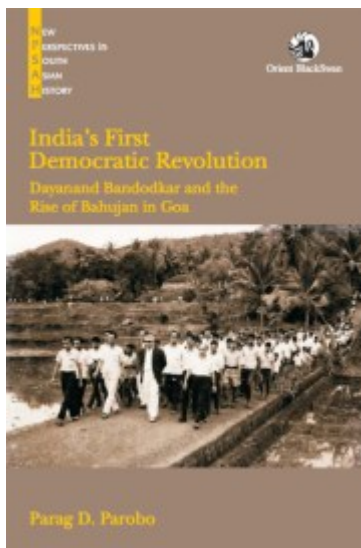




The discourse on Goa's history oscillates between two dominant narratives, one is that of *Goa Dourada* –a reminiscence about a Goa that is European; and the second –*Goa Indica*– which is a nationalist reversal of *Goa Dourada*, at times propagated by oriental scholars. Both are often pitted against each other, ultimately trying to erase the existence of the other narrative. However, both these narratives emerge from elite rungs of Goan society and hence fail to represent the complex nature of Goa's diverse social ethos. The inadequacy of these narratives lies in the very nature of their historiography which tends to ignore or silence the marginalized communities of the land. Till recently, no scholarly attempts of writing 'history from below' were made in the context of Goa and the recently published book *India's First Democratic Revolution – Dayanand Bandodkar and the rise of the Bahujan in Goa* (2015) by Parag Parobo is a step towards bringing marginalized narratives of history to the fore. Parag Parobo is a professor of History at the Goa University.

The book chronicles the rise of Hindu Bahujan samaj in post-colonial Goa under the leadership of Dayanand Bandodkar. Moving away from the trend of solely attributing the Portuguese colonial state for the 'making and unmaking' of Goa, Parobo argues that Goa was a product of Portuguese as well British colonialism. Similarly, post-colonial Goa isn't a self-standing entity but, he says, one needs to place Goa in wider context of the subcontinent while assessing its regional complexities. Adopting a non-conformist approach to the Portuguese colonialism, the book also debunks the trend to attribute Goa's post-colonial advancements to the Portuguese colonialism, which fell considerably short to revive a stagnating economy in Goa since the nineteenth century.



The book begins by giving a detailed accounts of formation and consolidation of caste identities in Goa. The case of *Gaud Saraswat Brahmins* (GSBs) is of particular importance here to understand their dominance in contemporary civic sphere. The book argues that the Brahmin status of Saraswats is actually a seventeenth century construct, following the intervention of the Benares based Vedic scholar Gaga Bhatta. Parobo also critically analyses the myth of Parashuram as narrated in the *Sahayadrikhand* from the nineteenth-century, rebutting the antiquity of the claims therein. Thus, Parobo challenges a dominant view that asserts the GSBs as the original settlers of Goa, based on a nineteenth-century rendition of the *Sahayadrikhand*.

Simultaneously, Parobo also offers insight into the reorganisation of lower caste communities around the Maratha identity as a path to seek upward mobility. Further, the book analyses the colonial state in its local and micro contexts, unearthing the elitist nature of Portuguese colonialism. Parobo argues that the colonial state, and its collaboration with Saraswat Brahmins, actually accelerated the *Brahminisation* of Goa in terms of establishing control on land, temple, administration, and history.

In post-colonial Goa, Parobo provides a detailed account of Bandodkar's politics and how his lower caste affiliation complimented with his capitalist background marked a possibility of emancipation for the Bahujan samaj in Goa. Parobo provides insightful analysis of the merger issue for which Bandodkar has been criticised by a certain fraction of Goan society even today. Parobo argues that, though the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party's (MGP) chief agenda was to merge Goa with Maharashtra, Bandodkar wasn't keen on the merger. He says Bandodkar's personal political interest may have taken precedence over the party ideology. Even though the rest of the MGP wasn't satisfied with the opinion poll verdict, Bandodkar was first to accept it. The opinion poll did not dent Bandodkar's image but on the contrary, strengthened it. MGP's vote base and seats increased in the elections that followed the merger. Parobo further analyses Bandodkar's regime through his far reaching land reforms, educational policies and healthcare initiatives that proved to be emancipatory to the Bahujan samaj.

The book seeks to project Goa onto India to demonstrate how the marginalized, equipped with political power, can change the course of their progress and create newer possibilities for themselves. When the Bahujans Speak

Nehru's vision for India was a result of his upper caste elite background which worked only to the benefits of Indian elites while the marginalized struggled to find a place for themselves within that vision. Bandodkar, with his lower caste capitalist background, set a model of governance that prioritized liberating the Bahujans from bonds of feudal and social oppression. The limit of Nehruvian idea of development and liberating nature of Bandodkar's governance is evident from Parabo's astute analysis of their respective education policies.

The book departs from the traditional narratives of *Goa Dourada* and *Goa Indica* and reterritorializes Goan history from the perspective of the lower castes. However, its scope is limited to the Hindu Bahujans and the narrative of the subaltern Catholic is largely absent in this work. Also, the book does not provide an analysis of the progress of Bahujans post the Bandodkar regime, which was systematically hurdled by the resurgence of brahminical dominance in Goan civic sphere. The denial of official language status to Marathi or the recent amendments to the tenancy act are telling examples. Nevertheless, the book offers some great insights into Goa's history and is a must read for individuals interested in understanding Goa as well for those engaged in articulating newer possibilities of subaltern politics in contemporary Indian context.

*(The book is published by Orient BlackSwan under their "New Perspectives in South Asian History" series. The book is available for online purchase on Amazon)*

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