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1988.

An ethnological Study of Goan Society.

In:

Shirodkar, P. P., Goa: Cultural Trends. Pp. 34-45.

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— S. S. Desai

At the outset it needs to be emphasized that the meaning of the word culture is broad. It is connected with civilization, but not in wide sense. It is a modern word and derived from German word *Kultur*. It became popular in the beginning of this century. Culture is a way of life and it covers all facets of human life, such as anthropology, ethnology, history language, literature, costumes, habits, traditions, etc.

In this context, it is worth discussing some aspects of Goan traditions and life. Dr. Antonio de Bragança Pereira, a jurist and researcher in history has to his credit a book under the title '*Ethnografia da India Portuguesa*' in two volumes. Though it is written in Portuguese, it has immense historical value. In the second volume of this book, Dr. Bragança Pereira has dealt with extensively the history of the castes and communities in Goa. He says that there are 30 to 35 castes and sub-castes among Hindus of Goa, 17 amongst the Catholics and 20 amongst Muslims. In comparison with the castes and communities in Maharashtra and Karnataka, the neighbouring States of Goa, the majority of castes and communities in Maharashtra are to be found in Goa. But, where did they come from? Certainly they might have migrated to Goa from Maharashtra. The students of ancient history of India are well aware that in bygone days Goa formed a part of the province of *Aparant*, which stretched from the North, the southern boundary of Gujarat and to the South, the river Gangavati or Gangavali in the South Kanara district of Karnataka. The province of *Aparant* was the occidental or littoral part of Maharashtra alongwith Vidarbha and Ashmak.

The castes and communities cited by Dr. Bragança Pereira, in his book might have come down to *Aparant* from Vidarbha, the first homeland of Aryans, who crossed the Vindya ranges from the north. He has cited following castes and communities amongst the

Hindus of Goa; Brahmans: Chitpavan, Karade, Padhe Joshi, Goud Saraswat.

Goud Saraswat: Smarts (Shaivas), Sastikar, Pednekar, Kudalkar (Shaivas).

Other Castes: Maratha, Vaish, Gurav, Sonar, Kanjar, Sutar, Lohar, Olar or Kankankar or Bogar, Shimpi, Kharvi or Gabit, Gosavi, Zogui, Piddukkar, Bhandari, Komarpaico, Kumbhar, Agri, Gaude, Parit, Mahale or Hajam or Nhavi, Teli, Dhangar, Gauli, Lingayat, Gujir, Mhalshi, Perni, Bhavini and Deuli, Forgent or Chedde or Bande, Mahar and Chamar.

All the above mentioned communities or *Jatis* exist in Goa from the time immemorial with a few exceptions, for example the Chitpavans or Konkanasthas. The arrival of Chitpavan Brahmans in India is a subject of speculation. It is known that they arrived in India very late. Some say they came from Iran; others say they are of the Nordic stock of Aryans; while according to a legend, they are not Aryans at all, but of Semitic race most probably Arabs of North Africa, who sailed to India from the coast of Barberia and landed at Guhagar on the Konkan coast, their original homeland. Dr. Bragança Pereira is of the view that Chitpavan Brahmans assumed the surname Konkanasthas in the year 1715². The original home of Saraswats is also a subject of speculation. Some say they came from Bengal. Bhau Daji, a Goan scholar of repute is of the opinion that they came from Trihotra, while C.V. Vaidya asserts that they migrated to Bengal and Goa from the region of Saraswati.³

Karade Brahmans: The home country of Karade Brahmans is also a subject for discussion. But by the very name Karade it is presumed that they came to Goa from Karad. They were brought to Goa by the Silahar Kings of Western Maharashtra.

Padhey Brahmans: They are a sub-caste of Karade Brahmans. But their assumption is that they are a separate community. In Maharashtra they are to be found in North Konkan and in Goa at Anuz or Ponda Taluka.

