CHAPTER II
WOMEN AS FREEDOM FIGHTERS

'Most recognized Freedom Fighters may be male, but the story of the other half is no less stirring.' Manohar Rai Sardessai

The growth of political involvement of women in Goa can be traced back to Goa's liberation struggle. Women played a laudable role in this struggle. They came out in sizable numbers to fight against Portuguese colonial rule. They offered satyagraha, were beaten up by the Portuguese police, and were jailed. But this could not deter them from fighting for liberation. It is interesting to note, and this is paradoxical, that before the Portuguese rule in Goa the position of women in Goa was more unequal than it became as a result of Portuguese rule. Portuguese brought in remarkable changes in the position of women such as abolition of Sati, ban on child marriage, encouragement of widow-remarriage, etc. This progress lead to an awakening in Goan women who rose against Portuguese rule. Thus Portuguese colonialism while benefiting women, also sowed the seeds of its own demise in that it awakened women to the goal of liberation.

Status of Women in Goa before the Portuguese rule

The position of women in Goa before the advent of the Portuguese was the same as that of their counterparts elsewhere in India. The Goan society was essentially Indian and it practiced almost all the customs and traditions of the Hindu society as in other parts of India. A glance at the ancient literature reflects the inferior treatment given to women by men. Women were considered as fickle by nature and given to sensual enjoyment only. The emphasis was laid on stridharma - which referred to fidelity and loyalty with which a married women served her husband and her family. There was prevalence of polygamy, Sati, and child marriage. Women in Goa had a grossly inferior position before the coming of the Portuguese. 'They were exploited, taken for granted, suppressed and subjected to cruel rules and

1 Sardessai, Manohar Rai (1997), 'Remembering Freedom's Her Story,' Goa Today, (August), p. 82.
unreasonable customs.³ Society was patriarchal. Women lacked individuality in the male dominated family. They were considered as property that could be disposed off. There was a bias against women right from the time of birth. The birth of a girl child was unwelcome while the birth of a boy was a case for rejoicing. A girl was a burden on the family. Her contribution to the household work and to family income was ignored. The dowry system was prevalent.⁴ However the girl hardly got the benefit of this dowry. It was taken away by her husband’s family. They demanded much more beyond the capacities of the girl’s family. Further, since the girl was married with the giving of dowry, she could not henceforth claim her share in her parental property. Child marriages were popular and this led to early maternity which affected the health of the women. Sati pratha⁵ was existent. From the accounts of a traveler, the Italian Pietro Della Valle, who visited Goa in 1623, from Tome Pires’s Suma Oriental, and the Jesuit Account of 1548, it is evident that Sati was practiced in Goa.⁶ The archaeological findings also reports a large number of Sati-stones of different designs in many places in Goa.⁷ Widow remarriage was not permitted. Women lacked education which further exacerbated their inferior position. Neither the Kadambas nor the Vijaynagar rulers who ruled Goa for a considerable period, did anything to alleviate the suffering of women.⁸ With the coming of the Muslim rulers, the status of women suffered a further setback. They were confined to the four walls of the house. Purdah affected women from receiving education, curtailed their movement outside the home and hampered their social participation. However the observance of practice of purdah was largely influenced by the socio-economic background and social context. The Hindu women also observed purdah. It was a part of Indian culture to separate the two sexes so as to restrict the sexual relationships within the approvals of the society. Thus women had a secondary position vis-a-vis to men. They were burdened with duties without any rights. Child marriages, female

³ Silva Gracias, Fatima da (1996), Kaleidoscope of Women in Goa, New Delhi: Concept, p. 16.
⁴ According to Jacky Goody and S.J. Tambiah, Dowry referred to wealth given with the daughter at her marriage for the couple to use as the nucleus of their conjugal estate. It stressed the notion of female property, Stridhanam, and female rights to property. It meant transfer of property at a marriage as a sort of pre-mortem inheritance. (Source: Goody, Jacky & Tambiah, S.J. (1973), Bridewealth and Dowry, London: Cambridge University Press, p. 63)
⁵ Sati Pratha referred to the practice of burning of the wife in the pyre of her dead husband.
⁷ Gune, V.T(ed.) (1979), Gazetteer of the Union Territory, Part I, Goa, Daman & Diu, p. 64.
infanticide, polygamy, purdah, Sati, strict widow-hood and the denial of education, and of ownership of property, confined the women to the four walls of the house.

Advent and Expansion of Portuguese rule in Goa

Portuguese established their rule in Goa in 1510. Goa was then under the rule of Adil Shah of Bijapur, who was at war with the Hindu King of Vijaynagar. A Governor of the King of Vijaynagar sought the help of Albuquerque, the Portuguese sea Captain, to conquer Goa from Bijapur. In 1510, the Island of Goa or Ilhas was captured from Adil Shah of Bijapur. In 1543 Salcete and Bardez were conquered. Ilhas, Salcete and Bardez, together comprising of 113 sq. miles, were known as ‘Velha Conquistas’. These three parts of current day Goa came into contact with the Portuguese much before the rest of Goa, and, as a result were strongly influenced by Portuguese institutions and culture. The rest of Goa, known as ‘Novas Conquistas’, came into Portuguese hands only at the close of the 18th century. Portuguese captured Ponda, Sanguem, Quepem and Canacona in 1763 from chief of Sounda and secured Pernem, Sanquelim, Sattari from the Bhonsles of Sawantwadi during 1781-1788.

The Portuguese colonial rule and its impact was felt more in the Velha Conquistas. Having gained a foothold, the Portuguese conquerors concentrated on stabilizing their domination, and decided upon denationalization of Goans as the best method of achieving it by separation of Goans from the rest of the people of India.

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9 Denationalization referred to the process of robbing the inhabitants of their customs and traditions. There were various restrictions led down by Portuguese rulers like:
- The neo converts were not to make use of musical instruments during wedding ceremonies
- They were not to recite ovios during any ceremony.
- Males were not allowed to wear dhoti at home or in public places and women were not to wear cholies.
- No feasts were to be arranged in ceremony of deceased relations
- The tulsi shrub was not allowed to be planted near the house and if one was found, it was uprooted.
- All the posts in the government were assigned to people who were Christian convert.
- There was ban imposed on the idols even in the private homes.
- Tax was imposed on Xendi, the hairstyle that was prevalent among men in those days.
During the period from 1560 to 1812, Portuguese rule was very autocratic. The *inquisition*\textsuperscript{10} in Goa began in 1560 and Aleixo Dias was sent to Goa as the first inquisitor.\textsuperscript{11} There was mass conversion by force of Hindus and Muslims to Christianity. Temples and Mosques were burnt down and wealth was confiscated. There was persecution of the local Goan language. All books and scriptures were destroyed. The Portuguese rule was imposed on the Goan people in a tyrannical manner with brutalities, with physical and mental coercion. 'It murdered personality, national pride and dignity. It created a slavish mentality, brought about cultural, political, and economic bankruptcy.'\textsuperscript{12} During this period, Portuguese did not invest any capital in Goa. They did not set up any big or small industry except developing manganese and iron, which ore was exported to foreign countries which turned it into iron and steel, for their own needs.\textsuperscript{13} There was no means of employment, except agriculture which was grown at subsistence level.\textsuperscript{14} The forced conversions also led to migration out of fear, as a result the villages were deserted and the fields were abandoned.\textsuperscript{15} It reduced the land revenue and led to decline in trade and commerce. Portuguese drained away wealth of Goa to Portugal. There was the imposition and collection of an exorbitant land revenue. They led to disintegration of the traditional village communities and reduced their self-sufficiency. They promoted forced labour and large scale domestic slavery. At this time Portugal was a poor country and the Royal Exchequer was usually broke.\textsuperscript{16} In post-industrial era Portuguese took from India raw materials and dumped finished goods in Goa which affected the art and craft of the region, and further impoverished the people.\textsuperscript{17} 'Thus there was mental slavery, religious onslaught, racial prejudice, mass conversions, the inquisition,'

