

BJP blues

As the BJP leaders shouted slogans via the microphone at Panjim's Azad Maidan on Friday evening, the response from the fairly good crowd was feeble and muted. If anything, this is a reflection of the state of affairs in Goa's main Opposition party.

Indeed the BJP is a party that has dominated politics in Goa ever since the mid-1990s, not long after influential forces in the State managed to work out a poll alliance between it and the then-influential Maharashtra Gomantak Party. In ideological terms, the BJP has been far more clear and focussed than the Congress can ever hope to be. In Goa, the Congress is now a loose alliance of individuals with disparate ideologies, backgrounds and approaches. If anything, the Congress is known to string together rather diverse individuals by working out a strange power-sharing arrangement, where individual selfishness attempts to serve the collective good however inefficiently.

So why has the BJP failed to sustain its steam? In its hurry to ascend to power, the BJP's gameplan in Goa was to decimate the earlier Opposition, and lure over those with a potential for treachery from within the Congress. While the party today spends a lot of time in lambasting "controversial" politicians in Goa — and indeed there are many — if one looks at the past, many of these honourable gentlemen were linked to the BJP itself.

In addition, the BJP has been rather short-sighted in its approach towards ascending and staying on in power. On the one hand, it has unsuccessfully attempted to create a "Hindu" votebank. On the other, it has vacillated between wooing the "minorities" and badly alienating them, via some rather ill-conceived measures.

In the first place, should politics be seen as a game of "majorities" and "minorities"? While the BJP has been quick to decry what it calls "minoritism", it has itself not been able to go beyond mixing religion with politics, in a most unhelpful manner. Its talk about working to "bring the party closer to the minorities" now, under the leadership of Nitin Gadkari, is an exercise in self-delusion. Parties like the BJP need to realise that the "minorities", even assuming that religious identity does have a link with politics, don't want any special privileges. They just want to be treated as common citizens, and reassured that they won't be discriminated against just because of their religious identity.

It would help the BJP in Goa if it was less of a one-leader dominated party, and allowed for more inner-party democracy. Likewise, while the party's urge to get into power is understandable, it also needs to play the role of a credible Opposition when assigned with this role. It cannot just hope to cultivate sections of the media and hope to create a good image. At times like these, when so many of its former "leaders" whom it had borrowed from the Congress are back in that party, Goa does need something more than a pseudo-*Opposition*, one that will take up the people's issues with determination and honesty.

Two Vazes

There are now two individuals with a Vaz surname in the House of Commons. Aden-born Keith Vaz has retained his seat, while his sister Valerie, a former TV presenter, became the new MP for Walsall South. Valerie held on to the Labour seat, though with a reduced majority. This is indeed an achievement for the Goan diaspora.

In another development elsewhere, former committed campaigner and ex-MLA from Goa Justice Ferdino Rebello was recently named chief justice at the high court level. May they serve their voters, and the cause of justice, respectively.

In times like these, we are only reminded about the fast-changing nature of our world today. As we seek a fair deal for the Goan diaspora worldwide, we in Goa also need to commit ourselves to being an open society, that offers opportunity to all, regardless of their place of birth and origins. If anything, the question is how anyone can get a chance to fit into their new society and play a useful role there. Herald wishes all these Goan-origin achievers, and others too, a meaningful and useful stint in office. May they make Goa proud too.

Maritime India: Trade, religion and polity

The gains of the local trade led to create the Indo-Portuguese cultural heritage in Goa, explores TEOTONIO R DE SOUZA

We owe it to Pius Malekandathil: His recent compilation of ten dispersed research articles into a book entitled *Maritime India: Trade, Religion and Polity in the Indian Ocean* (Delhi, Primus Books, 2010), has made it easier for us to appreciate better, the insights he has been contributing over the past two decades to the understanding of maritime India. He starts by calling our attention that there have been all through history, two Indias — the inland and the terrestrial India. The maritime India was more exposed to changes and had to be more accommodative, liberal and tolerant in contrast to the inland India, which always remained more conservative and socially rigid. This need not be seen as a watertight division, and the dividing lines were always blurred, resulting into intermediate realms. How far inland are the maritime frontiers? This is one among many questions that this book seeks to raise and answer.

