

Chapter - IV

PORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATION IN GOA

Chapter - IVPORTUGUESE ADMINISTRATION IN GOA

It is necessary at this stage to have a glimpse of the nature of Administrative Organisation in Goa, Daman and Diu during Portuguese Rule. The Portuguese pockets were ruled in a dictatorial manner without even a semblance of self-government. Portugal itself was and is under the grip of one dictator or the other for decades after the overthrow of Monarchy there. So the Portuguese pockets had to suffer under a similar situation. Lisbon controlled all affairs of Portuguese settlements in India. The Minister for Overseas Provinces in Lisbon was incharge of administration directly.

During the 16th century, the Viceroy or Governor of India was the Chief Executive over an area extending from Gaurdafui to Ceylon and under him were placed 5 Governors or Captains who ruled respectively over Mozambique, Ormuz, Mascot, Ceylon and Malacca. By the

17th century, the Portuguese lost many of the conquered areas to the Dutch Government. In India it was able to save Goa, Daman and Diu as its permanent possession with the assistance of the British Empire.

From 16th to 20th Century, we notice, the Viceroy or the Governor of Goa enjoyed all military, naval, Civil and Judicial powers. He was assisted by two Councils, - the Council of States and the Council of Three Estates.

With the adoption of a new Constitution for Portugal in 1910 and 1933, a Governor-General was appointed to administer the Portuguese settlements in India i.e., Goa, Daman and Diu with Goa as headquarters and in accordance with the directions given by the Minister of overseas provinces in Lisbon. The Governor-General appointed the Governors of Daman and Diu to assist him in the discharge of his duties. He had extensive Legislative, Executive and Judicial powers and he controlled the treasury even. The Council of States consisted of 13 members of which 8 members were nominated by him. This Council acted as an Advisory

Body to the Governor-General in the discharge of his Administrative responsibilities. In August 1955, the membership of the Legislative Council was increased upto 23 of which 11 Councillors were directly elected, 5 Councillors were nominated by the Governor-General and 7 Councillors were indirectly elected by public bodies and Associations.

The Governor-General could over-rule the advice given by the Legislative Council. He was all-powerful. Even if a Bill was passed by the Legislative Council and approved by the Governor-General it needed the concurrence of the colonial Minister in Lisbon to become an Act and an effective Law. The Legislative Council had no power to pass the Budget. The Governor-General used to submit it to the Colonial Minister in Lisbon who was the final authority in all matters. Laws passed in the National Assembly in Lisbon were applied automatically to the Portuguese Settlements in India and elsewhere.

The Portuguese settlements in India were divided into 14 Concelhos and an Administrator for each of them

was appointed by the Governor-General and an Administrative Committee was formed in each Concelho to aid the Administrator in the discharge of his duties. The members of the Administrative Committees were nominated by the Governor-General. Even at the Municipal level, the administration was not carried on democratic lines.

"Portuguese language was the Official Language in Goa, Daman and Diu. Only 3% of the population knew Portuguese Language. Use of other languages, namely, Konkani, Marathi, Kannada or Gujarati was prohibited even in petitions and representations. Government officials were prohibited to speak in any other Indian languages in offices and on public occasions. This was the worst kind of oppression. Colonial Powers have exercised their right to impose a language of their own wherever they have ruled reducing the subject people to second class citizens. In India too the English language was imposed with the assistance of governmental patronage and power. In Goa, Daman and Diu, those who knew the Portuguese

Language became the masters and those who did not know it, naturally were made subject people depriving them of all opportunities of life. There were 4,500 civil servants. Except a few, all civil servants were Portuguese. The Lisbon Government made a tall talk of treating the people in colonies on par with their own people. But in practice, the colonial people were not given equal opportunities. A Goan could reach only upto the rank of a corporal in the Army. Only the Portuguese were appointed to all important posts."¹

There was virtually a Military rule in the Portuguese settlements in India. The Government maintained an iron grip over the settlements with an average of one soldier or policeman for every 40 citizens. A military tax was imposed in lieu of compulsory military service. Such a tax was unheard of in any part of the Indian sub-continent.

Even the Judiciary was not separated from the

1. Source. "The Story of Goa" Information Service of India, India House, London, p.18.

Executive. All enlightened nations accept the theory of separation of powers in order to secure the minimum amount of liberty for all citizens. But the Portuguese colonial power was blind to this fact. It wanted the subject people to suffer. The Executive used to bring pressure on Judiciary. Actually the Judiciary was at the mercy of the Executive. This is illustrated by the case of Dr. Furtado, a Judge of the Administrative court at Panaji. He was asked by the Governor-General of Goa to sign a letter of protest against the Indian Prime Minister for purposes of publicity abroad. He was even threatened that he would be exiled if he did not sign the letter. Dr. Furtado refused and he was dismissed from service.²

In Portugal, there was one-party dictatorship. Uniocco Nacional was the only officially recognised political party. All other political parties were illegal. The same trend was there in the colonies of

2. Ibid., p.18.

Portugal. In Goa, the situation was not different. In the middle of 20th Century, out of a population of 6,37,000 only 25,000 persons enjoyed voting rights in the elections to the Legislative Council. A civil authority had to certify that a person was "Politically acceptable" before he could become a voter. A person was Politically acceptable if he joined the party in power and showed moral and material support to the Government in all its activities, no matter how heinous and inhuman they were. An individual could become politically active and powerful if he threw to the winds all accepted principles of morality and humanity. Portugal has been criticised by the World Press as the worst kind of Colonial Power in the world. It retained and reinforced the age-old Albuquerque's policy of creating terror in the minds of the natives. The life of people in the Portuguese settlements of Africa and Asia is a concrete witness to this argument. The admonitions the Government of Portugal has received in U.N.General Assembly only explain the nature of Administration carried on by Portugal in the Colonies.

Article 8 of the Political Constitution of 1933 provides for "Freedom of speech and expression and thought under any form", as well as "the freedom of association and meeting." But the same Article nullifies the earlier portions when it mentions later, "special laws shall regulate the freedom of expression, thought, association and meeting, and as regards the first named, perversion of public opinion must be forbidden preventively or repressively." The press in the overseas provinces was regulated equally rigidly. The Constitution provided for pre-censorship of all matter before publication. Further, an editor or publisher or even a correspondent must give a monetary guarantee for carrying on their profession. This acted as a great deterrent to freedom of the press.

Thus there was neither individual nor collective liberty in the Portuguese settlements in India. There was also no equality, social, political or economic in these territories. Justice rested on might not on principles. Naturally, the Goans prayed for liberation from the clutches of Portugal.³

3. P.S. Appendix I for a comparative view of the life in Goa before and after its liberation.