To call women the weaker sex is a libel,
It is man's injustice to women.

- M. K. Gandhi.

The active participation of women in the liberation struggle of Goa began on 18th June 1946. It was on that day that Dr. Lohia inaugurated the last phase of the liberation struggle. The spirit of nationalism among the Goan women was evident on that day as for the first time in Goa's colonial history, they came out in large numbers to show their determination to fight against the colonial rule in Goa. This courage of Goan women is depicted by one of the participants in the liberation struggle of Goa.

'At a certain stage, the police van arrived with a girl at the police station at Margao. She came out of the van, turned to us with her eyes afire, a resolute face and a salute of the hand and shouted Inquilab Zindabad... soon after there arrived a procession of women and girls, in two rows. It stopped in front of the (police) station. On being asked what they wanted, they replied in chorus. We want to keep company with Vatsala Kirtani who has been arrested.

The commandant, Lt. Julio Figueiredo who never tired of repeating- why are you doing this? This land is yours and we shall one day quit it- began giving people explanations. He had not arrested the girl Vatsala. Because she had been shouting political slogans, in defiance of his orders, she had been isolated. Now she was free to go with her colleagues. But Vatsala, who was more than a match for this tomfoolery retorted; 'If I have been brought here, it is because I have committed some offence and I want to know what it is and my statement to be recorded'.

Lt. Figueiredo repeated his explanations. He had not arrested her. She had been merely isolated from the group. But the girl interrupted him and said in Portuguese language.

'Nao Percebo Portuguese' (I don't understand Portuguese). 'Konkani Uloi' (speak Konkani).

This remark was received with amusement all round. If she did not understand Portuguese how did she express herself in that language?
Commandant patiently arranged for an interpreter, asked him to tell the young girl that the duty of the girl was to cook, sew, etc. at home.

Vatsala recorded in Konkani, 'That may be in Portugal. Here in India the women too fight for their country. But I don’t want to hear such tomfoolery. I want to know what offence, what crime I have committed.

The Commandant stated that she had shouted 'Jai Hind! Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai!'

I don’t see any offence in this, replied the girl Kirtani. Just as you Portuguese say Viva Portugal, Viva Salazar, we Indians say, Jai Hind, Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai.

If in your eyes this constitutes an offence, you get my statement recorded and have me tried'.

The above stated episode makes many things clear. Firstly, women in Goa were not silent spectators, to the injustice committed by Portuguese rule, but were active participants in the liberation struggle of Goa along with men. Secondly, they were not only proud of their country India but, by emphasizing the words, 'Konkani Uloi', they also wanted to uphold their self-respect and dignity as Goans. Thirdly, women were to be seen no longer as the weaker sex, but were equally respected with men. Fourthly, they would henceforth play an important role in liberating Goa from colonial rule.

The words of Ms. Kirtani is forcefully analysed by a freedom fighter in the following sentence, 'He (police Commandant) asked her why she shouted Jai Hind to which she replied that if Viva Salazar brought pride to the heart of the Commandant, Jai Hind gave spirit to fight for her freedom'. Thus the voice of Women in Goa was loudly heard in Goa for the first time during the Portuguese rule. I shall discuss i.e. 'The Gendered Face Of the Liberation Struggle' in terms of four themes;

(i) Background to women’s involvement, (ii) Civil Disobedience Movement and women, (iii) Liberation struggle & women, and (iv) Women’s participation in the struggle (1946 – 61).


Background to the Women’s involvement:

The sudden upsurge of nationalist sentiments on the part of women in Goa during the 18th June 1946 movement needs to be explained in terms of their status in society and the impact of various factors which led to their involvement in the liberation struggle in Goa. Society played a very important role in the life of women in Goa. It controlled their behaviour. During Portuguese rule Hindu women, rather than going out and mixing with others in society, preferred to stay at home. Catholic women, in contrast, were more outgoing and liberal minded, unlike the Hindu women and took part freely in the feasts arranged on various occasions, talked with men, and danced merrily with them. Due to this one found a lot of Catholic women who were educated, employed, and who participated in social activities with men. The progress of Hindu and Catholic women in the 1930s is very well expressed in the following words:

‘If we think about the progress of women in 1930 or little further, in 1935, there were seven Catholic women doctors, eight Catholic women who had completed their pharmacy course and sixty-nine who were government primary school teachers. Besides this, many Catholic women were employed in government offices. Hindu women in Goa never reached this position or posts. How would they? Their education never went beyond primary education. At the age of 15-16 years they were married. They were not free to roam outside their homes. They were afraid of Portuguese (pakles).’

This is evident from the participation of Catholic and Hindu women in the liberation struggle of Goa. Those Hindu women who were involved in the struggle were less educated may be till seventh standard or matric. On the other hand, Catholic women were more educated because of which they were involved at the national and international level. For example, we can conclude this from the participation of Beatris Braganza and Berta Braganza. Berta Braganza was a member of the Goa Political Convention, Indian Association of Afro-Asian Solidarity and All India Peace council, and Beatris Braganza was also involved in the Goan politics at national and international level. Whereas, Hindu women were mostly involved in politics at the local level.

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The duties attributed to a Hindu woman in the family was restricted to what is called as 'Chul and Mul' meaning 'chullah' (generally it means home or household) and children. They hardly attended any functions of public or social importance. Only on the occasions of Haldi-Kumkum (function of married woman), Puja (religious function), wedding ceremonies, Jatra festivals, they were seen out of their houses. The work, such as going to markets, etc., was essentially done by men. Few Hindu women would be seen in the market. Women going out or going to market were seen with suspicion and labelled as having bad character. This was the position of women in society and family during Portuguese rule. Women were always treated as dependent socially and economically on men for their status. A girl was dependent on her father before her marriage and then on her husband after her marriage. They did not have a separate or independent identity of their own. Two factors may be held responsible for their dependent status in society and family, during Portuguese rule. They are (i) the inherent conservative nature of Hindu families and (ii) the Portuguese rule. Since society and family controlled the behaviour of a Hindu woman during Portuguese rule, it was very difficult for them to take their own decisions and suddenly come out of these bonds and participate in social and political activities. The girl before her marriage was a great responsibility on her parents. Discussions about her marriage would begin once she attained the age of puberty. In the villages, girls were married at the age of 16-17 years. The duty of a girl was to quietly listen to the advice of her family members and adopt the career of housewife. The question of her pursuing higher studies or selecting some other career, would not arise under this type of family system.

In addition to this, Portuguese rule was also responsible for confining Hindu women within the household in Goa. Since the rulers of the land were foreigners, who could not be trusted, due to the fear of falling prey to the lust of these foreigners, women had to spend their life within the four walls of their houses. For most of the Hindu families in

5 Regarding the duties of women in Goa during Portuguese rule, I have been greatly benefited from the interviews of women Freedom fighters in Goa such as Smt. Shashikala Hodarkar, Smt. Suryakanti Fal Desai, Smt. Sharad Gude, etc.
Goa, especially so called respectable Hindu families, women were considered as the basis of the new generation and thus they should be protected and their sanctity preserved. There was always a fear of the presence of Portuguese people in the villages and thus the houses provided them security. Both these factors contributed to determining the position of woman within the society and family. As Shri. Rambhau Kakodkar, one of the participants in the liberation struggle of Goa notes, it was very difficult for women to take part in the freedom movement. Parents never encouraged their daughters. If you find some of these women coming forward to participate in the freedom struggle, they have done it on their own.6

The following paragraph would throw light on the position of women and their participation in the civil Disobedience movement in Goa.

'One thing had happened due to this (18th June 1946) movement. Women have crossed the threshold of their houses. Until this moment, the world of women of respected Hindu families was their home. Only on the occasions of wedding ceremonies they used to travel. They were not to be seen on social occasions and other functions of social importance. After the schools, young girls used to help their mothers, aunts in the houses. But due to Dr. Lohia's movement, revolution took place in them. They participated in demonstrations, shouted slogans and by participating in satyagraha; they got themselves arrested. The credit of woman's emancipation (in Goa) goes to this movement'.7

The number of women who were totally committed to the liberation movement was not in equal proportion to men politicians or even to the total female population.8 According to the population census of 19509, out of the total population of Goa 5,47,448 men accounted for 47% and women for 53%. There were 88.8 men for every 100 women. Except Marmugao and Sanguem, all other Mahals (Talukas) accounted for more female population than male. Although the female population was more, it was not so easy for women in Goa to suddenly come out of the bonds of society and family, to take part in the liberation struggle. Still they showed courage and determination and took decision on

their own to defy the Portuguese rule in Goa. Perhaps this was the product of the Nationalist movement. ‘Nationalism transform the subservient, uneducated and secluded upper class woman of the nineteenth century into the articulate, educated woman of the mid twentieth century active in professions and public life’10. Political consciousness among the woman in Goa was stimulated mainly by three factors: (a) the Indian National Movement (INM) and its leadership, (b) education and (c) women themselves.