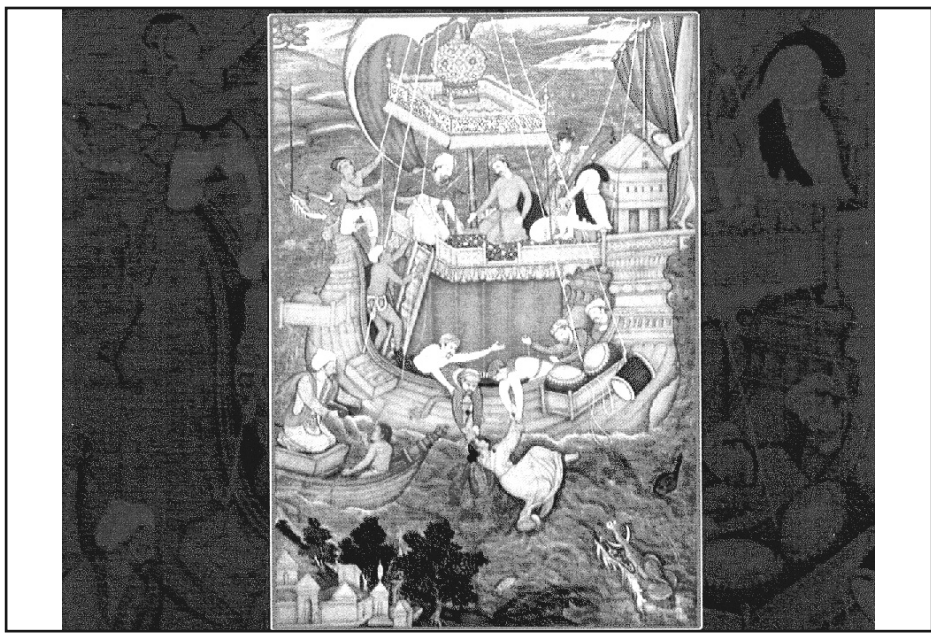
The geography and the ecology of the littoral played a vital role in the shaping of the ethos and mentality of people living along the sea or its proximity with a rhythm and pattern of their own, generally defined as the culture of the littoral, including professional occupations, linguistic traditions, food habits, etc. Pius Malekandathil does not tell us that the impact of the waves and the winds was also responsible for bringing distant people together, or for taking home people into Diasporas, but this is implied throughout these essays and we are offered some refreshing concepts, such as maritime consciousness and value-based dependence on sea space. It is in this context of sea space and oceanic circuits that we are led to identify the regional and micro-regional nodal points that served as procurement and distribution outlets for resources that political elites and rulers sought to promote or control for enhancing their power base.

The ongoing research about Goa, just like about any other littoral region, needs micro-studies, but which are never delimited from the macro-vision of its fast or slow fluctuating links with the sea space and ocean circuits. We need an ever greater interaction between the Goa-based researchers and students of history and culture with the national and international research circles. The internet forums, including Goa-Research-Net (created by me in 1996 jointly with Goan journalist Frederick Noronha) can be useful tools for this interaction, in addition to the usual University-based institutional activities.

Tongue in cheek

After the unfortunate incident wherein seventy-five jawans were ambushed and killed by the Maoist, the Chief Minister of Bihar, Nitish Kumar had a word of advice for non other than the Home Minister of the country. He said Home Minister P Chidambaram should talk less and work more. This is one advice often heard from the boss in several offices. This advice could also be pasted on the walls of some offices just to remind the employees that they are paid to work and not to talk. But many employees, especially the women employees do not heed to the advice.

Women probably find their office to be the best place to gossip. All the happenings in their respective homes are discussed threadbare. Nothing is left out from the discussion. Even what was cooked for dinner, the previous night, could be discussed in detail, while the office-work is kept on the back-burner. For them the various TV serials are a blessing in disguise. The past episodes of the favourite serials are discussed in detail and probably, what twists and turns the serial will take in future episodes, could also be a matter for discussion.



Historical explorations

Pius Malekandathil's academic and professional curriculum is a fine example of how the historiography needs to be developed and promoted by casting ever wider the analytical web, but never ignoring the regional and local specificities. Within a short span of time Pius Malekandathil has lectured and researched at Pondicherry University, Goa University, Shankaracharya University (Kalady), and is now at the JNU in New Delhi. The insights he contributes to the understanding of Goa's history are drawn from his trans-regional and oceanic perspective across times, going back to the incorporation of the Indian ports into the Persian Sassanid mercantile networks. Gopakapattanam (Revatidvipa) was one of the nodal points for this Sassanid trade. Pahlavi-inscribed crosses found along the coast from Goa (in Agassaim) till Mylapore are some traces of that network. The Gulf links of the Goans are therefore not any novelties promoted by the arrival of the Portuguese and the British in India. They date back to fourth century, when the persecutions of the Christians by Shahpur II drove merchant communities from Persia to Indian littoral, particularly to Malabar, but they were also active along Konkan and Gujarat

coasts.

