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## GOAN WOMEN AS REFLECTED IN THEIR CUSTOMS AND FOLK TRADITIONS

The preceding chapter focussed on early Portuguese influences on the status of women. This chapter is concerned with customs and traditions in Goan society as they relate to women. Customs and traditions influenced the life of women in Goa both in a positive and negative way. Women were controlled through customs and traditions. Some of these customs gives us an indication on how men and society view women. Many of these customs have emerged from the demands of a male dominated society and the socio-economic conditions of Goa. These customs serve as indices of women's backwardness, prejudices against them, low opinion about women's capabilities and complete absence of women in decision-making. On the other hand the customs and traditions show the importance of women in various traditional roles – mother, housewife and in matters of religion.

Proverbs are used in this chapter. Proverbs that have been transmitted to us from generation to generation. Proverbs and sayings are important part of the Goan folklore. They reflect the attitude of the people and the entire culture. The Konkani language, the mother tongue of the Goans, has a rich legacy of proverbs known as *oparyo* (idioms) or *mhunnyo* (profound sayings). There are more than hundred proverbs about Goan woman.

A great deal of information in this chapter comes from oral sources. I have interviewed women from various communities and strata of the Goan society—Hindu, Christian and Muslim. The majority of the women I have interviewed were born and brought during the last fifty years of the period under study. Many of the customs are still being followed in Goa. I have participated in some of these customs for the purpose of this work.

Births, marriages and deaths were expensive affairs. Sums beyond their means were spent on such occasions on dowries, food, clothing, ornaments and entertainment. Celebrations at birth, marriages and religious festivals provided a welcome relief to women from the monotony of their lives. They provided opportunity to move out of the house, meet people and disseminate information.

As in rest of India, the birth of girls was not always welcomed. There was marked preference for boys over the girls for reasons discussed earlier in this work, specially in non-Christian communities. Prayers, fasts and rituals were performed and vows were made for the birth of boys. Pilgrimages were undertaken for this purpose, many times even across the border to Gokhand, Kashi, Pandarpur, Tirupati, Banaras and Kanpur. The Christians prayed to various Saints including their patron St. Francis Xavier and visited religious places. This marked preference for boys reflects the dominant social ethos. The birth of the son was welcomed with great rejoicing while the birth of a girl was often met with complete silence. Soon after the delivery the birth was announced with the beating of a copper vessel. (Bragança Pereira 1940, ii:271). In the later period birth of boys was announced with firing of three packs of fire-crackers while those of the girl with two. The naming ceremony among Hindus and the baptism ceremony of Christians boys was celebrated on a large scale.

Nevertheless, despite all prayers and pilgrimages if a girl was born she was not done away with deliberately, as it happened elsewhere in India among certain communities. Apparently, better care was provided for the boys, who often survived diseases. Until the present century there was favourable male sex ratio. Pronounced preference for sons led to poorer feeding and neglect of daughters (Silva Gracias 1994). Girls were breast fed for shorter period than the boys. Boys were given supplementary food earlier and on the whole were better fed. Male children were provided better medical care too. Boys were considered an asset. The following proverb can be cited as an example:

*Cheddo zaloleak ani madd lailoleak bhed na.* (There is no difference between the birth of a boy and planting of a coconut tree ).

The son and coconut tree were considered profitable as they brought income to the family. The male child supplemented the family income through his wages and dowry that eventually brought when he married. The son stayed with his parents and looked after them in old age, while daughters when they married left their parents.

A girl's first menstruation was celebrated publicly by Hindus. The

occasion was celebrated with a big dinner by some, while others distributed sugar and confectioneries to members of the family and friends (ANTT:CGSO-IG 36/23). This was a happy occasion, because it meant that the girl was now a woman; and among the non-Christians she was now ready to go to the home of her husband. As pointed out earlier, Hindu girls were married at the age of seven or eight in the early period of this study. The fact that the custom of celebrating the first menstrual period continued until a few decades ago, points out that the ban issued in 1736 by the Goa Inquisition was not strictly implemented.

Menstruation was an occasion for awe and fear. During her menstrual cycle, the Hindu woman remained segregated from rest of the family. She was considered ritually unclean for a period of five to seven days. Menstruation was viewed as polluting and the activities of women were severely restricted. Particularly taboo were cooking and any kind of religious practices. She was not allowed to touch her belongings and stayed in a separate room during those days. Even the food to be eaten by her was left at a distance and served in separate vessels kept for the purpose. Although it was very unhygienic, a woman was not allowed a bath until her menstrual cycle came to an end. At the end of her menstrual cycle she took a ritual cleansing bath before resuming normal activity. It is possible that the practice was introduced to give a woman some rest from kitchen work and religious practices in those stressful days. A Hindu woman in the past had to prepare for and perform several rituals.

Christian woman of lower class also followed some of kind of restriction during this time. They considered themselves impure and for this reason they did not receive the Holy Eucharist during this period. They too did not bathe until the menstrual cycle was over.

During menstruation Muslim women did not follow all the above restrictions, but they refrained from praying or touching the holy Koran. They were permitted to pray after they had a complete bath between fifth to seventh day. Muslim women had to perform some other cleansing rituals too.

**Amchi, atam tumchi** (She was ours, now she is yours) – Customs and Traditions at the time of Marriage

Numerous customs and rituals were observed at the time of marriage. Some of these customs differed from one community to other, but there

were many common ones. Hindus when converted to Christianity and Islam continued to follow their earlier customs.

Girls in Goa were married very early. Among the Hindus the marriage was consummated sixteenth days after the girl reached puberty which was normally around twelve, hence the proverb:

*Bara, chol ghovache ghora*

(You are twelve, go to the house of your husband)

This custom was followed usually by non-Christians. Among the Ranes marriages were held at slightly higher age. Christian girls were also married early. However, the age of marriage was slightly higher.

Hindu girls rarely remained unmarried by choice. In this community an unmarried daughter after puberty was an embarrassment to the family, so the family tried to arrange a marriage for the daughter at any cost, before she reached puberty. *Vadhalem chedum modlolya gharak* (a grown up daughter in the house is a disgrace). Besides, it was believed that a woman has to be a mother in order to be fulfilled.

Customs and traditions at the time of marriage differed according to the social status, caste and the community to which the girl belonged. Marriage was a long process. In Goa as in other parts of India marriages were arranged by parents, relatives or a middle person known as *raibari*. The girl being young and submissive had no say in the choice of her partner, neither the opportunity to know her future husband before marriage. The feelings and taste of the girls were not considered. During the later period of colonial rule, Christian brides had sometimes the opportunity of talking to their grooms on a few occasions. It was said that:

*Aplya nasiban ghov khavuntço*

(A woman must accept a husband, fate has ordained for her).

Another proverb that shows that the couple had no choice in selecting the marriage partner is shown in this proverb:

*Bail mevlea mhos, patkan ailam sos* (You got a wife like she buffalo, one must suffer the consequence of one's sins). The woman was probably ugly like the buffalo. In Goa, even today large number of marriages are still arranged but the couples have ample opportunities to know each other before marriage.

This does not mean that girls did not fall in love and get married

during the period under review, but it was an exception rather than the rule and that too in certain communities and classes. For instance, the *Mando Sorgu nitoli Go Nirmollu* is about a Christian *sudra* (lower class) girl who marries a Christian Brahmin (higher class) boy. The girl was not only of lower class but ugly and plain. Such matches were not approved of by the society. Normally, marriages were arranged after enquiries were made about the girl's character, caste and the economic position of the groom's family. Often the caste was the main concern. Gips in his work "Jacob e Dulce" describes the prolonged negotiations about the dowry and other matters among the middle class Goan Christians (Costa 1907: 19-22). In this class as well as in the upper class Christian families, ability to play a musical instrument such as a piano or the violin was merely one more accomplishment to claim during marriage negotiations, even though some of these girls had no inclination for music. Inter community marriages were rare particularly among the upper strata.

Girls were judged by the character of their mothers. A popular proverb maintained: *Avoi polleun dhuv vhor, dudh polleun mhos vhor*. (Note the mother's character and choose a bride, similarly buy the buffalo on checking the yield of its milk).

Girls from families with hereditary diseases, especially mental illnesses, leprosy and tuberculosis found it difficult to get husbands. In those days T.B and leprosy were considered highly contagious, besides they were then incurable.

The reputation of the girl was an important consideration, that was the reason why the parents guarded their daughters and got them married early. Girls were expected to be chaste at the time of marriage. They were not allowed to talk to men outside the family, neither were they allowed to go out unchaperoned.

In addition to moral qualities of the girl, the complexion too was important. Fair complexioned girls were in great demand. Fair was considered by many, as beautiful, while dark complexion was considered ugly. Two proverbs are cited here as examples: *Kali bail ghovachi, ghoril bail desachi* (The ugly wife remains faithful due to lack of temptation while a fair complexioned one belongs to the public). It also refers to the temptation a fair complexioned woman excites in men. There is another similar proverb: *Kalem Devak barem, gorem ghovak barem* (God loves the dark one and the husband loves the beautiful one). Everything points to the fact that beauty is synonymous with "fair" here. The fair one had all the advantages. Since it was difficult to arrange

husband for a dark complexioned girl some of these among the Christians remained unmarried, while others joined the convent to become a nun.

It was believed that a fair looking woman could get out of many problems and people were blind to her faults.

