CHAPTER FOUR

The Problematic Course of Nationalism in Goa

While Russia and the other socialist countries applauded India's freeing of Goa, the western international media, especially the British and American press, were highly critical of the Indian 'invasion' of Goa. On 21 December 1961, the New York Journal referred to 'India's Imperialism in Goa' and reported:

The invasion of the tiny Portuguese enclaves was naked aggression against a peaceful neighbor [National Secretariat for Information (NSI) 1962:337].

The army action was described as a 'mockery of morality' and a violation of the doctrine of ahimsa. The Liverpool Daily Post went so far as to draw allusions with Hitlerian aggression in Poland [NSI 1962:395]. Projections were made about the fate that awaited the Goans in their merger with India, and Goan 'prosperity' and 'enlightenment' were contrasted with Indian 'poverty' and 'backwardness'.

A legislative assembly member in Brazil was quoted by the Diario da Manha as referring to India as 'the India of the castes... where Indians have a reddish saliva that looks like blood... It is not blood but is caused by a plant which people chew to guile their stomachs and prevent them from feeling hungry' [NSI 1962:603].
While propaganda of this nature was motivated by political allegiances, a charge made by the international press which could not be so easily dismissed was the weakness of the freedom struggle in Goa.

A few days after Goa was freed, Dom Moraes -- the noted writer of Goan origin -- then a young student in England, wrote in the British daily, the Evening Standard:

I think this must be the first occasion, seen through the rain of Indian propaganda pamphlets fluttering down on Goa, where the 'liberation' of a country was achieved from outside rather than inside [NSI 1962:393-394].

A report titled 'Darkness in Delhi' in the British daily The Daily Telegraph speculated:

Did the Goanese really yearn for 'liberation'? If so, they kept remarkably quiet about it, despite every incitement from India to express their feelings. Indeed many of them -- possibly a majority -- have obvious reasons for wanting to stay out of India [NSI 1962:391].

It is evident that the attainment of freedom by Goa was not a natural corollary to the development of nationalist consciousness in Goa. It would be more correct to say that Goa was freed by India on account of the mounting national and international pressure it was subject to, and in spite of the absence of a concerted and popular nationalist struggle.

Though in most accounts of the freedom struggle much is made of the
military build up by the Portuguese in Goa, the fact is that when the Indian army entered Goa with 15,000 troops (and with 15,000 additional troops in reserve, at the border) only 3,500 Portuguese troops were actually stationed in the territory.¹ This belies claims by nationalists that the Portuguese were maintaining their rule over Goa by the use of brute force.² Nationalists in Goa had been consistent in their demand for Goa's freedom, but were unable to develop a full-fledged movement which could force the Portuguese to leave. This was expressed most articulately by Dr Sukhtankar:

We were not liberated by our own efforts. We were liberated by Sardarjis whom we didn't know and who had no love for us.³

The perceptions of participants shed some light on the factors responsible for the impaired development of nationalist consciousness in Goa, and the problematic course of nationalism in Goa.

**Repressive measures**

The freedom fighters were unanimous in identifying fear as a major factor preventing the development of the nationalist struggle. The late Dr Pundalik Gaitonde, who assumed importance in the freedom struggle after he was transported to Portugal for having uttered two words of protest (see Chapter 2),


²Braganza Cunha's claims, too, appear a little exaggerated. In a *Report to the World Assembly for Peace* he states: "After India's independence the Portuguese, who had no army of occupation, brought thousands of African and European soldiers to Goa equipped with modern British and American weapons, and with them posed a challenge to independent India" [1961:336].

³Personal communication at an interview with Dr D S Sukhtankar on 10 December 1991, at Bandra, Bombay.
explained:

The difference between arrest under the Portuguese and British was that under the British you knew you would be released after some period. Whereas under the Portuguese, there was no guarantee of being released at all. Goa is such a small place and so many arrests took place from north to south.4

Dr Sukhtankar fled to Bombay in 1953, as he feared being arrested and deported to a far off place for a long period of time. He identified fear as a major factor preventing people from actively associating with the movement or causing others like himself to flee from Goa. He confessed: 'The fear of being arrested anytime actually killed me.'5

As a result of the repressive regime in Goa, numerous freedom fighters thought it better to stay outside Goa and fight rather than stay in Goa and face arrest and transportation. George Vaz, a member of the leftist Goan People's Party (GPP) was one such freedom fighter. He stated:

We mainly operated from Bombay. In Goa, because of the absence of civil liberties, it was not possible to participate.6

Consequently, within Goa, effective leadership was lacking. The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1946 had resulted in 1500 Goans being arrested, held in police detention for various terms or being subjected to police excesses |Shah

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4Personal communication at an interview with Dr Pundalik Gaitonde on 8 December 1992, at Palolem, Canacona.