The Sassanid network served as base for the construction of the Arab-Islamic network that followed and integrated Goa. The second essay of the book concentrates upon Goa's maritime past in this phase, extending till the Portuguese arrival and their efforts at replacing it. It starts with the Arab-Rashtrakuta collaboration. Goa under Silaharas, initially vassals of Rashtrakutas, had strong Arab presence, at least since the 10th century. Al Masudi's travel account includes Sindapur among the important maritime centres of Western India. Later Arab visitors Al Idrisi (12th c) and Ibn Batuta (14th c) also contain references to Sindapur, with fine buildings and rich bazaars! But even before the intervention of the Kadambas, many ship-owning Arab merchants seem to have settled in the region with bases at Chandrapura and Bali-pattana, making it a Hanjamannagara. Present-day Anjuna and its flea market could draw inspiration from this not so distant commercial past.

The Arab ship-owning magnate Muhammed, his son Ismael and grandson Sadhan, played key positions in the trade activities of Gopakapattanam

under Guhalladeva I and his son Shastadeva, and Jayakesi I, assisting them in naval battles against the North Silaharas. Jayakesi I permitted Sadhan to collect customs for the maintenance of a mosque from vessels coming from different regions of the Indian Ocean. The income probably served to assist the urban poor, and was to some extent a parallel to the Portuguese Institution of Santa Casa de Misericórdia. The policy of Jayakesi favouring the mosque with a grant needs to be viewed as a strategy to attract more traders from Arabia, ensuring thereby more wealth to strengthen his emerging kingdom. Truly enough, the Muslim merchants contributed liberally with personnel, vessels and money for the political expansion of the Kadambas.

The fall of the Abbasid Caliphate in 1258 following the attacks of the Mongols, adversely affected the trade links with India, including Goa. The repeated attacks by Malik Kafur, Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq and Jamal-ud-din from Honavar, drained further the economy of Gopakapattanam. But these misfortunes also opened new opportunity of importing horses from West Asia. Jamal-ud-din was son of a Goan ship-builder. He had accumulated fortune to establish himself as sultan of Honavar and to seek control of Goa itself. Since then Goa became a mere gateway of commercial ambitions of rival regional powers, such as Vijayanagar, the Bahamanis and the Bijapur. It was against this economically well-activated and commercially stimulated space that the Portuguese arrived to conquer Goa in 1510.

While most of the remaining essays concentrate mostly on the south Indian participation in the Indian ocean networks, including the foreign commercial origins and growth of the communities of Armenians, Jews and St Thomas Christians, we get to know, more about the dispersion of the Portuguese renegades in India and their utilisation by the Portuguese Goa-based administration to share in the privatisation of trading activities in the so-called Portuguese shadow empire in the Bay of Bengal and South China sea. We come to know also better the growing shift of the Portuguese carreira or seaborne trade, via the cape, to greater concentration in more lucrative intra-Asiatic country trade. Pius Malekandathil concludes that the gains of this local trade of the married-settlers that permitted them to create what we see today as the Indo-Portuguese cultural heritage in Goa, Cochín and the other former Portuguese settlements.

Of Work and Talk

By Adelmo Fernandes

For many employees 'talk more work less' could be the motive for going to the office. Where does one gossip while at the work place? Well, any place (besides the boss's cabin) is good enough. There is the office canteen which seems the ideal place for some idle talk. Why not talk around the water-cooler? Still better is to walk the talk i.e. talk while you walk along the corridors of the office premises or while walking in the office garden. The place where you talk does not matter, neither the time spent in lose talk.

Some can talk for hours together. A study, on how much the country loses by way of productivity because of the gossiping indulged in by the employees, could throw up alarming stats. In a majority of the cases, idle talk at the cost of work is not welcomed. But then it is not always the case. In some jobs you are actually paid to talk. If you happen to be a sports commentator, the longer you talk the more you are paid. A Radio Jockey's job is to talk, some time for hours together. A preacher's job is to talk so is the case with a salesman, a lecturer in a college or a teacher in a

school. In each case, one is paid to talk. In this case, the advice 'talk less work more' does not hold water. Now it is, 'You talk more, you work more'.