*Ieki gori beator khoddi chori* ( Let a woman be fair, this will hide seventy two blemishes). There is another proverb concerning fair looking woman: *Zachi bail gori to nidta aple gharini, zachi bail kali to vhartta paynt zali*. (The one who has fair wife stays at home, the husband of dark looking wife casts his nets elsewhere). A good looking wife keeps her husband interested and happy at home, whereas the husband of dark woman finds it more pleasant to cast his net and trap his catch elsewhere rather have uninteresting time at home. It is said that the husband of good looking wife stays at home since he finds no pleasure outside but with his wife. It also could mean that the husband of a good looking wife need not stray.

Parents were advised to marry the daughter in a superior family and to bring a girl for a daughter-in-law from a lower economic status as can be deduced from the following proverb:

*Aplem vortek duinchem ani khalteak haddchem*

So that their daughter could live well and improve her social position. The idea was not to lower the status of the daughter, at the same time they were advised to bring a daughter-in-law of lower class because such girls would be submissive to the rich in laws and also improve her conditions.

Mothers were anxious to get rid of their daughters in marriage regardless of the age and health of the groom. At times even an old man would do as long as he was rich. The dowry demands of such groom were small this can be gathered from : *Pantçam asurpiyantco ghovlo, kitloso ge, may, tagtalo*. (Husband worth five xerafins, mother, how long will he last).

—*Naka ge, may, Saxthiço-ghav*. (Mother, I do not want a husband from Salcete). This proverb was popular in Bardez (north Goa). Girls from Bardez would sometimes beg their mothers not to arrange husbands from Salcete (south Goa). These girls were probably reluctant to marry in Salcete because of distance, specially at the time when means

of transport and communication were poor. It was believed also that marriages between men and women of these two talukas were not happy ones. Men from Salcete did not have a high opinion of girls from Bardez.

It was not easy to arrange a match for a daughter. Therefore, it was said that those who had daughters did not walk tall (*Chedvankarachi nan sadantç khalti*). They had the heavy responsibility of getting their daughters married. There were several obstacles that the parents had to face.

Marriages were expensive affairs sums beyond the individual's means were spent on such occasions; on dowries, food, clothing, furniture, ornaments, entertainment and gifts to the couple and members of the family. An *alvara* dated 1681 banned excessive expenditure on marriages but the practice continued. Another *alvara* 1729, decreed that the Portuguese and the native Christians could not invite relatives of third degree (Lopes Mendes 1989:38). The parents had to provide heavy dowry for their daughters and meet other demands. This is reflected in the following proverbs: *Eka lagnak bara vighnam* (For one wedding dozen hurdles).

*Eka chedvak kazar karunk bara zutim zharaunk zay*, (To get a daughter married you have to wear out several pairs of slippers). Slippers were and still are the common footwear of the Goans. Often they took the proposal (marriage) to several likely young men, before one accepted.

*Chedvachya ghovak dilem itley thodem* (It is not enough, however, much you may give to the husband of a daughter). This refers to ever increasing dowry demands of the groom who was not satisfied with what he received. The dowry given to the daughter depended on the economic conditions of the parents and demands made by the groom's side. Often debts were incurred to get the daughters married. Dowry demands at times led to conflicts among the families. There are cases when the girls failed to bring the dowry that was demanded, they were harassed and even tortured by the husband and in-laws. It is because of dowry demands that a daughter was considered a burden to the family as is aptly said in the following proverb: *Kazar Karche adim chedum zad, kazar Kartotç god* (The daughter is a burden before marriage, after marriage she is a pleasure).

Due to preference for sons and the fact that the parents had to spend large sums at the time of the marriage, parents did not show great enthusiasm at the daughter's marriage.



*Baie-Kazar, sante-chitt*

(Marriage of a daughter, invitation in the bazaar).

For the marriage of the son invitations were personally given at the house. The proverb indicates that the parents did not show the same enthusiasm at the marriage of daughters.

**Lagnacha Velar**—Customs at a Hindu marriage

Among the Hindus, the father of the girl or a close relative took the proposal of the girl to the boy. Wedding plans were finalized only if the horoscope of the bride and the groom matched and dowry demands were accepted by both parties. Horoscopes were matched for compatibility by a priest known as *bhat*. He had a chart with a number of qualities. At least eighteen of these qualities had to match in order to finalize the marriage plans. In case the horoscopes of the couple matched, then male members of the family would go to the temple for *Prassada* that was to receive the consent and blessings of the God. This was more a formality and some families asked the *Prassada* before taking the proposal to the boy.

A Hindu girl could marry the son of maternal uncle. This combination was encouraged and even expected by the parents. Maternal uncle was given great respect and played an important role at the time of the marriage of his niece. First preference was given to his son. In such case the girl did not have to make too many adjustments in the family but there were other risks involved which were not considered at the time of marriage. This combination was also not uncommon among the Christians, although not always encouraged specially by the Church because of the genetic risks involved in marrying close relatives.

A day before the wedding, the family of the girl sent her trousseau and other things to the house of the groom. Among the upper classes, girls were given dowry in cash and kind. Dowry in kind consisted of copper vessels, silver vessels to be used for religious ceremonies, clothes, needle work, jewellery, furniture and even animals. Traditional jewellery presented to a daughter of the upper strata consisted among other things of four fat bangles (*ghont*), two flat bangles known as *Patli*, four other bangles (*kankanam*), two bangles with intricate patterns (*todde*), *valle* arm bangles, *mangalsutra* — a necklace with black beads and pendant of gold — symbol of married woman. In addition of *mangalsutra* upper class brides were also presented with *moedanchem-gantlem, conthi*,

*mohan-mal sorpoli, chandra-har, moniachi golsori* and other *mals*. Hair decorations consisted among others of intricate patterned *atti, gulab-ful* (rose), *xenvtem, chandli, salcam, surga-olessor, chanfeanchi-atti, kadmim-fulam, pisollin, ghanti-sorpoli, bubdi, carabam*. A Hindu bride was also given the traditional earrings with seven stones. In the early period these earrings were set with pearls but in the present century they were set with diamonds stones. This was probably as result of improvement in the standard of living due to the growth of mining industry, emigration to other parts of India and greater contacts with the rest of the world. A bride of this class was also given a *notha, pili* (nosestud), and toe rings.

Women of lower strata, generally, were given dowry in kind. The gold given to a girl of this class was much less due to economic conditions. In addition, as with the upper classes gifts in gold were presented to the son-in-law at the time of marriage. Dowry was considered as a security for the girl in time of illness, unemployment of the husband or in case of his death.

The time and the day of the marriage was fixed for an auspicious day after consulting an astrologer and the *Bhat*. The Christians did not follow such practices but Christians did not marry in advent and Lenten season.

Sometime before the wedding, the bride was invited by her relatives for a *porcond* (farewell to maidenhood). On this occasion special food was cooked for her and she was presented with a gift.

Some days before the marriage, the Hindu bride had to go through a variety of rituals which prepared her for marriage and acquainted her with the family of the groom. Some of the important rituals are mentioned in this work.

It was a custom for the bride to wear a *chuddo* (glass bangles) along with five married ladies including her mother. The bangles were worn by the bride in uneven number, normally nine in one hand and seven in other. These bangles were of glass and green in colour — Green stood for hope and fertility. The bride wore these bangles to ensure long life for the husband, as glass was believed to have a special protective property. She was supposed to break them only when the husband died. The five other women participating in the ritual wore bangles of different colours. *Vovios* were sang during this ceremony.

This ritual followed by another ritual known as *Deucare* which was performed previous day of the marriage. The ritual was held to seek the blessings of God so that the marriage ceremonies should go smoothly.

The *Datem* ceremony was the one in which the husking paddle was blessed. The husking paddle was used to grind all the spices and pulses, necessary for cooking meals for the entire period during which the marriage rituals took place. Five married women placed their hands on a husking-paddle prayed to gods and goddess for the success of the marriage rituals.

An interesting ceremony was performed on the previous day or at times just before the wedding ceremony. *Tel* is an auspicious ritual. The bride dressed normally a *sari* of yellow colour for this ritual. Women from the family of the groom visited the bride and brought along two containers, one with turmeric and the other one with oil. These ladies applied oil and turmeric with the help of two leaves from a mango tree on the forehead, neck, chest, shoulders arms and legs of the bride. This was done to prepare her for marriage. Oil was rubbed on the head of the bride. Turmeric and oil were believed to make the skin smooth besides turmeric is supposed to prevent infections. Oil on the head acts as a conditioner. When the *tel* ceremony was over, the bride was given a ceremonial bath near a banana tree in the compound of the house (Banana tree stands for fertility since it produces fruit every year). After the *tel* ritual the bride was not permitted to be out of the house until the wedding day. This is the reason why in the present day the ceremony is held few hours before the wedding. A similar ceremony was repeated at the groom's house by some members of the bride's family. Gifts were exchanged on this occasion. Parents were presented with gifts by relatives and friends.

The wedding was usually held at the house of the bride or at a temple which had the deity worshiped by the family of the bride. The wedding ceremony was conducted at the astrological auspicious hour by the *bhat*. As mentioned earlier the maternal uncle played an important role in the marriage ceremony. The bride wore a *sari* usually yellow in colour — the colour of the turmeric. The *sari* was the last gift of the family to an unmarried daughter. The main ceremony was known as *Kanyadan*. This was the moment when the family of the girl gave up their responsibility for the daughter and handed her over to the family of the groom.