Joshi or Kramavant Joshi: This is a microscopic community found in Ratnagiri district and a few in Goa. It is said that they are of Dravid stock.

Daivadnya Brahmins or Sonars: This community belongs to Vishwakarma Panchal Brahmins. They are of Aryan race and descended to Dandakaranya from the North. Their Sanskrit surname is *Shresthin* from which the general surname *Shet* is derived. They are found in Maharashtra and might have migrated to Goa from Konkan. Some ethnologists are of the opinion that they migrated to Desh or upper Maharashtra from Konkan. While some contend that their homeland is Goa. This presumption is being upheld on the grounds that they are components or Gaonkars of some comunidades or village communities. They are also found in South up to Mangalore. Most probably they might have fled in those parts during religious persecutions in Goa.

In Daivadnya Brahmin community of Goa, sub-castes are not found. But in Maharashtra we do find, e.g. the sub-castes of Lad, Abhirs, Malvades, etc.

Vaishya: They are also called *Vani*. The etymology of this word is *Vanic* means businessman. In Rigveda, the word *Vish* occurs very often. Its meaning is also businessman. Vaishyas are of Aryan stock and descended to Vidarbha from the North. They might have settled down in Goa long back, for they are components or Gaonkars of many village communities or comunidades. The family deities of Vaishyas are mostly in Goa. But they are spread in many parts of Maharashtra as well as in Karnataka. Most probably they might have fled to Karwar region during religious persecutions in Goa. In Maharashtra, there are eight sub-castes amongst the Vaishyas.

Sutar: Sutar community belongs to Panchal Brahmins. In Goa, some families of this community do the profession of carpentry and iron work. The latter are called *Mesta*. (Mestres in Portuguese) While in Maharashtra, the Sutar and Lohars i.e. *Mestas* are two sub-castes of the same community. Sutar are a

small community in Goa. They are to be found sparsely in Cuncolim of Salcete taluka, Quepem, Bardez and Canacona.

Kansar or Twastta Kansar: This is also a Panchal Brahmin community. They follow the profession of brass and bangles work. As the family deities of Kansar community are in Maharashtra, they might have descended to Goa from Maharashtra. Thread ceremony is performed in this community as those of other Panchal Brahmins.

Gurav: This small community is found in Goa as well as in Maharashtra. Though they follow the profession of priests in the temples and wear thread, they are not treated as Brahmins. Besides they intermarry with Marathas. There are five sub-castes of Gurav community. They have also gotras.

Bhandari or Naik Bhandari: This is the largest community of Goa after Gauda community. They are also found fairly in South Konkan but sparsely in Desh or upper Maharashtra. In Goa, in Bhandari community there are no sub-castes, but in Ratnagiri district there exist. These are called Hetkaris and Kittey Bhandaris. They however do not intermarry. Nowadays, Bhandaris call themselves Kshatria Marathas. They are good fighters. There was a fair amount of Bhandaris in Maratha army.

Gabits or Daryawardy Marathas: This fisherfolk community is to be found mostly in Ratnagiri district and in Goa. Besides the profession of fishing, they were working as sailors in the Maratha navy. That is why they call themselves Daryawardy Marathas in Ratnagiri district.

In Goa as well as in Ratnagiri district, there is a sub-caste of fisherfolk community which is called Kharvi. In Goa, they are also called Vhadekars. All these sub-communities follow intermarriages.

Kunabi: Majority of this community hails from Maharashtra and they are farmers by profession. Nowadays, in Maharashtra they have been incorporated in Marathi community. But high

class Marathas do not intermarry with them. The Kunabi community of Goa might have descended from Maharashtra and settled down on the slopes of Sahyadri ranges. They are found in Sattari, Sankhali and Sanguem. As already stated, they are farmers and toilers by profession. There are no sub-castes in Kunabi Maratha. The others like Kumbhars, Dhangars, Telis, Gaulis, etc. are microscopic communities in Goa. They are predominantly found in Maharashtra.