5Personal communication at an interview with Dr D S Sukhtankar on 10 December 1991, at Bandra, Bombay.

6Personal communication at an interview with George Vaz on 18 December 1990, at Assonora, Bardez.
Among those arrested and transported were persons who had the organizing capabilities needed to build a movement. This meant a major setback to the movement.

Of the activists who remained, some moved to places like Bombay and Belgaum, as to remain in Goa and openly associate with the movement was not possible. Others remained in Goa and functioned clandestinely, mainly engaging in terrorist activities and not in mobilizing popular support for the movement. Gaitonde remarked:

The Goa freedom struggle was leaderless... There was a movement. It was not as though we were totally bankrupt of movements. But we did not know how to organize effectively... We were ignorant people trying to do something for the movement.

Collaboration of Upper Castes

Without doubt the phenomenon of fear played an important role in restricting participation in the movement and rendering it leaderless in the post-1946 period. However, it does not account for the late development of the movement. Casual comments and observations provide some insight into the reasons for this.

Sukhtankar identified collaboration of the upper classes with the Portuguese as a factor preventing the development of the anti-Portuguese struggle. He emphasized that among the upper classes, the Bamonn caste was especially interested in the continuance of Portuguese rule:
After the Republic was formed, Hindus had an interest in Portuguese rule because they could reach the top. The Director of Postal Services was a Hindu, so too of Customs. In Goa the bamonnns were more with the Portuguese; even Hindu bamonnns were with the Portuguese. They had a divided loyalty to some extent. They were loyal to the Portuguese because of financial security, and the worry -- what will happen after liberation, when all land will belong to the tiller?

Sukhtankar also said that once the mine owners got rich, they used to give money to both the Indian government and to the Portuguese government. He pointed out that different castes participated in the movement differently, according to the treatment they had received from the Portuguese. He differentiated the position of the Catholic charddos from other Christians:

Among Catholics, bamonnns had more interest in Portuguese rule.

Charddos had more interest in the nationalist movement as they did not get an equal opportunity with the bamonnns.

According to him, the charddos who joined the movement were 'more nationalist than any Hindu'.

Divakar Kakodkar shared similar views regarding the position of the upper castes in the movement. Kakodkar joined the CPI at the age of 18, as a student in Bombay. In 1947, he came to do political work in Goa but within two years was arrested and sent to Cabo Verde for eight years, after spending one and a half years in the Fort Aguada jail in Goa. He commented:
In India, many jails were like universities. Here it did not happen.

Participation was often on caste basis. Upper caste Hindus who liked to lead, did not want to give ‘pep talks’ in jail or political talks . . . The upper caste Saraswats\(^7\) were next to the Portuguese in stressing their power and would control the masses.\(^8\)

Kakodkar was critical of upper caste participants who tried to dominate the movement, consequently alienating the lower castes from the struggle. According to him, this accounted for the fact that freedom fighters who stood for elections after liberation were defeated, while the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party, seen as a party of ‘the people’ rode to power.

**Indian Government’s Response**

For most freedom fighters in Goa, the nationalist movement in India was a source of inspiration and served to strengthen their nationalist sentiments. But on numerous occasions, the attitudes of the leaders of the INC, and later of independent India towards the Goa problem, appear to have had a demoralizing effect on the freedom fighters. It also led to the reification of the belief that Goa was distinct from India, and the process of ‘Goan nationalism’ distinct from the process of Indian nationalism.

Berta Menezes Braganza was critical of the behavior of some Indian leaders

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\(^7\)The term ‘Saraswats’ is used to indicate Goud Saraswat Brahmins, the dominant Brahmin grouping in Goa. The upper strata of the Saraswats is Goa’s major Hindu hstakar community.

\(^8\)Personal communication made at an interview with Divakar Kakodkar on 28 January 1991, at Curchorem, Quepem.
who propagated the politics of exclusion. She recalled:

Morarji Desai came for a meeting and said: ‘You Goans, you fight for yourself. What has India got to do with it?’ I couldn’t stand it. I got up and shouted, and told him: ‘You are an Indian and I am not? Would Mahatma Gandhi listen to this?’

