

HERALD

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## Edgar Ribeiro must stay on

Former Town Planner Edgar Ribeiro's resignation from the State-level Steering Committee formed to finalise the Regional Plan 2021 is a serious blow to the first Regional Plan being prepared in the state with people's participation and input. RP2021 may not be perfect, but if it is properly formulated, will stand as a pioneering venture.

At present, the Steering Committee is looking into the over 8,000 suggestions and objections received from members of the public, special interest groups, builders, etc, to the draft circulated. Village committees have prepared detailed modifications to the draft plans for their areas. All these need to be gone into thoroughly before the final plan is prepared. For this, it is essential that the Steering Committee continue to carry out its unique responsibilities.

Mr Ribeiro, apparently, is displeased about the non-implementation of several vital measures he proposed, particularly a clause calling for a halt to large construction projects till the draft RP was finalised. Reports are that it was never considered, much less implemented. Instead, a clause was inserted enabling the department to give permissions as per the prevailing Regional Plan.

Is it all that unreasonable to expect that the whole of the state come under the Regional Plan? However, Mr Ribeiro's demand for this was ignored too, and all municipal areas were left out of the planning process. Not only this, villages for which the Outline Development Plan (ODP) was finalised were also exempted from the RP, even though ODPs must be based on the RP and not allowed to supersede it.

He also wanted that Private-Public Partnership (PPP) projects come under the ambit of the RP, and that the Plan should not be bypassed for government projects by resorting to the notorious Sections 16 and 16(A) of the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act. Here too, he was given the go-by.

As a member of the Task Force and Advisor to the Chief Minister, Mr Ribeiro has been very patient. He has had to endure not only ignominy from the state government's machinery but also ridicule from purist activists, who have accused him of being a sell-out. But he has taken all this in his stride to give the state a good Regional Plan that takes into account the will of the people.

It is now up to Chief Minister Digambar Kamat to urgently address his grievances. The Chief Minister needs to rein in the officious officials of the Town and Country Planning Department. They cannot and should not be allowed to derail a historic exercise. In fact, scuttling RP2021 may be the real objective behind their high-handed behaviour.

The TCP Dept is notorious for bending over backwards to accommodate even the most outrageous violations of the law by big builders. It is equally adept at making files of controversial projects 'disappear'. In the unlikely event that the CM sides with the department and allows Edgar Ribeiro to go, he will be showing in no uncertain terms that his own sympathies lie with those who want this Regional Plan never to see the light of day.

## Sibal finally sees sense

Finally, Union Education Minister Kapil Sibal seems to be coming to his senses. He has realised the folly of proposing a single school examination board for the country. Now, he says, he wants a uniform level of excellence in school education. We agree, wholeheartedly.

Sibal needed only to think back to his school studies to realise that India is a sub-continental country of vast diversity. If this was Europe, every state in India would have been a different country. That we are united does not mean that we destroy the diversity of the country.

Now, Sibal is talking sense. He has asked the states to give up their 'laid-back' approach and urgently improve the quality of their education. He wants all state boards to achieve a uniform level of excellence. And he wants it to be done in two years. It's possible, and Goa needs to go along.

# Waking up from Medieval Slumber

TEOTONIO R DE SOUZA reminds us that the ordinary people of town and country have been neglected in Goan historiography

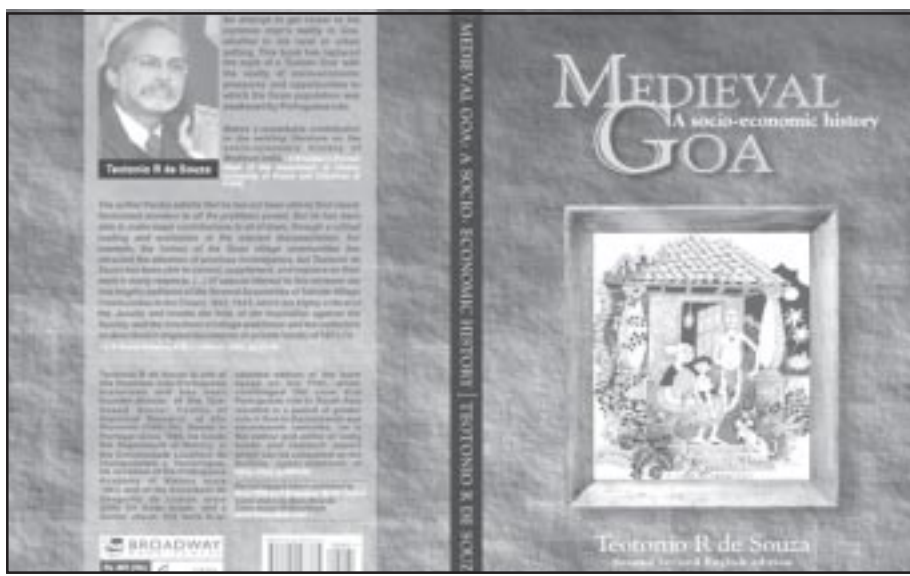
When the book *Medieval Goa* first appeared three decades ago (Delhi: Concept, 1979), it represented a significant break in the tradition of Indo-Portuguese historiography, until then markedly Luso-Indian, even when Goan native historians were the authors. This was acknowledged by prominent historians like C R Boxer, M N Pearson, A Disney, J Wicki and others who reviewed the book in international journals of history.

