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It must be stated at the outset that the villages of Goa are unique and distinct from villages in the rest of India. Before dealing with the rapid transition that has taken place in rural Goa since Liberation, it will first be necessary to give a picture of village life during the Portuguese regime. Twenty-five years ago though essentials like electricity, sanitation, water-supply schemes, good motorable roads were unheard of, the villages in spite of being illiterate were certainly not ignorant, and deprivation of food, clothing and even shelter was unimaginable. Each village had its peculiar characteristics which differentiated it from other villages. Thus Moira was noted for its bananas, Taleigao for sweet potatoes, Aldona for chillies, Benaulim for coconuts, Assagao for flowers, etc.

In pre-Liberation Goa the village was dominated by the manor house of the bhatkar, and in predominantly Christian areas by the Church, or conversely by the temple. Certain talukas like Salcette, Bardez, Tiswadi were more developed, populated and progressive than others like Pernem, Canacona and Sattari. This is because the former were older establishments than the latter. The occupation in the villages was mostly agricultural, and the peasants were divided into those who possessed small holdings, those who cultivated Comunidade lands, and the landless labourers who worked for the bhatkar. On a higher rung of the

social ladder were the teachers (if the village could boast of a school), government employees who worked locally or in the city, the professionals (doctors and lawyers), the parish priest or the pujari, and the bhatkar. Though there was rigidity in as much as it was well-nigh impossible to move from one category to another, contentment and singular absence of a competitive spirit were prevalent. Each was happy with his lot, and this was perhaps because there was a healthy relationship among the various categories. The mundkar was content to be dependent on his bhatkar, and he had full confidence that his master would stand by him in his hour of need, be it a marriage, an illness or death. The bhatkar on the other hand was a benevolent patron who trusted his subordinates and gave them his unqualified support and confidence.

It is only since Liberation that the tiller has become assertive and suspicious of the landlord, thanks to the politician who, to suit his own ends, has driven this wedge between the bhatkar and the mundkar. Thus the former relationship of trust and dependence has been vitiated. Instead of persuading the landlord gradually and progressively to make the tiller the owner of the land he cultivates, legislation has forced the hand of the former whilst the latter has begun to feel that he was grossly cheated and exploited, and has consequently begun to nurse a deep resentment so that in a vindictive mood the tiller looks for opportunities to humiliate the erstwhile boss. Besides, more often than not, the tiller is cultivating many fields including those of the absentee landlord who has only a solitary field purchased by his earnings abroad, and thus the tiller has virtually become a bhatkar particularly by ousting the small landholders living abroad.

Before Liberation the majority of the villagers lived at home. Only the more enterprising ones went to the neighbouring States in search of education or employment. English medium schools

were few, and as employment opportunities were opening up in Africa ambitious Goans went to Belgaum or Bombay to matriculate and thus qualify for jobs in the dark continent. Others went to sea mostly as cooks and butlers, whilst a substantial number went to work in Bombay and other parts of India. When those returned to the insular homeland they brought experiences of the outside world which were liberally shared with their co-villagers. The taverna provided the ideal atmosphere for the propagation of such news, particularly at sunset when the labourers congregated there after a hard day's work to ease their weary limbs, find relaxation in the local brew which was both cheap and intoxicating and in the dim light of the petromax to take in avidly whatever was the latest gossip. Such tavernas were the haunt of the common man who wended his way there after work to exchange news and views over feni, only dispersing into the thick darkness of the night after being sufficiently charged, if not intoxicated often to create a rowdy scene at home at the slightest provocation.

All this has changed rapidly since Liberation. New primary schools have mushroomed in every village, and even secondary schools have been established at convenient distances. The lone ramshackled, bone-rattling *camião* as a mode of transport has given way to comfortable buses, thus widening the horizon of the villages. Colleges for academic studies in many of the towns as well as professional institutions have enabled not only Goans, but even non-Goans, to qualify as teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers and architects. Employment opportunities in the Gulf have served as a boon to Goa, and petro-dollars have brought tremendous changes in the villages.

On the one hand government has provided amenities including good roads, transport facilities, electricity, water-supply, whilst the Gulf has been mainly responsible for the

territory's economic prosperity. Palatial houses built by those working in the Gulf now vie with those of bhatkars, whilst electricity has provided T. V., Video and stereo equipment in most houses in rural areas. These have brought the rest of the country and even the world into the rustic drawing-room. On the other hand affluence has brought in a host of problems, the most conspicuous being drug-addiction and permissiveness caused primarily by the disintegration of the family. Easy mobility prompts children to leave home on one pretext or another at an early age, sometimes before they are emotionally and intellectually equipped to face the problems that beset such situations. In many instances one or both parents are abroad, and the children left in the care of grand-parents or other relatives, or in boarding-schools or hostels. The consequence is that they are supplied with all the luxuries that money can buy even before they are capable of making a judicious use of these luxuries, as also a liberal supply of money which tempts them to indulge in drugs and permissiveness with their peers. Materialism has bred hedonism, and consequently the deep spirituality which lay at the root of the Goan's upbringing has been a severe casualty. Wherever they went for employment Goans were noted for their honesty, complete reliability and dedication to duty. These sterling qualities are unfortunately fast disappearing. For lack of parental love and guidance there is serious erosion of values under the pretext of modernity.

