renda* (rent) was increased or decreased the same should be proportionately divided among the *gaunkars* in the way each would pay the rent of the lands or of the paddy fields he had.<sup>114</sup> This is significant for many reasons: Primarily, the government assumed upon itself the right to increase or decrease the rent at will. Albuquerque's promise not to increase the taxes was thrown to the winds. Secondly, it is clear that the *gaunkars* did not pay equally the rent but it differed according to the assets that each one held. It is also possible that the payment of rent varied according to the productivity of the agricultural fields, which were classified into different categories based on the fertility of the soil.

On the basis of payment of land revenue the village had three types of land: First, there were kitchen gardens, palm groves and paddy fields that were bound to pay a certain amount every year but were not to pay if there was a loss. A second category of

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<sup>113</sup> Filipe Nery Xavier (Jr.), *Collecção das Leis Peculiares das Comunidades*, pp. I-XI.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

kitchen gardens, palm groves and paddy fields not only paid rent but were also bound to pay towards the losses incurred. Such lands were under the charge of the *gaunkars*. The third category of lands was those, which the *gaunkars* gave to whomsoever they liked to give, rent-free and without any obligation to contribute towards the losses. These were the *Namoxins* lands granted to the temples and their servants, by the *gaunkars* over the centuries in the pre-Portuguese period.<sup>115</sup> When, in the centuries to follow, the Portuguese carried out forcible conversion of Goans it was these *Namoxins* lands that were taken over and handed over to the Church for the propagation of Catholicism in Goa and elsewhere.<sup>116</sup>

The Goan *comunidades* have survived for quite a long time. One of the reasons for this was the fact that the *comunidades* were functioning based on the common will of the *gaunkars* in passing decisions that were to be unanimously taken and even a single veto exercised by any member was sufficient to defeat any resolution. However these very *comunidades* provided for individual enterprises, as well. The Charter of Afonso Mexia noted that the plots of land on the outskirts of the village, which were lying fallow, could be given to those who wished to change the same into palm groves or for areca cultivation on payment of rent. It was provided that for an area covering hundred palm trees, with the distance between two palm trees being twelve paces, the *comunidade* could charge the maximum of five *tangas*. Similarly, for an area covering hundred areca palms, with the area for each areca palm being five cubits by five cubits, the rent was to

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<sup>115</sup> Roque Correia Afonso, "A Evolução do Municipalismo na Índia Portuguesa," in *A Índia Portuguesa*. Vol. II, Nova Goa, Imprensa Nacional, 1923, pp. 389-464.

<sup>116</sup> Philippe Nery Xavier, *Bosquejo Histórico das Comunidades das Aldeas dos Concelhos Ilhas, Salcete e Bardez*, edited by José Maria de Sá, Vol. I, Doc. 8-11, pp. 215-222.

be fixed at either four or six bargains depending on whether the land is irrigated with well water or running water. The Charter of 1526 noted the perpetual nature of such grants and this might have helped in the agricultural development of the *comunidade* lands.<sup>117</sup> During the Portuguese period and even thereafter the trade in both coconut and arecanut brought good income for these private entrepreneurs.

The Charter of 1526 also stipulated that if a member of a *comunidade* desired to sell his hereditary rights in the village, he needed the permission of the other members of the *comunidade*. Similar permission was required to buy or sell shares of the *comunidade*. Sale or purchase in contravention of the above was declared null and void. The sale of hereditary rights was to be signed by the seller as well as all the heirs, and the minors through proxy, failure of which could result in the sale being set aside. In such an eventuality the buyer could recover his purchase price, but had to lose the money invested for improvement of landed estates. Carmo D'Souza says that this fits with the Hindu Mithaksara Co-parcenary concept.<sup>118</sup>

A careful study of the clauses of the Charter of 1526 makes one conclude that the Portuguese made a subtle attempt to bring about uniformity and centralisation in the functioning of the Goan *comunidades* by putting the customs and usages in written form. Henceforth a *comunidade* was to function as a unit sharing profits and losses collectively. Sale or purchase of rights into a community without the permission of the Portuguese government was to be declared null and void. In this manner the State placed