Maratha Kshatrias: Maratha Kshatria community is the main bulk of the inhabitants of Maharashtra. They have descended to Goa from Maharashtra. There are 96 *Kulas* among Maratha Kshatrias, who descended from the royal dynasties who ruled India in bygone days.

Many scholars of repute like C. V. Vaidya, V.K. Rajwade, V.V. Mirashi, A.S. Altekar, K.A. Nilkanth Sastri have dealt with this subject extensively. According to Rajwade, Marathas migrated to Deccan from Magadhadesh due to the persecutions of Boudhas, long before the Christian era.⁴ That they had cohesion with the Nagas in Maharashtra and by which three '*Vanshas*' namely sun (Surya), Moon (*Chandra*) and Naga came into existence. Rajwade further adds that amongst the Maratha Kshatrias of Maharashtra great ruling dynasties like Chalukyas, Yadavas, Bhojas, Pallavas, etc. produced great warriors like Pulkeshi, Amghvarsh, Vikramditya, Singhan, Aparark, etc.⁵

Rajwade further elucidates that the Magadh Kshatrias brought alongwith them their family priests, who are no other than the present Deshasth Yajurvedi Brahmins.⁶

Though the above theory is not acceptable to some of the historians, they agree that Marathas migrated to Deccan from the north and established their first settlement in Vidarbha. C.V. Vaidya has stated in his '*History of Mediaeval Hindu India*' that the 96 *Kulas* of Marathas are no other than the ruling dynasties of Kshatrias, who ruled many parts of North India, Western India, Malva, Karnataka, etc.⁷

Maratha Royal dynasties which ruled Goa: Goa came

under the sway of following dynasties: Mauriyas, Satvahanas, Bhojas, Abhirs, Traikutaks, Butpuris, Old Kadambas, Konkan, Mauriyas, Chalukyas, Rastrakutas, Shilaharas, Goa Kadambas and Yadavas.

It is needless to make it clear that the etymology of More, one of the 96 *Kulas* of Marathas is Mauriya. Satvahanas have no place in the 96 *Kulas* of the Marathas. But though they were born from the admixture with ruling and Dravids they had matrimonial relations with ruling dynasties like Chalukyas, Rastrakutas etc.⁸

Bhojas: They belonged to Yadav Kula of Mathura. They came down to Goa and established their kingdom at Chandor in Salcete Taluka.⁹ King slike Devraj, Maharaj Chandra Varma, Prithvimall Varma, Kapali Varma and Ashankit were born in this dynasty.¹⁰

Abhirs: Abhirs do not belong to the 96 *Kulas* of Maratha Kshatrias. The Puranas refer their rule in Aparant.¹¹

Traikutaks: There is no *Kula* of Traikutaks in Maratha Kshatrias but they ruled *Aparant* and were feudatories of Abhirs.¹²

Chalukyas of Badami: The founder of Chalukya Dynasty of Badami was Pulkeshi I. His son Kirtivarma extended his rule upto Goa¹³. Chalukyas hailed from Ayodhya. They are also known as Solankis. In the 96 *Kulas* of Maratha Kshatrias they figure under the name of Chalukyas, Chalkes or Salunkes.¹⁴

Rastrakutas: Rastrakutas hailed from Latur region of Marathawada. From there they migrated to Elichpur in Vidarbha. For several generations they played the secondary role as the feudatories of Chalukyas. Dantidurga threw away the yoke of Chalukyas. He defeated Emperor Kirtivarma and extended his sway over the entire Maharashtra including Goa. His successor Krishna I built the famous rock temple, which is known as Kailas Mandir at Ellora or Verul in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra. In the 96 *Kulas* of Maratha, the Rashtrakutas are known as Bhales, Khandagles,¹⁵

It is supposed that many 'Charde' families of Goa are of Rashtrakuta stock.

