CHAPTER SEVEN

Reception of Braganza-Cunha in Goa

Though posthumously recognised as the Father of Goan Nationalism, Braganza-Cunha is accorded no place in studies of Indian nationalism. His efforts were to bring about the integration of Goa with India, at both a pragmatic and ideological level. This was a task that was ridden with difficulties, considering the fact that a significant section of the elite in Goa had been assimilated by the Portuguese into supporting their regime. The fact that Goa was divided along communal lines compounded the problems that he faced. It is in this context that Braganza-Cunha's reception has to be understood.

He was viewed by his contemporaries as an atheist and communist, and yet he was recognised as virtually the undisputed Father of Goan Nationalism. Today, politicians try to portray him as a symbol of the divergent viewpoints which they represent. An examination of the reception of Braganza-Cunha at a pragmatic level, and also at the level of ideology, will help to understand the nature of this

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1 The late Pundalik Gaitonde was the only one who believed that 'scientifically, it is not correct to say that Cunha was the Father of Goan Nationalism. His influence was restricted to a few persons' [personal communication made at an interview on 8 February 1992 at Palolem, Canacona]. Personally, Gaitonde was influenced more by the writings of Luis Menezes Braganza, who he felt had educated a whole generation. Another person to question this title from a different standpoint was Aleixo Manuel Da Costa who had served as the curator of Central Library, Panaji, from 1930 to 1967. He was acquainted with Braganza-Cunha as a visitor to the library. According to him, 'after liberation he has been put on a pedestal, which should not have been done' [personal communication made at an interview on 6 March 1991, at Panaji].

2 Brass observes that when the local aristocracy collaborates with 'the alien conquering group' it postpones or prevents ethnic mobilisation and the development of nationalism [1991:279].
Braganza-Cunha Remembered

The person of Braganza-Cunha is enigmatic. After conducting interviews with people who knew him either in the capacity of a fellow freedom fighter or at the level of a bhatkar of the village, the image that emerges is that of a 'thorough gentleman', with a westernised aristocratic bearing, who spoke fluent Portuguese and French, but who had difficulty speaking Konkani. But a concomitant image is that of a man of superior intellect, who had won the respect of fellow freedom fighters.

First of all, it must be pointed out that there were freedom fighters who participated in the freedom struggle, ignorant of the existence of Braganza-Cunha till his arrest in 1946.

Manohar Prabhudesai, a freedom fighter who was active in Canacona, in the border areas of South Goa, said that during his activism, the leader whom he was most influenced by was the Praja Socialist Party leader, Peter Alvares. While he came to know of Braganza-Cunha on account of his arrest, he had occasion to read his writings only after Goa was freed. It is to be noted that Prabhudesai was one of the few persons from his village who took an active part in the freedom struggle and, consequently, was a man who was better informed than most about current political affairs. However, according to him:

When I was active I was unaware of his significance, and had not even heard of him till he was arrested. Now I understand his
contribution. He was learned. His theory of denationalisation is relevant even today.3

Braganza-Cunha was not viewed as a mass leader but was seen as an ideologue for the movement. Shamrao Madkaikar had personally associated with him while doing relief work in Salcette, which was ravaged by heavy floods in 1941 (see Appendix 2). He stated as a matter of fact: 'In the movement Cunha talked to the top level leaders, while we talked to the ordinary people.' Madkaikar saw him as a leader whose function was to prepare other leaders who would mobilise the people.4

Braganza-Cunha belonged to the wealthy bhatkar class and maintained his liking for good food and good living even after he became politically active.5 While this is a matter which is viewed critically by some today, none of the freedom fighters interviewed were critical of this aspect of him.6 Instead, they were awed by the fact that in spite of being a Christian and a man of wealth, he chose to take up the cause of Goa’s freedom, although personally he had everything to gain by supporting the Portuguese, and suffered considerably on account of his involvement in the movement.