The colonial culture and the political climate were not helpful for the promotion of a critical approach. Several Goans produced excellent works, and we can think of Filipe Nery Xavier, or more recently of Pandurang Pissurlencar. However, they usually limited their efforts to publish documents. Filipe Nery Xavier admitted in an introductory note to his *Bosquejo Histórico das Comunidades* (1852) that he did not have sufficient strength to produce a more critical work.

P S Sissurlencar manifested his true nationalist sentiments only when the colonial-political climate was about to change. He then displayed some political courage through his reluctance to collaborate with the Portuguese Government in the 'Right of Passage' case at the International Court of Justice at The Hague. He is said to have collaborated discreetly with Indian historians, providing them documentary information that was decisive to strengthen the legal position of India.

Following the Indian occupation of Goa in 1961, P S Sissurlencar accepted an invitation from the University of Poona to deliver a series of lectures in Marathi on the history of Portuguese-Maratha relations. The Portuguese historian Alexandre Lobato was preferred by the Portuguese Government to gather historical documentation for their 'Right of Passage' dispute with India. This fact may have been particularly irksome and responsible for Pissurlencar's resentment. He felt that his competence in handling old Marathi records had been ignored and that his political loyalty was doubted. Besides organising the Historical Archives of Goa very competently, Pissurlencar had published extensive selections of archival documents, including those related to the *Agentes da Diplomacia Portuguesa na Índia* (1952). It was probably his way of proving that Hindus and other non-Christians (Muslims, Jews and Parsis) had served the Portuguese imperial interests in India with great dedication and competence.

There were other Goans who were not serving the Portuguese in Goa, but produced valuable historical works outside Goa and with significant critical capacity: D D Kosambi, Gerson da Cunha and Braz Fernandes may be cited among these. All three were able to integrate their research into the wider context of the his-



### HISTORICAL EXPLORATIONS

tory and culture of the Indian subcontinent.

During colonial times, Portuguese studies were concentrated largely on the history of navigation and expansion of Christianity by the Portuguese in the East. They do indeed merit attention and their long-term consequences can hardly be ignored. However, following the end of the colonial era, it was necessary to restore the historiographic balance and to question the exaggerated myths about the 'Discoveries' and 'Civilising Mission' of Portugal, and the playing down of, or ignoring, the harmful consequences that accompanied and followed those feats and mentality.

*Medieval Goa* represented an effort to question the biases of the colonial historiography, while avoiding falling prey to equally questionable triumphs of nationalism.

It is with great satisfaction that I should record here my close collaboration with the late Fr John Correia Afonso, S J in initiating the series of Indo-Portuguese history seminars which, during the past three decades, contributed significantly to help restoring the historiographic balance that *Medieval Goa* had intended. My manifesto at the first seminar of that series took the form of a research paper entitled 'The Voiceless in Goan Historiography'. Despite the apparently populist provocation of the title, it was no more than a call for serious attention to the native sources, to balance the colonial documentation.

*Medieval Goa* covers a period which is generally regarded as the early Modern period in the West. However, we prefer to maintain the earlier designation, in common with the corresponding periodisation of the Indian historiography.

Besides, whatever semblance of modernity the Portuguese colonial regime brought to India, Goa had to wait for it until the 18th century or almost the 19th century, and that was largely due to the English intervention in the economy of Portuguese India through the Anglo-Portuguese treaty, the setting up of the railway link, and forcing the end of the Inquisition.

The second English edition of *Medieval Goa* comes after three decades, because researchers and the general public in Goa and elsewhere worldwide continue to find it a useful book of reference with extensive archival documentation from Goa and abroad. It focuses the stage-lights upon the rural population as affected by the bustling urban and metropolitan politics.

For the believers in the role of colonial elites, or any elites, it may be difficult to accept that rural folks could have decided the long-term fate of the colony. A careful analysis of this fact should suffice to question even two very recent studies published in Portugal.