All the freedom fighters had expected Goa to achieve freedom soon after India won its independence from the British, and were surprised by the indifference of the Indian government towards the Goa problem. Sukhtankar was critical of the Indian government’s obsession with her ‘international image’ and claimed:

We remained Portuguese, not because of Portugal, but because of Nehru. He wanted to maintain panchasheel and settle things amicably, which was not possible with Salazar.

The Indian government’s ban on the participation of Indians in the satyagraha movement of August 1954 was incomprehensible to the freedom fighters. Divakar Kakodar remarked:

When Indians marched from every part of the country in the satyagraha movement, that was the real Ekatmata. But the role of the INC was very much influenced by their desire to protect the Gujarati merchants in Goa.

What the intentions of the INC were is a debatable question, but the fact is that the INC failed to meet the expectations of the freedom fighters, and

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9Personal communication at an interview with Berta Menezes Braganza on 14 June 1990 at Margao, Salcete.
contributed to weakening the nationalist movement in Goa.

**The Lusitanisation Process**

Aside from the caste factor, the nature of Portuguese rule in general and its use of religion in particular were cited as factors determining the development of nationalist consciousness.

For the elite sections, being a Portuguese citizen was not just a paper privilege, but had real implications. Barring the post of governor, they could realistically aspire to any other high ranking official positions in Goa, Portugal or in the other Portuguese colonies.

A telegram sent to the Portuguese head of state on the eve of Goa's attainment of freedom by a group of Goans resident in England, is illustrative of the loyalty of this elite section towards Portugal:

As Goans who reside in the United Kingdom, faithful to our motherland, we have the honor of informing you that yesterday we sent telegrams to his Holiness the Pope, the Heads of State and Prime Ministers of various countries and high officials of the UNO among others, appealing to them to use their influence with the Indian government to avoid any aggression against our beloved land... In this most grave hour we respectfully greet you as the esteemed Head of our dear Homeland, as well as the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, and the Overseas Provinces, in whose efforts to defend the sacred rights of Goa we place the
greatest hopes and confidence.\textsuperscript{10}

Commenting on the reasons for the weakness of the nationalist struggle in Goa, George Vaz stated:

The Portuguese, unlike the British, had developed more rapport in their 450 years of rule, as a result of which sharp anti-Portuguese sentiment was absent.

Pandurang Mulgaonkar pointed out that the people of Goa were considered citizens of Portugal, enjoying the right to send their elected representatives to the Portuguese parliament, and that this gave the elite sections a feeling of superiority over their counterparts in British India. The period of the republic had especially helped in bringing the Hindu elite to enjoy positions of power under the Portuguese:

The Republican Regime was far more liberal than British India.
People had all the fundamental rights. During this period a small delegation of Goans visited Gandhi for guidance on what to do in Goa. Gandhi told them: ‘Your position is better than ours. You have civil liberties.’\textsuperscript{11}

Commenting on the nature of the Portuguese administration, Sukhtankar observed:

I saw very few Portuguese. We used to see only Indians ruling.

Practically speaking, Indian Catholics ruled first, later Hindus; the

\textsuperscript{10}Reported in the Portuguese journal \textit{Diario de Noticias}, 19 December 1961 [NSI 1962:434].

\textsuperscript{11}Personal communication at an interview with Pandurang Mulgaonkar on 22 February 1992, at Porvorim, Bardez.
higher castes ruled. Every office we would go to, some acquaintance would be there.

While the phenomenon of co-option of the elite to the administrative services is common in countries under colonial rule, there was a vital difference in the way in which the Portuguese treated this section as compared to other colonial rulers.

Portuguese residents of Goa mingled freely with Goans. In British India, the recreational clubs were the preserve of the Britishers, and were closed to all non-whites; while in Goa, the elite Goans freely fraternized with the Portuguese at such clubs, which were established at the initiative of Goans.

Scholarships to study in Portugal were liberally doled out, enabling Goans to stay in Portugal. Among the co-opted elite the feeling of being citizens of Portugal was a very real one. Till today, there is a minuscule section of Hindus and a small section of upper caste Christians whose first language is Portuguese.

How successful the use of the church as an agency of lusitanisation had been -- especially in the educated elite -- can be gauged from the fact that Hindu and Christian freedom fighters were unanimous in their identification of the church as being an agency instrumental in curbing the development of nationalist consciousness.

