




By ALBERTINA ALMEIDA

O Tiracol, O Goa: Thoughts Towards a 'Quarta Corrente'

Tiracol has the potential to be a watershed moment for Goa. But only if it is accompanied by a deeper reflection on the underlying streams of thought about Goa's political status, and drawing of linkages. Goa being currently a part of India, today we are no longer at that trisection thinking whether Goa be back under Portuguese rule, or be part of India, or separate from Portugal and India. So, can there be a fourth political location – a stream of thought that would do justice and be transformative for Goa? As Goa witnesses its 70th Revolution Day, it is time for introspection.

Occasionally some voices still question the basis of Goa's integration into India. They assert that it was not liberation and wonder therefore whether anything can be built on what was essentially an improper foundation of Goa. Then there are the freedom fighters – those who fought for freedom from Portuguese rule and for its integration into the existing UN Member-State, namely India, which Goa is geographically contiguous with. Their narratives bristle with the brutalities that they, and many a Goans who dared raise a black flag to the Portuguese, endured. A citizenship encompassing freedom of association and expression, and self-determination was denied. Then there were those who felt that Goa was no space for any kind of 'foreign' rule, Portuguese or Indian, and needed to come into its own. Their argument was mainly hinged on a Goan identity with required political and administrative reforms that would be affirmed and not racially despised by the Portuguese as in the *Acto Colonial*.

But as we hark back, to look forward, we cannot forget that there was no such thing as Goa as we know it *today*, until the Portuguese set up shop in various bits of territory along the west coast from 1498. These territories formed part of various kingdoms ranging from the Deccan Sultanate of Adil Shah to that of Vijayanagara, and small feudatories of the Marathas and the Mughals. It is only under the Portuguese rule and administration of the *Estado da Índia Portuguesa*, albeit for different periods of time, that these various territories and peoples were brought within a single political, social and economic entity. This marks a distinct political history from that of formerly British India. To that extent, a different socio-political economic culture evolved in Goa.



Hence concerns that are raised in Goa start from a different politico-cultural location from that of mainland India. For instance, in Goa, articulations and responses to family laws come from a location where Goa has a semblance of an uniform civil code which is a legacy of the Portuguese rule, whereas arguments over family laws in India come from a location where there is a spread of religion-wise family laws. So also, Goa has already had a version of free port and could speak from that position when India was entering globalization mode.

Along with the politically different past, Goa also stands at a different juncture due to an overlay of many other factors such as size, geography, and its attendant possibilities, that underwrite this difference. This different juncture is manifested in for example, the way in which gender discrimination at or before birth occurs. Not in Goa, female infanticide involving the popping of gooseberries, to take away the life of a new born female child, as heard of in some parts of India. It manifests in selective abortion of female foetuses, pronouncedly in Goa's urban areas. So also casteism, is present, but rarely manifests as brazen separate sitting arrangements or untouchability, or recurring rapes and murders of Dalits. Hence, given the different location, a different kind of focus for planning and governance is called for.

There have been articulations galore about Goa's streams plainly flowing and merging into a huge subcontinental mess that is ever so unwieldy to manage. This is seen as giving an edge for big transnational corporate Leading Hotels to wedge their way and rule the roost. So, if not part of India, is it about a separate Goa, where a Senhor Antonio will travel from one part of a village to another in his Machilla, just to assert his power over other human beings? And at another level, in today's context, maybe scouring the forests of Goa and other places for mining wealth in every sense of the term, gliding on hellitourism (helicopter tourism)?

A separate Goa is imagined as one without those who are pejoratively called '*ghanttis*', which is facilitated by Goa's integration into India. So how many here are ready to pull up their trousers/sarees, go work in the fields, sweep the roads of Goa, provide domestic services in other people's homes?

A local speaker from Tiracol at a recent protest rally over the land grab for the golf course

took the gathering back in time. He paid his respects to Goa's first Chief Minister Dayanand Bendothkar, who had done honours to the persons who cultivated, tilled and cared for the land, by enacting the *mundkar* and agricultural tenancy laws. Could something like this possibly have come about, had Goa been a separate entity? Or would the Senhor Antonios still be holding sway? Perhaps transformed into capitalists of today? So do we want a special status that would help rewrite this feudal legacy?

As we brainstorm about the *Quarta Corrente* - the fourth stream of thought, a question that also surfaces is how does Goa retain its unique identity within a global frenzy of extortionist trade and land appropriation by powerful big business? "Goa is not for sale to the highest bidder", Dr. Francisco Colaco categorically pronounced at the same rally in Tiracol. Simultaneously, the voice of Mr. Richard Trumka, the President of one of America's largest politically active trade unions in the United States, echoed, "Our Government belongs not to the highest corporate bidder, but to the working people who make our country run". He was speaking in the context of thrusting of the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement.

Goa's working people who make it run must design and shape Goa's destiny and give concrete shape to the *quarta corrente*. It would perhaps be about a special status but not one that will provide the dominant powers in Goa a tool to further penetrate class, caste, gender, creed-based and other discriminative power.

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