Garlands were exchanged and rituals performed by the bride and the groom at the wedding ceremony. The bride was presented a *mangalsutra* (this was the sign that the woman was married) by the groom. She wore two *mangalsutras* on her wedding day—one given by her mother and

other one presented by the husband. Soon after the main wedding ceremony, the bride changed her *sari* and wore a *sari* either red, green or peacock blue in colour. This *sari* was a gift to her from the family of the groom. Hindu married woman always wore a *sari* after her marriage. Before marriage she normally wore a *gagra* (long skirt) and a tight fitting *choli*. She had to wear a kumkum (a red spot) on her forehead and bangles on her arms.

At the fag end of the wedding ceremony the bride performed *Vainam dane*. A ceremony in which the bride distributed five coconuts to five married women for the good health of the groom. The major fear of a married woman was of becoming a widow, therefore, she always prayed for the good health of the husband. A coconut was used in this ceremony, as a coconut was considered an auspicious fruit. The above mentioned customs are still being followed in Goa, particularly among the upper classes.

Rituals did not end with the wedding ceremony. When the bride came for the first time to the house of her husband, several rituals were performed. It was a practice to place at the entrance of the house five mounds of rice and *podd* (measuring container). The bride was asked to kick the container and splash rice around as a sign of prosperity and good luck. This ritual was followed by a lamp ceremony. The mother-in-law handed over a lamp to the bride. The ceremony was performed to initiate the girl as a housewife. A member of the groom's family applied to her *Chandan* (sandalwood). Sandalwood was supposed to prevent infection and had a soothing effect.

The young bride was required to have a great deal of patience to deal with the mother-in-law and members of the joint family of various age group with whom she was going to live. The patience and stamina of the bride was tested during the *Kanjina* ritual. Five vessels (copper) were placed one on top of the other. The larger one on the base and the smaller ones on the top. Over these vessels a coconut and some mango leaves were placed. The bride had to remove carefully each vessel without making any noise and had to place them back in the same position. In one of the vessels, the family kept a gift for the bride usually a ring in gold.

The bride not only adopted her husband's surname but also it was custom to give her new name on the wedding day. Thus, she symbolically took a new identity after marriage. The groom was asked to write the new name of his bride on a plate. This name was selected by the parents of the groom.

A Hindu married woman had to perform *vratas* during the life time of her husband, for his good health and long life. A Hindu man did not perform any rituals for the good health of the wife. Every morning married woman had a bath and prayed to Tulsi (*Ocimum Basilicum*). Tulsi is a plant that Goan Hindus plant in front of their house or in their courtyards. They believe that Lord Vishnu resides in the roots of this plant. The plant has medicinal value too. It was used to cure cough and fevers including malarial fevers (Silva Gracias, 1994). A Hindu woman worshiped Tulsi by placing turmeric and flowers. *Tulsi* was worshiped for the good health of the family.

The wife had to be submissive to the husband. She had to walk behind the husband as a sign of respect and wait on him at the dinner table. Therefore, she did not sit with the husband and other male elders of the family during the meals. The wife was not permitted to call her husband by his name. When referring to him she used the term *amcho* (ours), *amguele, te*, my son's father, the father of so and so, my lord and in case he was a man with a professional course such as doctor, engineer or a professor she would refer to him by that title. This was a sign of respect as usually the husband was much older than the wife. Although today many women of this community are highly educated, still some of them do not call their husbands by their names.

#### Obligations of the Parents of Married Daughter

The parents of the Hindu married girls had to perform rituals and observe several traditions throughout their life. Just before the first monsoons, the parents of the married girl sent to her house *porment* (provisions). In Goa there was scarcity of certain food commodities during the rainy season. They had to be procured well in advance before the monsoons. Provisions sent to the daughter's house consisted of pickles, condiments, *papads*, dry fish, pulses, *vadayo* (made of rice and ash pumpkin) sweets including mango jam and other requirements. It was also a custom to present the son-in-law with an umbrella for the rains. This was one of the ways of earning the good will of the in laws.

During the first monsoons after the marriage, normally in the month of July, the daughter was brought home to the house of her parents to spend a month with them. This was necessary since girls were married very early in life. They had a few opportunities to meet the parents, particularly if they lived far. These young girls often felt home sick and missed their families.

The daughter stayed a month in the house of her parents at the end of which a ceremony was performed known as *Ashadh Phulam*. Relatives and friends from both families were invited for this ceremony. The family of the son-in-law distributed sweets to the guests. Among the upper classes the daughter-in-law was presented with a gift in gold and a *sari*. After this ceremony the young bride was taken back to the house of her husband.

It was a custom to send *ojins* with sweets and fruits to the married daughters on various occasions, particularly for important festivals such as Ganesh Chaturti and Diwali. Along with *ojins* other gifts were sent to the daughter and the son-in-law. The purpose of these gift was to maintain good relations with the in-laws. *Ojins* sent in the first year of marriage were large. *Ojins* contained packets of *xev*, *chivada*, *xencar padde* (savouries), sprouted pulses and variety of sweets like *laddus*, *neuroes*, *kapam* and *dud peddes*. Some of these sweets were distributed among the neighbours, relatives and family friends of the son-in-law. *Ojins* contained also fire-crackers, flowers and fruits both edible and non-edible. Some of the edible and non-edible fruits were used to decorate the place where idol of Lord Ganesh was placed. At the time of Ganesh Chaturti the son-in-law among the upper classes was gifted a *patt* (low sit) with decoration made of silver. The *patt* was used during the *pooja* to the Lord Ganesh. The son-in-law was presented also with ceremonial clothes to be worn during the *pooja* and a gold ornament.

At the time of Diwali the son-in-law was presented with a set of clothes, perfume and another gift in gold. In addition it was also a practice to give a soap for the ritual bath on this day. The purpose of these gifts was to maintain good relationship with the in-laws. Gifts in gold and in form of clothes were also sent to the married daughter.

### Christian Wedding

Christian marriages too were arranged by members of the family, relatives or a *raibari*, but the proposal could come from either side. A number of customs and traditions were followed especially among the lower class. Some of these customs were Hindu customs which continued to be practiced by the Christians, despite the ban imposed on them by the State and the Holy Inquisition. In 1787 one Ana Afonso of Linhares (Sinquerim-Bardez) was accused by the Holy Inquisition of following non-Christian practices on the eve of her wedding (ANTT:CGSO-IG:36/23). Catharina Roiz of the same village was also accused of similar practices. Goan Christians at the time of the wedding, followed also

some Portuguese customs that were either imposed on them or have come down as result of the mingling with the culture of the rulers.

Before finalizing the date of the wedding it was a custom to discuss the dowry demands with the groom and his parents. Dowry was commonly known as *dote* was a kind of security for the girl — material help to start her a new life. Some members of the bride's family accompanied by *raibari* visited the house of the groom to finalize the dowry demands. This visit was made with prior appointment and during the visit various members of the groom's family would be present. Questions about dowry were asked only when negotiation was in progress and there was enough interest on both sides. Prolonged negotiations took place about dowry and other matters regarding the marriage. Many times the question of dowry was responsible for terminating the negotiations. Among the educated families dowry was not always asked but it was expected. There were cases also where no dowry was considered but those were exception rather than the rule.

Dowry demands were put forward by the parents of the groom. Parents of the girl had to provide a long list of goods to get the daughter married. Debts were often incurred to meet these demands. At times these demands led to ill feelings between both sides. In the last decade of the Portuguese rule in Goa, the state helped economically backward girls particularly orphan girls by providing them dowries through *Montepio*.

Some days before the wedding, the bride was invited by her relatives and close friends for *porcond* — to spend the day with them. The bride was bathed with coconut milk to purify her, after which she was dressed in traditional clothes, garlanded and taken around visiting the neighbours of the host. A special lunch was prepared for her with different types of meat and vegetable dishes. The dessert consisted of *batica*, *folles*, *patollio*, *alva*, *jagradas* and *bebinca*. Some of these were sweets made of coconut, flour, jaggery and other ingredients. It varied from class to class and the place.

Banns were read in the Church before the wedding. Banns were formal announcement of intention to get married. These were read for three consecutive Sundays in the Church where the groom and the bride lived. The banns were read to enable the people to raise any objection (in case they had one) against the marriage. After the first bann was read the Christian bride of lower class wore a *chuddo*. Christian brides wore about 30 glass bangles (this custom is still followed in Goa)—fifteen bangles in each hand. The bangles were either green or of mixed colours.

*Chuddo* was worn at the house of maternal uncle. A bangleseller (*kakoncar*) was brought home for the purpose. During the ritual relatives and other women friends sang special songs seeking blessings and happiness for the bride. *Chuddo* of mixed colours was replaced by bangles red in colour after the marriage. Red was considered an auspicious colour which stood for passion and growth. A Christian married woman like her Hindu counterpart was expected to wear bangles during the life time of the husband.

A day or two before the wedding the bride and the groom were groomed for the coming wedding. A ceremony similar to *tel* was performed. This was known as *ros* (juice). The bride was smeared with turmeric paste, coconut milk, rice flour and leaves of abolim, to make the skin smooth, fair (ANTT:CGSO-IG:36/23) and prepare the bride for marriage. In 1736, the practice was baned by the Holy Inquisition.

*Dennem* or *dote* (dowry) was sent to the house of the groom a day before the wedding. The trousseau which varied from class to class consisted of clothes and jewellery. In the early period among the upper classes a *fator* set was also included in the jewellery. It was a custom to send a small image of baby Jesus in the trousseau. The bride was provided with some furniture. The main piece of furniture was a *armario* (wardrobe). Inscribed on the wardrobe was the name of the bride and the date of the marriage. Lower class brides were also given copper vessels. In the early period of this study, it was a practice to carry betel and areca nut along with the dowry. The practice was banned by the Holy Inquisition in 1736. Among the lower classes, dowry was given only in kind. The trousseau was displayed in the house of the bride before it was sent to the house of the groom. Crackers were fired on this occasion to announce the arrival of the *dote* to the house of the groom. Neighbours and friends were invited to have a look at the trousseau.