As in the case of men, the women in Goa were largely influenced by the INM and its leader Mahatma Gandhi. The news of success of INM was propagated mainly through the Indian newspapers, Marathi as well as English, which were circulated secretly and sometimes even smuggled from across the border. The reading of these newspapers by elders and by young boys and girls in their houses was a source of encouragement. Sometimes the discussions on the Indian freedom struggle among the friends and family members in the household had a great impact on the young girls at home. Jyoti, alias Malu Deshpande, a participant in the freedom struggle describes this impact, thus,

‘My father Raghuvir Srinivas Kamat, belonged to a village called Madkai. He had studied his lyceum and was impressed by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Nehru and many others. As a child, I remember that he used to receive many newspapers from Bombay and Poona and did extensive reading. Further he also remained absent from home. Then the elder people in the family used to say that he has been arrested for ‘Jai-Hind’ activities. I was studying in the Marathi school that time and believed that my father had done something similar to what Tilak and Agarkar had done as they fought for their country. All this had a great impact on us’.11

In addition to the INM serving as an inspiration Goan woman also drew her ideas from the education they received during the Portuguese rule. Just as there were Government Portuguese schools there were English as well as Marathi schools in Goa. Many women had access to Portuguese, Marathi as well as English education. English education especially opened the new doors to Goan girls and boys. In these schools, the students were informed about Indian history and the rich cultural heritage, which made

10 Stephens, Julie. ‘Feminist Fiction, A Critique Of the Category ‘Non Western Woman In Feminist Writings In India’ Guha, Ranajit (ed) (1987). Subaltern Studies V, Writings on South Asian History & Society, Delhi, Oxford University Press. p. 104
11 Interview with Freedom fighter Jyoti Deshpande. (December 1999).
the students proud. The same thing happened in Marathi schools too. The English schools were mostly started by Catholic missionaries whereas Marathi schools were mostly private in nature. By 1930-35, the number of boys and girls who attended schools was almost equal. Marathi schools like that of English schools played an important role in rousing the patriotic sentiments among their students.

The growth of English institutions was so swift, that in 1934 there were thirty-six institutions, out of which fifteen were started by Hindu social reformers and, eight by Catholics. There were convent schools for girls, which used to impart education in English language. On the similar pattern, there were Marathi schools, which used to impart education only to girls. Besides this, majority of villages in Goa had their own private Marathi schools, which imparted education to the village children. There were no school buildings as such in the villages but the temples or houses were converted into classrooms for temporary purposes.

Teachers were not paid by a regular salary but accepted whatever they got in cash or in kind from the parents. It was more like that of voluntary or social service. Teachers, if coming from other parts of Goa or India used to stay at the houses of the local people who used to look after their daily needs such as food, clothing and shelter. These schools played an important role as most of the young girls, educated in these schools actively participated in the liberation struggle of Goa. Many a times, these teachers used to be staunch nationalists. They used to prepare the students with the objective of making them patriots as most of the teachers hailed from India. Recollecting the role of her teacher in her life, Ms. Sharada Savoikar said,

"In the village of Savoi-Verem, we had a teacher called Mohan Ranade. He had come from India mainly for the purpose of Goa's liberation of which I came to..."

1 Interview with Shri. Rock Santana Fernandes. (AGD).
14 These schools were Mahila Nutan Vidyalaya, Adarsh Vanita vidyalaya in Margao, Kanyashala in Panaji. Interview with Smt. Lalita Kantak. Lalita Kantak was the student of Adarsha Vanita Vidyalaya. Berta Braganza was their teacher.
15 Interview with Smt. Sharada Savoikar. (December 1999)
16 Interview with Smt. Sharada Savoikar. (December 1999)
17 Interview with Freedom Fighter Smt. Sharada Savoikar. (December 1999)
know much later. As a teaching method, he used to conduct Bal-Sabhas (meeting of students) on every Saturdays, he used to select the topics (especially related to India’s Freedom Struggle) and used to encourage us to come forward and speak on the topic. Besides this, he used to tell us that India won its independence, now it was our duty to fight for our independence (in Goa). He used to tell us about the positive features of swaraj and negative features of colonialism. As we were young children, his teachings had a deep impact on our minds. 18

Thus education and the role played by nationalist teachers encouraged these girls from remote villages such as Madkai, Savoi-Verem, Poinguinim, etc., to come forward and challenge the Portuguese rule. In these schools students were made proud about the India’s struggle for Independence, the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose, and others in it, the dedication of the Indians, etc. It also taught them about the significance of freedom, nationalism, self-dependence, etc.

Another striking aspect of the women’s participation in the liberation struggle of Goa is the impact the women nationalists had on Goan women. A woman can be impressed more by women who were in the liberation struggle of Goa, than by men. Some of the women, rather than taking the inspiration from their fathers and brothers, they took the inspiration from women nationalists such as Pramilabai Kant Jambaulikar, Sindhutai Deshpande, Sudhatai Joshi, Ambikabai Dandekar and others.

Pramilabai Kant Jambaulikar and Sudhatai Joshi were basically Goans. Pramilabai Kant Jambaulikar was from Poinguinim, Canacona and was married to Kanta Jambaulikar from Margao. Leaders of INM such as Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru influenced her during her stay in Bombay. She was active in politics of Goa even prior to 18th June 1946 movement for civil liberties. 19 Being a woman of free thought, she came directly in contact with Gandhians such as Purushottam Kakodkar. As a result she became a member of ‘Goa Seva Sangh’. She was the first woman in Goa to actively participate in the activities of Goa Seva Sangh like spinning and weaving of Khadi, wearing of Khadi sarees, praying,

18 Interview with Smt. Sharada Savoikar. (December 1999)
19 Interview with Sulochana Katkar, the daughter of Freedom Fighter Smt. Pramilabai Kant Jambaulikar. (October 1999)
ceremonial flag hoisting, etc. She played an important role in the civil disobedience movement in 1946-47 in Goa. These inculcated in Goan women, the spirit of non-violence, patriotism and importance of liberty, self-reliance.

Sudhatai Joshi, who played an active role in the liberation struggle of Goa during the mid-50s, was the wife of freedom fighter Shri. Mahadev Shastri Joshi. She, who went to Poona in 1935\(^{20}\), settled there, but came to Goa clandestinely to participate in the satyagraha movement. She was elected as the president of the ninth annual session of NC(G) which was held in Mapusa on 6\(^{th}\) April 1955. She was then arrested and jailed.

Sindhutai Deshpande and Ambikabai Dandekar hailed from India and had come down to Goa mainly for the purpose of Goa’s liberation from Portuguese rule. Being Indian nationals they were influenced by India’s freedom struggle. Sindhutai Deshpande with her other family members was active in the Indian freedom struggle and especially in the Quit-India movement of 1942.\(^{21}\) While appreciating the role of Sindhutai Deshpande, Ms. Shashikala Almeida remembers,

‘Sindhutai Deshpande was very active in organizing the women in the liberation struggle of Goa in the mid-50s. She had established contacts with many women and girls. It was due to her I could participate in the liberation struggle’.\(^{22}\)

Another participant, Suniti Divkar remembers,

‘My sister Srimati Divkar was in prison. She was sentenced to nine months of imprisonment. Shanta Hede, Shashikala Almeida, Mitra Bir, Sindhutai Deshpande were her friends. They used to come to our house sometimes. One day Sindhutai Deshpande said to me that your elder sister has gone to prison. And now it is your duty as a sister to follow her foot-steps. I was 17 years old then. I believed in whatever she said. I told her, I am ready to come and one day left home to participate in the liberation struggle’.\(^{23}\)

If we evaluate the participation of women in Goa, majority of them were motivated by Sindhutai Deshpande such as Smt. Celina Olga Moniz of Panjim, Srimati Divkar, Shalini Lolienkar, Shashikala Hodarkar, etc. ‘She behaved as a child with children and elderly

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\(^{21}\) Ibid pp. 87, 88.

\(^{22}\) Interview with Shashikala Hodarkar alias Almeida.

\(^{23}\) Interview with Suniti Divkar. NC(G) (May 1997)
with elders’, remembers Suryakanti Fal Desai. She was a great motivating force and the credit of preparing Goan girls in the 1950s for the liberation movement goes to her.

Ambikabai Dandekar, aged seventy had come down to Goa specially to participate in the liberation struggle. Her mere presence was itself an encouraging factor for the girls and women in Goa. Kumudini Kavlekar remembers Ambikabai Dandekar while telling about her participation in the liberation struggle of Goa,

‘I went to the camp of NC(G) at Maneri. There I met Sudhatai Joshi and Ambikabai Dandekar, along with whom I was to participate in the satyagrahi conference at Mapusa on 25th November 1955. I was impressed with the spirit of Ambikabai Dandekar. She was seventy and had become so old that even she could not stand properly. If she, being an Indian national could come for us in Goa it would be shame on young girls like us who lag behind in participating in the freedom struggle’.

In addition to these women nationalists who took upon themselves the initiative to participate in the liberation struggle of Goa, there was also a small group of women who were involved in the liberation struggle mainly due to their husbands who were nationalists. As their husbands or sons or brothers were involved in the movement these women indirectly helped them in their efforts in the liberation of Goa from Portuguese rule. For some women it was just their ‘patidharma’, duty towards the husband, but for some it was an opportunity to express their nationalism. In the words of Rajani Naik, wife of Shri. Kanta Naik,

‘Within one month of my marriage, I was involved in the struggle. I accompanied my husband wherever he went for the cause of Goa’s liberation. Sometimes due to frustration I used to tell him to leave all this and go home. But he never used to listen to me. He used to tell me to go if I was not interested in all this. But I supported my husband and always lived with him and worked with him’.

