



Our political condition becomes worse with each passing year. The nature of public debate (rather the absence of it), the deteriorating condition of public infrastructure, and unscrupulous bids have plunged Goa's into chaos. Thus, taking stock of the bygone year, or reflecting on the past on any anniversaries (such as the recently concluded 57th Liberation Day of Goa), appears to be an exercise in futility. However, can we really afford to ignore the past? If we do, we run the risk of subjecting ourselves to the same political manipulations of the past. It is only by considering the past errors that we are able to avoid blunders in the present and future. However, making sense of our present in relation to the past (thereby charting a vision for the future) is not as easy as it seems.

Tourism and mining are the two main industries of Goa today and the government's policies regarding the regulation and development of these industries is a major concern for the future. These two industries in Goa share a similar history in terms of their origins in the economic policies of the Portuguese state. A large number of Goans depend on mining and tourism - more on tourism than mining today - and these two industries place heavy demands on resources like land and water, not to mention the human resource. The Justice Shah Commission reported huge illegalities in the mining sector, which means that the Goan hinterlands and forests have been hollowed out. Just a few days ago, the Union Cabinet has approved new regulations for Coastal Regulatory Zones, in an attempt to promote eco-tourism and development on the coast. It is a chilling reminder of what is in store for us as resource-extractive and culture-destroying economic activities have continued for over half a century, and the government today further seeks to promote this destruction.

When the erstwhile Portuguese state gifted mining leases in perpetuity to private capitalists or industrialists, the Goan economy was experiencing economic stagnation. The increasing calls for decolonization in the 1950s had also put the Portuguese state under severe pressure to demonstrate that the Goan economy was fit and fine. In this, they conveniently gained the support of local industrialists and capitalists. The tourism industry, too, has its origins in the economic policies of the Portuguese state. However, the present tourism industry in Goa begins with the Indian government trying to boost the national economy either by exploiting Goa's beautiful locales for leisure activities or by introducing exploitative and unsafe

activities for the sake of earning foreign exchange. Goa was the main target due to its Portuguese- and Catholic-influenced culture. Goans were convinced by the central and local state authorities that large resorts (and golf courses) would bring in jobs, stopping the out-migration of Goan youth. In the last two or three decades, successive governments have used the rhetoric of preference-for-Goans in employment to promote the interests of large businesses.

Considering this long history, it is obvious that the economic policies of various states and governments have progressively promoted economic development dependent on large infrastructure and heavy industries. This has exerted immense pressure on the land and the people living in it. In recent decades, with an increasing imposition of neo-liberal economic policies – even by chest-thumping nationalists – we observe that there is an increasing migration into and out of Goa. In fact, migration in and out of Goa is related to the same economic and political processes that created industries like mining and tourism. With agricultural productivity declining from the late nineteenth century, Goa witnessed an outmigration to British-ruled cities like Bombay, Karachi, and Dar-es-Salaam. The out-migration continues, except to different locations; and the difference between the in-migration then and now is that, in our time, large numbers are migrating into Goa, who also face exploitation within the tourism and mining industries.

So, a long view of Goan economic history shows that we are heading for increased destruction of land and other resources and increased migration into and out of Goa all in the name of development, employment, and boosting the state's and nation's economy. But this is not the future that we want. Every contestant and each political party during elections give us a vision that further promotes this long process of destruction rather than suggesting ways to halt it. Repeatedly, we fall for such a vision not just because it comes with the promise of jobs and prosperity, but also because it seems that no other vision is realistic.

The results of the recently concluded state legislative elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and Mizoram suggest that there is possibility of change in the future. Indians citizens are desperate for any positive change after the misrule of the BJP for the last five years. Would a change in power roll back all the bad policy decisions and destruction of the environment? Arguably not. The nexus of capital, big industries, and political parties runs deep in all national parties. This is important, as a shift in power at the

center or state would not mean that land-grabbing, water-polluting, and generally destructive development would end. Therefore, we need to think out of the box, and force those who wish to represent us to do the same. Our would-be representatives need to tell us specifically how they will get Goa to step away from the current path of destruction; how we can break the pattern of Goa's economic history for the last 100 years.

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