On this occasion the family of the bride sent to the house of the groom a *Ojem* (basket) with fruits such as bananas variety of sweets mainly *balos* (cakes made of wheat, coconut and jagegry) *doce*—a sweet made of gram flour, sugar and coconut. The number of *Ojins* (baskets) sent depended on the economic conditions of the bride's family, custom of the place and demands of the bridegroom's family. *Ojins* were sent soon after the engagement, a day before marriage, important festivals and after the first confinement. This basket of sweets had significance for both the families. It helped to earn the good will of the groom's family and ironed out any difficulty that a girl may encounter in adjusting to the new family. Besides, sweets were meant to convey the good



news of the event to friends, neighbours and relatives. Sweets were distributed to relatives, neighbours and friends. Exchange of *saguates* at the time of weddings was banned by a decree issued by Holy Inquisition in 1736. (ANTT: CGSO-IG:36/23).

Brides from upper classes were given dowry in kind and cash. In the early period of this study brides were given only dowry in kind but in course of time dowry in cash was added. This was the root cause of conflicts between the two families. Girls who were given dowry in cash were often asked to give up their rights to the family property.

A few days before the marriage the *bikrem-jevonn* was held—a meal on the floor on big mats in the house of both the bride and the groom, for the poor of the village. Neighbours and friends living nearby were also invited to participate in the meal. Suitable verses known as *zotis* were sung on this occasion.

The bride was not allowed to see the groom a day before the marriage. It was feared that such a meeting would bring misfortune to the couple.

Christian brides in early period of the Portuguese rule married in *hol*. Some women of upper strata wore *Fota-kimao* after the Church ceremony. *Fota* was a *baju* worn for festive occasions. It was made of red velvet, damask or satin with black border and embroidered with gold thread. The accessories used along with *Fota* consisted of a variety of jewellery worn on head, ears, neck and arms. The classical *fator* set was a part of this apparel. The set consisted of green stone in the middle with two corals on either side held by double chains. Together with the *fator* set, the women wore a set with five intricate chains known as *conti* and other chains. On their arms they wore bangles such as *nille* with matching *carap* on the ears. They also wore a number of small chains from the ear to the head, combs made of gold, silver or tortoise shell and rings in every finger.

During the later period of Portuguese rule, majority of Christian women married in western style clothes, as result of Portuguese influence. They wore white gowns made of silk, lace, damask or satin—white was symbol of virginity and purity. The gown was a gift of the groom to the bride. The gown could be tailored either in the house of the groom or the bride. It was a practice to give the tailor a gift in cash soon after he started cutting the material to make the dress. When the dress was ready it was sent to the house of the groom.

On the wedding day the sister or sister-in-law of the groom or any other close female relative took the dress to the house of the bride, along

with the accessories including in many instances jewellery presented by the groom to the bride. In Salcete among the upper classes, the groom presented to his bride a gold set—a necklace, earrings, bracelet and ring. The set was worn by the bride on her wedding day. Among the lower classes the parents of the bride gave to the daughter all the jewellery to be worn on the wedding day. The arrival of the wedding dress was announced with firing of crackers. Until the first four decades of the present century, bridal clothes were sent among the upper classes in a *machila* or *dolim*. This was the mode of transport used also to bring the bride to go to the Church. When the bride stayed within the walking distance from the Church, she arrived with her party under a colourful *sotri* (umbrella) red in colour, held over the head by a peasant woman who was generously tipped. Together with the wedding gown another dress was tailored. The dress known as *saddo* was to be worn by the bride of lower strata at home after the wedding. *Saddo* was red in colour and made usually of *chita*.

Before leaving for the Church, both the bride as well as the groom received blessings from the various members of the family. Blessings were given first by the parents, grandparents, siblings followed by other close elderly relatives and neighbours. It was a custom in the villages to sing special songs in Konkani known as *vovios*. (ANTT:CGSO-IG:36/23). *Vovios* were improvised songs sung in praise of the bridal couple, their parents, relatives and important guests. They were sung by women who were close relatives or friends of the couple.

Along with the blessings the bride and the groom were presented with gifts in cash by various members of the family, family friends and neighbours. The wedding was held at the place of the groom. The royal *alvara* of 1729 forbade dances for wedding during the lenten season. (ANTT:CGSO-IG:38/15).

#### Customs and Tradition at Nikha

As in other communities marriages among the Muslims too were arranged by parents, relatives or a *raibari*. The proposal for marriage was sent by the boy's family to the parents of the girl. The caste of the prospective groom and the bride was important factor to be considered. Muslims in Goa were divided in three groups based on religion: Sayed, Sheik and Khan. A boy of higher class could marry a girl of lower class but not vice-versa.

Unlike the other communities in Goa, Muslim girls were not pro-

vided dowry by their parents. Nevertheless, there was an exchange of gifts between both the parties. The groom had to give *Meher* to the bride either at the time of marriage or later in form of gold or cash. The *Meher* given by the groom was fixed by the girl's family. This was a kind of security for the wife since Muslim men could easily divorce the wife by pronouncing the word *talaq* three times for a period of time and in the presence of witness. The *Meher* was usually small since majority of Muslims in Goa were poor.

Muslim brides had to go through the *ros* ceremony too. A ritual equivalent to Hindu *tel* and Christian *ros*. *Mehendi* ceremony was also held two days before the wedding. It was compulsory for every bride to have their nose pierced before the marriage. Muslim brides married either in *sari* with *choli* or a dress worn over pants and a *dupatta*. The clothes and jewellery worn by the Muslim bride on her wedding day were presented to her by the groom. Marriage was performed at the house of the bride and the celebration lasted for 3-4 days.

#### Role of the Young Bride

Life was not easy for the young married girl at her new home. The girl had to adjust to her husband and various members of the family. Young couples in those days lived in a joint family. The wife had to be submissive and dependent on her husband. There are several proverbs projecting this aspect including:

##### *Dadlo bayle adlo*

(Probably this proverb refers to the creation of Adam before Eve. It is a proverb used by the Christians). Man being the dominating partner, it was not unusual for him (particularly among the poorer classes) to beat the wife. In fact, the man considered it his right to beat the wife. It was even encouraged by tradition as can be seen from following:

##### *Ghovan baylek marlyar demand na*

(In case the husband beat the wife she has no right to complain.)

##### *Pavsan bhizlem ani ghovan marlem sarkem.*

(Getting wet in the rain is same as being beaten by the husband). It is both natural and easily back to normal. It was believed that it left no permanent scars. The wife had no right to complain. She suffered in silence. If the wife was ever to show any protest—it was something looked askance at.

Generally, the husband was considered superior to the wife but there were times when the wife had the upper hand over the husband as can be seen from the following proverbs:

*Dhakteli mogachi, pun ghovachem utar na sostali*

(The little wife is loving, but she will not tolerate the domineering ways of the husband.) This saying shows surprise that the little woman is not tolerant of the husband's lapses. The male is flummoxed.

*Ghova poros bail motti, musol gheun dhanvta fatthi*

(The wife takes the upper hand, she runs after him with a pestel).

Although the husband was considered superior to the wife, the wife was expected to manage the affairs of the home as reflected in the proverb:

*Ghovan zoddlen, baylen sambhallem, ghar tharlem*

(The wife is the key of the house)

There are many instances when the wife being stronger than the husband would beat him during their fights, the husband used to feel ashamed and tried to hide this fact from the neighbours. He considered it an insult to his manhood:

*Ghe go, ghe go*

(Take it, take it), the husband would shout when he was being beaten by his wife to make the neighbours think that it was him who was beating the wife. *Go* means she in Konkani.

A married woman had to be submissive not only to the husband but to the various members of her husband's family:

*Kazar zalo, dha zannanch pangik sam.*

(One who marries is under the sway of many).

The daughter-in-law had to remain submissive to her mother-in-law – *Sunechi satya mayche khala*. (The daughter-in-law is under the sway of the mother-in-law).

The relationship between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law were not always cordial leading to jealousy and hatred. There are quite

a few proverbs about the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship. *Bailechi khoxi poili, kazar zauchi, dusri veggli sorchi, tisri bhurgem ball zaunchi.* (The desire of a woman is to get married first, then get separated from the mother-in-law and to have children).

It was common for a daughter-in-law and mother-in-law to disagree. Their fights have been compared to the one between a dog and a cat — *Mayu-sunechem jinem, zot sunya-mazrachem.*

Another proverb says that a dog is better than a daughter in law (*Sunem hoy, pun sun nay*) of course from mother-in-law's point of view.

*Maincheo kornneo xinkear, sunecheo kornneo tinttear.* (The acts of the mother-in-law are hidden in the kitchen sink, the defects of the daughter-in-law are published in the market). *Sunarddem, chamarddem, ani mharddem sarkem.* (The daughter-in-law, the shoe maker's wife and mahar's wife are the same.) The daughter-in-law in upper class family was equated sometimes by the mother-in-law to low caste women. This proverb was quoted when a mother-in-law ill treated the daughter-in-law and wanted to offend her.