Civil Disobedience Movement and Women

Beginning with their role in the civil disobedience movement, which continued for about two months from 1946, women played an active part openly for the first time in the history of Goa. After the arrest of Dr. Lohia, a number of men and women came forward to

24 Interview with Suryakanti Fal Desai. (November 1999)
25 Interview with Shashikala Hodarkar. (October 1999)
26 Interview with Kumudini Kavlekar. (May 1998)
27 Interview with Rajani Naik. (AGD) (October 2000)
break the law by shouting 'Jai-Hind' which resulted their arrests. Ms. Vatsala Kirtani was the first Goan girl who was arrested soon after the arrests of Dr. Lohia on 18th June 1946. This resulted into a swift and angry response from the women who took a morcha to the police station in Margao and demanded the release of Ms. Kirtani. The spirit and the courage of this girl was such that she refused to be released out and had to be bodily thrown out of the police station. The civil disobedience movement continued for days together, holding speeches, demonstrations, satyagrahas, hartals, etc. Umabai Shiroli, Berta Menezes Braganza were among women who defied the ban on civil liberties by speaking publicly. In her speech on 30th June 1946, at Margao Berta Menezes Braganza said, 'The present civil Disobedience movement is like a whiff of fresh air blowing into a dark suffocating dungeon which is just what our country has been reduced to during all these centuries of imperialist oppression and exploitation'.

She was then arrested along with Dr. T. B. Cunha, beaten-up mercilessly and was released.

Demonstrations were held under the leadership of Pramilabai Kant Jambaulikar and a number of women as well as schoolgirls participated wholeheartedly. Every morning, before 6:00 a.m., prayers were held in the Shanti-Kutin of Nilkanth Karapurkar in Comba area. After the prayers, as a way of spreading the message of nationalism among the Goans, Prabhat-feris were taken out in which a large number of school going children used to participate. It was during a procession on July 21 a young girl of VIth standard, aged 17 years, Miss Lalita Kantak who while leading a procession with a tri-colour flag in her hand was slapped on the face.

Remembering the incident, she notes,

'Iafter Dr. Lohia's arrest on 18th June 1946, it was decided by the leaders of the movement to organise Prabhat feris in the morning every day. Accordingly we all used to meet in 'Shanti-Kutin' of Nilkant Karapurkar at 6 o'clock in the morning for 'prathanas'. After that we used to participate. During Prabhat-feris we used to sing patriotic songs loudly. One day on 21st July the leader told me to head the procession of girls and boys. I was in front of all and I had a flag in my hand. We proceeded towards the Moti dongor in Margao. On reaching there, we found many police men, who were waiting for us.'

29 Menezes, Juliao op. Cit, p. 62.
30 Interview with Smt. Lalita Kantak.
Soon Commandant Figueredo approached me and started pulling the flag from my hands. Some invisible strength had come over me and I was equally adamant of not leaving the flag from my hands. In the effort of pulling the flag he broke it. The top most part was in his hands while the other part remained with me. On seeing my attitude he started beating me with a bayonet. Police also beat up the other satyagrahis. From that day onwards seeing the attitude of the police towards the women leaders succeeded therefore to stop the *Prabhat feris*.

The civil disobedience movement was peaceful as specified by Mahatma Gandhi. The main intention of taking out 'Prabhat feris' in the morning was to create a sense of patriotism in the minds of Goans. Due to this, every morning there were processions taken out in different villages around and in parts of Margao. But the response of the Portuguese towards this peaceful movement was violent. They attacked these processions with lathis and bayonets. School going girls such as Lalita Kantak, Sreemati Krisna Hegde, Vitha Hegde were beaten up mercilessly. In Panaji, teenage girls like Shashi Bandodkar and Ratan Khaunte were assaulted. On 21st July 1946, the leader of the procession Mrs. Pramilabai Jambaulikar was arrested and beaten. While in the police custody she was threatened by the police Commandant who said that if women acted like what Lalita Kantak did he would not make a distinction between a girl and a woman but would strip them.

The *Free Press Journal* of Bombay reported on the above incident on 26th July 1946 in the following way:

> 'The satyagraha movement in Goa has now taken a serious turn and the government authorities have taken up to brutal attacks on unarmed people. The movement is going according to the strict principle of non-violence, as advised by Mahatma Gandhi. All provocations on the part of government officials to misdirect the movement have proved futile'.

In this movement one can see the spirit of the young students, boys as well as girls. Although the heads of educational institutions in Goa were ordered to rusticate for one...

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31 Interview with Smt. Lalita Kantak.
year any student who takes part in political agitation. Students did not remain behind. It would not be wrong to say that the movement for civil liberties specially organization of Prabhat feris and holding of Prarthanas was essentially done by school going children with the help of some leaders. After the above mentioned incident it was decided by some leaders that they would resort to satyagraha and underground activities like distributing pamphlets, sticking posters, etc. Students also co-operated with this. However after the arrest of leaders like Purushottam Kakodkar, Laxmikant Bhembre, etc. the civil disobedience movement declined. After Dr. R. M. Lohia second visit to Goa on 29th September 1946, Goan women continued to engage themselves in civil disobedience movement. Ms. Jeevan Karapurkar, Ms. Ratan Desai and Ms. Indira Bhise were arrested for participating in a satyagraha at Margao.

Liberation Struggle And Women.

The liberation struggle of Dadra and Nagar Haveli in August 1954 and the declaration of the 15th August 1954 mass satyagraha gave a boost to the liberation struggle in Goa. A number of individual and group satyagrahas were held after the failure of mass satyagraha in 1954. National Congress (Goa), in an effort of keeping alive the movement on Goan soil, announced the organization of satyagrahas on the days of national importance like 26th January, 2nd October, birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, 17th February, 'Gaitonde Day', 15th August 'Independence day' etc. Together with men, women also participated to make these satyagrahas a success.

In this section, let me consider the three important events in which women took the initiative and lead. I would like first to give a detailed account of these events. Then I shall examine them carefully to establish their similarities and differences as well as to estimate the contribution of women to the liberation struggle of Goa. All these four events dealt with the practice of satyagraha and non-violence by women confronted by the fascist Portuguese rule. Further in all these events women played a primary role.

35 Ibid p. 58

In the words of Shashikala Hodarkar Almeida,

'Sindhutai told me that she would undertake satyagraha on 25th November 1954 in Panaji. She also told me to participate. I agreed. But when my mother came to know about this she refused me permission to participate in the satyagraha. My mother told her that as she was an Indian I, her daughter, would be jailed all alone. But she also said that if other Goan girls were also participating (many other girls were supposed to participate in this satyagraha), I, her daughter may also participate. Accordingly on 24th November Vishnu Naik, a Goan nationalist dropped Sindhutai at my residence at Margao, in the morning. After having lunch we left our home at about 2:00 p.m. to go to Mapusa. When we were just on the road, I saw Anamel Monteiro, the brother of Casmiro Monteiro, the Portuguese police officer, coming on a bicycle. I asked Sindhutai whether he knew her. Sindhutai told me that he did not know her. Learning this, I told her that we would not hide ourselves and continued walking. As he came close by I wished him to which he responded. Then we left for Mapusa and stayed at the house of a nationalist named Sanzgiri.

Next day was the 25th November. Sanzgiri went to the market in the morning. After coming home he informed us that Casmiro Monteiro had come to Mapusa and was searching the houses of the people. He told us to go to the temple which was just behind his house and to hide there. We accordingly went to the temple. After sometime, he informed us about the departure of Monteiro and we re-entered the house. After having lunch, Sanzgiri and Sindhutai left for Panaji where she was supposed to do the satyagraha. I stayed back and the next day went to Margao to my residence. Soon I was arrested and taken to the police station'.

Every year, the Portuguese government in Goa celebrated 25th November, the day of Reconquista with big celebrations. Don Afonso D’Albuquerque had captured the castle of Panjim (Panaji) for the first time in February 1510, taking the possession of island of Goa and leaving Salcete and Bardez to Timoja. Adil Shah, the King of Bijapur did not take a long time to drive back the conquerors. But on 25th November, of the same year, the Portuguese, better armed and once more helped by Timoja and the Raja of Garsopa reconquered the town.

This day of great importance to the Portuguese was celebrated by conducting a parade of police and military troops in front of the police headquarters in Panjim. Similar preparations were made in the year 1954 by the Portuguese authorities. But, when the Governor General Bernado Guedes stepped forward to receive the salute of

36 Interview with Shashikala Almeida. (October 1999)
the parade, Sindhutai Deshpande and Laxman Govekar marched forward with the flags in their hands and 'Jai-Hind' slogan on their lips. Goans commemorated 25th November as a 'black day' and organised satyagrahas at various places inside Goa. The revolutionary organization, Azad Gomantak Dal commemorated this day by taking out demonstrations on bicycles and shouting anti-Portuguese slogans in the border areas.

After this incident, both Sindhutai Deshpande and Laxman Govekar were arrested in Panjim. Shashikala Hodarkar who had accompanied Sindhutai to Mapusa was arrested and kept in police custody for a day and was released. Sindhutai Deshpande, as predicted by Shashikala's mother, was released soon on 14th January 1955 and pushed outside the Goa's frontier.