Catarina Madeira Santos chose as the title of her M Phil dissertation (1999) a designation which Afonso de Albuquerque attributed to Goa in his correspondence

with his king. For the conqueror of Goa, as cited in the concluding chapter of *Medieval Goa*, it was the key for the whole of India ('Goa é a Chave de toda a Índia') in his imperial strategy. He assured his king that he could thenceforth order in Goa whatever he willed, but it did not turn out to be that easy or true.

Contrary to most prevailing theories about the determining role of the elites, *Medieval Goa* substantiates the reality of Goa where people protested with their feet, migrating from Goa in significant numbers and determining thereby the fate of the colonial masters and their more or less subservient native elites.

Few may have engaged in negotiations with colonial power while growing waves of Goan emigrants sought their future away from colonial domination from the earliest times. No one in India will be easily convinced that Goans dispersed worldwide to proclaim the gains of the Portuguese civilisation.

The Inquisitors in Goa were proposing, at the end of the 17th century as studied here, a series of legislative measures inspired by St Paul writing to the Romans, when he advised: "Noli propter escam destrueres opus Dei" (Do not destroy God's work for the sake of food! It was more important for the Inquisitors to put an end to Hindu practices among the converts rather than to bother about their complaints and difficulties of livelihood and survival.

The main actors of *Medieval Goa* are the ordinary people (the "subalterns" of recent historiography) of the city and the countryside. Their voice had been little heard, if it was heard at all, in the prestigious and masterful works of the well-known historians of the Portuguese expansion.

The new edition gave me an opportunity to update the bibliography and to add some critical comments suggested by it. Interestingly, no recent research called for any significant correction or change in the findings and conclusions of *Medieval Goa*, even three decades after it was first published.

*Medieval Goa* followed the inspiration from the Goan sage D D Kosambi: Indian (Goan) history cannot be reduced to an episode of colonial historiography. *Medieval Goa* focuses the stagelights upon the rural population as affected by the bustling urban and metropolitan politics. It does ignore, though, the fact that the common people also included many ethnic Portuguese who were just as much victims of the colonial and imperial adventurism of the metropolitan and colonial elites as their native Indian counterparts.

(The second edition of the Teotonio R de Souza's *Medieval Goa*, published by 'Goa, 1556' will be released in mid-August.)

By Charlane Pereira

## Life's Little Lessons

Random Rambles

What is meant by the phrase 'to live life'? All earthly beings are born in this world, raised by their parents and educated. They build their careers, hunt for a life partner, tie the knot, have babies, and the same cycle continues for the next generation. So what's the big deal in living life, if everyone goes through a similar metamorphosis? This philosophical query has crossed the minds of many, leading to a revolution in the 'way of life'.

A certain juncture in your life and you may come to a crossroads where you may face a dilemma. All the pathways seem the right routes, and you may feel confused. Confusion is, of course typical in one's teens. However, the victims of such confusion can turn out to be young adults on the brink of building their careers and caught with marriage proposals. You do not wish to err. But 'to err is human'. And you go ahead with the major decision (whether job or marriage) after deliberate pondering on the various pros and cons. You may either make the right decision or be stuck with the wrong decision for a lifetime. You may be able to jump to different jobs in search of greener pastures, but of course you cannot change your life partner, however much you may want to. Though, come to think of it, nowadays people have developed the notion that changing partners is as simple as changing their shoes.

Sometimes you may feel regretful and melancholy. "Sigh! What have I

done?" Live life without regrets! It's important in life to 'let go'. You may seek the companionship of a person who is not interested. You may crave to accumulate the world's wealth like Uncle Scrooge. You may yearn for your mother's love and affection. You may want a number of things in this world. Life teaches that this world doesn't govern as per our wishes or wants or cravings. The change has to be within us and it is 'we' who need to adapt to this world to survive the stress, crisis and conflicts in this modern era.

One experiences a deep sense of satisfaction when one forgives those who have wronged oneself. I have often heard people saying, "Yes, I have forgiven, but I have not forgotten." A person fails to fathom that forgiveness involves forgetting the wrong acts done.

Self-reliance is another important quality that an individual needs to cultivate. Support and encouragement from near and dear ones will add to one's determination and inner strength. As we grow into young mature adults, we learn to be independent – stay on our own, do our shopping, banking and manage other set of chores. No one has to teach us how to manage our earnings and save for a rainy day. When young students venture into the outside world (staying in a hostel away from home, for example) for academic reasons, they learn important life skills – how to cook, do banking transactions, buy groceries, book theatre tickets, etc.