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3Personal communication made at an interview on 10 February 1992, at Mashem, Canacona.

4Personal communication made at an interview on 20 May 1992 at Navelim, Salcette.

5Aleixo Manuel Da Costa recalled having lunch with him frequently at the Hotel Republica, Panaji [personal communication made at an interview on 6 March 1991 at Panaji], while George Vaz recalled how Braganza-Cunha used to like having 'a good meal' at the Wayside Inn, at Fort, Bombay, which was under Goan proprietorship [personal communication made at an interview on 18 December 1990 at Assonora, Bardez].

6At a seminar hosted by the Institute of Indo-European Studies on ‘Understanding Goan Culture’ at Panaji, 20-22 October 1994, Mario Cabral E Sa, a journalist, asked how Braganza-Cunha could propagate his thesis of denationalisation when he was himself so westernised in his way of life.
Divakar Kakodkar, who under the guidance of Braganza-Cunha established *The Goa Youth League* in Bombay in 1944, stated: 'It cannot be denied that in a sense Cunha lived in an ivory tower and was unable to mix with everybody.' But, he pointed out, 'all Christian leaders before him wanted to move in the orbit of Portugal. It is to his credit that he was unlike them'.

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, in the initial stages of the movement for Christians to participate in the freedom struggle was not common. For a Christian bhatkar to initiate a movement was even more remarkable. But Braganza-Cunha was different from the other bhatkars of his village and was quite estranged from them. Albert Cunha claimed that Braganza-Cunha had minimal association with the bhatkars of the village, and was viewed with distrust by Christian bhatkars (who were in the majority), as he never went to church.

But his aloofness from his own class did not bring him substantially closer to the gaudas who resided in neighbouring Borsulem, some of whom were his mundcars. According to a confidential memorandum signed by the administrator of Salcette a number of gaudas attended a meeting addressed by him. But, while the elderly gaudas interviewed deeply respected him and appreciatively remembered his active concern for them in times of crisis, their interaction with

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7Personal communication made at an interview on 28 January 1991, at Curchorem, Quepem.

8The memorandum dated 2 July 1946, states that 150 mundcars of Braganza-Cunha, armed with bamboo sticks, were among the 1300 people who attended a meeting held at Cansaulim addressed by him [Shirodkar 1991:11].

9For details of Braganza-Cunha’s role in the repatriation of gaudas maintained as indentured labourers in Assam and the relief work organised by him for flood victims, see Appendix 2.

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him had not brought them closer to the freedom struggle. Caetano D'Souza, one of his *mundeurs*, stated:

He never talked much to anyone or came where we stayed. But if anyone had a problem he would look into the matter. If we plucked any fruit from his trees he never objected. If we went for payment, the *mukadam* would look into it and pay immediately . . . He never took any meetings here.¹⁰

Jacque Anton Vaz occasionally worked on Braganza-Cunha's land. He recalled how Braganza-Cunha had allowed the *gaudas* to organise a *tiatr*¹¹ in the compound of his house when they were refused permission by the concerned authorities to put up a *mattov* for the purpose. He recalled:

Some of my neighbours went to Assam. If not for Tristao *bab* they would have remained there . . . He used to tell us about the terrible times they had there: no proper food and sickness everywhere.¹²

Bosteao Diago Soares, an elderly *guda* of Borsulem stated that while Braganza-Cunha was good to them, he never talked to them about his activities. His arrest surprised and saddened them.

In Chapter 6, Braganza-Cunha's views regarding the role of the intellectual have been examined, according to which he believed that once the nationalist idea

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¹⁰Personal communication made at an interview on 23 March 1992, at Borsulem, Salcette.

¹¹According to Albert Cunha it was not a *tiatr* but a *zagor*, another folk form.

¹²Personal communication made at an interview on 23 March 1992, at Borsulem, Salcette.
had been expressed by intellectuals, the people would automatically give their support to it. Perhaps he believed that his role was to generate political consciousness among the intelligentsia, as he was best suited to this task. This could explain why he did not take up the political education of the people, and concentrated on propaganda work among the intelligentsia.