Portuguese police had adopted a liberal attitude towards the Indian nationals before the mass satyagraha of 1955. They used to take utmost care as far as Indian citizens were concerned as they always feared that a single wrong step on the part of Portuguese government might provoke the Indian government to react sharply and take a serious step against the Portuguese in Goa. Even in 1938 a political arrest and detention of a school teacher named Mr. Bhat, who was alleged to be engaged in communist activities in Goa, had created a general interest in all the circles.

Mr. Bhat was a British Indian national. There had been many instances where Indian nationals, after their arrests were taken to the border areas and released with a warning not to enter Goa. Even Sindhutai Deshpande, who was released on 14th January 1955 and pushed out of border areas, came back to Goa to offer Satyagraha on 16th April 1955. However, her plan was leaked out and she was arrested along with many other volunteers. On 8th February 1956 she was sentenced to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of 10 escudos per day for 2 years with expulsion to the Indian border after her

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39 Interview with Shri. V. N. Lawande.
40 Kunte, B. Gop. cit., p. 17.
Case II: Satyagraha of 17th February 1955.

'On 16th February 1955, Vilasini Prabhu had come to my residence all the way from Poinguinim (Canacona) to participate in the satyagraha the next day. Accordingly, on 17th February, Vilasini and I left our house at 10 o'clock in the morning. On the way, we met a person who interrupted me and asked, 'Where are you going with perfect preparations?' He had a doubt in his mind and a smile on his face. I said, 'Just going for a walk'. It did not take us long to reach the venue, near the market in Margao. After reaching there, I started distributing the pamphlets of NC(G) to the public. Vilasini, by holding the national flag in her hands started shouting the slogans like 'Quit-Goa', 'Jai- Bharat', 'Jai-Gomantak', etc. Within few minutes two policemen arrived on the scene and arrested both of us. At last my wish came true on this day. I had participated in the satyagraha which I could not participate on 25th November 1954 with Sindhutai Deshpande'.

These words of Shashikala Hodarkar\Almeida find echo in the expression of Suryakanti Fal Desai from Cancona,

'I wanted to participate in the liberation struggle of Goa. I had heard that many girls want to offer the satyagraha on 17th February 1955. So I sent my brother to Laxmi Poinguinkar who was associated with NC (G) to find out about the satyagraha so that I could accompany her. Everything was done clandestinely so that no one should get an idea about our adventure. Otherwise there would have been every possibility of our arrest before the satyagraha. My brother came back and told me that Laxmi would go to Margao by bus. I did not know that Gangadhar Lolienkar would also accompany us. I got into the bus near the temple of Lord Parashurama. This bus stop was away from my house, so that the people of Poinguinim would not come to know about this. Later we came to Margao in the evening and stayed in the hotel, 'Ithanaval' of Bhat. I had carried with me two sarees in the hand bag. Later on Laxmi gave me a 'shabnum bag'. For the first time, I had come to Margao. I did not know anything about the place. We stayed there at night and had our dinner. At night, Raghuvir Kamat and Kantak came to meet us. They gave us courage and told us not to be afraid of Portuguese.

On the next day i.e., on 17th February, we reached near the garden in the evening. One man asked us on the way, ‘where are you all going?’ ‘We told him that we were going to Borim to Laxmi’s sister’s place. And started walking. On reaching the garden, one policeman intercepted us and asked us the same question.

41 Shirodkar, P.P (vol II) op.cit., p. 88
42 Interview with Smt. Shashikala Hodarkar alias Almeida. (October 1999)
Our answer was the similar. But he had recognised us as satyagrahis with our ‘shabnum’ bags. Soon he said, ‘wait, I will teach you a lesson. At that moment, Laxmi tried to remove the flag from her bag. But she could not do so. He soon arrested us and took us to the police station’.43

National Congress (Goa) had decided to celebrate the first Gaitonde day on 17th February 1955 in Goa by organizing satyagrahas on a large scale. This had got a good response from the people. The programme adopted for this day was two fold, firstly to organise satyagraha in every village and town and secondly to offer non-cooperation to the Portuguese government in every possible way. Besides this, they had also called on the people of Goa to observe hartals, bandhs, etc.44 It was on this day in the previous year that Dr. Pundalik Gaitonde, a Goan nationalist and a member of NC(G) was arrested for his pro-Indian attitude.

On 14th February45 1954, Dr. Pundalik Gaitonde with his wife Mrs. Edila Gaitonde was invited for a farewell dinner party of a judge Semedo. However, on the same day, Mrs. Edila Gaitonde could not go for the function because of some reason. At the last moment, her empty chair was given to a barrister named Mr. Santa Rita Colaco. Although it was decided earlier that no political speeches would be made on such occasions, Mr. Colaco stood up to speak on the occasion. Known for his Portuguese loyalty, he congratulated and wished the Judge and at last uttered the following sentence, ‘You will one day remember this Portuguese land of Goa: Yes, for, here too is Portugal.’ (Aqui tambe’m e’ Portugal)46. The next voice that was heard was of that of Dr. Gaitonde, ‘Eu protest’ i.e., I Protest’.

These two words of Dr. Gaitonde created a sensation among the Goan nationalists. But these two words suggested the pro-Indian attitude of Dr. Pundalik Gaitonde with respect to Portuguese rule. And Portuguese government specially the police could not have excused Dr. Gaitonde for this. Thus he was arrested on 17th February 1954 and was deported to

43 Interview with Freedom fighter Smt. Suryakanti Fal Desai (November 1999.)
44 Sardesai, M. H. (vol II) op.cit., pp. 183, 184
45 Gaitonde, Edila (1987 ), In Search Of Tomorrow, Bombay: Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd. p. 100
46 Ibid. p. 100
Portugal along with his wife. He was tried in the Lisbon High court on 7th July 1954 on the charge of links with the nationalists. Later on he was sentenced to three months of imprisonment (including detention period) or fine of 40 Escudos per day in lieu of jail term and suspension of civil rights for 12 years. However he was released on 25th May 1955 and returned to India on 14th June 1956. This event had influenced the general public in Goa and hence 17th February was declared as Gaitonde Day. In the satyagraha on 17th February 1955 held the following year Goan women also took part.

Both the above mentioned satyagrahas were held on 17th February 1955, one in the morning and the one in the evening. This denotes the fact that there was no proper communication between the satyagrahis although they hailed from the same village. Vilasini Prabhu who participated in satyagraha, along with Shashikala Hodarkar\Almeida, came from Poinguinim. She had to come to the place of Shashikala on the previous day. Laxmi Poinguinkar and Suryakanti Fal Desai along with Gangadhar Lolienkar came to Margao on 17th February but stayed in a local ‘khanavol’ (hotel). At that time, two young girls of 17 and 23 years staying in a hotel for a night along with a man would have created many problems. But the fact that on that particular night, two Goan nationalists had come to hotel to give them courage and support for their satyagraha indicates the fact that preparations were already made by the nationalists for the stay of these satyagrahis in the hotel. Care was also taken so that the arrest did not take place before the practice of satyagraha.

Further both these batches of NC(G) practiced satyagraha at two different places in Margao at two different times. The first batch of Shashikala Hodarkar\Almeida and Vilasini Prabhu, who practiced satyagraha in the morning, atleast got sometime to distribute pamphlets and shout slogans before their arrests. But the later batch of Laxmi Poinguinkar, Suryakanti Fal Desai and Gangadhar Lolienkar did not even get the chance of removing the flag from their bags, forget about shouting the slogans and distributing pamphlets. After the satyagraha of Shashikala and Vilasini in the morning, the Portuguese police had become alert and they wanted to suppress the satyagraha movement with force. They could

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easily recognise the satyagrahis with the ‘shabnum’ bags which carried their clothes, flags, pamphlets, etc. Besides the satyagraha by women, Margao witnessed satyagraha by men nationalists, on the same day.\(^4\) People especially young boys and girls were seen with the suspicion and even an ordinary police constable had full freedom to arrest any person anytime, anywhere, and to detain him and take him into custody. The same thing had happened with these nationalists. They were first taken to the Margao police station and under the cover of darkness they were taken to the Panaji (Panjim) police station.

One more question that arises here is why these women selected Margao for the satyagrahas? Actually NC(G) had called upon the people of Goa to hold satyagrahas in their villages and towns. These girls, except Shashikala Hodarkar\(^6\) Almeida, came especially to Margao from Canacona Taluka for the satyagrahas. Suryakanti Fal Desai, who had never seen Margao before had to build up the courage to come to Margao from ‘Chavadi’ only for satyagrahas. Not only the declaration of NC(G) to offer satyagraha was done at Chavadi by NC(G) but it was held at Chavadi (Canacona) under the leadership of Vishwanath Lolienkar where twelve satyagrahis had participated.\(^49\)

Three reasons may be taken into consideration for the selection of Margao which was far away from Canacona. Firstly, Margao had historical importance. It was here that on 18\(^{th}\) June 1946 Dr. R. M. Lohia had inaugurated the last phase of liberation struggle in Goa. Thus organizing satyagraha at such places would have got more importance and publicity rather than organizing satyagrahas at some other places.