There is another that compares the treatment given by the mother in law to her own daughter and to the daughter-in-law. *Dhuvék tel amasnao aniquilar a divalechi divalek* (Daughter's hair was oiled (groomed) from new moon to the full moon, while the hair of the daughter-in-law was oiled only on festive occasions.). The mother took better care of her daughter than her daughter-in-law. In Goa, it is a custom to use coconut oil for the hair as a conditioner and to keep it black.

The ill treatment given by the mother-in-law led the daughter-in-law to complain to her family and friends about her mother-in-law as can be seen from the following proverb :

*Hadli sun kalle gharache gun.* (The moment you get a daughter-in-law all the secrets of the husband's family are out). It was considered a blessing not to have a mother-in-law or a sister-in-law in the house:

*Nonnond, na zav, susegad rav.*

(You have no husband's sister, nor husband's brother's wife, live happily after) . This is said to a girl on her wedding day who has no in laws in the house.

Women, mainly the ones from lower strata had to do all the household work, take care of the husband and other members of the family. In addition, she had to collect wood for fuel, cowdung for manure and performed several tasks in the fields. Women of lower strata worked

also as wet nurses, *daias*, (midwives) and *aias*, (nannies). Hence the following proverb:

*Dublyach marum naye bail, giresthitço marum naye ghov.*

(Dalgado 1922:67) (The wife of the poor should not die before him neither the husband of a rich woman).

The proverb speaks of problems created by such situation. Among the poor, the man would be helpless without the wife to cook, take care of his needs and help in performing several tasks. A rich woman who has always been pampered in the house would find it difficult to look after the family affairs and property.

Husbands were normally very demanding, specially at the times of illness, their expectations of what a wife could do never seemed to satisfy them:

*Garv padlyar kadhumyeta, pun ghov padlyar kadhum nazo* (It is easier to look after a village rather than a sick husband).

The fidelity of the wife was many times questioned, specially when the man worked away from home for long stretches of time. Goan Christians in the last two centuries of the Portuguese rule migrated in large number to Metropolitan cities of British India and to Africa. They returned home after a prolonged absence. They normally left behind their young wives. What happened to many of them is reflected in the following proverbs:

*Ieka poteant dnt were: Ganesh.*

(You cannot keep two swords in the same sheath. One wife cannot have two husbands).

*Man zano pap, may zano lankratço bap*

(The conscience knows the sin and the mother knows the father of the son) or *Kharkasa ghovatchi bail xindal* (The wife of a jealous man is immoral).

*Ghovache pathir, miryam vati*

(Pepper is ground on the back of the husband) It means that in the absence of the husband the wife committed many irregularities. When the husband turned his back the wife had a field day.

#### Traditions at the Time of Birth

A Konkani proverb says that the wife who has a husband is always pregnant (*Ghovachi bail, sadantc garbhest*). In Goa married women were

pregnant during the great part of their lives. Child bearing was a difficult process in Goa as elsewhere in South-East Asia due to lack of medical facilities and hygiene before, during and after the delivery. This was responsible for high mortality rate among women in Goa. Antenatal care did not exist in Goa. Furthermore, most girls married early, before they completed their growth. Poor body built and stature were major cause of obstetric risks.

Women had large families, specially among the economically backward class. In healthy villages the average number of births to each marriage was 6 to 8 children and in unhealthy areas the average number of births to each marriage was 2 to 4 children. There were times when a woman would give birth between eleven to fourteenth children. Therefore, it was not surprising that she spent a great part of her life giving birth to children. It was considered her duty to have children.

Infant mortality is one of the factors that contributed to large families. Women had children as many as "God wills". However, they followed sometimes the natural methods. In Goa and the rest of India there was the widespread practice of extending breast feeding till the infant was 36 months old. This practice was reinforced by Hindu custom that required abstinence from or at least limitation of sexual intercourse during the period of lactation. Similar regulations existed at the time of religious festivals. Hindus were prohibited to have sexual relations on the anniversary day of the dead parents, nights previous to the anniversary day of the dead parents, in the day time, at sunset, midnight and during an eclipse. The poor health and nutritional conditions must have had a pronounced effect on fertility.

Several rituals and ceremonies were performed among the Goans and particularly among Hindu women before and after the delivery, mainly during the first pregnancy.

The pregnant woman was advised to refrain from strenuous work from the time the pregnancy was confirmed. She was permitted only light work. Great care was taken to keep her segregated from all influences likely to distress her feelings. The duration of eclipse of the sun was for her a period of inactivity. This was meant to prevent any disfigurement to the child. She was not allowed to visit or see a dead body as it was believed it would bring her bad luck.

Great care was taken to see that the pregnant woman did not eat food that were regarded as possibly harmful to the baby. She was given special delicacies. A major concern was to shield the expectant woman and

her unborn child from malevolent magic and spirits. Therefore, she was encouraged to remain at home as much as possible.

In the fifth month of the first pregnancy a ceremony known as *Fulam* was performed among the Hindus. The expectant mother was dressed in a *sari* and *choli* green in colour and she also wore glass bangles of the same colour. Her head was covered with flowers and she was adorned with jewellery. Women relatives and friends were invited for this ceremony. Men did not attend the ceremony. The expectant mother was given a gift in gold by her in laws. After the ceremony, the girl was taken to the home of her parents for the delivery. It was custom among the Goan parents to take the daughter home well in advance for the first delivery. *Phulam* was again performed at the house of her parents. The pregnant woman among the upper classes was offered a gift in gold by her parents. The purpose was to keep the pregnant woman cheerful and happy. She would return to the home of her husband about two months after the delivery.

The Hindus followed another custom in the 6th month of the first pregnancy. This ceremony was known as *Againim*. In this ceremony gifts were exchanged. Gifts were offered to the son-in-law and the daughter-in-law.

Among the masses a *prima gravida* was bled in the sixth or seventh month of her pregnancy. Apparently, to avoid high blood pressure. This practice of bleeding weakened the pregnant woman.

Prayers and offerings were made for the safe delivery by close members of the family, normally by husband, mother, or mother-in-law. Hindus resorted to various rituals. Christians besides seeking help of their saints resorted also to *ritos gentílicos* – non-Christian rituals. (ANTT: CGSO-IG :33).

Deliveries during the major part of the colonial period in Goa were performed at home by a *dai* due to lack of hospital facilities. Even when hospitals were established in Old Conquests, majority of women preferred to have their deliveries at home. Probably, because they were not used to the idea of having a baby away from home and due to their economic conditions. In New Conquests lack of medical facilities, transport facilities and poverty prevented women in need to seek the help of trained doctors.

The *dai* had no formal training. It was a hereditary skill or lack of skill that was greatly responsible for high infant mortality. The *dai* had little knowledge of hygiene and even less of obstetric science. She was illiterate usually middle aged or old and her only qualification was her



experience. Unlike other healers she was of low caste, because among Hindus everything associated with confinement and to an extent with pregnancy was considered unclean. *Dais* many times performed superstitious rites at the time of delivery (ANIT: CGSO -IG-33/19). For instance in 1785 a *dai* from Choraó was found guilty of practising superstitious rites during deliveries by the Holy Inquisition. The *dai* was paid in cash and kind. She was paid extra if the baby was a boy.

The room used for deliveries was dimly lit, ill ventilated and away from family quarters. The child birth among the Hindus was looked upon as unclean and the woman treated as an outcast. When the labour began the prospective mother was suddenly separated from others. Cleanliness in the room was considered out of place. Windows and doors were closed to prevent fresh air. Dirty clothes were used during the delivery.

Deliveries were performed either on a chamber pot or on two chairs placed in such a manner that they resembled a chamber pot. This practice was followed even fifty years ago (Silva Gracias 1994). The child was received in a *sup* (winnowing fan). The umbilical stump was covered with a paste made of pepper and bandaged with cloth. Through this bandage hot oil was poured daily on the navel.

To bring the mother's uterus to its original position, the mother was placed on a mat or bed. The *dai* would press the mother's stomach with the sole of her foot. At the same time she would try to raise the mother with her hands.

The penknife used to cut the umbilical cord was kept under a pillow of the child till the sixth day of the birth. Similar iron material was placed under mother's pillow to prevent misfortune to the mother and the child.

As already said earlier the birth of the son was welcomed with great rejoicing. A girl born after three boys was known as *tickli* and she was considered a bad omen, as it was believed she brought bad luck to her parents and her husband. A girl born after a *tickli* was known as *niclli*. She too was considered a bad omen as it was believed that she would cause untimely death in her husband's family. Therefore, it was difficult to arrange husbands for such girls.

Among the Hindus when a child was born as a thanksgiving, the head of the family offered coconut and sugar to the family deity and the parents. Relatives of the mother placed areca, betel and a coin near *Rui*. They removed a leaf from the tree and placed it on the forehead of the mother.

The mother of the baby was fed with a cake made of flour and jaggery in the first three days, probably to give her strength.

During the first six days after the delivery the new mother and the child were in an especially great state of pollution. This was because it was believed that after the delivery the woman bled nine months menstrual blood. Therefore, she was not allowed to have a complete bath during the first six days. She could have bath from the neck downwards. This was probably because she was weak to go out to have a bath near the well which was at the back of the house. In addition, it was believed that head bath during this time could be responsible for tetanus, convulsions, cold and other health problems. Some leaves were boiled in water to prevent infection. However, in some communities, head bath was permitted on the third day of the delivery.