His predicament was peculiar in that, on the one hand he was estranged from the members of his class, while on the other hand, as far as the common people were concerned, he could not shed his identity as a bhatkar. For, notwithstanding his benevolence, he was still seen as a bhatkar, whose incarceration by the Portuguese was incomprehensible. Thus, for Braganza-Cunha, the only social group he could identify with was the small circle of politically aware intellectuals, and it was on this class of people that he had the maximum impact.

Braganza-Cunha was no doubt aware of his own denationalised state. Though he was an ardent proponent of the development of Konkani, his knowledge of the language was deficient; while admiring the resilience of the people who had not succumbed to the denationalisation process, his communication with them was limited.

In 1927, in an open letter to Antonio Furtado, a student in Portugal at the time, he wrote that it was the task of the denationalised to reconstruct national life, questioning and resisting the notions of progress imposed on the people by the dominating nation. For Braganza-Cunha, the manner in which he sought to overcome his denationalisation was in articulating the nationalist idea. He tried to assert his nationalism by discounting the question of his bearing and
appearance and asserting his Indianness through his ideas -- through what he said and wrote. This is in keeping with his belief that: 'Mental enslavement is incompatible with liberation' [1961:371].

During his period of activism in Goa, the Goa Congress Committee comprised a small circle of politically aware intellectuals; the rallying slogan of the GCC being 'A Free Goa in A Free India'. The fact that the activities carried out by the GCC were modelled on the programme of the INC was possibly responsible for the limited response it received. According to Hobsbawm, icons representing symbols, rituals or common collective practices are a 'crucial component' of proto and modern nationalism [1992:72]. But there is no evidence of the use of any icon by Braganza-Cunha; instead he relied on projecting the INC as a symbol of Indian nationalism.

Perhaps this did not represent a symbol that was powerful enough to override the communal divisions and the plurality of nationalist imaginings that existed among the people. It relied on an appeal which was in effect internationalist in nature. The GCC was thus unable to become a popular organisation and comprised of the exiguous group of Goan intellectuals who identified with the Indian nationalist movement and were based in and around Goa.

Seton-Watson has pointed out that people who have a genuinely internationalist world-view are scarce 'and their capacity for leadership of real

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13According to Hobsbawm the call of nationalist leaders to the people to surmount sentiments of tribalism or communalism was internationalist, and signified 'the opposite of nationalism, which seeks to bound together those deemed to have common ethnicity, language, culture, historical past and the rest' [1992:179]. For Braganza-Cunha, the act of identifying with India was sufficient to resolve the religious and other differences that existed among the people.
men and women is doubtful' as they are unable to recognise 'the nationalist passions and prejudices which animate so large a portion of humanity...'. [1977:465]. Braganza-Cunha represented a person of this type. It accounted perhaps for his inability to conceive of populist measures to develop the nationalist movement in Goa. But his internationalist world view also gave him a certain strength.

His strength, or the reason for his identification as the Father of Goan Nationalism, was his ability not only to conceive of Goa as an integral part of India but to build an organisation intended to facilitate the process of integration, to identify denationalisation as a phenomenon which came in the way of the growth of nationalism, and to bring about the unification of ideologically differentiated groups under the banner of one umbrella organisation.

The Goa Congress Committee founded by him, notwithstanding its limitations, was the first effective agency of nationalism in Goa. It laid the foundation for the formation of the National Congress (Goa) in 1946, which emerged as the most important nationalist group in Goa.

