



Often times, we are so obsessed with ourselves and our aspirations, demands and objectives, that we do not realise that the (political) positions we take vis a vis 'others' are a slippery slope towards disaster for us ourselves. I will illustrate this with the use of the word 'outsider'.

The Slippery Slope

In Goa, we use this word so loosely that we are almost overwhelmed by it, and it is the lens that tints what we see. Earlier, since there was a large migration from Karnataka, via the Western Ghats, the word *ghanti* was synonymous with outsider. The *ghanti* was seen as that person who was disturbing our picture post-card visual of Goa, a visual that we have come to internalize by the marketing that is done for tourism, and that generally conceals the not-so-pretty underbelly of Goa. He was also the person who was seen as dirtying our place, and defecating anywhere, while we conveniently forgot that the builder, be he Goan or non Goan, who employed him as cheap labour had not provided him housing and toilet facilities. Today, it is the migrant workers from places such as Jharkhand and Northeast, who are being painted with the same brush.

Those who ransack the local resources and rapaciously extract them for profits as they have no stakes in the place and will move to greener pastures once the resource has dried up, are, in fact those who should be seen as outsiders, be they Portuguese, Indian or Goan, or from wherever in India or the world. But using the word 'outsider' has in fact always been maneuvered against marginalized sections of society, or against political dissenters.

The word 'outsider' was generally used to signify somebody who is not originally from Goa. But then who is originally from Goa? Depends on the time net that is cast. At one time, local people referred to people from Portugal who migrated to Goa (though it was not called as such) as outsiders. They were the other, the outsiders, because they had come from another land. One may refer to those who have done travel writings on Goa as outsiders, because they travelled from somewhere and therefore viewed Goa from an outsiders' gaze. Then there were the hippies, the flower children, white folks, but they were not referred to as outsiders – they were referred to as hippies or foreigners. One also notices that those who come on tours are not referred to as outsiders but as tourists.

As a matter of fact, today, the word 'outsider' has a strongly negative connotation and is used disparagingly to ignore or discredit people. For example, around two years ago, there was a naphtha tanker ship that had run aground off the Marivel coast against a cliff. (Yes, the second death anniversary of a resident who died with the anxiety is approaching). I had gone there at the request of the residents who were feeling helpless and informationless about when and how the ship was proposed to be removed from there. I was shocked to hear the MLA of Taleigao, the same constituency where I reside, refer to some of us as 'outsiders', in

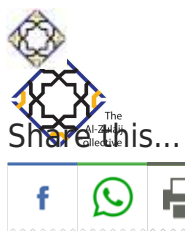
her conversation with the Revenue Secretary and the Deputy Collector, who she accompanied. I was also told in not so many words that I had no business to be there. That is the level to which the word 'outsider' can be taken. The Slippery Slope

As a matter of fact, there were people who told me that since I was originally from Taleigao, while she was married to a person from Taleigao, she was actually the outsider. Now I do not buy that argument either. Because, in that case, given the patrilocal society we live in, most married women will always be 'outsiders' given that they move to their husband's place upon marriage and given that few marriages take place intra-village.

Similarly the word 'outsider' has also been used for migrant children who have been sexually abused by tourists, to suggest that since they are outsiders, we should not bother about them. It took a documentary film called '*Bhaille*' to hold a vivid mirror to us on this, and to see how sexual abuse of children was being disregarded by Goan society. We soon learnt that this is the slippery slope via which condonation of sexual abuse happens and then it got so entrenched that it has been difficult to fight the menace.

Why, even the Chairperson of Mormugao Port Trust, himself not a Goan, used the word 'outsider' to refer to people living outside Vasco who had converged there for the public hearings, to suggest that there is no local opposition to the berth expansion projects. He conveniently forgot that coal knows no geographical and political boundaries and that the coal dust from Mormugao even comes to rest on houses at Dona Paula. It was seen as an apt way by him and his cohorts to discredit opposition to the coal hub. Do we know that although the Kaiga nuclear plant is located at Karnataka, it is people in Goa who would bear the biggest brunt of any nuclear disaster? So if we in Goa resisted it, our opposition to Kaiga should be called opposition by outsiders by Karnataka?

One can see therefore, that the word is used differently, or conveniently, across space and time. In fact the word outsider has the potential to acquire gendered, casteist, and conveniently misusable overtones. and that using this word or for that matter any word loosely can be the slippery slope for the 'outsider' as well as the persons who label others as outsiders to slide into an abyss, while the dominant forces watch the fun and then it is Khela Hobe (the game is on) season, or Khela Shesh (the game is over) season, where the dominant forces (from Goa and outside Goa – the big corporates and the politicians, and the dominant castes and the rich North Indians living in gated communities) pull the rug (our land and resources) from under our feet and laugh their way to the bank even as some of us are lost in arguing and training our guns against hapless outsiders, whose services no local is available to provide, and without whom, our economy would be like a vehicle without wheels.



The Slippery Slope