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\textsuperscript{10} Inquisition referred to the establishment of Holy Tribunal to check the tendency of the new converts to Christianity to revert to the practices of their old religion. The Inquisition in Goa punished not only Christians who were suspected of heresy but also Hindus and other non-Christians who were accused of obstructing conversion or infringing some of the laws directed against their religions. The punishment meted out included torture, sentenced to banishment, corporal corrections or the galleys, confiscation of property, subjection to lashes, deportation etc.


\textsuperscript{13} Telkar, S (1962), *Goa, Yesterday and Today*, Bombay: Telkar Feature service, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{14} Menezes Braganca, Berta (1992), op. cit., pp. 28-29.


unnatural manners, cultural bankruptcy, physical degeneration and economic ruins, that is what T.B. Cunha called as denationalization of Goans.

However Portuguese adopted a policy of tolerance as far as the *Novas Conquistas* were concerned. Various factors might have been responsible for the change in the attitude of the Portuguese rulers:

- The policy of inquisition resulted in migration. The desertion of villages and abandonment of fields resulted in decline in land revenue, in trade and commerce.
- In the early years Portuguese followed the policy of persecution, as it wanted to stabilize its powers in an alien land, and it would be easy to do it if the population of the land was of their religion and culture. Once they had stabilized their power, they relaxed their rules.
- There was change in Portuguese leadership, there was decline in the ecclesiastical power, and leaders now came up with new orientation of non-interference in the Hindu religious practices. They decided to follow policy of tolerance.
- There were also some local revolts launched by the natives, which warned the Portuguese of possible unrest.

Thus the *Novas Conquistas* were allowed to follow their own customs and usage. The Republican Government which came in power in Portugal in 1910, and though it was in power only for a short period (1910 to 1920), it brought in most desirable changes in Goa. It guaranteed individual liberty and equality and was secular in nature. Now, for the first time Christians and Hindus were treated on an equal footing. It removed the censorship on press and promoted education. However in 1926 Portugal came under the grip of a fascist dictatorship and its impact was felt in Goa. The fundamental freedoms and civil liberties were suppressed. There was no freedom of press and association. Severe restrictions were laid on the publication of newspapers. This autocratic rule lead to the growth of political consciousness in the Goans to fight for their motherland.

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Portuguese rule and its Influence on the Status of Women in Goa

Though Portuguese rule was non-democratic and fostered inequality, it had positive impact on the status of women in Goa. It brought forth remarkable changes in the position of women. The Conquest of Goa by the Portuguese in 1510, gave a gentle push to womanhood along the path of social justice. The following reforms were brought in by the Portuguese rule:

a) Ban on Sati

In 1510, Afonso de Albuquerque, through a Government decree banned Sati in the island. The motive behind this move of Albuquerque is however questioned. There was stiff reaction from the locals, specially the Brahmins, who pressurized the subsequent governors to revoke the ban on Sati. In Bardez and Salcete Sati was banned in 1560 by Governor Constantino de Braganca. The prohibition stated that one who abetted the crime would be sent to gallows and his properties would be confiscated. However Sati practice continued in other parts of Goa. Sati practice in the Novas Conquistas was abolished as late as 1884, as these areas were governed by Codigo dos Usos e Costumes (laws of Land) till 1880.

b) Right to Inheritance

In the early centuries of Portuguese rule in Goa, the wives and the daughters of the deceased person were enabled to inherit some portion of movable property. If the daughter or widow was converted to Christianity, she was permitted to enjoy full proprietary rights. Thus to the dark cloud of forced conversions was attached the silver lining of ownership of property to the female converts. However these rights were not extended to Hindu widows or daughters. Though there were alvaras (laws)

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20 According to some scholars, Albuquerque's supposed 'tolerance towards the Hindu' is a myth and he banned sati to encourage mixed marriages which was an imperative necessity to tie down his people to the conquered land and to ensure the continuation of their predominance through these strong unions. This view is supported by T.B. Cunha. While writers like Jose Nicholau Da Fonseca opined that Albuquerque was a politic, a statesman and a skilful general. He tolerated all forms of religious belief, and he aimed at cementing the union of the rulers and the ruled and therefore encouraged intermarriages between them. (Source: Cunha, T.B Denationalization of Goans, Goa, Goa Gazetteer Department & Nicolau Da Fonseca (1994), Historical and Archaeological Sketch of the City of Goa, New Delhi, Madras: Asian Education Services)
21 Kamat, P. (1987), op. cit. 94.
made from time to time to promote these rights to Hindu women, such efforts were thawned due to the divide in the Hindus.\textsuperscript{22}

c) Abolition of Polygamy

The viceregal decree of 1567 decreed monogamy for all irrespective of their religion. The State tried to control polygamy through a Carta Regia dated 1614, as per which non Christians desiring to have another wife, had to seek permission from State. Those who violated this law were to be enslaved.\textsuperscript{23}

d) The Civil Code of 1867

The Civil Code of 1867 was very important as it gave protection to the woman at the time of marriage and the property she owned at that time. It gave half of the husband’s property to his widow. Daughters were also entitled to their rightful share in their father’s property. The civil code decreed that women below age of 12 years, could not marry. Under the Republic, the age of marriage was further increased to 16 years for girls. This led to decline in child marriage. Civil marriage now came to be regarded as the only valid marriage for all purposes. It guaranteed equality to women on par with men. Widow re-marriage promoted in 1684, was further encouraged by this Civil Code. The Republican regime further improvised the Civil Code. It gave the Goan women various rights. Thus on the death of the husband, wife could now have the right to half of her husband’s property. Introduction of Civil Marriage checked polygamy, gave a wife a share in the husband’s property, and gave legal protection to the children. Besides, the wife could sue without the prior consent of the husband. It provided various grounds for Separation, Annulment or Divorce to the