According to Urselino Almedia, there was no interest in Goa's freedom struggle on the part of Christians. If they got involved, they would be treated by other Christians as if they had been 'bought over'. Most of those who participated did so from Bombay, or did so only after getting a chance to broaden
their vision, having spent time outside Goa. Narrating some of his experiences when he was an underground activist, Almeida recounted:

In Goa, Catholics would inform on others. When I was underground, no Catholic family offered me shelter. I stayed with Hindus. And to stay with Hindus, I used to take on a Hindu name to gain their acceptance.

George Vaz commented on the use of religion by the Portuguese, saying:

They (the Portuguese) had successfully separated the people from the nationalist trend in India. The Church had made the Goans feel separate from the Indians, especially the Catholics. We were few Christians in the movement; later, others joined.

Most persons interviewed irrespective of their religious beliefs were of the opinion that for a Christian to become active was far more difficult than for a Hindu. This is substantiated by a first hand account given by Evagrio Jorge (1925-78), a former secretary of the Youth Congress (Goa) in his Reminiscences, in which he explains why on one particular occasion he decided to postpone the date for his offering satyagraha. One of the reasons was:

Being at that time one of the few Christians in the front rank of the movement 'sui generis', somewhat foreign to the westernized traditions of a sector of our people, it did not please me to be merely one of the many who offered satyagraha. I wanted time to contact our people, to pass on to them our message, to publish

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12 Personal communication at an interview with Urselino Almeida on 6 March 1992, at Margao, Salcete.
something, and only then give myself up into the hands of the authorities. [1973:69].

Berta Menezes Braganza said that most of her close friends and associates were Hindus and that only a few Christians understood or were supporters of her activities.

When asked whether the numerical strength of Christians in the freedom struggle was significantly smaller than that of Hindus, however, most freedom fighters felt that the relationship between religion and nationalist consciousness could not be quantified in such definite terms. But they felt that sympathy for the movement was much greater among Hindus than Catholics. Dr Sukhtankar gave various examples to illustrate his point of view that, generally, the mass of Christians was apathetic to the freedom struggle:

Catholics staying in *cuddos* were completely ignorant of the situation in Goa... They identified their interests as being safe under the Portuguese... Catholics in Delhi organized a grand function for the Ambassador of Portugal... After liberation, the next week was Natal but Christians had no desire to celebrate it.

On 17 August 1954, the Goa correspondent of the British daily newspaper *The Times* reported on the reaction of the local population to *satyagrahis* entering Goa to demand her liberation: "The "oppressed brothers", seemingly unattracted by this prospect, resorted in almost unprecedented numbers to the shrine of St

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13 The *cuddos*, or Goan clubs in Bombay, were residential dormitories, organized mostly on a village basis, for the migrant Goans who had come to the city to work. These Goans belonged to the lower or middle classes.
Xavier with petitions to be saved from the disturbances which threatened their way of life' [Kay 1970:304].

The Church in Goa had, through a process of eneulturation, attempted to alienate and segregate the Christians from the nationalist movement, and caused them to identify with their colonial masters on account of the religion they shared. It is noteworthy that in spite of this, numerous Christians participated in the movement, although this often implied their alienation from relatives and friends.

The use of terror to curb the movement and the attitude of the Indian government to the struggle, contributed to curtailing the development of nationalist consciousness in Goa. But more important than these factors was the cultural penetration achieved by the Portuguese, which led a section of the elite to refuse to admit that they were Indian.\(^\text{14}\)

In fact, three years after Goa was freed, the *Goa Freedom Movement* was established with the objective of ending Indian ‘imperialist’ rule over Goa. Although this organization was formed in Paris, mainly by non-resident Goans, it would be wrong to assume that this trend of thought enjoyed absolutely no sympathy within Goa.

The historiography of the nationalist movement to date, fed by nostalgic reconstructions, at times seeks to deny the existence of the affinal feelings.

\(^\text{14}\)On 6 October 1964, Evagrio Jorge, a nationalist of Goa, while watching a *tiares* staged by a famous Goan dramatist, Kid Boxer, got up to publicly protest against frequent anti-India jokes in the *tiares*. Jorge demanded to know why Boxer lived in India, and asked him why didn’t go to Portugal if he liked that country so much [Konkani Boropancho Ekvott 1964:42-46]. It is to be noted that after 1946 and till 1961, numerous *tiares* were pro-Portuguese. *Tiares* continue to be very popular among Christians.
towards Portugal still to be found in a section (no doubt small) of Goans. But this is a form of exclusion. The validity of different trends of thought cannot be denied.

R.K. Laxman comments on Goa's Liberation, *The Times of India*, 20 Dec 1961