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<sup>117</sup> Carmo D'Souza, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>118</sup> Carmo D'Souza, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

itself legally above the *comunidades*. Similarly, if any particular village defaulted in payment of its dues then it passed under the control of any of the eight principal villages that agreed to pay the government dues.<sup>119</sup> In this manner a different administrative layer was sought to be legally created between the Portuguese and the *comunidades*. Moreover it was decreed that whenever the *Tanador-mor* sends for the *gaunkars* of the entire Tiswadi Taluka or of any one village, they were all bound to obey the order or to convene the assembly in each village in order to elect those who should go to attend the meeting. Those who remained absent would be fined. It was also made obligatory that whenever the *Tanador-mor*, the *Feitor*, or any official of the *feitoria* went to the villages for any official work then the *gaunkars* had to provide for them. Similarly any errand boy sent by the government with a message or for collection of the rents had to be given two measures of rice for his meals and one pie for betel nut for each day he spent in the village for official work. So, one can see that the Portuguese government was slowly trying to assume the control of the rural economy on the pretext of codifying the customs and usages of the *gaunkars* and others. The Charter of 1526 not only codified the customary law on inheritance, succession, leases, etc., but also defined and affirmed the rights of the exchequer.

On the face it looks that the Charter of 1526 aimed to preserve the local customs and traditions. This was the first of the blizzard of policies designed by the Portuguese to

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<sup>119</sup> *Foral de Affonso Mexia*, § 6 as transcribed in Filippe Nery Xavier (Jr.), *op. cit.*, pp. II-IV. Herein the Capitulo VI stipulates that, “*Se alguma Aldea for tão perdida que não possa pagar o seu foro. e renda que nos pretence. darão os Gancares. e moradores della conta disso ao Tanador-mór, e Escrivão da Ilha. e elles hirão ver a dita perda, e achando-se por bou verdade que a tem. o ditto Tanador-mór mandará chamar aos Gancares-môres das sobre ditas oito Aldeas principaes. e então bem poderão vir a isso outros Gancares quaes quer que quizerem, posto porém que com os das oito Aldeas principaes se hão de fazer por ordeneção as cousas da Ilha, e todos juntos com o ditto Tanador-mór e Escrivão, poderão os da Aldea perdida encampar a sua Aldea aos Gancares das oito...*”

transform and fossilise life in Goa at the village level.<sup>120</sup> The customs and usages were turned into compulsory provisions, revocable only at the will of the government, who, not committing itself to safeguard the *comunidades* in perpetuum, but would modify the terms of the Charter of 1526 as and when it thought fit to do so. Shorn of the trappings, the Charter of 1526 was nothing more than the assertion of the right to intervene in the administration of the *comunidades*, and of regulating their relations with the Portuguese *Estado*. The Charter invested the *Estado* with an important right i.e., the right to legislate on the Goan *comunidades*.<sup>121</sup>

By mid sixteenth century Portuguese *Estado da India* was a territorially fledging state. In around 1545 they acquired the territories of Bardez and Salcete.<sup>122</sup> The new territories, which were conquered, were brought under the ambit of the Portuguese laws and various other provisions, which were made, taking local conditions into consideration.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Paul Axelrod and Michelle A. Fuerch, "Flight of The Deities: Hindu Resistance in Portuguese Goa". in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, Part 2, 1996. pp. 387 – 421.

<sup>121</sup> This fact was acknowledged by the Portuguese government when in the Preamble to the Code of *Comunidades* of 1904, it stated that with the promulgation of the Charter of 1526 the *Estado* became the legitimate guardian of the *Comunidades*, looking after their economy and administration and legislating successively as indicated by experience.

<sup>122</sup> V.R. Varde Valaulekar, *op. cit.*, p. 2.; Also see, J.H. da Cunha Rivara, *op. cit.*, Fasc. 5, Part. I, Doc. 153, p. 268; Also see *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. I, Bombay: Gomantak Printing Press, 1928, p. 9; The Portuguese came to possess large territory comprising of 900 villages as a result of the Treaty signed on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1555, between the Viceroy D. Pedro de Mascarenhas and the Adil Shahi Prince Mealkhan Abdullah, the heir apparent.