\textsuperscript{22} A Royal alvara of 1695 gave the widows the right to the property of their husbands and the equal share with their brothers to their father’s property for Hindus of Goa (city of Goa), Salcete and Bardez which were governed by the Portuguese law. However the Hindus were divided and wanted to follow their Usos e Costumes. The alvara of 1739 stated that the Hindus of Velha Conquistas should be governed by Portuguese Laws, while their counterparts in Nova Conquistas would be governed by their Usos e Costumes. Though the Hindus requested the State to extend the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867 to whole of Goa, they wanted to protect some provisions of Usos e Costumes. In 1880 the Hindus were given option as to follow either Usos e Costumes or the Uniform Civil Code. Thus the insistence of the Hindus to follow their traditional practices denied women the opportunity to avail the benefits of the laws passed by the Portuguese Government.
(Source: Silva Gracias, Fatima da (1996), Kaleidoscope of Women in Goa, New Delhi: Concept, p. 94 )

\textsuperscript{23} Silva Gracias, Fatima da (1996), op. cit. 97-98.
women in Goa. Now women could seek divorce and claim maintenance from her husband if she was ill-treated. She could also seek divorce if her husband had illicit relationship.

However the impact of this progressive legislation was felt more in the Velha Conquistas. The Novas Conquistas continued to follow the Codigo dos Usos e Costumes dos habitantes das Novas Conquistas. In these areas people continued to follow their own customs and traditions. Child marriage continued and women did not have the legal protection. The people were not bound to follow the above reforms. Though some revision was brought in 1880, the traditional customs and practices continued to be an obstacle to the progress of Hindu women in these areas.

e) Education of Women

It was only in 1841 the Portuguese took the initiative for women’s education. In 1846 a girl’s school was opened in Panjim. In 1854 two more such schools were opened, one in Mapusa and other in Margao. By the decree of 1869, education was made compulsory for the children of the age group of 9-12. Large number of primary schools were started. However the education imparted in this schools was in Portuguese and a large number of them were situated in Velha Conquistas. The first school to provide education for girls was started in 1887. It was latter replaced by Escola Nacional de Sexo Feminino in 1911. But in both these, the teaching was confined, besides learning languages of Portuguese, French, and English, to singing, playing, and home science, i.e. house keeping, needle work etc. 24 The Liceu National, the Higher Secondary Schools were set up in Panaji, Margao and Mapusa. However attendance was not very encouraging. The establishment of the Republican regime in Portugal in 1910 led to the Hindu community setting up schools catering specially to the needs of primary education through the medium of Marathi. The growing national consciousness in India and its struggle for freedom influenced the Goan people, and during the last years of the 19th century English schools were set up by

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private initiative. Although in earlier years, the Hindu woman in Goa was restricted, by traditions, from acquiring education, however due to modernization, the progressive legislation such as the uniform civil code, share in property rights etc, and access to education helped in her emancipation.

The colonial rule effected the status of women in a subtle and less direct way as well. The Christian missionarues, Portuguese traders and colonial administrators, all sought to deal with Goan men. Over a period of four centuries this conferred advantages on the men involved, and communicated the unsuitability of women for conducting affairs of substance. Missionaries consciously or unconsciously sought to alter marriage patterns from polygamous to monogamous, nuclear family. Furthermore as Goans became educated and aspired for acceptance by Portuguese as their equals, they themselves began to modify traditional customs and conventions. It brought in change in their ideology, values and beliefs. The 'Westernisation' of the elite, brought in change, however, marginal in their personal lives. As a part of modern group, they introduced measures such as sending their daughters to schools, delaying their marriage by a year or two, allowing them to be present at formal social events etc. The new identity was expected to distinguish the elite from the colonial government and its institutions as well as from the orthodox milieu of their society. They encouraged women from their families to acquire education and participate in public activities.

Thus abolition of Sati, grant of the rights of inheritance and ownership of property by women, provision for widow remarriage, and introduction of certain other measures to improve the socio-economic status of widows, were some of the important steps in the direction of modernity where women were introduced to the ideas of rationalism, humanism, liberalism and secularism. 'The progressive legislation of the 19th and the 20th century built, for all Goan women, from daughter

25 There was the Mustifund Saunstha set up in Panaji, Saraswat Vidhalaya and Gnyana Prassarak Mandal in Mapusa, Gomant Vidya Niketan in Margao, Goa Vidya Prassarak Mandal and Antonio Jose da Almeida High School in Ponda, Sharada Vidhalaya in Cumbarjui and Atmodhar Sanghet at Sanquelim. (Source: Varde, P. S (1977), History of Education in Goa, From 1510 to the Present Day, Goa: Goa Vidya Prathisthan, p. 91.)

26 M.N. Srinivas gave the concept of westernisation to describe the changes brought in the Indians, in their ideology, values and belief as a result of prolonged British rule. The westernisation of elite Hindu male was significant as it created an awareness to the need to modify traditional customs and conventions concerning women. (Source: Srinivas, M. N (1972), Social Change in Modern India, Bombay: Orient Longman’s , p. 6.)

to the grand-mother, a brighter legal future based on the twin pillars of equality and liberty.\footnote{Kamat, P. (1987), op. cit., p 99.} The Civil Code and other social legislation opened the doors of bright future for the women in Goa. The Christian women were first to make use of the legal infrastructure provided by Government. This had a demonstration effect on Hindu women, who followed suit, although at a slower pace.\footnote{Kamat, P. (1987), op. cit., pp. 101-102.}

**Women's Role in the Goa's Liberation Struggle**

The political consciousness of Goans and their determination to free themselves of foreign rule was noticeable from the very early years of Portuguese rule. The first revolt was in 1654 led by Fr. Martin de Castro, followed in 1787 by the Pinto conspiracy. There were a series of revolts led by the Ranes of Sattari. For the lack of sufficient documentation, it is difficult to define exactly what role women played in the revolts against the Portuguese during the first four centuries of Portuguese colonialism. The desire for liberation of Goa was given concrete shape from the 1930’s. In 1926, Portugal came under the grip of a fascist dictatorship and its impact was felt in Goa. The fundamental freedoms and civil liberties were suppressed. There was no freedom of press and association. Several restrictions were placed on publication of newspapers and other publications. Thus all the rights given by the Republic regime (for more than a decade - from 1910 to 1926) were reversed by Salazar. However he could not stop the enlightened leadership that had emerged due to the liberal policies of the previous Government.\footnote{Sheik, Ali (ed.) op. cit., p.7.} The autocratic rule of Salazar kindled the patriotic feeling in Goa. Besides, the people in the neighbouring areas of Pune, Kolhapur, Belgaum, Bombay etc. were involved in India’s freedom struggle. Goans who were studying there and the others who visited these places were very much influenced by these freedom fighters. The rise of Indian National Congress and India’s Freedom Struggle further flamed the people’s desire to throw away the Portuguese yolk.