Shilahars: There were three families of Shilaharas in Maharashtra: North Konkan, South Konkan and Western Maharashtra (Karad, Kolhapur and Miraj). Sanafull is the first king of Goa Shilaharas. Their first capital was Vallipattan, the location of which is not yet confirmed. Some say it is Balli in the taluka of Quepem, while the others say the Veli of Salcete taluka. Some believe, it is Khare Patan near Rajapur. In later period, the Shilaharas transferred their capital at Old Goa¹⁶. In the 96 *Kulas* of Marathas, Shilaharas are figured as Shelars.

Kadambas: Kadambas ruled Goa more or less three and half centuries, not independently but as feudatories. It is said that Mayursharma, the founder of this dynasty was a Brahmin. But when he became King, he assumed the surname Varma, means Kshatria. The Kadambas had matrimonial relations with Kshatria ruling families of Gujarat and Deccan.¹⁷ The Kadambas are included in the 96 *Kulas* of Marathas as Kadam.

Yadavas of Devagiri: The original home of Yadavas is Dwarka. From there they migrated to far away parts of India. The founder of Devagiri kingdom is Seonchandra. As a mark of respect to him, Devagiri was called as Seoondesh.

It was in the reign of Singhan the powerful Yadav King that Goa Kadambas had to accept the suzerainty of Devagiri, which persisted for more than one century. The Yadavas fell to the onslaught of Allauddin Khilji of Delhi in the year 1310.¹⁸

Yadavas are one of the 96 *Kulas* of Marathas. Here ends the first period of the relationship of Maratha Kshatrias with Goa.

Marathas: The second period begins with Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. But before him, the northern part of Goa was under the rule of Savant Bhonsles of Wadi, who were feudatories of the Adilshah of Bijapur. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj subjugated the Savant Bhonsles of Wadi in the year 1661 when he overran North Konkan.

In the year 1675, Shivaji captured the fort of Fonda or Ponda from the hands of Adilshah of Bijapur and thence made a drive to South up to the Gangavati or Gangavali river in North Karwar district. Thus, most of today's Goa came under the rule of the Marathas with the exception of Tiswadi, Salcete and Bardez which were in the hands of the Portuguese.

Marathi Language: Marathi language existed in Goa from the ancient times. It was the literary and cultural language of Goa. Some say that Konkani literature existed in Goa before the arrival of the Portuguese. Krisnadas Shama, the author of *Shri Krishna Charitra Katha* had to his credit two Konkani books namely *Ashwamedu* and *Raghunath Vanshah Katha*,¹⁹ which are not available. Moreover, the Western as well as the Goan scholars do not mention these books in their writings. Had these books been written by Krisnadas Shama, the well known scholar Dr. S.M. Katre would have mentioned them in his famous thesis *The Formation of Konkani*. He categorically affirms that before the arrival of missionaries in Goa no literature did exist in Konkani. He says: "It is commonly averred that before the advent of the Portuguese there was flourishing Konkani literature in Konkani which was destroyed by the Portuguese Inquisition (*The Origin of Konkani Language* by Santana Rodrigues, pp. 11-14). But the fact that the Christian missionaries themselves were studying the native tongue and composing grammars shows that the mother tongue continued to be in vogue inspite of persecution. But literature as such we have no traces. The efforts of Father Thomas Stephens did not give us Konkani literature, his own Purana being in the form of Marathi current in Goa during the 16th and early part of the 17th centuries. It would appear from this, as well as from the absence of any literature in Konkani outside Goa before the 17th century, that Konkani at no time enjoyed the status of being a medium of serious literature or a court language."²⁰