A ceremonial ritual *sotvi* was observed on the sixth day after the birth of the child. The purpose was to drive away evil spirits, bring luck to the new born and to prevent tetanus. Seven types of vegetables cooked with coconut were distributed to seven houses. Flakes of garlic were tied around the wrist of the child. The family did not consume water from their house well. The whole family kept vigil on the night of the fifth and sixth day. They spent the night singing and playing while they waited the visit of Dame Luck and Dame Fortune. It was believed that they visited the new child on this night. For this reason, the room of the child was rearranged. Close to the mother a mound of rice was arranged, and a vessel with cereal placed over it. The vessel was closed with a coconut and flowers of a shrub known as *potcoli* (*Ixora Coccimia*). The vessel represented goddess *Sotvi* and to her fruits and sacrifices were offered. These gifts were taken away by the *dai*. *Sotvi* was a custom followed even by Christians, despite repeated decrees both from the State and the Church against the custom.

As the family waited for the Dame Luck/Fortune, the area from the mother's bed to the front door was sprinkled with flakes of garlicks, mustard seeds and grains. The natives believed that both Luck and Fortune competed with each other on this night to be the first to enter the room. Condiments were sprinkled to keep one of them busy collecting the grains while the other, usually Dame Luck, gave luck to the child and disappeared. Some people fumigated the house with gunpowdered and covered the child with black cloth, possibly to prevent tetanus and bad luck. In a joint family when this ceremony was performed, it was a tradition among the female relatives with children (who had not started teething) to stay away from the house for a period of 10 days. They

stayed at the mother's place. This was followed so that the evil spirit that was repelled from the new mother did not enter the mouth of the child (who had no teeth to obstruct the entry).

For a period of ten days after the delivery the mother was isolated in a room. She was allowed to have only one woman for company. This practice was followed because the Hindus considered such women as polluting and also probably to prevent infection to the woman.

First eleven days after the delivery were regarded impure and therefore a woman who delivered a child was banned from participating in religious ceremony. It was believed that if she participated in such ceremony she transferred her impurities to the family and community, leading to misfortune or disease.

Another interesting custom *Pancha-gavia* was performed on the eleventh day after the delivery among the Hindus. *Pancha* meaning five and *gavia* meaning cow. The five secretions and excretion of the cow *duda* (milk), *lounim* (butter), *tac* (cream of milk), *chene* (cowdung), and *muta* (urine) were mixed together and given to the mother of the new born child.

A tradition was followed even among cultured people to decorate the door of the house of the newly born child with *marvel* (*Andropogon Annulatus*). It was meant to drive away evil spirits. Possibly, it was an antiseptic.

On the 12th day the naming ceremony of the child was performed. The mother and other women of the family played an important role. The mother rocked the cradle on and off. Rice, coconut and a piece of cloth for a blouse was placed on the lap of a married woman. After this ritual was over, the same married woman would announce the name of the child.

A sweet made of rice, coconut and milk was prepared for the ceremony performed on 20th day after the delivery. The *dai* took seven spoons one at a time, and waived it over the head of the mother and the child. At the end of the ceremony a small quantity of this sweet was kept in the place where the mother had her bath during the first seven days. The mother and the child were given oil massage for the period of a month.

Finally, the postpartum pollution period ended about forty days after birth. The last vestige of ritual birth pollution was removed in a ceremonial bath in which seven types of flowers were boiled. After this ceremonial bath, the woman was ready to resume her normal life. According to the custom women were not permitted to go out of the house for

forty days after the delivery. In spite of a episcopal decree of 1784, Christian women continued to follow the practice. The custom was also followed by the Jews. The episcopal decree of 1784 advised Parish priest to convince such women to go to the Church before forty days. On the fortieth day Christian mother and the child visited the Church. Women had to bath near a well for two months after delivery.

Failing to conceive was regarded as a feminine defect. At times such wife was replaced among the non-Christians. Bareness was sometimes seen as a punishment for sins committed in a past life. Husbands were generally not blamed. In the early centuries of this period some Hindu women of upper strata in order to be able to conceive went around the pipal tree and those of lower strata danced the *fugadi*. They resorted also to various other superstitious rites to conceive (ANTT: CGSO-IG: 33). The glance of a barren woman was feared as it was assumed that she might bring evil to other people's children.

#### **Hindu Women and Major Festivals**

Religion played an important role on the lives of Goan women of all communities. Unlike Christian and Muslim counterparts Hindu married women played a major and active role during the religious festivals. She was involved not only in cooking and preparing sweets but performed also rituals. Some of these rituals were restricted to and conducted by women. In Goa, the Hindus celebrated a number of festivals, among these the most important were: Ganesh Chaturthi which in Konkani language is known as *Chovoth*, Diwali, and *Guddi Padva*.

#### **Chovoth (Ganesh Chaturthi)**

Ganesh Chaturthi is a festival celebrated in honour of Lord Ganesh, one of the sons of Lord Shiva and his wife Parvati. This festival was usually held in the month of August or September just before the harvest season.

A Hindu woman began preparations for this festival a month in advance with some religious rituals and fasts. This was the busiest season for Hindu women in Goa. It was her responsibility to prepare, well in advance sweets and other foodstuff which were offered to Lord Ganesh and were sent to married daughters of the family as well as to friends. The main traditional sweets prepared on this occasion are: *Neureos*, *laddus*, *chakli*, *chuda*, *sev* and *shanker padius*. As it was done in every-

day life, the woman had to bathe before entering the kitchen to cook. She cooked a variety of vegetarian food without onion and garlic for the festival. Garlic and onions were not used in the food cooked for religious functions. The food before it was served to the family was offered to the deity.

Traditionally, women wore a new *sari*, preferably of silk for the occasion. Women of lower strata of the society danced the *fugddi* in front of the idol of Lord Ganesh.

Ganesh Chaturti was also a time for socializing for the women. Various members of family returned to their ancestral home during this season from different places. Women exchanged news and compared notes. In the evening they visited their neighbours and relatives living closeby and payed homage to their Lord Ganesh.

The festival was not only for socializing and cooking for women — it was a time for renewal of their loyalty to their husbands through rituals. The most important ceremony performed by the housewife on this day was *Gauri Pooja*. This ritual was performed only by married women. Gauri is the other name of Parvati, the mother of Lord Ganesh. According to legend Parvati who was then in love with Shiva observed a fast to invoke the blessings of God to be able to marry Shiva. God granted her wish. Eventually, when Parvati married him, she fasted every year as thanksgiving for the gift of desired husband. *Gauri Pooja* was also performed to ask God good health for the husband.

#### **Diwali—the Festival of Lights**

*Diwali*, the festival of light was celebrated soon after harvest season. The festival was celebrated in the month of October or November depending upon the Hindu calendar. Lamps were lit all over the house and around — in front of the *tulsi* plant which occupied an important place in the Hindu household and in the cowshed (Hindus worship the cow). On this day, early in the morning the family had a ceremonial bath. The wife applied oil to the husband and male children to smoothen their skin. Possibly, because the festival was celebrated in the cold season when the skin was usually dry. This was a service that the wife performed to the men folk of the house on whom she was dependent. This was also her way to show her appreciation and affection for the husband. The oil had to be applied evenly to every part of the body as it was feared that any part that remained uncovered by oil may turn black, thus disfiguring the person.

The wife bathed the husband after massaging him with a paste known as *vatane* made of some tender seeds, coconut shavings and turmeric powder. The purpose was to make the body smooth and healthy. The water for this ceremonial bath was boiled in very large copper container, decorated with garlands of marigolds ( flowers of the season ), mango leaves and a bitter gourd. After bathing the husband, the wife would bathe the male children. This was followed by prayers. For this festival women wore their best clothes (usually new) and jewellery.

It was a tradition for the wife to cook on this day five variety of puffed rice in addition to other dishes. These five dishes were first offered to God on a banana leaf. Hindus eat on banana leaf on religious occasions. This was followed by another ritual, that the wife performed for her husband. A plate containing incense, five different leaves, areka nut and money was waved over the husband. The husband presented the wife with a gift in gold or cash and clothes depending upon the socio-economic status of the family.

#### **Practices on the Death of the Husband**

The role of a married woman changed drastically the moment she became a widow. She would lose whatever status she enjoyed in the society. Therefore, many husbands remarked: *Bhieun choltam, bailechim kanknam rakhtam* ( I live cautiously, I take care of the bangles of my wife).

It was a custom among women of all communities to cry and shout when the husband died. Hindu women fasted during the period the corpse was in the house. Women of this community were not permitted to attend the funeral ceremony at the crematorium.

Christian women of lower classes wore their best coloured clothes and gold ornaments on the funeral day of the husband. This custom was probably followed because a Christian widow had to mourn the death of her husband by wearing black for the rest of her life.

Following the death of her husband, a Hindu widow was stripped off her jewellery and hair. A barber shaved her hair — she became a *Bodki* — *bodki* was a generic name for Hindu widow. The widow was completely disfigured not to attract the attention of other men. Tradition demanded that she should break her glass bangles, remove the *mangalsutra* and wear either red or white coloured *sari*. Several other restrictions were imposed on a Hindu widow. A *Bodki* was expected to live a simple secluded life—praying and fasting. A widow was forbidden

from chewing betel. In some families she did work of a servant. The miseries of widowhood were such that a widow preferred often to die on the funeral pyre of her husband as relief against the cruel world.

Apart from her disfigurement and humiliation, the widow was looked upon with suspicion. Believed to possess malignant powers a *bodki* was considered unpropitious. Therefore, she was held responsible for all the misfortunes in the family and the place where she lived. Consequently, she was banned from attending auspicious occasions — *Rand bail konxyant, ayav bail munxyant* (A widow in a corner, a married woman among the people). She was also not permitted to perform rituals.