Sometimes some of us have to learn the hard way, through hard toil

and struggle. Life's little lessons learnt the hard way are rarely forgotten. No one will tell you to be street smart. Your close family members might guide you, but they won't be able to do all your work for you.

Often, we might have to follow the diplomatic approach in our dealings with other people. Relationships with school friends, colleagues at workplace, neighbours in our locality or acquaintances are like fragile glassware. At such times, diplomacy is the preferred strategy – no taking sides, no comments, no bitching.

One has to make efforts to strive towards their goals. Hard work ultimately pays off. So do moral values like honesty and conscientiousness. Besides this, it is also necessary that one learns etiquettes and good manners, which reflect good parental upbringing.

Live life to the fullest possible. Pick up a novel of your choice, read it. Go for a long drive, join a club, go for an adrenalin-pumping trek in the woods, make friends. Always wear a cheerful smile on your face (even if you are stuck in the pit of dark moments). Go for a jog in the countryside. Life may throw golden opportunities in your direction, or it might give you the darkest of blues. What you can do is bounce back higher with renewed strength, vigour and courage to brave the blues.

A person never lives twice. So live life! After all, a life is meant to be lived, not to be quit upon.

## Letters to the Editor

### Punish child abusers

Jerry Fernandes, Vanxim

My blood boils when I think about the barbaric treatment of an innocent defenceless child, allegedly by Audumbar Pednekar, a civil engineer, his wife Minaxi and sister-in-law Tina at Porvorim. No one knows what satisfaction people get by beating poor children so heartlessly.

People who engage in such acts put to shame the so-called 'savages' who would give any type of treatment to anyone found in the jungle. It is a shame that such people are still living in our midst who do not have compassion for the less fortunate ones.

To add insult to injury, it is reported that the doctors at GMC initially said that they were simple injuries. As one can see from newspapers reports and photographs, the injuries are clearly very serious in nature.

We request all politicians and others not to interfere in the investigations. Let the law takes

its own course. Let those found guilty be given the most stringent of punishment for child abuse, hiring child labour, and other charges under the Prevention of Atrocities (SC/ST) Act, IPC and Goa Children's Act.

### Protect the displaced

Vimlesh Rivonkar, Mercres

Goa needs world class infrastructure in aviation to ease the air traffic and provide better landing and parking facilities to aircraft. Since the government has announced that work on the Mopa airport will commence in 2010 and Section 6 has been invoked (*Herald*, 22 Jul), the completion date must also be announced, along with the rehabilitation package to those whose houses are acquired. The government must also declare reserved jobs at the airport to the heirs of those who lose land, as was done in the case of Konkani Railway.

Goans will benefit from the new greenfield airport, the tourism industry will grow, and the Vis-count of Pemem will benefit and other politicians will become richer. But the necessary steps must be taken to save poor Goans who will lose land.

### Stop illegal constructions

Stephen Dias, Dona Paula

I am glad that the Corporation of the City of Panaji (CCP) has demolished a construction within 200 m of the high tide line at Caranzalem, which was reportedly constructed to house a *ma-drassa*. I understand that the issue was taken up only after complaints from the locals. When Mayor Caroline Po resides at Caranzalem itself, she could have spotted this illegal construction much earlier, especially when the area was acquired by the government for building a park. There are several illegal constructions around Panjim and it is high time that the government consider these constructions as cognisable offences.

In the past there were several complaints against a 5-star hotel in Panjim which has allegedly come up in the CRZ, and the CCP could not do anything since they are influential people. The present system of monitoring these illegal constructions is a total failure. It is suggested that a special CCP squad for this purpose may be necessary to deal with such offences.

### Letter of the Day

## Affront to Catholics

Egipcio Noronha Rodrigues, Panjim

It has been announced that the Banguinim area in Old Goa is going to be used as the site for a garbage processing plant, despite all the opposition from the local population and of the Christian community due to the plant being located in the area close to the pilgrimage site of Old Goa.

Referring to this decision, Fr Francisco Caldeira, who is in charge of the San Tome chapel of Panjim, made a strong appeal to the parishioners to do all possible to see that the said decision is not implemented. He pointed out the inconvenience that it will cause to all those that visit the Old Goa Churches and take part in the religious services therein.

In a lighter vein he remarked that it so happened that the officer who is keen on implementing this decision happens to belong to the Catholic community and he is helped in this matter by the chairperson of the Corporation, who is also a Catholic. It is to be noted that all this is being done with the approval of the minister belonging to the same community.

This project being an affront to the Catholic community, he impressed upon the parishioners to act before this can be implemented. This appeal was well received by those present.

It is now our hope that at least a non-Catholic organization or authority will come forward and intervene to prevent the utilization of that area as a garbage site, and thus avoid an affront to the Catholic community.