Secondly there was every possibility that these three girls who hailed from Canacona were not aware of the satyagraha that was to be held at Canacona as secrecy was held to be most important. But even this might have a little importance because satyagrahas in Canacona Taluka were better organised, than in other places in Goa. Specially the villagers of Poinguinim, Mashe, Chavadi, Loliem in Canacona had atleast one of their family members in the NC(G).\(^50\)
Thirdly, the most important reason may be that these girls wanted to avoid the villagers who would have looked down upon them. Being women, all of them had taken care to hide their family identity. That Suryakanti Fal Desai, otherwise a relaxed and home-loving girl, sent her brother to the home of Laxmi Poinguinkar to inquire about the satyagraha, clearly shows the orthodox nature of the villages in Canacona. Even the nationalists who had come to meet Laxmi Poinguinkar in the ‘khanavol’ at Margao were surprised to see this girl, coming all the way from Canacona to Margao for satyagraha. Thus instead of participating in the satyagraha in their own villages they chose this place. What is more important here is to recognise the value of the words ‘Jai-Hind’ for these women nationalists and its impact on the Portuguese. The meaning of ‘Jai-Hind’ was not just to express their nationalist sentiments but also to demand freedom from the Portuguese rule. Even during the civil disobedience movement in June 1946, the shouting of ‘Jai-Hind’ by Ms. Vatsala Kirtani, which resulted in her arrest, was not just to break the Portuguese laws and demand the liberty to express nationalist feelings but had rather greater meaning attached to it. Shouting of ‘Jai-Hind’ suggested that Portuguese should leave Goa and Goa should be integrated into the Indian Union. Portuguese authorities were stunned and shocked when they heard this slogan under the fascist rule in Goa. They understood that the time for their departure had come. This is evident during the arrest of Ms. Vatsala Kirtani. The police commandant repeatedly asked Vatsala: ‘Why are you doing this? (She was shouting the slogan) This land is yours and we shall one day quit it’. Thus the activities of women nationalist during this period were restricted to the shouting of anti-Portuguese and pro-Indian slogans and distributing the pamphlets of NC(G). These were some of the techniques of peaceful resistance and were identified as offering satyagraha by women in Goa.

**Case III: Satyagraha of 6th April 1955.**

As recorded by Kumudini Kavlekar

‘A small satyagraha session was to be held on 6th April 1955 in front of Maruti temple at Mapusa. Two days before this satyagraha, Shalini Lolienkar and I
were taken clandestinely to the house of Dina Chende at Mapusa. Ambikabai Dandekar and Sudhatai Joshi were staying in the house of some other nationalist. We did not know about her, as to where she stayed.

On 6th April 1955 there was Jatra festival of the God Maruti at Mapusa. And in front of the same temple the satyagraha session was to be held. We were altogether thirteen out of which nine were men nationalists. The police were informed about the place and the time of the satyagraha session. In order to arrest us they were supervising the entire area. At about 4 o’clock in the evening we went to the venue and got ourselves mixed with the huge crowd that had gathered for the Jatra festival. We had flags in our hands. So, one volunteer brought a stool on which Sudhatai Joshi stood. Loudly she spoke and shouted ‘Jai Hind’. After 5-10 minutes of slogan shouting police appeared on the scene and arrested all of us. We were taken to the police station.51

Mrs. Sudha Joshi was elected as the President of the ninth annual session of National Congress (Goa). This session was held openly in Mapusa on 6th April 1955 in the presence of large number of people. Although, she was arrested before finishing her speech the copies of the text of her address were distributed to the people.52 In her address she called upon all Goans as well as Indians to participate in the liberation of Goa. She also warned Portugal in the following words,

‘Let the Portuguese not forget that for sixty years they were ruled by Spaniards and they had to fight for their freedom....Dr. Salazar must not misunderstood our peaceful intentions for therein lies danger. The determination of Goans and Indians to liberate Goa is bound to succeed. No prestige must stand in the way of Portugal to concede freedom to Goans’.53

On the same day i.e., on 6th April 1955 Margao witnessed three satyagrahas at different places but at the same time. These satyagrahas were at three different places in order to confuse the Portuguese police. The satyagraha batch of Margao was led by Fabiao de Costa. They were altogether seven satyagrahis. The satyagraha batch of Cuncolim was led by Vishnu S Angle and there were nine satyagrahis in this batch. The third batch was led by Narayan V. Kurade. The Margao batch went to the railway station, Cuncolim batch went to the market at Margao. And exactly at 4:45 p.m. all these three batches with the

51 Interview with smt. Kumudini Kavlekar. (May 1998)  
flags in their hands started shouting slogans of 'Jai-Hind', 'Jai-Gomantak'. When the news reached the police station in Margao, all were arrested and imprisoned.

Two resolutions were released from the office of NC(G) from Sawantwadi after the satyagraha session of 6th April 1955 which emphasized, 'that the desire, efforts and sacrifices of the people of Goa are not motivated by any feelings of antagonism, superiority or any purpose other than that of securing freedom for our people' and called upon the 'Portuguese government to quit Goa forthwith and hand power to the people'. The second resolution, after response to satyagraha urged the people of Goa to greater efforts and sacrifices to the cause of freedom. 55

I have discussed the three above mentioned events at length. They give us some understanding of the psychology as well the spirit of Goan women in terms of their participation in the liberation struggle.

The first important observation that can be made out from the above accounts is the extent of women's participation from Canacona Taluka, the southernmost Taluka in Goa. This Taluka had always remained quite aloof from the main stream of Goa due to its geographical location. 56 It is surrounded by the Arabian sea from the west, Karwar is the state of Karnataka from the south, Quepem from the north and Sanguem Taluka from the north-east. However, due to its vicinity to Karwar the activities there, especially the activities of the Indian National Movement under British India, had a great influence on the nationalists from Canacona Taluka. Kumudini Kavlekar was even the member of Seva Dal activities 57 conducted under the banner of INM in Karwar. Pramilabai Kant Jambaulikar who hailed from Canacona was the first woman in Goa to participate in the activities of Goa Seva Sangh. Her leading part in the political and social sphere of Goa, before 18th June 1946 movement for civil liberties, attracted a group of young girls and women to constructive activities such as spinning and weaving of Khadi sarees as a symbol of patriotism. Among a

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57 Interview with Kumudini Kavlekar (May 1998)
number of constructive activities that were launched by Mahatma Gandhi to generate the non-violent strength among the Indian masses, hand spinning and hand weaving had a primary importance. The motive behind this was to develop a 'consciousness of the ideals of Ahimsa, self-reliance and self-sufficiency'.

These activities had helped to launch a non-violent peaceful struggle in British India. And this non-violent struggle led to India's independence from British rule. Hand-spinning and hand-weaving in Goa under Pramilabai Jambaulikar marked the beginning of nationalist activities as well as it was considered to be the beginning of the rise of political consciousness among the Goan women. And this was probably the main basis for the inculcation of the spirit of non-violence among Goan women who took part in large numbers in the civil disobedience movement in Goa. The credit for women's participation during the civil disobedience movement, the moral strength that was generated in them certainly goes to these women from Canacona Taluka.

The second generation of women who played an active role in the liberation struggle represented Canacona Taluka in large numbers. These were young girls such as Suryakanti Fal Desai, Kumudini Poinguinkar alias Kavlekar, Laxmi Poinguinkar, Shalini Lolienkar, Vilasini Prabhu Mahale and a woman named Shobha Prabhu Desai. All these women were the members of NC (G) and ardent nationalists. Although they belonged to orthodox families from the villages of Poinguinim, Loliem, Mashe, etc. from Canacona, they built up the courage to participate in the struggle sometimes against the wishes of their parents. Although many girls had shown their willingness to participate they could not do so due to the strict restriction which family members imposed upon them. Kumudini Kavlekar fled from her house in order to participate in the satyagrahi conference that was held in Mapusa on 6th April 1955 as she was detained in the house when she was willing to offer satyagraha on 17th February 1955 in Margao.

The second observation from the preceding accounts concerns the issue of leadership among women nationalists. From the discussions, we can conclude that women had a

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59 Interview with Smt. Kumudini Kavlekar. (May 1998)
good leadership who could motivate them to participate in large numbers. Few Goan women could take part in the satyagraha and other underground activities. During the civil disobedience movement Pramilabai Jambaulikar gave a lead to women’s participation. However that was not sufficient. She could not do any further work for Goa’s cause as she went to Bombay (Mumbai) and settled there. Thus the very foundation which was laid down by this woman was incomplete and this is the reason why the woman did not come forward during the liberation struggle in mid 50s in large numbers.

A new group of women had emerged in the mid 50s who fought against Portuguese sovereignty in Goa. It was during this time, Ms. Sindhutai Deshpande, an Indian national encouraged young Goan girls to come forward and lead the movement. However her constant arrests and detention kept her away from mobilizing these women in large numbers.