Christian and Muslim women too broke their glass bangles. This was a Hindu custom practised by Christians and Muslims. It was a tradition among Christian widows not to wear jewellery and mainly earrings for the rest of their lives.

*Saptapadi* (taking of seven steps in marriage) must happen only once in a Hindu woman's life. Therefore, she did not remarry even though permitted by law. However, a man among the Hindus was entitled to remarry even during the life time of his wife in order to get him a son. Christian men quite often married after the death of their wives. For this reason, the pain caused by the death of the wife was compared to the pain caused by banging of the elbow, while the death of the husband was felt deeply specially because it left the wife in a pitiful state. Goan men were discouraged from marrying widows as it was believed that they brought misfortune:

*Randek ghov tenklo, tatço modlo donko*

(The husband touched the wife who was earlier a widow and he broke his leg). This proverb was mainly used among the Christians, since Hindu widows were forbidden to remarry. Even among the Christians, the vestige of opinion that widows were unlucky lingered.

The major fear of a woman was to become a widow. Hindu married women performed complex rituals particularly *poojas* once or twice a week to secure good health and prosperity for their husbands as well as good health for their children. One does not find married men performing any such rituals for the good health of their wives.

When a woman died at the time of delivery or 10 days after the ceremony of *pancha gavia* several rituals were performed. These rituals were performed so that the woman did not change (transform) herself into a *Xetan*, who was likely to disturb the peace of the family. These

rituals were barbaric. It consisted in cutting the veins of the upper and lower organ of the woman and fixing a nail of wood on the head and closing all openings in the body with wooden pieces. The veins and arteries were cut so that the woman did not return home, a nail was fixed *para nao aniquilar a alma*, they closed the opening so that xetan that was in the body did not move out.

### Some Other Roles of Goan Women

#### *Freiras*

Hindu women rarely remained unmarried by choice. Some Christian women did not marry. They joined a religious congregation to become a nun or remained spinster for life. A woman who joined a convent renounced material life and took three fold vows of chastity, obedience and poverty. Young Goan women joined a religious congregation for several reasons. The most important factor was vocation to religion. Women who joined the convent were at times accused of doing so to improve their status. This applied to women of lower classes. Lack of dowry, unhappiness and rejection by the loved one were the other factors, Goan girls were accused for joining a convent. Goan Christian parents encouraged at least one daughter to join the convent. In some families it was a tradition and status symbol to have a nun in the family.

#### *Beatas*

Several factors were responsible for young Christian girls to remain spinsters at home for life. Lack of suitable partners, dowry problems, lack of good looks, physical defects and too much expectations on the part of the parents can be considered as some of the causes. In present century the emigration of men to far away countries could also have contributed for girls to remain spinsters. Certain hereditary diseases including mental diseases and the caste system also played a role. Girls who could not find husbands within their caste remained often unmarried.

Sometimes girls of upper strata were kept unmarried because the family liked to keep its wealth as intact as possible within the family. Furthermore, in the upper class Goan families normally only the eldest son married, the remaining sons were forced to remain unmarried and one or two were sent to the seminary to be trained as priests. Sons were influenced to remain bachelors not divide the family property.

Unmarried girls of upper and middle strata hardly had options. Most



of them spent their time in Church activities — they felt the need to dedicate their feelings to someone. They dedicated themselves to religion — praying, conducting prayers for the faithful, cleaning and decorating the Church. Some of them prepared confectioneries to the priests. These women were known as *beatas*. At home they tried to dominate their brothers and their families and looked after the family properties.

*Camponesas, Peixeiras and Criadas*

Women supplemented the family income by working in the fields alongside with their husbands. Agriculture was the main occupation of the people in rural areas. Among the cultivators *camponesas* (female farm hand) provided seasonal labour and played a distinctive role in both production and distribution. There was seasonal emigration of Goan women from early twentieth century at the time of harvesting and early July. The harvesting of crops was given out to teams of seasonal workers on contracts. Seasonal emigrants did not cross the boundaries of Goa. They travelled around the villages in small groups, returning again to their home base after a span of few weeks to a whole season.

In coastal areas of Goa, women helped their male family members in fishing activities. These *nustemkans* or *peixeiras* as they were known sold fish at the *tinto* or went around selling fish from house to house. Some other women went around selling vegetables from house to house or at the market.

*Criadas* (domestic servants) normally lived in the houses of their employers. This was the most exploited class in the Goan society who had no fixed hours of work and specified tasks. They performed all kinds of tasks from cooking to carrying errands. At times they played the role of a nurse to the sick members of the family they worked, companion to the old and nannies to the children. Domestic help in Goa as in Portugal were poorly remunerated. The plight of Goan domestic help was worse if they happened to be employed in the house of their *batcar* (landlord). They were paid no salary in the house of the landlord but provided only with poor quality food and some clothes. The kitchen was the place where they slept on a thin mat. Provisions for the health care were unknown. The work done by *criadas* was normally not appreciated.

Consequently, many *criadas* migrated to British India and particularly to Bombay to work for British and Parsi families. The service conditions in these places were much better than in Goa. The emigra-

tion of women of lower strata was responsible for scarcity of domestic help in Goa as early as 1930's.

#### *Poskem*

Goan families of upper and middle strata sometimes "adopted" a child. Adoption was permissible only to Hindus according to their *Codigo de Usos e Costumes*. Hindus could adopt a male child in case they had no issue, from among their relations. Christians were not permitted to adopt a child as per the general laws of the land to which they were subject yet they "adopted" children in Goa. Majority of adopted children were girls. Christians families adopted children for several reasons. At time the *adopted child* would be the illegitimate child of one of the family members.

Some families gave the adopted children the same treatment they would give to their natural children. Generally, the conditions of the adopted girls were not always good—they enjoyed no status in the society and were looked down upon. In most families adopted girls were made to work in the house as servants. They were loyal and dedicated to the family. They worked like slaves but rarely their work was rewarded suitably. *Poskems* received no salary for their work neither they had any right for the immovable properties of their adopted parents. Most of them were kept unmarried in the house of their adopted parents. They looked after their parents specially in their old age with great care and affection.

#### **Bailadeiras de Goa**

*Bailadeiras* were Hindu dancing girls who belonged to a class known in Goa as *kalavantam* (derived from *kala* meaning art). The Portuguese called them *bailadeiras*. They dedicated themselves to god. *Bailadeiras* danced and sang in the temples. On festive occasions they danced in public and in the houses of well known people including Portuguese officials. According to *Farol* of 1526 *bailadeiras* had to dance first in the house of most important *Gaoncar* of the village (HAG:RG-LV:1/155v). During the time of Gaspar Correia *bailadeiras* danced every Sunday at lunch and dinner time at the Terreiro do Sabaio overlooking the palace where the Viceroys of India lived until 1554.

Four groups of women performed several duties at the temple. They were : *Colvontas* or *kalavantam*, *Chedvans*, *Deulinas* and *Bandens*. In British India these women were known as *Devadasis*. In Goan society

the generic name for such women was *naiquins*. The offsprings of *naiquins* were known as *cheduanle*.

They were initiated in the profession through a ceremony known as *Xens*. The girl was presented for the ceremony by an important person of the village. This man had the right to enter into a union with the girl after puberty.

The *Xens* ceremony was exactly like a marriage but with a difference. In this ceremony the girl was married to an object, a flower usually a *hibiscus* or another girl dressed as a man. It was a ceremony of initiation. The ceremony was also known as *atlaulim* which means caressing or touching with hands. This ceremony was banned by the State through a legislation issued on 31st July 1930 (LREI 1930:248).

Widows of the upper class joined the profession including pregnant widows when they were thrown out of their homes. Some women in this profession were those divorced or abandoned by their husbands.

*Bailadeiras* wore colourful saris when they performed their usual dance. These saris were either of brocade (*pitambor*) or silk with gold or silver border. Silk saris were imported from Belgaum, Chapur or Nagpur. The *cholis* were made out of velvet or satin and embroidered with gold thread. However, when they performed the *Peshwa dance*, they wore long dresses embroidered with sequins and loose pants. Jewellery was profusely used on hair, neck, arms, nose and ankles. Anklets (*paenzqnnam*), toe rings and nose rings (*noth*) were their distinctive trade marks. *Bailadeiras* wore aromatic flowers such as *mogarins*, *zaios*, *champins* and *abolims* on their head. They ate a hash of spiced greens (*Xaky baji*), with vegetables such as *tendlim* and cucumbers as added savouries. They ate betle leaf and nut for breakfast and butter and ghee for lunch besides other normal food.

Socio-economic conditions forced *bailadeiras*, in course of time, to offer their services to temple priests and high class men. Some men of the latter class kept them as their mistresses and offered donations to the temples to which the girls were attached. Various accounts available reveal that the Portuguese too were fond of the dancing girls. In course of time the choice of men was no longer restricted except for *Harijans* (untouchables). *Bailadeiras* contributed to the upkeep of the temple. These women had different status from other prostitutes. At times the illegitimate daughters of Brahmins were handed over to these women and initiated in the profession.

Majority of *bailadeiras* lived in New Conquests, where many great temples were situated. According to the English traveller Richard Burton

who visited Goa in mid nineteenth century, there were about 20 establishment in Seroda (Siroda-Ponda) with a total of fifty to sixty dancing girls.