"When work is a pleasure, life is a joy! When work is duty life is a slavery," wrote Maxim Gorky. For those who love to talk, a job that requires one to talk is always welcome. But when you are paid to talk, mind you, you are not paid to indulge in some lose talk. Incidentally, the advice given by Nitish Kumar to P C was from one politician to another.

Indeed, it is politicians who need this advice more than anyone else. Simply because, as a general rule politicians have the gift of the gab. They talk even when no talking is required. Politicians tend to talk a lot just before the elections. They talk of their false promises. After they win the elections they suddenly seem to have lost the will to talk to the electorate. But then this does not mean that they spend more time in their work and less in talking. Now they probably feel there is no need talk as also there is no need to work.

Letters to the Editor

Is this the end?

Pachu Menon, Margao

At long last, with the special court constituted to preside over the Mumbai massacre pronouncing Ajmal Aamir Kasab guilty and sentenced to death on five counts, the year-long trial into the 26/11 terror siege of Mumbai has finally come to an end. The Special Public Prosecutor Ujjwal Nikkam was heard commenting that the higher courts of appeal wouldn't alter the ruling of the special court. But he was equally sceptical about the issues pertaining to clemency. This brings into sharp focus the hibernating matter of Afzal Guru, whose fate remains undecided in spite of being confined to the death row. Moreover, the Pakistani-factor weighs heavily on matters that have any relevance to our neighbours. Finally, if one is allowed to have his say, the courts in all fairness may bring such culprits to book, but it is for the government to decide and act.

Hang him now!

Er Jayesh Shrikant Rane, Mumbai

This refers to report 'Kasab gets death sentence' (Herald, 7 May). Special court has declared his decision of hanging Kasab, but matter doesn't close here. He can appeal in the High Court and Supreme Court against this decision. Later Kasab can give petition of mercy to the President. It means that the actual day of hanging is far away. What happened to Afzal Guru, who had attacked the Indian Parliament? He is still alive. Same thing should not happen with Kasab. The story of such expensive criminals ends only when they are hanged. How expensive these terrorists are for India! When USA had caught former Iraq president Saddam Hussein they immediately took the practical decision to hang him. When are we going to be practical?

Celebrating death?

Annamd Madgavkar, by email

It was disgusting to see images of civilised people celebrating the death sentence passed on Kasab. And shame on the TV channels that maximised their gains on the event going down to the level of asking an 11 year old child to give her emotional and perhaps tutored comments and broadcasting the same again and again to dramatise the same. What sorts of people are we becoming to fire crackers and distribute sweets to 'celebrate' a death sentence passed on another human being. A death sentence is a terrible thing to be passed and should be treated as such with a solemn feeling of restraint and quite satisfaction that justice has been done. Let us act civilised and allow the law to take its course instead of baying for his blood by asking the law to take shortcuts thereby giving the world a chance to say he was not given a fair trial.

Why Homeopathy?

Errol D'Souza, Porvorim

I am referring to the letter of Maria D'Cunha regarding Homeopathy (Herald, 6 May). First and foremost I would like thank you for bringing the truth out about the Homeopathy. In modern times allopathic medicines have reached newer heights of

Letter of the Day

Salary hikes will fuel inflation

S Kamat, Alto Betim

The majority of bank employees in the country after their wage negotiations are getting an increase of around 17.5% in their salary. Now there is news that the judicial services have been granted a three fold increase in their salaries. We are aware that the 6th Pay Commission hikes in wages has been implemented for government employees and has also been expanded to cover those employed in government and semi- government institutions. Most of these wage hikes could be from retrospective effect leaving a large sum of money in people's hands. Nobody denies that our people should be paid better but during these times of inflationary tendencies in the economy it will only fuel inflation further making prices to rise. A short term spending thrust to the economy from people with money in their hands is good for the economy since it spurs growth but in the longer term it leads to a stronger push of a rising price trend in the marketplace. Thus the government and employers in the public sector like banks and other institutions should consider putting some of the money being given particularly the component related to retrospective payments into 3-5 year government bonds with reasonable interest so that the amount of money floating in the economy is somewhat curbed. This will at least attempt to put a leash on inflation which is close to being in a runaway stage in the Indian economy. These measures need be considered seriously since a large part of the population particularly retirees; employees in the un-organised private sector, the people from the rural areas and the urban poor do not come under the ambit of the wage increases. These are people who are already suffering from the all-round increase in prices and if prices go up even further their backs would be broken.

scientific research achieving excellent results. Homeopathy, I believe takes months or years with no guarantee of cure.