Goan women had fought under the banner of nationalism in Goa. Though they had a good leadership, due to the lack of communication, the resistance of these women was more an individual than a group affair. During the satyagrahas, we find mainly individuals. For example in the satyagraha of 25th November 1954 only Sindhutai Deshpande participated and although many Goan girls were willing to offer satyagraha, they could not do so. In the satyagrahas of 17th February 1955 i.e., ‘Gaitonde Day’ satyagrahas were offered by two women each i.e., in the morning by Shashikala Hodarkar\Almeida and Vilasini Prabhu and in the evening by Suryakanti Fal Desai and Laxmi Poinguinkar. On 6th April 1955, Smt. Sudhatai Joshi with other women and men nationalists organised the conference of NC (G) publicly. The satyagrahas of 6th April 1955 and 17th February 1955 are the best examples of the satyagrahas organised and undertaken by the women nationalists where men nationalists played a secondary role. Let me also mention here the role of Mrs. Libia Lobo Sardesai, who was the member of Voice Of Freedom Of Goa, an underground radio station. She, as an individual worked underground for nearly about six years from 1955 to 1961 living in jungle areas on India-Goa borders. We will discuss about her contribution as a member of Voice Of Freedom in the Chapter Six ‘Voice Of Freedom Of Goa’ in detail.
Secrecy was held to be the most important factor in Goa, at all times during the nationalist activities whether peaceful, non-violent or violent. However, secrecy played an important role even in the Indian National Movement when it was conducted underground during violent activities. But satyagraha and non-violence under Mahatma Gandhi had no place for secret activities. In contrast in the nationalist activities in Goa which were conducted under the banner of NC(G) with its strategy of satyagraha and non-violence, secrecy played an important role. This is clear indication of a deviation from the strategy of satyagraha and non-violence of Mahatma Gandhi who maintained that the secrecy should not have any place while fighting for political freedom. Secrecy, in his opinion, was a sin and a symptom of violence, which should be avoided and underground activities, was for him a taboo. In his opinion, ‘secrecy’ aimed at building a wall of protection round the individual who practiced it (satyagraha and non-violence). Ahimsa disdained such protection. It functioned in the open, even in the face of the heaviest odds.60

However, the importance of secrecy in the liberation struggle of Goa was considered mainly for two reasons. Firstly, unlike British India, Goa was under the Fascist rule of the Salazarist regime in Portugal. There was no place even for elementary civil liberties. Even asking for civil liberties was the greatest crime in the eyes of Portuguese. By keeping in view the advice of Mahatma Gandhi, Goa had to fight for civil liberties by non-violent means. As we have seen earlier Gandhi’s advice for Goa was:

‘Swaraj cannot be attained by any direct actions of citizens, whether violent or non-violent. In non-violent action, success is assured where every inhabitant is a hero ready to lay down his or her life. It is less to be thought of in Goa than in the more numerous and the better seasoned and awakened British India. Therefore the clearest possible issue of civil liberty must be kept steadily in view’.61

But the result of adopting a non-violent struggle resulted in the Portuguese colonialist reacting harshly towards the satyagrahis. Arrest and severe punishment, with deportation in some cases were meted out to them. And within two months after the commencement of the civil disobedience movement in 1946, Portuguese could suppress the civil disobedience

60 Pyarelal, op.cit., p. 37.
61 Kunte, B. G. op.cit., p. 57.
movement completely by arresting its prominent leaders such as Laxmikant Bhembre, Purushottam Kakodkar and others. The Gandhian Satyagraha was practiced on the soil of Goa, when liberation struggle of Goa took the momentum after the liberation of Dadra and Nagar Haveli. Many Goan women took part in these satyagrahas, which cannot be held as pure form of Satyagraha but the modified form or 'Neo-Gandhism' or 'Neo-Satyagraha'. These modified techniques included sabotage on the widest scale, underground activities and organization of parallel government, during India's freedom struggle.

The second reason responsible for the complete secrecy of the satyagraha and non-violent activities was the Portuguese spies who might have reported to Portuguese police and crushed the movement before it began. The fear of the spy among the Goan nationalist is very well explained in the following words:

'There was always a fear that the police might be just around the corner. Everyone was haunted by the ghost of a spy. The policeman was there, of course, there was no escaping his presence even for a moment, but the spy could well have been the priest, the teacher, the doctor-why even your kith and kin'.

This is not an exaggeration. These had been many instances where the arrest had been made before the actual practice of satyagraha on account of the leakage of news to the Portuguese administration. For example, Smt. Celina Olga Moniz was arrested before the actual practise of satyagraha as she was carrying National flags, pamphlets and other nationalist material. So if every time the satyagraha was cancelled due to the arrests Portuguese would have been successful in propagating that no movement for the liberation was going on and that the Goans are happy under Portuguese rule.

Thus in order to show the Indians as well as the world that Goans were fighting for freedom it was necessary to keep everything secret. Even the nationalists kept their identification as satyagrahis or patriotic feeling secret from their family members. For eg., Rajanikant Mahatme and Shashikala Hodarkar lived in the same house as they were cousins. But, both were unaware of the fact that they were working for Goa's cause.

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63 Telkar, Shridhar (1962) *Goa Yesterday and Today*, Bombay: Published by Shridhar Telkar for Telkars' Features, p. 23
In the words of Rajanikant Mahatme,

The secrecy was held to be the most important aspect of Goa's liberation struggle. Though Shashikala and I was cousins, both did not have even the slightest doubt this each of us were separately involved in freedom struggle. The same was the case with one of my friends. I did not know that he was active in the liberation struggle of Goa and so was he unaware of my participation.64

It was only when Casmiro Monteiro came to their house in search of Sindhutai Deshpande that Rajanikant Mahatme learnt that Shashikala was involved in the liberation struggle. He fled away from his house thinking that Monteiro had come to arrest him. Casmiro learnt from his brother, Annamel that both Shashikala and her mother had gone to Panaji to meet her brother who was in jail. Annamel Monteiro had mistaken Sindhutai for Shashikala’s mother, whereas Casmiro Monteiro after interrogation learnt from Vishnu Naik, that it was Sindhutai Deshpande with whom he had gone to Shashikala Hodarkar’s place. Further, after having a doubt about the veracity of Shashikala’s mother’s answer that they had gone to their native place at Sanvordem, he set out the next morning neither for Panjim nor for Sanvordem but to Mapusa to arrest both of them. After his unsuccessful attempt of locating them he returned to Margao and Sindhutai was able to practice satyagraha on 25th November 1954.65

The same was the case with the satyagraha of 6th April 1955. Although the Portuguese were informed about the date when Sudhatai Joshi would inaugurate the ninth session of NC(G) at Mapusa, the place and the time was kept secret. The arrival of Sudhatai Joshi, Ambikabai Dandekar, Shalini Lolienkar and Kumudini Kavlekar was also kept secret to avoid their arrests.66 Even Kumudini Kavlekar who stayed at the house of Dina Chende on 5th April 1955 did not where Sudhatai Joshi and Ambikabai Dandekar were kept. As it was announced by NC(G) earlier that a satyagraha session will be held on 6th April 1955 at Mapusa, Portuguese administration was well set to curb this session. Even a prize was announced for the capture of Sudhatai Joshi before the satyagraha session. And Portuguese

64 Interview with Shri. Rajanikant Mahatme. (January 1998.)
65 Interview with Smt. Shashikala Almeida Hodarkar. (October 1999.)
66 Interview with Smt. Kumudini Kavlekar. (May 1998.)
police had kept a strict vigil on the traffic going to Mapusa. But in spite of this strict vigil Sudhatai Joshi and Ambikabai Dandekar reached Mapusa on 5th April 1955. On the other hand, Portuguese police arrested many women to whom they considered to be 'Sudhatai' and were released later on as it was proved to be wrong.67

However, the difference between the satyagraha of 25th November 1954 and 6th April 1955 lies in the fact that the former was conducted against the sovereign claim of the Portuguese whereas, the satyagraha of 6th April 1955 was an open conference of NC(G) which required the co-operation and participation of a large number of nationalists. Thus, the satyagraha of 25th November 1955 was kept secret whereas the satyagraha of 6th April 1955 was announced earlier so that it should become a great success.

I have discussed at length, the participation of women in the satyagraha movement in Goa against the Portuguese rule. This makes clear that women in Goa were not involved in the revolutionary or violent activities. They were not in favour of violence. Women has been called by Mahatma Gandhi as the 'incarnation of Ahimsa'. In the words of Sharada Savoikar, I wanted to participate in the satyagraha movement under the banner of NC(G). I felt very bad when I was arrested in the murder of Custodio Fernandes. Never in my life would I have dreamt of killing somebody. I do not believe in violence. I don't believe that violence can solve any problem.68

However there was a group of women, who participated in the underground activities, which should not be mistaken for revolutionary or violent activities. These underground activities included distribution of pamphlets, working as messengers, taking care of the families of Goan nationalists who were jailed, etc. The best example is that of Smt. Sharad Gude, a teacher in the school who used to collect funds from the people supporting the movement in order to take care of the families whose only head, or bread earner went to jail in the liberation movement of Goa. She used to even buy the medicine, clothes, etc. for their families, for which reason she had been also interrogated in the Margao police station.69

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67 Interview with Smt. Suryakanti Fal Desai. (November 1999.)
68 Interview with Smt. Sharada Savoikar. (December 1999.)
69 Interview with Smt. Sharad Gude (May 1999.)
It is believed by many nationalists in Goa, that few girls were directly involved in the violent activities and were members of Azad Gomantak Dal. They give examples of Shanta Hede, Mitra Bir and Sharada Savoikar being involved in these violent activities. However there is no proof to suggest this. Actually the Portuguese should be given the credit for making these non-violent satyagrahis as revolutionaries. The best example is that of Sharada Savoikar who was arrested by the Portuguese as being involved in the murder of pro-Portuguese in her village. Sharada Savoikar who was supposed to organise a satyagraha on 15th August 1955 with many other girls, was arrested earlier i.e. on 6th August 1955, for allegedly having links with revolutionaries and helping them in the murder of Custodio Fernandes.