The first significant confrontation the Goan women had with the Portuguese police, during the liberation movement, was on 18\textsuperscript{th} June 1946, the day when Dr Ram Manohar Lohia addressed a public meeting in Margao without taking prior permission of the colonial Government. From then onwards women did not look
back. They were present at political meetings, debates, processions and even participated in *satyagrahas*. Women freedom fighters in Goa can be grouped into four levels depending on the nature and extent of their participation. The first group consisted of a very small number of women who were attracted to the movement in its entirety, and participated in various aspects of liberation activity. This was an elite group and they came from sound socio-economic background and possessed certain resources like education, leisure and support from family. The male family members were well educated, and involved in the liberation struggle and encouraged these women to pursue education and take active part in the liberation struggle. The second was a small group of women who were committed to one particular aspect of the liberation struggle. Their involvement was limited in terms of issue and geographical locale. The third was the large group of women who participated as a part of the general mass of people who, being influenced after 18th June 1946, participated in the political meetings and *prabhat pheries*, or became *satyagrahis*. They opposed Portuguese rule publicly. They held the Indian tricolour and shouted slogans like ‘Jai Hind’, ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’, ‘Chodo Goa’, ‘Bharat Goa Ek Hai’ and distributed anti-Portuguese pamphlets. A fourth category also requires to be given due recognition to. In fact, in any freedom struggle, while men find themselves in jail or carry on underground activities, the women who are left at home to manage the household and bring up children are no less freedom fighters. It is this group whose story does not get recorded in any history books, yet it is these who keep the struggle alive by their silent support and willingness to accept hardships.

**a) Factors that influenced women’s entry in Goa’s Liberation Struggle**

Various factors influenced women’s entry into the freedom struggle. A large number of them entered freedom struggle mainly due to family influence. In families, men were more experienced in politics and their opinions influenced their sisters, wives and daughters. The patriotic atmosphere in the house, political meetings, discussions, the visits of leaders to their home, the political literature that was brought

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31 *Satyagraha* refers to insistence on truth. It is a form of non-violent resistance, wherein demonstrators peacefully obstruct actions or resist laws which they consider unjust. The most powerful weapons of *satyagraha* are fasting and civil disobedience.


33 *Prabhat Pheries* referred to parades in the streets in the mornings carrying the national tricolour.
home all led to the growth of political consciousness and willingness to volunteer for the cause of freedom. Thus Shalini Phaldesai, Sharada Savaikar, Mogabai Naik, Prema N. Tendulkar were influenced by their brothers who were involved in the liberation struggle. Sharada Savaikar recalls how her brother was connected with the activities of Azad Gomantak Dal.\textsuperscript{34} Berta Braganca De Menezes and Braganca (Dr) Beatris De Menezes were influenced by Dr T. B. Cunha, who was their uncle. There were also instances where women such as Harmalkar Kishoribai, Rajani Suryankant Naik, Shoba Prabhu Desai and others perceived their participation as being supportive of the activities of their husbands.

Persuasion by other women also played a role. A prominent persuader was Sindhutai Deshpande who went from one end to another and persuaded many young women to take part in the freedom struggle. Sindhutai was a Maharastrian. She had actively participated in the Bharat Chodo Andolan of 1942. She was imprisoned for the cause of freedom. She was persuaded by Peter Alvares, the president of National Congress (Goa), a fighting organization which had taken steps to organize and intensify Goa’s freedom struggle. Sindhutai created fearlessness in the minds of the Goan women against the Portuguese police. She stimulated political consciousness amongst women in various parts of Goa. She persuaded Hordarkar, Celina Moniz, Divkar, Shalini Lolienkar, Shanta Hede, Vilasini Mahale and others to offer satyagraha and actively contribute to Goa’s liberation struggle. Hordarkar although, influenced by her brother who was involved in the struggle, participated in the satyagraha mainly due to the persuasion by Sindhutai.\textsuperscript{35} Peter Alvares also influenced Subhavati Bhobe. Anthony De Souza persuaded Laxmi Paiguinkar while Vithal Lolienkar persuaded Shalini Lolienkar and Kumudini Paiguinkar. Efforts of Pramilatai Kant Zambaulikar also needs to be recognized. She was active member of Goa Seva Sangh started by Purushottam Kakodkar. She preached the use of Khadi. Many women joined this ashram. She persuaded them to join Goa’s liberation struggle. Some women outside Goa were actively supporting the revolutionaries. These women were not Goans, nor had experienced Portuguese rule. They had enthusiastically participated in the Indian national struggle for independence. They took up the issue of Goa’s liberation in right earnest and rushed to the aid of the

\textsuperscript{34} Sharadha Savaikar, Interview, May’97.
\textsuperscript{35} Shashikala (Hodarkar) Almeida, Interview, May’97.
struggling Goans. They were Ambika Dandekar, Rai Sahodara Devi, Tulipule Malinibai, Mandakini Yaigi, Kamal Upasani, Prabha Sathe, Shanta Rao and others.

The major event that attracted people of Goa to its liberation struggle was the movement launched by Dr Ram Manohar Lohia on 18th June 1946 in Margao to demand civil liberties and to defy the ban on public meetings. Dr Lohia asked the young men and women not to fail in their duties. He challenged them to carry on with the struggle. 'Look not to Delhi nor to U.N.O for your deliverance; your freedom lies in you. Five lakhs of full democrats can shake Portuguese into submission. Get arrested, get beaten, suffer bullets, but take out your marches and demonstrations and refuse to pay taxes. Goa was the first gate for European in Asia. We shall smash in Goa, the supremacy of Europe over Asia.' This stirred up the patriotic feelings of Goans. Hundreds of them came forward and offered satyagraha. Dr. Lohia was arrested. With many others one women named Vatsala Kirtani was also arrested on the same day. This lead to nearly forty women marching to the police station demanding that Vatsala Kirtani be freed. This event became the immediate cause for some women in Margao, like Jeevan Karapurkar, Shashi Bandodkar, Ratan Khaunte, Umabai Shirali, Lalita Kantak, to enter into liberation struggle. Dr. Lohia inspired confidence not only in women, but in their guardians, husbands, brothers and fathers who did not object to their women folk coming out of their sheltered homes to march on the streets. Thus Lohia was something like a Messiah to the Goan people. To quote George Vaz, '18th June was like a big Light House that guided many ships traveling in the sea.'

It is interesting to note how Mitra Madhav Bir entered the freedom struggle. Her father was working for the Portuguese Government. After her S.S.C. she went to Dharwad for further studies. In the year 1954, the then Prime Minister of India, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, was addressing the students of Dharwad University. This created in Mitra the desire to listen and see the prime Minister, not in Dharwad, but in her free Goa. The very next day she left her studies and came down to Goa to enter the freedom struggle.