<sup>123</sup> The Historical Archives of Goa is the repository of a large number of documents regarding the administration of the *Comunidades* of the Talukas of Bardez, Salcete and Tiswadi. HAG, *Forais das Ilhas de Goa*: Codex nos. 7593, 7594, 7595, 7596 and 7597; HAG, *Forais de Bardes*: Codex nos. 7587, 7588, 631, 7589 to 7592; HAG, *Forais de Salcete*: Codex nos. 3070, 3071, 7581 and 7582, 7583 to 7586.

## 2. Impact of Portuguese Religious Policies on the *Comunidades*

From the mid sixteenth century onwards the Portuguese religious zeal for conversions increased manifold and in their attempts to Christianize Goa they altered drastically the socio – religious structure of the Goan society. Many Hindu temples were destroyed.<sup>124</sup> The destruction of the temples would follow with a meeting of the *gaunkars*, convened through “criers” by the Portuguese authorities. The *gaunkars* would then be asked to declare on oath the information regarding the properties (*namoxins* lands) held by the Hindu Temples.<sup>125</sup> The properties were then seized and handed over to the Church authorities for propagation and maintenance of the Christian cult. Though villages after villages were converted in the Old Conquests, the pre-Portuguese village structures were essentially preserved by the Portuguese in the tax structures, village productive systems, and economic relations were not much altered.<sup>126</sup> However Hindus whose presence was considered as undesirable from the point of views of propagation of the new faith were banished from Portuguese territories. And those who remained were denied rights in the *comunidades*.<sup>127</sup>

The net result of Portuguese persecutions was that the Hindus migrated en masse to neighbouring lands. This resulted in business establishments being closed down. and

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<sup>124</sup> Francisco Pais, *Tombo da Ilha de Goa e das Terras de Salcete e Bardes*, edited by P.S.S. Pissurlencar. Bastora, 1952, pp. 165-182. A list of Hindu temples which existed in the island of Goa that is Tiswadi taluka as also those of Salcete and Bardes are given.

<sup>125</sup> J. H. da Cunha Rivara, *op. cit.*, Fasc. V, Part II, Doc. 610, p. 644.

<sup>126</sup> Teotonio R. de Souza, “Rural Economy and Life”, in Teotonio R de Souza (ed.), *Goa Through The Ages: An Economic History*, Vol. II, New Delhi: Concept Publishing House, 1879, pp. 96-97.

<sup>127</sup> J. H. da Cunha Rivara, *Arquivo Portugues Oriental*, Fasc. 5, Part 2, Doc. 472, p. 544.

there was an acute dearth of agricultural labour and artisans causing much damage to agricultural production. The self-sufficient nature of the *comunidades* got badly affected. Taking this into consideration Viceroy D. Francisco Coutinho ordered on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1561, that if any Hindu was to return then he would be handed over his estate back.<sup>128</sup>

Conversion of Goans from the Old Conquests however continued under the supervision of the Religious Orders. The debate on whether conversions in Goa were by convictions or by coercion is not conclusive.<sup>129</sup> However what is interesting is that a large section of the Goan populace was converted to Christianity and Goa became a Christian dominated province. Introduction of the new religion however created a lot of tensions in agrarian relations. For instance, though a lot of *gaunkars* were converted, they had to suffer at the hands of Collectors and Contractors of revenue who were mostly Brahmins and Hindus, as is seen from the decree of D. Sebastião dated 23<sup>rd</sup> march, 1559.<sup>130</sup> There were other problems also, as, for instance many times the meetings of the general body of *comunidade* were held without the presence of the Christian *gaunkars*. To rectify this anomaly Portuguese Governor Antonio Moniz ordered on 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1573, that *gaunkars* meeting in assembly and taking resolutions without the presence of Christian *gaunkars* would be fined 20 *pardaos* each, and the resolutions which were passed would be held as null and void. However the same order provided that in villages where Christian *gaunkars* were in majority the Hindus should not enter into the *comunidades*, that names of Christian *gaunkars* be written first, and only when the number of

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Anant Kakba Priolkar, *The Goa Inquisition*, Bombay: Published by author, 1961, pp. 50-59.

<sup>130</sup> J. H. da Cunha Rivara, *Arquivo Portugues Oriental*, Fasc. V, Part I, Doc. 195, p. 319.

