



From the late 1980's onwards, I have been involved in the struggle condemning tourism as it was foisted on the Goan people. Alito was involved at the time with a few others in the University in carrying out a study on tourism and its implications for the people of Goa. While interviewing me, he asked: "Why should those working on the farms oppose tourism, given the measly wages they are paid by the landlords and the better income they get from tourism?" The question has stayed with me ever since.

I was also at that time engaged as a research assistant with a study that the Indian Institute of Social Sciences was carrying out on Modern Mass Tourism in Goa. As I continued with this struggle and this research project, and interacted with host communities, particularly in the coastal belt, I was cautious to seek information from various sections of society, and not just the middle class families grumbling about their sons falling prey to drug abuse. For research to be participatory or a process to be consultative, one needed to specially be mindful that the marginalized sections were *also* stakeholders, and also accordingly one needed to have the sensitivities to frame the research questions.

As part of that agenda, I had the opportunity to go with research associates to a rave party. There I met a woman, otherwise a farm labourer, who was selling slices of cake, and had a kid holding on to her. She told me she earned Rs. 700/- per night by buying and selling cake at rave parties like that one, and that otherwise that is what she earned per month by toiling on the field of the *bhatkar* (landlord). Alito Siqueira's voice was ringing in my ears. Listen to various voices. Not just be content with the assumptions I bring to the field with my background.



Image Courtesy: IMJA – Insitudo Maria e João Aleixo.

I then also noted that her kid was not going to go to school the next day because she would be too tired after being awake the whole night, and statistics showed that there were a large number of dropouts from the schools in the coastal belt. I understood that the concerns around tourism needed to be discussed in all their nuances, and that the issue was much more complex than I assumed it to be. It was now clear to me that the implications of the feudal system in Goa had to be addressed if various sections of society were to be allies against the assault by tourism.

But it did not stop there. Coupled with all these concerns around tourism was the question of representation of Goa's women in tourism. The teacher in Alito presented me examples of how gendered approaches are layered and intersect with other factors. Commodification manifests in different ways for different sections of women in Goa, for tourism, and a certain imagery of Goa, is created from films shot by Indians, and cashed on by the tourism industry. Simply based on the clothes (i.e. frocks) that they wear these films make out that women in Goa are western, which then leads people to assume that these women are easily available. He was asking me whether the fisherwoman who has her *cass* raised when sitting with the fish for sale, was met with the same gaze as the college going girl with a mini skirt. And the obvious answer was 'no'. So, there was something about a particular male gaze that was crying for redressal. I learnt from this a little bit about Alito's pedagogical tools of engaging, with live examples from around us, that those we engage with can relate to. To this day, I use this method whenever I conduct a session on any subject, and more particularly, on sexual harassment and the law.

Years later, our paths crossed again. This time, with regard to the issue of non-implementation of reservations in Goa University (where he was employed and with which he had a love-hate relationship, and in other Government workplaces. Alito had done a detailed study of the situation. His research had benefited from being fed with information from the numerous students, over generations, with whom he had been engaging in his quest for unlearning the sociology learnt in his student days. Alito had all the information at his fingertips as to how little the reservation policy was implemented in Goa and how the number of persons employed in the reserved category could be counted on the fingers of one's hand with respect to high positions in any office or institution in Goa. It then dawned on me as to how a lot of our discussions are based on a Goebelsian 'commonsense', that is, created by repetition and hearsay - like this point popular with the dominant castes, that 'those' people are taking away 'our' jobs.

And so it was that I found myself exploring a lot of these commonsensical assertions about caste, and realized that deep in the recesses of my mind too there were these toxins that needed to be cleared. It took me a while to understand that privilege gives us merit, and that merit is itself a concept that is defined by a certain advantaged section of society. But privilege is so pervasive, that I found myself arguing with Alito, in an instance, which he categorized as privilege, and which I categorized as perchance. It was a scenario where a person from an upper caste community had written a long riposte, asking why the access she had to getting on to a Government Committee, by her merit, in her own right, should be understood as something she gained because of the distinct positioning of her father. I almost agreed with her, but there was something not clicking somewhere.

We had earlier in the day had a meeting discussing privilege, and Alito was suggesting that those with privilege must lead the discussion with peers in privilege. He was also, as is typical of him, suggesting that we enliven our presentation and engagement with case studies and group work. This discussion continued after the meeting. It lasted about an hour as we were parked just outside my house in his car. He unpacked the narrative. He said: You tell me: Would the Minister have put her on the Committee, if she was not who she was? True, to be fair to her, she may have not told her father about it, she may have not told the Minister whose daughter she was, but in a caste-ridden society, and that too in a small state, the father's caste and position is written on the child's sleeve - figuratively, so to say. So, even if she does not flaunt her father's position or her caste, it is there for all to see, and decisions are taken on such a basis.

I understood, and I had some more questions about privilege. But there was no opportunity for further long conversations, and now it was my turn to read - find the voices in written material - which were like needles in a haystack, hear them out, look for resonance, and

make sense - also to know that someone from an advantaged caste will never be able to put herself in the shoes of the person who suffers casteism.

The Influence of Alito Siqueira

So that was Alito Siqueira, insisting that one question every statement one made, or anything one took for granted.

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