36 Lohia, R. M (1947), Action in Goa, Bombay: August Publication, p. 73.
37 Vaz, George (1996), 'Tethem Kar Majhe Julati,' in Nave Parve: A Special Issue, Goa: Department of Information and Publicity, p 47.
38 Bir, Madhay. Interview, May'97.
Most of the women freedom fighters were young women. They had in them a strong streak of idealism. They hated the Portuguese regime. They were inspired by patriotism and wanted to see Goa freed from foreign rule. Provision of educational facilities and encouragement for private educational institutions by Portuguese, thus paradoxically had a positive influence on women. They were also influenced by the literature that came from outside Goa. The writings of Mahatma Gandhi, T.B. Cunha, and Ram Manohar Lohia had tremendous influence on Goan women. Besides the underground press like Jwala, Amchem Goem, Projecho Avaz, Resurge Goa, Azad Goa, Free Goa, Dipgraha, O Heraldo, Heraldo, Goa Tribune, The Hindu, Bharat, etc kept the public informed of the activities related to the struggle inside and outside Goa.

The general environment also favoured women’s participation in the struggle. The patriotic slogans and songs heard from the streets inspired women willingly to join processions, face the police and go to jail.

b) Course of Struggle

The beginning of the struggle was made by Sarubai Vaidya who started a Marathi-Portuguese monthly called ‘Haldikumkum’ in 1910 for women. She wanted to awaken Goan women. Another women, Pramilatai Zambaulikar, was very active and her house at Margao was a centre of political activity. She installed a handloom spinning factory and charkhas at her residence. She mobilized other women for the cause of Goa’s liberation. She gave shelter to the freedom fighters from the Portuguese police. She participated in satyagrahas and was imprisoned. Mahatma Gandhi was her greatest source of inspiration.

18th June 1946 was the golden day in the history of Goa’s liberation struggle. Women came out on the streets in large numbers in the city of Margao, and willingly dedicate themselves to the cause of liberation. They joined Prabhat-pheries in great numbers. Many of them were badly beaten up and arrested. On 19th June 1946 a procession of women was led by Shrimati Shah. A little girl Shashi Bandodkar, was hit on the face for shouting ‘Jai Hind’ and she started to bleed through the nose. Another girl of 14, Ratan Khauwate was similarly hit.39 On July 21st 1946, in the

39 Menezes, Julio (1947), Goa’s Liberation struggle, Bombay, p. 57.
Prabhat phery in Margao, Lalita Kantak, Krishna Hegde and Vitha Hegde were beaten up. Premilatai was taken to the police station and subjected to third-degree methods. She was told that if the women of Margao took out a procession the police would strip them naked. "This was another proof of the superior Portuguese civilization and training of Patriarch Jose." On 30th June 1946 Berta Braganca offered a satyagraha in Margao. In 1954 Sindhutai offered a satyagraha in Panjim. On 17th Feb 1955, Shashikala Hordarkar, Vilasini Prabhu, Suryakanti Dessai and Lakshmi Paiguinkar offered a satyagraha in Margao notwithstanding their awareness of the cruelty and inhuman behaviour of the Portuguese police. They were arrested and after court martial they were imprisoned. Kumud Paiguinkar offered a satyagraha under leadership of Sudhatai Joshi at Mapusa on 6th April 1955. Phadke Ashatai and Lila Sawant offered satyagraha at Shirgao Zatra day on 28th April, 1955. Tulpule Malinibai offered satyagraha at Pernem on 11th June, 1955.

The participation of women in Satyagraha Movement reflected the heroic personality and spiritual courage of Goan women of all castes, classes and ages. It brought into relief, the character and qualities of the Goan women who threw themselves into battle action with rare courage and braved brutalities of the Portuguese police and military.

There were some of those who through their fearless speeches and writings gave inspiration to the liberation struggle. Berta Braganca addressed a huge rally organized in Margao on 30th June, 1946. She appealed to the youth to freely carry out the civil disobedience movement. She asked the people to oppose the undemocratic laws of the Portuguese Government. The speech was powerful and courageous. She was the secretary of Goa Youth League-Goa branch. She along with her husband was the founder of a bulletin called *Free Goa* through which she wrote editorials, notes and other articles. Besides writing to promote the cause for Goa's Liberation, she also used other fora and platforms to advance the cause of Goa's Liberation. She undertook a tour of the Indian subcontinent on behalf of the national Campaign Committee for Goa to rouse the Indian masses to extend their help and wishes towards Goa's Liberation. 'Sometimes, in spite of poor health, she went from one part of India to another, from east to west, from north to south, and addressed

40 Ibid., p. 82.

41 Ibid.
meetings from dawn to dusk or even late in the night calling on the national Government of India to complete the nation’s independence by compelling the Portuguese to immediately vacate her aggression. She was a member of the Indian Delegation to Afro-Asian Women’s Conference in Cairo in 1961 where the liberation of Goa evoked a special interest. She was a member of the delegation to Moscow in the same year, where she highlighted the anti-colonial struggle of the people under the Portuguese regime and drew the attention towards liberation of Goa. Dr. Beatris De Menezes Braganca took active part in the anti-Portuguese propaganda activities, meetings and demonstrations held in Bombay. She was one of the youth leaders who led a large procession to the Portuguese Consulate in Bombay in 1946 to protest against the arrest of T.B. Cunha. She accompanied by Joachim Dias called upon the Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in Delhi to apprise him of the Goa Problem. Laura De Souza gave up a lucrative medical practice to join Goa’s freedom movement. She organized Goan’s Residential club in Bombay in 1955 which had 50,000 members who strongly supported Goa’s Liberation Movement. She edited ‘Konkan Life’ an English monthly in Bombay. She organized a huge rally of Goan’s in Bombay on 12th August, 1946, to demand that the Portuguese should quit Goa. In April 1961 she led a delegation to Africa to canvass the support of Goans living there.

Asha Phadke wrote patriotic poems. She used religious discourses (Pravachanas and Kirtanas) to spread the ideas of freedom. She also performed musical programmes and funded the activities of the satyagrahis. Libia Lobo, who was the secretary of Goa Youth League from 1948 to 1950, with her associate Vaman Sardessai, set up an underground radio station ‘Voice of Freedom’ at Castlerock. Later it was shifted to Belguam. It broadcast daily from 1955-61. She gave the last ultimatum to Goa Governor-General to surrender or Liberation forces would enter the territory, every ten minutes from this clandestine radio. Subhavati Bhobe recollects how she provided medical help to the freedom fighters. She along with others served the badly injured freedom fighters at the camp set up at Dodamarg with the help of Red Cross. Libia Lobo, who was the secretary of Goa Youth League from 1948 to 1950, with her associate Vaman Sardessai, set up an underground radio station ‘Voice of Freedom’ at Castlerock. Later it was shifted to Belguam. It broadcast daily from 1955-61. She gave the last ultimatum to Goa Governor-General to surrender or Liberation forces would enter the territory, every ten minutes from this clandestine radio. Subhavati Bhobe recollects how she provided medical help to the freedom fighters. She along with others served the badly injured freedom fighters at the camp set up at Dodamarg with the help of Red Cross.