### Taxation fiasco

Soter D'Souza, Socorro

The Chief Minister of Goa while recently presenting the budget in the Legislative Assembly has proposed to levy a 'Professional Tax' as one of the revenue-generating measures.

However, the imposition of tax on professions has always been the prerogative of the Municipalities and Village Panchayats. Therefore, a question arises as to who will be responsible to collect the tax on professions? Will professionals in Goa have to bear double taxation?

If the government decides to collect the professional tax, will it not deprive the Municipalities and Village Panchayats of their legitimate rights and income?

### Warrior of Konkani

Cypriano Lopes, by email

With the sad and untimely demise of Prof Dr Olivinho Gomes, a scholar and versatile writer par excellence, Goa has lost one of its acclaimed and accomplished geniuses, who excelled and made a mark in every field into which he ventured.

Dr Olivinho was a proud Goan who had a strong love for his mother tongue Konkani. He gave up

his high-profile job in the Central IRS and opted for the service of Konkani. He was proficient in many languages, including Portuguese, English, Hindi, Konkani and Marathi. His genius is reflected in his scholarly works, which include forty published books, and innumerable other writings. He was also a living encyclopedia of Konkani, and none could match his knowledge of Konkani's rich and varied history.

With the passing away of Dr Olivinho, Konkani has lost one of its illustrious sons. His towering personality and his acerbic writings on the Romi Konkani issue will be sadly missed. His dream of attaining equal status for Romi Konkani remained unfulfilled in his lifetime.

### Communal bickering

Sayed Iftiyaz, Margao

Goa is known for its scenic beauty, sandy beaches and, more importantly, for its communal harmony. Lately, we have seen number of letters in the newspapers speaking ill about other people's religions. Does such hatred against each other's religions suit the Goan identity? Goans have to wake up now, use their intelligence and not get carried away by the communal bickering of a few people.

### Spreading HIV

Marcos Alemao, Varca

The amendment of Section 377 by the Supreme Court, allowing homosexuality in India, is a great blow to society. Leaders of all religions have raised their voices against the judgement of the Supreme Court. However, there is no sound from the cabinet ministers or the leader of the opposition in this regards.

After the judgement, the dreaded disease of HIV will freely spread among the youth if we do not protest the judgement.

### Public money wasted

R Fernandes, Margao

The report about the huge rent of Rs 7 lakh per month rent being paid for two Govt of Goa offices at Porvorim (*Herald*, 8 Jul) discloses nothing short of a scam.

The argument that advertisements did not result in any better offers does not hold water. If there were no decent offers the location of the offices should be changed. If the location can not be changed, the government has to acquire the building/premises at fair market value of land and construction.

### Selling Goa short

Lasdun D'Souza, Nachinola

One will notice that there are increasing numbers of migrants in Goa. All this happens because of politics. The politicians sell our own Goan land to non-Goans for money. They construct houses for migrants, provide them water, electricity and ration cards, and give first preference to them. The *niz Goenkars* are left with nothing.

If the politicians keep on giving all facilities to non-Goans, then one fine day these non-Goans will say to us, "We are Goans, and who are all you people?"

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

Why I Am An Agnostic

By Clarence Darrow

The reasons for agnosticism are abundant and compelling. Fantastic and foolish and impossible consequences are freely claimed for the belief in religion. All the civilization of any period is put down as a result of religion. All the cruelty and error and ignorance of the period has no relation to religion.

The truth is that the origin of what we call civilization is not due to religion but to skepticism. So long as men accepted miracles without question, so long as they believed in original sin and the road to salvation, so long as they believed in a hell where man would be kept for eternity on account of Eve, there was no reason whatever for civilization: life was short, and eternity was long, and the business of life was preparation for eternity.

When every event was a miracle, when there was no order or system or law, there was no occasion for studying any subject, or being interested in anything excepting a religion which took care of the soul. As man doubted the primitive conceptions about religion, and no longer accepted the literal, miraculous teachings of ancient books, he set himself to understand nature. We no longer cure disease by casting out devils. Since that time, men have studied the human body, have built hospitals and treated illness in a scientific way. Science is responsible for the building of railroads and bridges, of steamships, of telegraph lines, of cities, towns, large buildings and small, plumbing and sanitation, of the food supply, and the countless thousands of useful things that we now deem necessary to life. Without skepticism and doubt, none of these things could have been given to the world.

The fear of God is not the beginning of wisdom. The fear of God is the death of wisdom. Skepticism and doubt lead to study and investigation, and investigation is the beginning of wisdom.

The modern world is the child of doubt and inquiry, as the ancient world was the child of fear and faith.