In her words:

'I was in the orchard when my sister along with two policemen came in search of me. I was called home due to the raid on our house. At once, I reached home. I then found that police officer, Casmiro Monteiro had come along with 150 other policemen and was searching our house. When I reached home, he started inquiring: 'Are you involved in the killing of Custodio?' He asked me. 'I do not know any Custodio,' I answered. At the same time, my sister-in-law, who was made to sit in the veranda, got up and went inside to look at the milk which was kept on the stove. Monteiro also went after her and catching hold of her, brought her out and slapped her twice on her face. I was furious. I asked him how he dared to touch her. He asked me why she went inside. I said, this is our house and we will behave in whatever manner we like.

'Have you been appointed by your government to beat women in their houses? I asked Monteiro. His reply was "Yes", I will show you, why I have been appointed'. Then he asked us to show the armaments or pamphlets which we had. I told him that we have nothing. He then arrested my brother and me. That night we were kept in the house of Custodio and the next day both of us were taken to the Panaji (Panjam) police headquarters'.

Sharada Savoikar hailed from a village called Savoi in Ponda Taluka. This village of Savoi, with Verem another village, is not only known for bettlenuts, mangoes, etc., but also for its nationalist activities. Not only was the Azad Gomantak Dal active in this area, but it also had many people such as Sharada Savoikar who believed in non-violent

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26 Interview with Smt. Sharada Savoikar. (December 1999.)
satyagraha. Besides this the family of Sharada Savoikar was involved in the nationalist activities such as organizing meetings at their house, giving shelter to nationalists, etc. and due to this the Portuguese police were looking for a reason to arrest members of this family. It was in this village, on 15th August 1954, that an Indian tricolour was hoisted by a Goan nationalist named Vinayak A. Surlakar along with his associates on the Portuguese school building.71

This flag was later removed by a pro-Portuguese Custodio Fernandes, trampled upon, and then burnt by him. The Goan nationalists were furious and decided to kill him. Accordingly on the night of 22-23rd July 1955 they went to his house, knocked at the door and by taking a name of his friend asked him to open the door. Thinking that his friend was out Custodio Fernandes opened the door and AGD volunteers shot him to death. After this the Portuguese reacted sharply and arrested a number of people from the village of Savoi-Verem. With them Sharada Savoikar and her brother Ganapat Savoikar and Vishwanath Savoikar, were also arrested.

The AGD volunteers who were also active in this area were behind the murder of Custodio Fernandes. They were Mohan Ranade and Balkrishna Bhonsle72 with Prabhakar Vernekar and others. Manohar Apte, an active member of AGD, had assumed the name of Mohan Ranade during the liberation struggle of Goa. He was an Indian national and was a teacher in the village of Savoi. He was a constant motivating force for his students such as the young Sharada Savoikar. He was involved in the liberation of Silvassa on 1st August 1954 and participated in a number of armed attacks on police and customs outposts, mines and seized weapons and explosives for his organization. On 25th October 1955, while leading the attack on Betim police, he was wounded seriously in an encounter with Portuguese. He was later hospitalized, and on 29th December 1956 was sentenced to 26 years of rigorous imprisonment and deported to Portugal. He was then released only on 25th January 1969 and his continuous detention, even after the liberation of Goa, evoked widespread protest in the country.

72 Mhadeshwar, Nandini (1986) Goa Ladhyatil Virangana (Marathi), Goa: Directorate of Sports and Culture, Goa Daman and Diu, Panaji p. 62
Sharada Savoikar along with her brothers, was arrested for having links with the revolutionaries. She was beaten mercilessly in order to compel her to tell the names of her colleagues. She was released by mistake as the authorities confused her name with that of Sharad Shirvoikar. In order to evade re-arrest she crossed the border. Although generally, all women nationalists were peaceful and non-violent, a small group of women, especially married women whose husbands were involved in revolutionary activities had indirect links with AGD, they were never involved in the violent or terrorist activities. Their activities can be grouped under subaltern category like providing food and shelter to the Goan nationalist, acting as couriers, informing them about police activities and so on. Take the example of Mrs. Rajani Naik. Being the wife of Shri. Suryakant Naik, one of the founder members of AGD, who had escaped arrest and went underground to organise Dal’s activities from across the border. Mrs. Rajani Naik also crossed the border along with her husband and took up the responsibility of providing food and shelter to the Goan nationalists in Banda and later on at Belgaum. During the liberation struggle, many Goan freedom fighters had to live the life of underground workers due to the fascist nature of Portuguese rule. In order to avoid arrest and detention, general tendency of Goan nationalists was to cross the border and organise the movement from Bombay and Belgaum and Banda. In fact AGD activists used to plan the future course of terrorists activities from across the border and implement them in Goa. Mrs. Rajani Naik’s rented house at Banda was the hub of nationalists activities where no distinction was made between NC(G) nationalists who were non-violent and AGD volunteers who were revolutionaries. Lack of finance, health problems, insufficient rest and continuous work for 16 to 18 hours a day, did not deter her from supporting and looking after the big family of forty to fifty Goan nationalists?

Similar was the case of Mrs. Mogabai Naik. She was dragged into the nationalist activities due to her brother and son who were active members of AGD. Like Rajani Naik, she provided food and shelter to the freedom fighters and allowed them to hold secret meetings in her house when they were in Goa. She even carried their food on her head at their hide-

73 Interview with Smt. Rajani Naik.
outs when need arose. Kishoribai Harmalkar kept a close watch on police activities and informed the nationalists about their plans. She, like, Prema Purav even carried their arms, posters and pamphlets wherever required.

**Participation of Women in the Liberation Struggle. (1946-61)**

Although this fear of Portuguese police was there in the minds of Goans, it did not deter them from participating in the national activities. It is believed that many nationalists were badly tortured both mentally and physically in the police stations and even in the jails.

The fate of the women nationalist differed in the sense that if women nationalists belonged to NC (G) were arrested while practicing satyagraha they were treated humanely by the Portuguese. The reason for this was that their fight was more open and had nothing secret to hide from the Portuguese administration. But women nationalists who allegedly supported revolutionary groups such as the AGD, etc. were beaten mercilessly in the police stations as well as in the jails. Inhuman treatment was given to them so as to extract the information about their associates. They were beaten so much that their bodies were swollen and became black and blue. As if this was not enough, even the family members were brought to the police stations and were imprisoned and physically tortured. Three brothers of Sharada Savoikar, along with her father were imprisoned in order to punish the entire family for her involvement. Portuguese police did not restrict themselves to physical torture but used the weapon of mental torture against women nationalists. For eg. Mrs. Lilavati Naik, a member of NC(G) was detained in police custody for her nationalists activities. While in the police custody a dead body was shown to her and she was told that it was her husband’s body, which led to her nervous breakdown, from which she could not recover.

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74 Interview with Smt. Rajani Naik.
75 Interview with Smt. Shashikala Hodarkar/Almeida.
76 Interview with Smt. Sharada Savoikar. (December 1999.)
77 Shirodkar, P. P. (vol II) op.cit., p. 235.
Ms. Sharada Savoikar, who it was believed participated in the murder of pro-
Portuguese, remembers the atrocities the Portuguese committed against her:

'While in the custody, Casmiro Monteiro had tortured my brother and me so much
that we had turned black and blue. We could not even stand properly on our feet.
He was forcing both of us to tell the names of those who killed Custodio. Although,
we were aware of the names, we had kept our mouth shut. Once he brought my
brother to me and asked,
'Do you want your brother alive or will you tell the names?
I kept quiet. He said, 'I will beat you to die in custody'.'
I told him, 'you do whatever you want to. I will not tell the names'. To this he
replied, 'I will destroy your life in the custody'.
I am a vegetarian. Since he knew that I do not eat fish, he used to send me rice
sprinkled with fish-curry. For eight days, I was starving. But, for how long could I
starve? I then used to pick up the rice, which had not touched the curry and eat it.
For about six months, I was brutally tortured by him in police custody. They used to
beat us with 'cavalmari' (a whip) They had given the names of Nehru, Gandhi to
these cavalmari. And while beating they used to ask us, Nehru jai, Gandhi jai (you
want Nehru, you want Gandhi)'.

Casmiro Monteiro being proud of his European ancestry being a mestizo, had
become more Portuguese than the Portuguese themselves. He was well known in Goa
due to his brutality and sadism. He was very much faithful to his masters. And he
would go to any length to please them. The Portuguese i.e. reinois (the Portuguese of
noble lineage, those from the Kingdom) were actually the people of great respect and
always respected women in Goa. Once during the identification of Sindhutai Deshpande,
Monteiro slapped a Goan nationalist named Celina Olga Moniz on her face, to which
a Portuguese officer said that 'we never beat the women. But if the Goans only beat
you all what can we do?'. These are many such examples of the brutality committed
against the women by Casmiro Monteiro who never made a difference between a man
and a woman.