44 Bhobe, Subhavati. Interview, May’97.
Shanta Dessai, Vilasini Mahale visited different parts of Goa and enkindled the flames of patriotism among the people. They created political awareness among them. They mobilized the women to fight for the righteous cause of liberation.

Then there were those who though did not participate in satyagraha, but played an important role behind the scene. They provided food and shelter to the underground revolutionaries. They informed them about the activities of the Portuguese police. They circulated messages, prepared pamphlets and distributed them. They affixed posters at public places, houses, shops, electricity polls etc. A few of them worked for secret underground organizations. One such major organization was Azad Gomantak Dal. However it is difficult to analyze the role of women in violent activities from published sources. It can be assumed that they carried out supplementary activities like giving food and shelter to the underground activists, carrying messages and arms. There was no special programme to train women. In fact, Prema Tendulkar was hurt due to ambush fire while taking explosives to Tamdisurla.\(^45\) She was young, only thirteen years old then. They were aware of the implications of their patriotism both for themselves and their families. Their families were exposed to harassment by the police to know their whereabouts, and some of them were even alienated from relatives and friends. They regretted the hardships their family members had to face due to their involvement, however they felt that such sacrifice was necessary for Goa's liberation.

It is proud to note that women went in jail for the cause of freedom.(See Table 2.1) They did not get any special consideration when they were in jail. They were jailed from six months to four years. They had to pay penalties for their 'crimes'. The treatment meted to them was very bad. The freedom fighters were first detained in the police custody, and then they were tried by TMT (Territorial Military Tribunal). The TMT often sentenced them to imprisonment. Many a times, they were detained in the custody for several days without any trial. The life in custody was miserable. They were mercilessly beaten up by the Portuguese Police Officers, and not provided food and water. There are instances where some women freedom fighters were harassed, both physically as well as mentally, by these officers. At other times, they were even abused, physically as well as mentally. The position of those who were arrested on the basis of doubt was still worse. The Portuguese used

hunters, batons, and *cavalmary* to torture them. They were often interrogated for hours to make them confess the names and whereabouts of their colleagues.

The imprisonment meted out by TMT to the freedom fighters, was not based on any clear criteria, but was rather based on the whims and fancy of the members of the TMT. It was arbitrary. Even those who participated in the peaceful *satyagraha* were sentenced from four to six years in jail. Those who were involved in underground activities like distributing nationalist literature, and carried anti-Portuguese propaganda were sentenced to jail for more than ten years. They had to go through RI (Rigorous Imprisonment). They were kept in a cage like cell which had a total watch. Only one glass of water was provided for 24 hours. There were no basic facilities provided. They were taken out only once a day. They had to lie down on the cemented bare floor, which turned chilly cold in the rainy season. It was a dark room, dirty and very humid. Some of them were badly hurt. Sharada Sawaiker and Lakshmi Paiguinkar had fractures while Prema Tendulkar's ear drum was badly affected. Some felt sick and suffered from dysentery, malaria etc. Laura Rodrigues was kept in solitary confinement abused and subjected to indignity. These atrocities committed did not discourage the freedom fighters, but on the contrary strengthened their morale. In the jail they led a *satyagraha* under the leadership of Sindhutai Deshpande for demanding better conditions in the jail. Besides, they also had to pay fine or in lieu undergo imprisonment for some more years. Their political rights were suspended. Thus Shanta Hede was imprisoned for twelve years RI, while Shoba Desai was sentenced to three years, since both were involved in underground activities. While Shashikala Hodarkar was sentenced to four plus two years RI and Suryakanti Phal Desai was sentenced to three plus one year imprisonment, since both had offered *satyagraha* at the same place on the same day. Mogabai Naik was arrested and detained for two years, and was not even allowed to attend the funeral of her mother. Lilavati Naik was arrested as she offered *satyagraha* on 15th April, 1955. She was severely beaten up and detained in jail. Her husband was also involved in

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>YEAR OF IMPRISONMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Desai, Shanta Jaiwant Nee Hegde, Shanta V.</td>
<td>She was arrested in June 1955, and was tried by TMT on 26th November, 1956. She was sentenced to twelve years RI and fine of ten Escudos per day for two years. Her political rights were suspended for twenty years. She was released on 19th August, 1959.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Desai Shoba Manohar Prabhu</td>
<td>She was arrested in 1957 and detained at Panaji Police Station for six months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Phaldesai, Suryakanti</td>
<td>She was arrested on 17th Feb, 1955, and tried by TMT in June, 1955. She was sentenced to three years RI and one year simple imprisonment, and her political rights were suspended for fifteen years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Deshpande, Sindhutai</td>
<td>She was arrested and detained from 25th Nov. 1954 to 14th Jan. 1955 and was pushed out of Goa border. Again she was arrested in Feb. 1956. She was sentenced to ten years RI and a fine of ten Escudos per day for two years with expulsion to the Indian border after her release.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Zambaulikar Pramilatai Kant</td>
<td>She was arrested on 21st July, 1946, when she led a Prabhat Phery in Margao and was beaten up. She was rearrested on 6th June, 1948 and sentenced to one month imprisonment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Kavlekar Kumudini D Nee Kumud Painguinkar</td>
<td>Was arrested on 6th April, 1955 and was tried by TMT and sentenced to eight years imprisonment. She was released in August, 1959.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mahale Vilasini D Nee Prabhu Vilasini N.</td>
<td>Was arrested on 17th Feb., 1955, tried by TMT and was sentenced to four years RI and two years simple imprisonment. She had to pay a fine of Rs. 2,000/- or in lieu two years imprisonment. She was released in April, 1958.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Naik, Lilavati D</td>
<td>Was arrested on 15th April, 1955 and was detained in jail for eight months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Bir, Mitra Madhav Pai Nee Kakodkar, Mitra-Vrinda Vasant Sinai.</td>
<td>She was arrested on 28th March, 1955, was tried by TMT and was sentenced to five years imprisonment. She was released in 1959.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Almeida Shashikala Nee Hodarkar Shashikala M.</td>
<td>Was arrested on 17th Feb, 1955 and was sentenced to four years RI and two years simple imprisonment. She was released in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Araujo Maria Joaquina Calista</td>
<td>Was arrested on 30th Jan. 1947 and was imprisoned till 15th Feb. 1947. She was tried by TMT on 26th Jan., 1951 and was sentenced to two and half month. She was released under General Amnesty on 17th Feb. 1951. She was re-arrested in March, 1956, tried by TMT and sentenced to fourteen years RI. She was released in August 1959.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Naik, Mogabai</td>
<td>Was arrested in March 1956 and was detained for two years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Painguinkar, Laxhmi B</td>
<td>Was arrested on 17th Feb., 1955, and was sentenced to two years RI and four years simple imprisonment. She was released on 28th March, 1958.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Patil Shubhada S, Nee Divkar Krishnabai S</td>
<td>Was arrested on 16th August, 1955 and released on 26th May, 1956. She suffered nine months and ten days of rigorous imprisonment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Joshi, Sudhatai</td>
<td>Was arrested on 6th April, 1955 and tried by TMT and was sentenced to ten years imprisonment. She was released on 16th May, 1959.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Lolienkar, Shalini V.</td>
<td>Was arrested on 6th April, 1955 and tried by TMT. She was sentenced to eight years rigorous imprisonment. She was released after seven months of imprisonment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Sawaikar, Sharada P</td>
<td>Was arrested on 6th August, 1955 and was detained in the Police Custody for several days. She was tried by TMT at Panaji and suffered imprisonment of two and half years. She was released by mistake after the authorities made confusion over her name as that of one Sharad Shirvaikar, later when they realized their mistake, it was too late as by that time she had already crossed the border of Goa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Rodrigues, Laura souza De.</td>
<td>She was arrested in 1958 and detained for one month. She was arrested again, imprisoned, kept in solitary confinement, abused and subjected to indignity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Naik, Shanti N</td>
<td>Was detained several times and suffered a total imprisonment of six and half years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goa’s liberation struggle. To extract information of the whereabouts of the other freedom fighters, the Portuguese Police showed her a dead body and told her that it was of her husband. This led to her nervous breakdown from which she has still not recovered. The arrest and persecution of these women evoked protests from different parts of India. Representations were sent to the Government of India as well as to the UNO to take immediate action in this regard. Thanks to Amnesty International, the freedom fighters were set free before the completion of the imprisonment. However Portuguese Government showed a sympathetic attitude towards women satyagrahis who came from other states to show their solidarity with the liberation struggle. They were detained for few days and then pushed out of the borders of Goa. This may be because Portuguese did not want to annoy the Government of India. To escape further arrest and imprisonment many of freedom fighters left Goa and continued to work from outside.