The Goa Action Committee, the umbrella organisation which was formed at his initiative in 1953, was an indication of the respect Braganza-Cunha commanded among people with political orientations totally at variance with each other. Liberals, leftists, terrorists and Gandhians united on the strength of the personality of Braganza-Cunha. Perhaps his internationalism prevented him from becoming a popular mass leader, but it enabled him to bring ideologically differentiated elites together, to work unitedly for the cause of nationalism in
Braganza-Cunha's weakness was his exclusive reliance on the strength of the concept of 'A Free Goa in A Free India' to excite the nationalist imagining of the people prior to India's independence, and his excessive reliance on the Indian government to take action to free Goa after India became independent. According to Ravindra Kelekar, there were freedom fighters in Goa who were willing to do something but faced a crisis of leadership. Distrustful of many of the leaders in Goa, they would have been willing to follow any guidelines for action given by Braganza-Cunha after his escape from Portugal, but none were forthcoming.14

There is evidence to suggest that in the period prior to Braganza-Cunha's arrest, his popularity was on the rise, a fact which the Portuguese authorities were conscious of. Since 1938, the police had been keeping a tab on his activities.15 A confidential memorandum of the Administrator of Salcette, dated 2 July 1946, states:

I have learnt that yesterday evening a meeting was held at Cansaulim, where, Tristao Braganca e Cunha (sic) and his niece Berta Menezes Braganca were carried in a procession from village Cuelim to the site of the meeting at Cansaulim [Shirodkar 1991:11].

Earlier, when Braganza-Cunha and Berta Menezes Braganza were physically

14Personal communication made at an interview on 25 October 1990 at Priol, Ponda.

15This was stated in the confidential memorandum of the Administrator of Salcette, dated 1 July 1946 [Shirodkar 1991:10].
prevented from addressing a meeting at Margao (and the former was savagely beaten, see Appendix 2) after the launching of the Civil Disobedience Movement by Lohia, the memorandum cited above gives evidence of a bandh being held, as the commercial establishments of the parish of Cansaulim remained closed as a mark of protest against the taluka authorities' action on them.

Perhaps if Braganza-Cunha had not been arrested shortly after this, he may have made his mark as a popular mass leader. Instead, his role as a 'mass leader' remained too short a phase of his political career, so that it did not even form a part of the memory of his contemporaries.

The Changing Significance of Braganza-Cunha

Freedom fighters see Braganza-Cunha either as a symbol of secularism and/or as one who was acutely aware of the 'denationalised' state of the Christian Goan (discussed in Chapter 5). Interestingly, the shared perception among freedom fighters of Braganza-Cunha as a 'Communist' (discussed in Chapter 6) did not come in the way of their acceptance of him as a founding father of the nationalist movement in Goa, or their perception of him as one who could bring about the unification of divergent groups under one umbrella organisation. Urselino Almeida attributed this to the fact that 'he never got involved in any controversy and so was acceptable.' This explained why 'all organisations accepted his ideas and leadership'.¹⁶

Flaviano Dias was appreciative of the fact that whatever Braganza-Cunha's

¹⁶Personal communication made at an interview on 6 March 1992, at Margao.

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private views on religion may have been, he was not inflexible. He recalled:

Father Mendonsa, a professor of philosophy, was highly agitated over the harassment he was facing in the Jesuit order -- having given an unconventional interpretation to the concept of virginity. Consequently, he told Cunha that he wanted to leave the order. Cunha asked him whether he was against Christ and the church. When Father Mendonsa said he was not, Cunha, much to the surprise of the former, said he should remain inside (the order) and fight for his ideas. Father Mendonsa, expecting Cunha to encourage him to leave, was surprised and told Cunha that he had become 'soft'.

In 1929, a committee was constituted to organize the birth centenary celebrations of Francisco Luis Gomes. A Christian religious ritual was included as part of the programme, in spite of protests from the Hindu members of the committee. Braganza-Cunha wrote a letter in Procasha protesting against the disrespect shown towards the Hindus [Angle 1994:62]. His sensitivity to religious questions is further illustrated by an incident narrated by Antonio da Cruz [1974:58]. When an uproar had been created in the Christian community on account of the criticism launched by da Cruz against a 'peace message' of Pope Pius XII, Braganza-Cunha warned him that 'a Goan nationalist should always be on his guard (and) not allow himself to be dragged into such religious polemics'. He advised him to drop the attack or 'withdraw from the fray' [1974:58].