Besides the inhuman treatment that was meted out to the Goan women, many of
them suffered from various kinds of diseases mostly skin diseases, fever, cough, etc. due
to the unhygienic conditions in the police lock-ups and in the jails.

78 Interview with Smt. Sharada Savoikar.
79 Monteiro was of a mixed race, a mestizo.
80 Mhadeshwar, Nandini op.cit., p. 69.
Many of these women were directly taken to the police station in Panjim after arrest. In custody they were cramped for space. Seven women nationalist were detained in a small room with no proper sunlight and air. The rules were so strict that in the morning, at 4 o’clock, each one was given 15 minutes to answer nature’s call, to bathe, wash clothes, etc. which was not sufficient. These circumstances had forced Sindhutai Deshpande to observe ‘Anna-Satyagraha’ i.e. fasting.\footnote{Interview with smt. Kumudini Kavlekar (May 1998.)} Young girls such as Shashikala Hodarkar\Almeida, Shalini Lolienkar, Kumudini Kavlekar, Suryakanti Fal Desai, Laxmi Poinguinkar with Sudhatai Joshi and Sindhutai Deshpande were women nationalists who had to suffer in the police custody at Panaji (Panjim).

It was only after the punishments of imprisonment, that they were transferred to the jail at Quepem. The Quepem jail was especially meant for women. There were no facilities for the women in other jails of Aguada or Reis Magos. Although, due to the confusion over the names of satyagrahis, these women nationalist were taken to the jail of Aguada. The names of these women were changed from Suryakanti to Suryakant, Laxmi to Laxman, Vilasini to Vilas, etc. However as Aguada jail was not meant for women, they were taken to Reis-Magos. Same thing happened at Reis-Magos jail. Only then were they taken to Quepem jail. The atmosphere in the Quepem jail was the worst. The jail had become dirty. Bushes had grown up due to the moist soil. Snakes and other reptiles were found roaming inside the jail. Due to the moisture in the soil it was very difficult even to sleep on the ground.\footnote{Interview with Suryakanti Fal Desai. (November 1999.)} But even under these circumstances women freedom fighters had kept their morale high.

They had tried to make the best use of the free time that was available. Besides cooking and sewing, they spent their time reading various books and learning new ideas from Sindhutai Deshpande. She, being an Indian national, used to make them aware of the various government schemes in India for women. She had even asked them to dedicate their life for the cause of the country and its people even after the liberation of Goa.\footnote{Interview with Shashikala Almeida, (October 1999.)}
With the exceptions of these women who had to undergo the punishment in Quepem jail. Two young girls at the same time were still suffering imprisonment in the police custody at Panjim. They were Sharada Savoikar and Shanta Hede. Both were imprisoned for allegedly having links with the terrorist organisations. Even under the brutality of Casmiro Monteiro, both these young girls kept their spirit up. ‘Even if death comes to us we will die with a smile on our face’ was their attitude towards life in the prison. With this in mind they stated torturing the police officials in the custody. They used to collect the news about the arrest of various nationalists while they were in the custody. Many Africans who were in the Portuguese troops used to help them for this, without the knowledge of Monteiro. In order to embarrass Monteiro, Shanta Hede as well as Sharada Savoikar used to sing patriotic songs loudly. In the words of Sharada Savoikar,

‘We used to sing many patriotic songs loudly while in the police custody to embarrass Monteiro. Further we used to also complain to the police Commandant, about the nature of Casmiro Monteiro whenever he came for visits. We told him that Casmiro Monteiro did not give us the clothes and sweets which our family members sent for us. So we used to tell the commandant to increase his salary as it was not sufficient to maintain his family. Under these circumstances we were kept in the jail for two and a half years’. 85

During these years, Sharada Savoikar was told by Monteiro that he would release her at any time if she was ready to come with him to his house. This was an insult to Sharada Savoikar who always gave a negative response. Due to this, Casmiro Monteiro had framed charges in such a way that the court would give her the maximum punishment. He had even taken a photograph with a bamboo in her hand at the house of custodio Fernandes as a proof of her involvement in the murder of Custodio. But when she appeared before the court, she denied all the allegations against her in the following words,

‘I was not involved in the murder of Custodio Fernandes. It was Monteiro who has involved me in this murder. Our parents do not allow us to go out at night to kill a person. I was given the worst treatment by Monteiro in the jail.

84 Interview with Smt. Sharada Savoikar. (December 1999.)
85 Interview with Smt. Sharada Savoikar. (December 1999.)
Portuguese Judge, believing in whatever she said, ordered her release and warned her not to participate in ‘Jai-Hind’ activities in the future. This girl told him that he being a Goan should also come forward to fight for the country. Although the Judge had released her, Casmiero Monteiro took her to police custody in which she was again kept in detention for about six months. However, due to the confusion over the name of Sharad Shirvoikar, Sharada Savoikar was released by some other police officer. Soon after her release, she crossed the border as there was every possibility of her re-arrest as she knew that Casmiero Monteiro would not leave her just like that. But he soon received the punishment that was due to him.

Monteiro, the persecutor of nationalists was arrested at the end of 1958 and shipped off to Portugal. The charge against him was that he had accepted high bribes. The Portuguese authorities were mum as long as Monteiro was busy in looting the huts and hovels of our peasants. This loot was rewarded by eulogy and promotions. Monteiro’s greed knew no bounds. But when he turned his hungry gaze in the direction of wealthy landowners and prosperous mine owners and began to extort money from them by blackmailing with threats of arrests as ‘Jai-Hinduist’, the Portuguese government suddenly woke up to the corrupt state of affairs...and he was transferred to the Portugal.

Patriarchal structure of the Goan society was also seen in the liberation struggle of Goa. It was noticed that man, during the struggle dominated and even influenced the nationalist activities of women. In fact man used the woman for their work. While doing that they did not take them in confidence, they did not take into account their feelings whether they would like to do such work or not, especially dealing with the revolutionary activities.

Smt. Prema Purav notes,

‘Many young girls were involved in the work such as carrying the nationalist material from one place to another. They carried sometimes even the bombs without their knowledge. Though this type of work was given to them, they were not told about the dangers behind the work, difficulties that they might have to face and what precautions they should take in case they face some difficulties’.

86 Interview with Smt. Sharada Savoikar. (December 1999.)
88 Mhadeshwar, Nandini op.cit., p. 52.
Society viewed the participation of these women in its own way. Especially the friends, neighbours and relatives looked at them with suspicion. After the release of these women they had suffered a lot from 'untouchable' treatment that was given to them. Even the rumours were spread about them that these girls were transported to Portugal, married to Portuguese and even that they have become pregnant. This insult was more unbearable than the atrocities committed by the Portuguese in jails. And these Goan women and young girls had to bear this courageously. Their struggle was not just directed against the Portuguese rule but at times, it was also directed against their own people.

Nationalist historiography generally speaks about the participation of women in the freedom movement. However it fails to recognise what women had to say during a particular period of liberation struggle. What nationalist historiography suggest is that subalterns do not have any voice and if they are women, they are speechless. While examining the role of women in the liberation struggle of Goa, one can notice the constant pressure of popular customs which were set forth for these women by society in general and family in particular. They had to fight two battles and win both. The first battle was directed against the Portuguese rule, and the second against the conservative nature of society and family of which they were also a part. The first seemed to be not so difficult as it was against foreign domination, the second was difficult because it was against their own people. The first battle they could fight and win but the second one had to be fought till they survive. Let me explain this in brief. As I have already mentioned earlier, these women took part in Goa's liberation struggle against the wishes of their family members. Many young girls escaped from their houses without the knowledge of their family members as they were determined to do something for their country. For example, Kumudini Kavlekar and Suniti Divkar, left their houses at the tender age of 16 and 17 respectively to join the liberation struggle. Kumudini Kavlekar, who hailed from Cancona, was supposed to

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89 Interview with Smt. Suryakanti Fal Desai. (November 1999.)
participate in the satyagraha of 17th February 1955 to celebrate Gaitonde Day. But when her parents resisted and detained her in the house, she escaped and joined the satyagraha session of 6th April 1955 under the leadership of Mrs. Sudhatai Joshi at Mapusa. By participating in the political activities during Portuguese rule, against the wishes of their family members, these women represented the entire subaltern women community in Goa during liberation struggle. Though they come under the category of subaltern, they had shown courage and had strong urge for Goa's liberation.

Patriarchal structure of society was dominant in the lives of these subaltern women even after their release from jails in 1958 and 1959. Though family members accepted these women in their family after release from jails, friends, and neighbours and relatives looked at them with suspicion and even treated them as untouchables. Participation of these women in the nationalists activities was a biggest crime in the eyes of society and hence they were to be punished. Thus the families of these women had to face ostracism. The life had become more difficult after release from prison. They had to go through Agni-Pariksha as these women who were imprisoned were associated with Portuguese officials and even believed to have lost their virginity. And due to this nearly fifty percent were married to the men who were active in the liberation struggle. Rest 20% were married to the educated and liberal minded Goans while others could not get their life partners. Many women nationalists, after liberation were engaged in political and social activities in Goa. Some of them like Suryakanti Fal Desai, Shalini Lolienkar, Mitra Bir opened up schools in the remote villages in order to impart education to the children free of cost. Few others worked with men nationalists to enlighten the Goan community about their civil and political rights.