Ban baby fish sale

Jonas Correia, Aldona

Some wise men, under the garb of protecting marine life, have suggested the mangroves to be overgrown so that the fish can breed without disturbance. In reality, if the government was truly interested in protecting baby fish, then it should stop the sale of all fish less than 6 inches in the market. We see tiny shrimps, baby mackerels, sardines, herrings, kingfish, sole and sharks being openly sold in the market. The market inspectors are not keeping a check on this activity. The government must come with proper legislation to ban the sale of baby fish which should be returned to the sea

otherwise all this talk of protecting marine life is just humbug.

Roads first, Sea Link later

Augustus Alphonso, Vasco

I have read a lot of letters concerning the Dona Paula-Vasco Sea link. It is good for the government to note through these letters that most of the citizens of Goa have clearly mentioned the aam admi's basic grievances like the bad condition of Goan roads, irregular water supply, irregular power supply, and so on. I think our Chief Minister must first solve these pending issues to the satisfaction of the citizens of Goa and then I feel that everybody will not hesitate to welcome this awesome project in Goa. Also, the feasibility of this project taking consideration of various factors like environmental damage, etc, is equally im-

portant. Therefore, I hope our CM will be careful and sensitive, as he should realise that he also represents the people of Goa.

Dogs need a better life

Stephen Dias, Dona Paula

It is unfortunate to see that the dogs reach our Dabolim airport to greet the tourists on arrival lounge and some of the dogs are already planning to leave Goa but without the baggage. Probably they are fed up with this government and the people who cannot look after them. These dogs get only rotten food from the garbage seen all over the places, but no love from the public. Everybody wants them to be killed or get rid of them. If the government cannot look after these dogs, it is better to have more flights from Dabolim exclusively for stray dogs, to leave this country to a better safe place.

Cellphones in Banks?

Pravin U Sardessai, Adpai

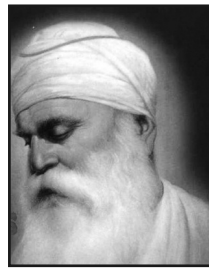
I have seen people using their mobiles standing at the savings counter at Union Bank of India, Ponda. The lone security guard on duty keeps on informing such people that talking on cell phones inside the bank premises is banned. He points out at the necessary instructions put up at the cash counter for the information of valuable customers.

But customers seem to take no heed of this. And the staff members at the counters seem to overlook the matter. Does this mean that rules and regulations put up at banks remain merely on papers and are not to be strictly obeyed?

The higher authorities at every bank should take a serious view of such incidents and instruct the staff members at counters to remain alert and strict in enforcing rules and regulations put up for the information of customers at large. Discipline at bank premises should be maintained at all costs.

Letters should be 150 words or less in length, and should have the writer's name, address and telephone number. The editor reserves the right to edit letters for size and readability, and to delete any personal attacks or libellous/objectionable matter.

Paths of Wisdom



Guru leads to God

There is only one God, who is known by different names in different religions. Strive hard and make a whole hearted effort to help others, because service to mankind is the biggest service to God. Follow the path of honesty. Lead a simple life. Don't get scared of anything and just keep performing good deeds.

Let no man in the world live in delusion. Without a Guru none can cross over to the other shore. Whoever, styling himself as a teacher lives on the charity of others, never bow before him. The word is the Guru, the Guru is the word, for all nectar is enshrined in the word blessed is the word which reveal the Lord's name but more is the one who knows by the Guru's grace. He who shows the real home in this body is the Guru. He makes the five sounded word reverberate in man.

In the eyes of God, all are equal, irrespective of the caste, age, creed or sex. Be compassionate towards all living beings. Even kings and emperors, with heaps of wealth and vast dominion, cannot compare with an ant filled with the love of God. God is one, but he has innumerable forms. He is the creator of all and He himself takes the human form. The lord can never be established nor created; the formless one is limitless complete in Himself. One cannot comprehend Him through reason, even if one reasoned for ages. As fragrance abides in the flower as reflection is within the mirror, so does your Lord abide within you, why search for him without? — *Guru Nanak*