

By ALBERTINA ALMEIDA



What is also this talk Regarding 'Anti-National' About?

Being branded anti-national is not new to Goans. As a matter of fact, the protagonist of a Konkani film 'The Enemy' that recently hit the theaters, poignantly raises the issue of how even a Goan who has migrated to a part of British India that eventually became Pakistan is treated not just as anti-national but as the enemy of the State.

If, after the Indian annexation of Goa in 1961, you critiqued the Indian/ Goan government, you would be seen as favouring Portuguese rule and therefore anti-national regardless of the content of the critique. At the time of the Konkani Railway agitation, the people opposing the then proposed route *alignment* through Old Conquests were branded as anti-nationals; this included the late Matanhy Saldanha. The demand for recognition of the Roman script has earned Goan Catholics the label of 'anti-national' for well over thirty/forty years. In 2006, Sanvordem-Curchorem was aflame through selective targeting and violence against Muslims, who constitute a miniscule minority in Goa. The 'anti-national' rhetoric was used as a justification to foment the riots against the minority and to sustain Brahminical majoritarian power. The rhetoric is also used to foist a development model that will enable a select few to hog all the benefits.

Which brings us to the moot question - who really is anti-national? Essentially, those who question the State, *even* when the State foments divisiveness are branded as anti-national. Somehow the word anti-national has been understood to conjure up an image of people having to get together to defend against an enemy for fears of attack. This becomes an effective means for the State to distract people's unrest about non-compliance with its basic obligations to the varied people in the nation under the Constitution. The enemy is imaginary and the fears are also imaginary. The word anti-national is like a sword brandished to chop freedom of speech and expression, as much as assembly and association, with the ultimate aim of sustaining Hindu Brahminical power and global capital.

So, according to the State, anyone who does not show pride in being superior is anti-national. Anyone who does not claim privileges on the justification of being superior is anti-national. Anyone who goes contrary to the 'nationalist' trend of upholding the idea of a nation bonded

by a culture of caste and cravings for massive greed and power, is anti-national.



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By this yardstick of nationalism, all those abiding by and upholding the Constitution of India which is the basic document on which the Indian Republic is founded, are anti-national. All those who work for democracy, justice and peace and against systemic caste based discrimination, exploitation and oppression are anti-national. All those who are fighting for Justice for Fr. Bismarque, Justice for Rohith, and to Stand by JNU, are anti-national. All those who strive towards intergenerational equity and sustainability of the earth or a particular geographical space, including farmers and fishers, are anti-national. All those who affirm the right to live and let others live are anti-national. All those who oppose the assault on Goa's environment and on people's livelihoods are anti-national.

They are said to be opposed to 'development' and obstructing the 'progress' of the nation. Who is the nation? From what can be seen, those at the helm of affairs consider the nation as a collective of its majoritarianists, its 'upper' castes and of corporate entities that tie up with multinational chains and exclusively benefit from 'development'. What the State does not spell out is that the development that is planned and foisted, through such things as Regional Plans is destructive and discriminatory in nature against many people who are said to constitute the nation. The State also does not respect the Constitutional imperatives of participation in governance, of people at the grassroots as so well enshrined in the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution.

The State effectively thus distracts people from the struggles against sale of their land and resources to the highest bidder without regard to the life and livelihoods of the people who till and sweat on its soil. With all the nationalist talk, it puts blinkers on gross injustices and frauds on the economy. We then miss seeing the formulation of policies and processing of files that let multinationals swoop in and squeeze people's labour and resources and siphon the profits and plough back the foreign exchange that the nation stately earned. The 'Nation' does not want to know about the processing of files for a Large Revenue Generation Scheme of the Central Ministry of Tourism, by Leading Hotels for their Tiracol Project, where Leading Hotels is a subsidiary of Asian Hotels (North) Ltd., which is a company of the Jatia Group, which in turn has 100% stakes in a hospitality company in Mauritius, that in turn has substantial stakes in Lexon a Mauritian company that has about 80% stakes in Leading Hotels. Which means that monies will eventually get siphoned. This even as

politicians trade allegations against each other about monies stashed in Swiss accounts, as a



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So, rather than feeding this distractive debate by labelling someone as national or anti-national, or defending that one is national or anti-national, it is necessary to unpack what is behind such labeling. As a matter of fact, nationalism has been the cover or the 'honour' behind which every condemnable form of discrimination is to be borne and endured, and the 'honour' killings or torture are expected to be condoned.

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