Thus participation of women in peaceful activities as well as their association with underground activities reflected that women could be involved in the different political movements and strategies. They worked shoulder to shoulder with men. They worked with patience, endurance and were willing to undergo sufferings and sacrifice for the cause of liberation. They demonstrated skill, initiative and qualities of leadership.

Role of Women in Politics After Liberation

The participation of women in the liberation movement was significant for two reasons, (i) it created a tradition of female involvement in politics, and (ii) it enabled women to evolve from an oppressed and subordinate position to an enlightened and less unequal, if not equal, position in the social and political affairs of the territory. It offered them an opportunity to assume leadership. During the freedom struggle families could no longer observe the strict rules of seclusion. As a consequence the hold of patriarchal ideology was loosened. The bars against women participation in political activities were broken in various areas. They participated in public meetings and attended morchas. They wrote and published their poems and articles. ‘Often we feel a kind of wonder at the whole complex of attitudes, ranging

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from subordination to rebellion thrown up among women from time to time.\textsuperscript{48} They felt that the movement would give them an opportunity to establish their credentials in the world in which they were previously powerless and invisible. They realized that the mechanism of power, which had held them back in the past, had been gradually transformed into a mode of social control.

In a given society in normal times, women are expected to shoulder the responsibility as the guardian and preserver of traditional culture. The very stability of given society is perceived as resting on the purity and orthodoxy of its women. There is strict surveillance and restrictions imposed on the activities of women. However, it is observed that women have achieved major gains during periods of social dysfunction, with the breakdown of constant surveillance and the mechanisms of discipline that normally objectify them. Women have rush forth to grasp the opportunities for response and growth that becomes possible.\textsuperscript{49} Thus it was recognized that women could participate in politics in an emergency or a situation like the liberation struggle. The liberation struggle not only meant liberation from Portuguese rule, but it promised a life to women where there would be greater equality both within and outside the home.

Therefore it is necessary to study to what extent were there changes brought about with respect to the status of women after liberation. Did the new role of women gave them credibility and an opportunity to participate in public and political activities after liberation? It was observed that the movement seemed to relate to the women only through the hierarchy of gender. This is not strange. Studies elsewhere have shown that such struggle has not brought any positive change in the lives of women. Rama Kundu recalling the 1971 Scenario of Bangladesh shows how 'she' remained ignored either in policy matters or in active behaviour and how the new State that was formed did not help at all in establishing or ensuring women’s status.


\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
and rights. This view is also supported by Esther Perica. Thus the position of women did change during the revolution. Active participation in the revolution changed for a time the relationship within the family and specially with its male members. But soon after the revolution they were reversed back into a secondary and subordinate position. Kumari Jayawardina argues that controlling women's participation in nationalist movement did create an awareness among women in general for the need to organize themselves, although the momentum was somewhat lost after gaining independence or liberation through revolution.

Thus four characteristics of the liberation movement can be clearly reflected, viz.; (i) the paradox of Portuguese rule, which was autocratic yet beneficial to women, which introduced various reforms that led to awakening in Goan women who rose against the Portuguese rule, (ii) though the women were awakened, there was male direction in the liberation movement, (iii) there was existence of concept of complementary sex roles, and (iv) the patriarchal basis of society was not challenged.

The gender specific issues, sexual division of labour, and the subordinate position of women were not sites of political struggle. It was observed that women freedom fighters felt proud that they could effectively carried out the tasks allotted to them. They appreciated their ability to travel alone, to travel at night, to transport guns, arrange shelters, travel through forests, address meetings etc. They did not resent the fact that they were expected to cook, provide food, take messages or nurse wounds. Thus though women's entry into the movement gave them an access to the public domain, however the code by which they were judged and assessed was still the code of the private domain. The liberation struggle did not move beyond the sphere of limited opportunities to women. It did not address the basic question of sexual division of labour or women's subordination within the family and in society. The questions like the differences made between male and female child, or public-private dichotomy and other related matters never surfaced. Therefore, it was not unexpected that their role was marginalized after the struggle. The patriarchal

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51 Esther Perica views that though the American Revolution opened the door and for a brief time women enjoyed independence and individuality, but the signing of the Declaration of Independence did not open any new vistas for women as a sex. The statement 'all men are treated equal' was interpreted as referring to men, not women. Thus women had to regress to their formal status. (Source: Perica, Esther (1981), The American Women: Her role during Revolutionary War, New York: Library Research Associates, p. 36.)
attitude relegated women to the private domain. There was erection of the four walls of the household again. This was specially so with Hindu women. Men refused to extend the opportunities created by the Liberation Struggle, and were not willing to grant social sanctions for such activities which differed from the prevalent ideology of the position and role of women. Even when women participated in the struggle, their role was restricted in such a way as it would conform to the normal image of women. Thus to draw women to the liberation struggle and encourage them was more of a tactical necessity. Even women failed to develop a strategy for their own liberation and struggle for their own interests.