Christians present for the meeting falls short of the required quorum then the names of Hindus be written to make the quorum according to the custom and tradition of the village.<sup>131</sup> All this might have hurt the respect of the *gaunkars* and also affected agrarian relation and agricultural production, though temporarily.<sup>132</sup>

The Portuguese had to deal with another problem which was of their own making and that is of the flight of capital from Goa to the neighbouring territories. Every *gaunkar* was entitled to receive annually a share in the income of the *comunidade* which is known as *jonn* (yearly dividend). The right to *jonn* is an inalienable right of every *gaunkar*, which they receive by virtue of being the descendants of the original settlers of villagers who were pioneers in subjugating the wild expanse of land to agricultural production, and thus bringing prosperity. On 7<sup>th</sup> March, 1634, Francisco Tavora observed that Hindu natives of Salcete who migrated with their families to neighbouring Canara and other territories to enjoy greater liberty caused Portuguese Goa to be depopulated and this invariably led to loss of agricultural production as has been mentioned above. So it was ordered that such people would be denied the personal *jonn*.<sup>133</sup> This might have resulted in an increase in the share of the people who resided in the villages. Earlier in 1573, King D. Sebastião ordered that *gaunkars* of Bardez who were living outside the

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., Fasc V, Part II, Doc. 768, p. 891.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. The translation of the order dated 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1573, and issued by the Governor of the *Estado* Antonio Moniz Barreto is given in Anant Kakba Priolkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-126. It is as follows: "From now onwards the *Gauncares* of the lands of Salcete shall not meet in assembly nor pass resolutions without the Christian *Gauncares* being present, under pain of each one of them paying in respect of each such occasion 20 *pardaos* towards the clothing of Christians, and the resolutions passed shall be null and void. Also in the villages where there are more Christian *Gauncares* than Hindu *Gauncares*, the Hindu should not enter into *Gauncarias* and when assemblies are held the names of the Christians should be written first and only when the number of Christians is not sufficient to form the quorum according to the custom of the respective village, the names of so many Hindus as are required to make up the quorum should be entered".

<sup>133</sup> J.H. da Cunha Rivara, *Arquivo Portugues Oriental*, Fasc. V, Part II, Doc. 768, p. 891.

Portuguese territories should not be paid the personal *jonn*.<sup>134</sup> These orders might have been issued more out of economic necessity besides the religious motive. On the one hand the flight of people had left the villages depopulated and affected agricultural production. The flight of *gaunkars* led to abandonment of agricultural fields without anybody to attend to, and when artisans also fled the rural agrarian based economy was really in bad shape. Shortage of tool and implements affected agricultural production, maintenance of dykes and embankments also became problematic with the result that low-lying areas got flooded at times in some places with salt water thus affecting the so far well-maintained age old ecosystem of the *khazana* fields. Under such circumstances the Portuguese thought it prudent to prevent flight of rural capital out of Goa by preventing *gaunkars* residing out of Goa from drawing their annual personal *jonn*.

From the mid sixteenth century the *comunidades* started losing gradually their independence, and their original character began to change as a result of religious persecution, oppression, looting, etc., which the *gaunkars* had to suffer in the decades to follow. The situation was complicated when Albuquerque's promise of not imposing any additional taxes was abandoned, and the *comunidades* were henceforth made to bear additional financial obligations which were heaped on them in the form of taxes, forced donations, and loans for all sorts of purposes. These included building of forts, churches, and cemeteries, financing expedition to Mombaça and even lending money to the Board of Trade of Mozambique.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> J.H. da Cunha Rivara, *Arquivo Portugues Oriental*, Fasc. VI, Doc. 600, p. 1295.

<sup>135</sup> Filippe Nery Xavier, *Bosquejo Historico das Comunidades ...*, Vol. 1, pp. 106-107, and pp. 207-214.