"Personal communication made at an interview on 11 November 1990, at Panaji."
Commenting on Braganza-Cunha's stand with regard to religion, Dr Sukhtankar said:

He never talked against Christ though he was a Marxist. He talked against priests or the influence of Jesuits. He would say, how can I talk against the Christian religion? It is good.\textsuperscript{18}

His ability to respect the religious sentiments of others facilitated his acceptance by a large cross-section of people.

In his preface to \textit{The Denationalization of Goans}, Braganza-Cunha comments on the responses that an earlier booklet written by him, \textit{Portuguese India After 400 Years of Foreign Rule}, had received. In particular, he refers to the responses of the 'Catholicus' of a prominent Catholic journal, \textit{The Examiner} and the 'anti-Catholicus' of the nationalist journal, the \textit{Gomantak}. He comments:

While the former (the 'Catholicus') states that the guiding spirit of our Committee is 'a notorious atheist, apostate and anti-clerical, who professes communistic ideas', the latter not less emphatically blames our organisation for working 'under the Jesuits' wing' \textit{[1961:57]}.

According to him, 'the charges which mutually destroy each other' were motivated by opponents, who were decided on 'fostering sectarianism among Goans' \textit{[1961:57]}.

Meanwhile, the Administrator of Salcette referred to Braganza-Cunha as a

\textsuperscript{18}Personal communication made at an interview on 10 December 1991 at Bandra, Bombay.
man who aspired to be 'an ardent leader of the Hindus' [Shirodkar 1991:10].

He was quite aware of the fact that his criticism of the Portuguese use of the Christian religion rendered him open to attack by pro-Catholic interests, while his consciously secular stance made him vulnerable to attacks by pro-Hindu forces.

The reception of Braganza-Cunha during his lifetime, his rejection by a section of the pro-Hindu forces on the grounds that his secular stance represented a pro-Catholic bias, and his rejection by Christian interests who viewed his attacks on the church as an indication of his being anti-Christ, was the reflection of a society divided on the basis of religion.

This was evident even after his death, as the Catholic church authorities in Bombay (in independent India!) refused to allow his burial in any Catholic cemetery.

Though no one was willing to own him when he died, today, Braganza-Cunha belongs to everyone -- the state, the leftists, the liberals and the Hindu rightists. Interestingly, however, while he is projected as a symbol of their supposed values, little is said about the values that Braganza-Cunha stood for. Consequently, he signifies a portrait that may adorn the hall of a meeting organised by any political group, be it the establishment or its opponents.

A report carried by a daily newspaper is revealing:

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) bicycle Ekta Yatra was welcomed at Mapusa by Block president Narayan Karekar and

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19The Catholic rightist force is politically weak. However, the church, which was at one time opposed to Braganza-Cunha, today makes no comment about him.
BJP workers on Sunday. He garlanded the portraits of T B Cunha

and Bharat Mata on the rath...

While the various organisations posing to be inheritors of Braganza-Cunha's legacy are silent on the values that he stood for, the fact is that fragments of his discourse can be utilised variously to represent the divergent points of view of the organisations concerned.

His articulation of the great Indian nation of which Goa was once a part, in conjunction with his numerous attacks on the political use made of Christianity by the church and foreign missionaries, can be utilised by the Hindu rightists to strengthen their case for a Hindu nation.

At the same time his analysis of global conditions along the lines of Lenin, can be seen as evidence of his Marxist methodology and explain his appropriation by the left. While his avowed 'neutrality' in the matter of religion and his attempt to expose the exploitation of religion for political purposes can be used to strengthen the case of the liberal proponents of 'secularism'.