Only few women freedom fighters were seen in public life after liberation. Laura de Souza was the first Goan women to have contested the Lok Sabha elections. In 1963 she was given a ticket by the Congress (I) but she lost to MGP (Maharashtra Gomantak Party) candidate. She contested again in 1967 but lost from Panaji Constituency. Shashikala Hordarkar/Almeida worked as a member of Praja Socialist Party and Seva Dal for few years. She actively participated in Opinion Poll. Later she got the government job in family planning department. Shoba Prabhu Desai, Kumudini Kavlekar, Mitra M. Bir and Rajni S Naik were the only four women freedom fighters who contested for the first Panchayat elections and were elected. However they did not contest again, except Kumudini Kavlekar who was elected for Nagarpalika elections in Margao in 1976. In an interview with the writer, two of them confessed that the family responsibilities restrained them from active participation in politics. Kumudini Kavlekar confessed that she could take part in politics only because of her supportive husband.

There were some who were interested in socio-economic activities. Mitra M. Bir was the first President of ‘All India Women’s Federation’-Goa Branch. She worked for Red Cross Society and was a member of Women’s Cooperative society. Prema Purav started the Annapurna Mahila Mandal in Bombay to help widows and divorcees. Libia Lobo Sardesai formed the first Women’s Cooperative bank in Goa. She worked to bring in peace and was one of the delegates of India who attended World peace conference in 1983. She was also the chairperson of Consumer’s Forum Association for some time. Rodrigues, Laura Souza de was appointed a member of

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53 Opinion Poll was held in Goa in 1967. It was a referendum to understand whether people wanted Goa to be merged with Maharashtra or to remain a separate political unit within the Indian Union.
the Consultative Committee of the Lt. Governor, and was also elected Secretary of
the Goa Pradesh Congress Committee.

Few of them were absorbed in government service. A finer observation
reflects that the freedom fighters who came from elite group were able to make a
niche for themselves in one field or the others. However a majority of the others
confined themselves to the household responsibilities once Goa was liberated. Two
valuable lessons can be learned from the experience. Firstly, to make changes in the
status of women, the changes have to be brought in at the primary institution of
family. Women should negotiate changes in personal relationship on an individual
basis with other members of the family. Secondly, when women form an important
component of mass movements with its own specific aims, like liberation struggle,
the interests of women as a group should be differentiated, respected and confronted,
not conflated or submerged.

Conclusion:

Reviewing the impact of Portuguese Colonialism the following points can be
made:

- Portuguese colonialism benefited women in Goa. It brought in changes in the
  position of women through introducing reforms like ban on Sati and child
  marriage, promoted widow remarriage, education of girls and introduced Uniform
  Civil Code. The progress of women lead to an awakening in them and they rose
  against Portuguese rule.

- Access to education had a tremendous impact on women. It awakened in them an
  inner awareness of self and developed a sense of dignity. The freedom fighters
  were well educated. They read and wrote. It is observed that most of them were
  studying when they participated in the struggle.

- Age played a major role for entry of women in liberation struggle. The
  movement was more appealing to younger generation and the youth volunteered
  willingly. Most of the women freedom fighters were between the age of 18-30
  years. It has to be noted that women even at tender age were conscious and
  wanted Goa to be freed from Portuguese rule. Two of them were only of age of 14
  years. They were enthusiastic and dedicated themselves to the cause of liberation.
  However, old age was not a hurdle to women like Smt. Ambika Dandekar who
was a Maharastrian and came to support Goa liberation struggle by participating in satyagraha in Mapusa in 1955. She was in her sixties then.

- The changes brought about in the status of women by the Portuguese government were largely beneficial to Christian women. This had a demonstration effect on Hindu women who also followed suit, but it did not alter the submissive position of Hindu women in general. The patriarchal hold in the Hindu families resisted the interference of the Portuguese rule in Hindu customs and traditions. Yet a large number of the women freedom fighters were Hindu. Besides the fact that Hindus were in majority in Goa, other reasons can also be attributed. The Portuguese treatment towards Hindus was discriminatory. They followed the policy of mass conversion and inquisition. Through marriages and through exchanges of favours and privileges conversions were promoted. Many temples were destroyed. Till 1910 Hindus could not stand for election and become the members of the Portuguese Parliament. Properties of the Hindu orphans were left to Portuguese if they did not agree to get converted. Hindus were forbidden from renting state land. These laws were relaxed at later stages. But it lead to constant growth of humiliation, anger and frustration in the Hindus. They wanted to get rid of the Portuguese rule. It was realized that besides physical strength there was need of moral courage and spiritual determination. These are the basic qualities which women possess. This led to breaking up of religious and social conventions which restricted the role of women. It was realized that political freedom was a desirable objective and women were to be mobilized to support the struggle. Such a motivation was well understood and appreciated by the Hindu society. Therefore respectability of women freedom fighters was not in question. Thus women's participation was drawn within an accepted framework. They were expected to play a complementary role. Their role was confined to that of 'sisters, mothers or wives'. In fact most of the women freedom fighters entered the struggle due to family influence, where their brothers, father or husband were involved in freedom struggle. Thus once the struggle was over the women freedom fighters were sent back to their traditional roles. Now the situation was 'normal' and hence the men in their family were capable in deciding what was best suited for the women in their family, and therefore there was no need for them to enter public arenas!
Women contributed in the struggle in various ways. They offered satyagrahas, attended meetings and rallies, offered food, clothing, and shelter to the freedom fighters, nursed their wounds, and a few of them also participated in underground activities.

The study of membership of women freedom fighters in the political party/organization during the liberation struggle clearly reflect that they strongly believed in peaceful means of bringing about required change. Many of them associated themselves with National Congress Goa. They believed in Satyagraha and civil disobedience as the best method to resist the colonial rulers. Very few of them were associated with Azad Gomantak Dal, (which was a revolutionary organization and believed in military craft and guerilla warfare to force the Portuguese out of Goa) and that too because the male members of their family were its members.

There was lack of consistency and persistence in the freedom fighters. Most of them were involved in the struggle for a certain period only. Also those who were imprisoned and later freed due to Amnesty International, left Goa and settled in other parts of India. Some of them continued to work from there for the cause of liberation. They did so as they wanted to avoid arrest and further imprisonment. They then concentrated on pursuing further studies, or to seek jobs elsewhere in India.

The Liberation Movement enabled women to get involved in extra-domestic activities. This participation, however, was not motivated by their desire to utilize the opportunity to secure an improved social, legal, economic or political position for themselves. They seldom resented the oppressive practices that prevailed. They accepted the male authority and guidance in their personal as well as political level. The role of women in the liberation struggle did not procure any benefits for them after liberation. They regressed to their earlier role. It did not give them opportunity or credibility to participate in public and political life.