As has already been mentioned temple lands were already handed over to the Church authorities. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and even thereafter though the Church continued to receive certain annual payments from the State for payment of salaries, provisions and other routine expenses, the *comunidades* were made to contribute annually towards Church repair, maintenance as also for celebrating feasts and festivals in Goa.<sup>136</sup> Further, when the State could not bear the ever-increasing expenses for the maintenance of the cult, it tried to impose a half tithe on the *comunidades*, the proceeds of which were to go to the Church for 'divine cult and church repairs'. When the *comunidades* protested, the tithe was repealed but only to be substituted by an additional 5% of the quit rent (*foro*) which was also burdensome on the *comunidades*. In 1707 the *comunidades* were forced to accept the new responsibility.<sup>137</sup> Moreover in 1745 the half tithe was revived without giving up any of the earlier impositions.<sup>138</sup>

The question was, on whose instructions a *comunidade* should pass resolutions providing for grants to the Church under the head 'divine cults and church repairs'. Whether it was to be at the instance of the Church or of the Portuguese State? The *comunidades* wanted instructions from the State. The State also desired the same. But the Church felt that permission of the State was not required at all. The matter was resolved when in 1711 the then Viceroy, instructed that no resolutions (*nemos*) providing for any expenses including Church expenses could be passed without seeking permission

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<sup>136</sup> B. S. Shastri, "Sources of Income and Items of Expenditure of the Church of Goa (c. 1510 – 1800 A.D.): A Note", B. S. Shastri (ed.), *Goan Society Through The Ages*, New Delhi: Asian Publication Series, 1987, pp. 35-47.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Filipppe Nery Xavier, *Bosquejo Historico das Comunidades ...*, Vol. I, pp. 257 – 317.

of the State. The procedure for passing the *nemos* under the head 'divine cult and church repairs' was to be as follows. The Church had to make a request to the concerned *comunidade* for expenditure. On consideration of the request, the matter would be referred by the *comunidade* to the *Tanador-mor*, who after verifying the facts would submit a report to the Viceroy, recommending, modifying or rejecting the request. The Viceroy would then issue an order for passing of the *nemos* accordingly. Only then could the *comunidades* pass the *nemos*. *Nemos* passed without following the above procedure would be rejected.<sup>139</sup> However, sometimes the managing committee of the *comunidades* did their best to bypass the requirements and due to this, orders were passed now and then asking for strict observance of the Viceroy's provision of 1711.<sup>140</sup>

The Church also received many other contributions from the *comunidades*. In many villages the Church received *jonns dos Santos* (shares allotted to the patron saint of the village) in the name of different saints during the period 1744 – 46.<sup>141</sup> For instance, the *comunidade* of Azossim kept aside four *jonns* (share) for different saints. Similarly the *comunidades* of Chandor, Cavorim and Guirdolim also contributed for the saints by paying *jonns*.<sup>142</sup> All these increased the expenses of the *comunidades* with no tangible returns from the same.

The *comunidades* were also asked to undertake the task of maintaining, repairing and renovating the Church as also looking after the needs of the Church in

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., pp. 292-293.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., pp. 264 – 267.

<sup>141</sup> A. F. Pereira, "Instituto Organico das *Comunidades* do Conselho das Ilhas" in *O Oriente Portuguese*. No. 5, Nova Goa: Imprensa Gonçalves, 1933, pp. 294-295.

<sup>142</sup> Olivinho J.F. Gomes, *op. cit.*, pp. 267-277.

general including payment of salaries of the officiating priests. For instance, the *comunidade* of Batim contributed a share (*jonn*) to the chapel of Our Lady of Guadalupe, shouldered the burden of all extraordinary expenses of the chapel and also paid the annual salary of the chaplain.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, the *comunidade* of Neura o Grande paid money to the Chaplain as also for the maintenance of the sacristy every year.<sup>144</sup> Church expenses were also borne by the *comunidades* of Chandor, Cavorim and Guirdolim.<sup>145</sup>

The net results of the *comunidades* being forced to provide for the maintenance of the cult were but enormous. The incomes remained static or in fact declined due to abandonment of agricultural fields on the one hand, and on the other the ever-increasing expenses would eat into the profits of the *comunidades*. Henceforth, the amount available for distribution as *jonn* among the *gaunkars* naturally declined. This is evident from the fact that the saints demanded many a time in most villages not one but several *jonn*s, thereby implying that a single *jonn* (share) was not fetching enough dividends. Faced with the prospects of getting diminishing returns, the life for orphans, poor and the widows might have been really miserable forcing them to migrate. This all happened because the Church expenses which should have been met with voluntary contribution from the *gaunkars* and others were contrarily charged on the common fund of the *comunidades*.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> A. F. Pereira, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>144</sup> B. S. Shastry, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>145</sup> Olivinho J. F. Gomes, *op. cit.*, pp. 267 – 270.