The projection of Braganza-Cunha by all manner of political forces as a symbol of the varied ideologies they represent is based on the selective appropriation of his discourse. This can be understood at two levels.

On the one hand, it is facilitated by the fact that there is a high level of ignorance about the peculiar history of nationalism in Goa, even among Goans. Till a few years ago, the history of Goa did not come under the purview of Indian history studied at the school and university level. This accounts for the ignorance

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20Gomantak Times, 7 January 1992 (emphasis added).
of the ideas that Braganza-Cunha stood for, even in political and academic circles in Goa.

On the other hand, one could view the selective appropriation of his discourse as a manifestation of a society attempting to come into its own, with different interest groups claiming to represent the interests of Goa, and appropriating Braganza-Cunha to give legitimacy to their claims. Thus there is competition within the political elite to capture the imagination of the people of Goa by using Braganza-Cunha as a symbol belonging to that notion of history which is supportive of their ideology.21

A Divided Society

Throughout this thesis the importance of religion in Goa is highlighted. It is impossible to examine Braganza-Cunha's activism or ideology without referring to the religious divisions in Goan society.

In fact Braganza-Cunha's discourse in general and his thesis of the denationalisation of Goans in particular are a product of the divided society in which he operated, attempting to unite the people by appealing to their identity as Indians. His discourse is meaningful because it directly addressed the problem of the communal divide, although his effectiveness was limited by the fact that he was unable to conceive of symbols that the people could identify with, and which

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21In the New York Review of Books, Amos Elon, discussing the significance of archaeological findings as a 'reassurance of roots' to the Israeli, points out that 'We all have the right to pursue what we want to pursue, and to explore the buried past and eventually dig it up -- the discovery... The problem arises when the proof of our discovery is prompted not by evidence but by ideology' [1994:15]. A similar problem is discernible in the appropriation of Braganza-Cunha by divergent interest groups.
overrode the divisions among them. But this limitation was not necessarily a weakness only on the part of Braganza-Cunha. The reality was that the divisions in Goan society were pronounced, resulting in a duality of culture. As pointed out by Louis Dumont, people who have co-existed for centuries do not necessarily constitute a society if their values have not fused [1970:98]. To find acceptable symbols which the people could identify with in these circumstances was difficult.

In spite of efforts to project Goa as an epitome of communal harmony the divisions in Goan society persist. This is evident in the fact that in post-liberation Goa, opinions on a wide range of secular issues have been coalescing along communal lines. After liberation, whether Goa should merge with Maharashtra or remain a union territory was a contentious issue. This compelled the Indian government to conduct an opinion poll in 1967, the first and to date the only one conducted in the country’s history, to resolve the issue. In 1986, Goa’s glorified ‘peace loving’ society was violently divided on the issue of language. In the recent past, agitations on the medium of instruction in schools and the alignment of the Konkan railway have been testimony to the fact that divisions exist among the people of Goa. In all these issues people have participated in large numbers, while religion has played a crucial role in determining the formulation of opinion. It is relevant to note that the ruling Congress Party has been unable to take a united stand on even a single of the

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Hobsbawm has observed that conversion to different religions can help to create two different nationalities among people who share a common culture [1992:70]. In this work the relationship between religion and national consciousness has been explored. While two tangential forms of consciousness persist, neither the Christian response nor the Hindu response is homogenous because of other factors, especially the caste system, which is observed even by Christians as discussed in Chapter 2.
major issues which came up after it came to power in Goa in 1980, as the opinion of its members has been divided along communal lines.

Braganza-Cunha’s discourse of nationalism was a consequence of the ambiguity of Goa’s identity during his lifetime. In spite of 34 years having passed since the Portuguese were forced to relinquish their hold over the territory and eight years since she achieved statehood, the ambiguity of Goa’s identity persists. Braganza-Cunha’s relevance is seen in his appropriation by divergent interest groups, all separately seeking to carve an identity for Goa in accordance with the ideologies they represent.