The category that is most seriously and obviously affected by the pervasive self-centredness is the aged, whereas in the past it was inconceivable to put the senior citizens into a Home for the Aged. Now practically every village can boast of such homes, and even though they are mushrooming rapidly, they seem inadequate to cope with the demand. Many of the old who now find themselves in a Home cannot reconcile to their position,

especially as either through choice or compulsion they cared for the older generation entrusted to their care and thereby expected a similar treatment when their turn came. It embitters them to accept the reality that their kith and kin no longer nurse such sentiments as respect and gratitude to their elders, but are ruled by hard-headed practicality. Thus their end comes in disillusionment and resentment instead of in peace and tranquility.

The replacement of the *Comunidade* system by the rule of the Village Panchayat is another aspect that has not proved favourable. The former helped to foster a community spirit and a sense of belonging to the village. As soon as a son of the soil was eligible, he was taken to register his name at the *Comunidade* office so that he could be entitled to 'zon' or a share in the income derived from the lands that were farmed out to the landless. Some of this income was wisely used for the maintenance of the bunds. Now for want of care these bunds are breached and fields inundated. The Village Panchayat as it was encouraged by Gandhiji and the Founding Fathers was an ideal system, but it has been vitiated by politicians having captured these local bodies. Regarding the Panchayats as their vote banks the politicians influence the elections, and all the ugly attitudes and actions that prevail at the Assembly level, like favouring one's supporters and punishing opposers, riding roughshod over departmental bureaucrats by pressurising them to give out-of-turn facilities to their friends, nullify the authority and influence of the Panchayats. At times those who stand for elections are not conversant with the rules and regulations that govern the body, consequently depend solely on the guidance or misguidance of the M.L.A. Not infrequently, because the Panchas are not imbued with the spirit of service,

they play the toppling game, thus bringing development of the village to a minimum if not a grinding halt. Petty politics cause divisiveness and bitterness where unity once prevailed.

To sum up, rapid changes have upset the equilibrium of the villages. Insularity caused by bad roads, lack of mass communication media, immobility, tended to keep the village isolated from the rest of the Territory. Only festivals and fairs at religious centres like Mangueshi and Old Goa brought people from different villages together which helped in the exchange of news and views. To a lesser extent marriages contracted between partners of different villages were also occasions to venture outside the limited precincts and to gain some acquaintance with the world outside one's home. For lack of transport the youth were confined to the village, and had to find leisure, recreation and entertainment within the village. Today's youth find affinity with their peers in the cities where they go for education or employment, and thus no longer feel concerned or committed to the village. Home has increasingly become a place to eat and sleep. Consequently the homogeneity is disrupted and fissiparous tendencies are creeping in to break up the closely knit atmosphere that prevailed before. Whilst the older generation who had emigrated abroad in search of employment felt the lure of returning home to the village to buy a piece of land and thereby raise their status and standard of living, the newly-retired people prefer to buy flats in the cities because they hanker for the conveniences of city life thus sacrificing their roots and identity.

Thus the whole pattern of life of some of the villages, notably in the coastal areas is changing. Whilst the affluent are moving out to the cities in search of city amenities, the non-

Goans are buying land either to build their own cottages or to indulge in tourist trade by erecting hotels, motels and restaurants.

These invite foreigners, including hippies who bring nudism and drug-trafficking to our beaches, and thus invite an influx of local tourists as spectators of their antics. All these rapid changes in the last two decades have thrown the smooth sailing, uneventful, placid life of the villagers into a turmoil, and there seems to be a seething unrest everywhere. One thing is certain — the village as it was known before with its rural, rustic atmosphere has given place to a semi-city, taking with it all the simplicity, innocence, tranquility, isolation that prevailed before. Whilst the amenities in the form of electricity, water-supply, roads, transport are to be welcomed, an erosion of values, rampant materialism are to be deeply regretted. Obviously one has always to pay a price for development and progress, but the question we have to ask ourselves at this juncture is whether the raping of our forests, the destruction of our ecology, the disappearance of our moral and spiritual standards is a price worth paying for our material gains. Could we, whilst imbibing all the worthwhile trends that have been ushered in the name of modernity, still strive to preserve the solid virtues that were synonymous with Goans in the past? Let us resolve not to eject the precious baby with the bath water as we proceed from the Silver (Jubilee) to the Gold.