<sup>146</sup> B.S. Shastry, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

However, it would be absurd to state that all or most of the *comunidades* had become loss-making proposition for the *gaunkars*. On the contrary profits were made by certain people though these were individual gains. For instance many times the expenses under the head 'divine cult and church repairs' were used as a pretext by some *gaunkars* and village administrators to promote their own private interests in collusion with Church authorities.<sup>147</sup> The priests were accused of living on the hunger of the poor under the false pretext of maintaining the cult. Many were actually making riches for themselves and providing for their brothers, nephews, and other relatives. Under such circumstances there were pleas made to the Portuguese Viceroy to address this grave problem and rescue the *comunidades* from the clutches of the Church.<sup>148</sup>

The major consequence of over two centuries of Portuguese rule was that by the middle of the eighteenth century most of the *comunidades* faced large-scale indebtedness. For instance the *comunidades* of Tiswadi Taluka had accumulated debt of over 4,25,000 *xerafins*, while, their annual income stood at only 1,55,000 *xerafins*. And the annual interest on the servicing of debts itself amounted to 21,000 *xerafins*. Almost all the *comunidades* of Old Conquests were impoverished due to the loans taken by them to help the State and the Church. In spite of this, the *comunidades* were not exempted from the payment of tax and other yearly contributions. These payments were to be made within the prescribed time, failing which the members of their managing bodies were likely to suffer imprisonment and other corporal punishments. Everything that entered into the coffers of the *comunidades* was therefore drained to service debts.

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Filippe Nery Xavier, *Bosquejo Historico das Comunidades ...*, Vol. I. pp. 358-363.

pay tax and *foros*, contribution for the maintenance of the cult, etc., with nothing remaining for the annual distribution among the *gaunkars* as *jonns*.<sup>149</sup>

The Portuguese *Estado* increased its demands from the *comunidades* because of several factors including its protracted struggle for supremacy on Indian waters with the Dutch, the struggle in which the *Estado* lost heavily and its trade was badly affected. With the decline in trade and trade-related profits, the *Estado* thought it convenient to extract increasing revenues from the *comunidades*. Once the Dutch menace was over, then the Portuguese faced repeated Maratha incursions into its possessions in Goa. The constant attacks of the Marathas aggravated the precarious position of the *comunidades*. For instance in 1739 due to repeated Maratha incursions in the province of Salcete, the *Camara Geral* was forced to sell at half price the harvest of the previous year in order to pay the Marathas a sum of 44,000 *xerafins*. On the other hand, when crops failed in 1739 year due to abandonment by the *gaunkars*, the Portuguese government refused to allow a proportionate decrease in the taxes, totally disregarding the provision made in the Charter of 1526. The state on the other hand allowed only a year's deferred payment.<sup>150</sup> The *gaunkars* were sandwiched between Maratha attacks on the one hand and Portuguese extraction on the other hand. However, the *gaunkars* preferred to flee rather than face economic depredation. The Marquis of Alorna in his letter dated 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1750 says that the expenses being excessive, those who enjoyed *jonns* and *tangas* remained with nothing as had happened in several villages on account of the debts and other burdens which the *gaunkars* faced because of the war with the Marathas. The calamity was such that great

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<sup>149</sup> Rui Gomes Pereira, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-80.

<sup>150</sup> Filipppe Nery Xavier, *Bosquejo Historico das Comunidades ...*, Vol. I, p. 81

many Goans, predominantly Christians being ashamed of their misery had to abandon their lands and had to go to the neighbouring lands.<sup>151</sup>