Dr. José Pereira, another authority on Konkani language states in his book *Konkani, a Language* as under: 'It was only under the inspiration of Latin West's scholarship that the grammatical analysis of these defiant but ostracized tongues was begun'.²¹ He has dealt with this subject extensively, only to draw conclusion that Western as well as Goan scholars produced more grammars

and lexicons than literary works in Konkani. So, due to want of Konkani literature in Goa during 16th and 17th centuries the privilege to become the literary language of Goa goes to Marathi. But this proposition is not acceptable to many, who vehemently state that Marathi was imposed upon the people of Goa by her erstwhile rulers, the Marathas. But is it rational? Can the rulers impose their language and will upon their subjects? If we go through the world history we find that the corollary of imposition is fallacious. No ruler could impose his will upon the subjugated people by coercion. Let us take the example of Goa in this regard. Goa was under the Portuguese rule for more than four centuries. With the instigation of the missionaries, the Portuguese rulers tried to suppress the vernacular idioms and impose Portuguese language upon the people under them instead. But they did not succeed.

Only a small section of people accepted the Portuguese language and that is for gainful purposes.

Another example is of Portugal, Spain and France: Portugal, Spain and southern France were under the rule of Sarracens i.e. the Muslims of North Africa for about three and half centuries. But did these countries convert to Islam and accept their language? Certainly not. Hence the Marathi language was not imposed upon the Goan people by any. It flourished in Goa by the will of Goan people themselves.

Literature: Marathi literature flourished in Goa by the imitation of the Marathi literature of neighbouring Maharashtra. The first Marathi literary piece *Shri Krishna Charitra Katha* was composed by Krishnadas Shama in the year 1526 A.D. He hailed from the village Keloshi of Salcete taluka, then under the rule of the Adilshah of Bijapur. It must be noted that this first Marathi literary work was produced not in Maratha domain but in Muslim's. After *Shri Krishhna Charitra Katha*, the Purana and biographies of Christian saints were composed by the Christian missionaries in Marathi, but in Roman script. This Marathi literary output written by Christian missionaries would have continued further had the Inquisition not intervened.

Since the beginning of the 16th century till 1970 more than 250

Marathi writers of Goan origin produced 3500 volumes in Goan Marathi.²²

Journalism: Marathi journalism was born in Goa in the late 19th century, by drawing inspiration from the eminent journalists in Maharashtra. Since 1886 till this date, 91 periodicals including dailies were brought out in Goa. Now only a few survive.

Music: The Marathi music of Goa is a regional music with its Goan peculiarities. But in later period, it was influenced by the Marathi music of Maharashtra. It was on account of the growing Marathi stage that this influence continued. The peculiarity of Goan Marathi music is this: The *vrittas* of Goan Marathi music are not found in Marathi music of Maharashtra. Some *ragas* and *Matras* of Goan Marathi music are different from those of Marathi music of Maharashtra. The *talas* of *vrittas* of Goan Marathi music which are called *Dhamar*, *Savari*, *Tappa*, *Zumra*, *Hori*, *Tilwada* are not found not only in Marathi music but in Indian music at large. They neither had the origin in Western music. Nobody knows from where they were derived.

The same thing is of the musical instruments of the Hindu music of Goa. For example Ghumat, Samei etc. But inspite of the marked peculiarity of Goan Hindu music, the present day Goan music has undergone a tremendous change under the influence of Marathi music of Maharashtra and that of the Indian music in particular.

Stage: The present day Goan drama is not independent, rather it is a copy of Marathi drama. But if one goes through the history of Marathi drama, one finds that its roots are in Goan stage. *Kāla*, *Gavalan Kala*, *Gopal Kala*, and *Jāgar* are the original traits of the Hindu stage of Goa, which were developed into the modern drama of Maharashtra. Shri J.S. Sukhtankar, a Goan Marathi writer has dealt with this subject in detail in his book *Jāgar*.

Habits and Customs: The habits and customs of Goan people, with the exception of Catholics and Muslims, are the same as those of the people of Maharashtra.

In sum, the cultural traditions of Goan people predominantly of the Hindus are the same in the context of the religions, castes and communities, customs and habits and with a small variation in the languages.

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