The interference of the Portuguese in the affairs of the *comunidades* was such that they at times suspended the *gaunkars* from exercising their right to vote, to bid in the lease auctions and sometimes prevented them from drawing *jonns* as have been seen earlier. Physically exhausted and economically ruined the *gaunkars* were forced to alienate their rights in their *comunidades*. Taking advantage of the impoverished condition of the *comunidades*, many Portuguese people and other powerful people managed to enter the fold of the *comunidades*, which succumbed to the new groups under enormous pressure. Many sold their rights, which were purchased by people called 'khuntkars' who penetrated the *comunidades* in great haste. The last two centuries of the Portuguese rule in Goa would witness a protracted tussle between the *gaunkars*, who would put up a spirited fight to preserve their ancient rights and privileges, and the *Khuntkars* who would demand vociferously a say in the management of the *comunidades*.<sup>152</sup> The Portuguese government continued to extract as much as possible on the one hand and on the other hand it passed various laws and orders to streamline the functioning of the *comunidades*. The Regiment of 1735 was formulated by the Portuguese to regulate the governance and organisation of the *comunidades*. The autonomy of the functioning of the *comunidades* was accepted. However, the Regiment

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<sup>151</sup> Rui Gomes Pereira, *op. cit.*, p. 81, quoting from J. B. Catão da Costa, *O Triunpho da Verdade*, Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1856, p. 39.

<sup>152</sup> Rui Gomes Pereira, *op. cit.*, pp. 86 – 96.

of 1735, which had about 46 *capitulos* (articles), made the *gaunkars* and other officials associated with the *comunidades*, responsible and accountable in the future.<sup>153</sup>

The Regiment of 1735 mentions about the arbitrators, revenue collectors and the village clerks and referred to the proceedings that could be taken against them for making illegal and unauthorised entries. The mention of arbitrators is significant as it gives a hint to the arbitration proceedings, a system well recognised in the Indian customary law, for settling disputes.<sup>154</sup> This is significant because the succeeding centuries would witness a lot of arbitration proceedings as a result of the *khuntkars* having entered the *comunidades* by purchasing rights.

The Regiment of 1735 also provided for the Judge of the Crown and king's Revenues to inquire into the administration of the *comunidades* every three years. This would allow the government to know the income and the expenditure of the *comunidades*, thereby facilitating the extraction of rural surplus for its own benefit.

As has been mentioned earlier the *comunidades* had to get the prior permission of the Viceroy to pass any *nemos* regarding expenditure on any head. As the process for getting the Vice regal approval was very lengthy and cumbersome, in times of emergency the *comunidades* suffered a lot. For instance as and when dykes and embankments required urgent repair the *comunidades* were faced with a piquant situation of passing *nemos* without permission of the Viceroy or face the prospect of damage to the low lying

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<sup>153</sup> Filippe Nery Xavier (Jr.), *Collecção das Leis Peculiares das Comunidades*, pp. XI – XXXIV.

<sup>154</sup> Carmo D'Souza, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

*khazana* lands. And this affected rural prosperity. To solve this problem the Regiment of 1735 made a provision that the *comunidades* could carry out urgent repair of dykes and embankments in times of emergency without getting prior vice regal permission. From the mid eighteenth century the *comunidades* would function based on the Regiment of 1735 and other laws, which were promulgated from time to time.

Thus, the land-based socio-economic order, which evolved and developed in Goa through *gauncaria* system, appeared during the pre-colonial period as the best rural-management mechanism. It evolved as a collective solution to the production-related problems of primary sector quite fitting for the eco-systems of Goa. The Gaudas, who introduced co-operative way of production and *comunidade* system in Goa, brought the Central Uplands under agricultural operations and ushered in a social formation based on land-ownership. The Brahmins, who reached Goa at a later phase, began to concentrate on the Coastal Plains for agricultural activities, which they commenced by reclaiming the marshy and low-lying lands. The increased number of land-grants made by native rulers to Brahmins for reclamation led to the emergence of large scale of *Khazana* lands under their possession, as a result of which the surplus accumulated from them enabled the migrants to fabricate a new social order based on *gauncaria*, wherein their position was projected to be the nuclei. The Portuguese who entered the scene in the sixteenth century converted *comunidade* system into a pliable instrument for rural penetration. In the pre-colonial and early colonial period, when the Portuguese generally concentrated on the maritime trade, first with India and later with Brazil, *comunidade* system was utilised by them more for rural management and for sustaining domestic economy. The

beginnings of a new land-structure appeared only by the middle of the eighteenth century, which brought in a new agrarian face to Goa.