At the turn of the nineteenth century *bailadeiras* began to migrate to British India to improve their standards of living. Majority of them settled in Bombay where they accumulated wealth. Some of them established permanent contacts with wealthy men like rich traders, nawabs, rajas and high ranking British officials. They remained their mistresses and had children from these unions. As for instance, the well known Batia Naiquini Calangutcar. She was a mistress of an Englishman Mister Jorge, a General in the British army by whom she had many children, with the condition that all these children would be the heirs of the said General with no rights to the property of the mother (OP,1906:3/339). She left her own property in Goa to her niece Caxy and various temples in north Goa. *Bailadeiras* were able to give their children education and better standards of living with the capital they acquired from their lovers.

The Census of 1910 reveals there were about eight hundred and fifty two *bailadeiras* in Goa. The highest number of *bailadeiras* were found at Ponda, followed by Pernem taluka. Ponda taluka had the highest number of temples. The Census of 1921 show that Goa had four hundred and five *bailadeiras*. The lowest number of *bailadeiras* were found at Marmugao taluka followed by Salcete taluka, probably because very few temples were situated in these areas.

When the ceremony of *Xens* was officially abolished in Goa, a number of *bailadeiras* left Goa and settled elsewhere in India. *Bailadeiras* knew to read and write in Marathi. A few could even recite Sanskrit *shlokas* (stanzas ) Most of these women were good looking and hospitable. These ladies were not only fond of betelnuts, alcoholic drinks but also liked to smoke. A large part of their earnings were invested in gold and pearl ornaments. The establishments were run by matrons who collected great deal of furniture, linen and clothes.

*Bailadeiras* have been the theme of poets and writers. These writers have focussed on the conditions of these women. The amorous life style of *bailadeiras* is depicted by various travellers who visited Goa. More details about *bailadeiras* are discussed later in this work. Women who danced in public were looked down upon by the society. *Bail natçli*, *Laz hogdayli* (A woman who danced in public lost her reputation). Men were not prepared to marry such women.

Daughters of *bailadeiras* also became *bailadeiras*. Illegitimate daughters of Brahmins when handed over to *bailadeira* were initiated in the profession soon after puberty.

*Bavinas* were girls dedicated to the temples by their parents at a young age. Such practice still exists elsewhere in India. These girls had to perform several duties in the temples such as cleaning the idols, carrying the earthen lamps and lighting them for worship. *Bavinas* did not dance in the temples. Germano Correia says that they did not involve themselves in prostitution and remained virgins throughout their life. However, some other available literature says that they too were traditionally connected to men of the Gawd Saraswat Brahman Community. Majority of the *Bavinas* lived in north of Goa.

*Badens* were not attached to the temples. They were the result of illicit affairs between the master and the servant. The conditions of these women were miserable. *Deulinas*, *Chedvans* and *Bandes* could not dance in the *Duila* (temples in Konkani). *Deulinas* usually lived on the outskirts of the *devalais* (temples), in their own homes from where they carried their trade. *Chedvans* could work in the temples but were not allowed to live in or around the temples (Germano Correia 1938: 77). The *naiquins* had different legal status from those of other prostitutes.

### *Solteiras*

As we have pointed out earlier prostitution was wide spread in Goa and mainly in city of Goa. Men of all strata of the society, spent time with women of low moral character which included irresistible slaves as well as ladies of high society. During the later period, they were found also in the port area of Mormugao and around military camps. Several legislative measures were taken by the State and the Church to curb or control prostitution. These measures will be discussed in detail later in this work.

Socio-economic conditions of the times contributed to prostitution. Majority of people were poor. Women deserted by their husbands or their relatives were easy victims of the vice. Widows left destitute by their husbands often joined the trade. In the last century emigration of Goan men, particularly of married men, led some of their wives into prostitution.

Prostitutes were responsible for spreading venereal diseases (Silva Gracias 1994). The disease was known in Goa as *bailli pida* or *phirgi*

*rog.* The disease is said to be brought from West Indies to Europe by the Spaniards and from Europe the disease was brought to Goa. It was disease which the people were not ashamed of. It was treated with *Pao de China* (*China root*).

We have estimates for registered prostitutes in the twentieth century. According to the Census of 1900 there were about 1,119 registered prostitutes in Goa. The highest number, 397 lived at Ponda taluka, followed by Bardez which had about 109 prostitutes while Satari had the lowest number with just 15 prostitutes. It is possible that the number might have been higher as all of them did not register and carried clandestine trade. There are references to open flesh trade in the capital city around 1925. The table below shows the number of prostitutes in various talukas of Goa in 1931.

<i>Talukas</i>	<i>Number of Prostitutes</i>
Ilhas	119
Salcete	172
Bardez	186
Mormugao	44
Pernem	111
Sanquelim	147
Satari	44
Ponda	277
Sanguem	70
Quepem	74
Canacona	85

These were the registered ones. In 1934 the number of registered prostitutes was about 1,000 in Goa. In 1936 there were about 1,748 Hindu prostitutes, 141 Christians and 9 Muslims. Hindu prostitutes were in majority probably due to religious views on sex, no widow remarriages and institution of devadasis.

In the mid 1930's the authorities with the help of Police pressurized the prostitutes to undergo regular medical check up in some talukas of Goa. These women often avoided these checks either by going underground or getting a male friend to file a petition in the Municipality declaring that she was mistress of the petitioner and not a prostitute. Prostitutes had to register themselves during this period either with the Municipality or with the Police.

A gradual increase in clandestine prostitution was noticed in the

first fifty years of the twentieth century, particularly in Bardez and Salcete. Many men from these two talukas migrated to rest of India, Africa and other places leaving behind their young wives. Some of these men could not send regular remittances back home causing economic burden on the wives. Males, who migrated, had sometimes mistresses in the place where they worked, neglecting the wife back home.

During the same period there was also an steady emigration of Goan women to other parts of India in order to improve their socio-economic conditions. They migrated mainly to Bombay. Economically deprived women at times involved themselves in flesh trade in the *Kuds* where they stayed in Bombay. A committee was constituted in Bombay to study the conditions of Goan prostitutes in that State. The committee submitted its report in 1923, according to the report about 510 prostitutes born in Goa plus their 225 female dependents lived in Bombay. Germano Correia gives an estimate of 2,000 prostitutes of Goan origin in Bombay around 1931. In addition, there were over hundred brothel keepers of Goan origin. The estimate is based on registered ones. Majority of these women belonged to the class of *bailadeiras*.

A report sent by a Health Officer of Pernem states that in the third and fourth decade of the twentieth century majority of the prostitutes in that area were those who had spent their youth at Bombay in similar activities. While the Health Officer of Canacona — one of the poorest taluka situated in South Goa states that suicide cases among the prostitutes were not unusual during the same period. They got themselves drowned or swallowed a poisonous plant known as *vagacho danteo* which was very toxic.

#### *Leisure*

Women of the upper strata of society as stated earlier had plenty of leisure. The women of the lower strata of society hardly had free time. They worked hard from dawn to dusk. Since they worked along with men in the fields, they enjoyed greater freedom than women of upper strata. Life was monotonous. Women looked forward to festivals, fairs, weddings and other such occasions to relieve the monotony of their existence. The Hindus had their religious Chaturtis — Ganesh and Diwali and other festivals such as Haldi Kumkum held once a year when women visited each others homes. This festival was held in month of January. Small gifts were exchanged by women. The festival was

celebrated by married women. They also attended *zattras* with male members of the family and visited fairs held on such occasions. These fairs gave girls and boys opportunity to see each other before marriage proposals were settled. Hindu women of some classes danced *fugree* to the beat of the *Ghumatta* through the night on certain occasions.

The Christians too, had their religious feasts with fairs outside the Church. Christmas was an important feast for women. They prepared a variety of sweets for this occasion such as *mandare, kormolam, neureus, dodol, alva, batica and bebinca*. Weddings gave women from all communities opportunity to meet and mix. Christian women of the upper strata from the end of nineteenth century onwards danced the Mando at weddings. Kunbi women (tribal) danced to the beat of *ghumatta* (drum). They participated in *Zagor* ( *gauddha* theatre). During the *carnival* folk plays were staged in the villages.

#### How Goan Men View Some of Their Women

Until the last fifty years of the Portuguese rule in Goa majority of Goan women were not educated. Women were considered by some men to be foolish and lacking in intelligence. She was equated to an ass and other animals. Though women are important in the life of men. Yet men had low opinion of women's intellect. The following proverbs shows contempt for women's understanding :

*Bail-munxyank dhompra sakal budh*

(Woman wisdom is below the knee).

*Saglyam baylank ordhya gadhvachear gnyan*

(All women put together posses the intelligence of half an ass.)

*Baylechem xahanepan touli kade*

(Women's wisdom is near the kitchen).

*Bayleche budhik bhullo, gharatço bhangastal kelo* ( The husband was bewitched with the advise of the wife and the house was in ruins.)  
Many women do not know to keep secrets.

*Bailechi jibh bakdechi xampdi*

(A woman's tongue wags like a snake's tail). The snak's tail is always moving.



*Bailankoddem gutt sangum-naka, raiakodden fott uloum naka, chovganchem utor moddum naka* (Do not confide your secret to a woman, do not tell lie to a king, do not go against the wishes of the majority.)

*Bail dhavea paianchi vhann* (The woman is left foot's sandal). Therefore not much importance was given to her—a doormat—to be used and tramped upon.

Certain habits among the women die hard. The following proverb describes the waspish behaviour of a woman, she is born with and she dies with it :

— *Chinch sukli azalea, tichi ambttan vochona*

(The tamarind may be dry but its acidity does not pass).

Some women were very fond of gossip and once they started talking they would forget the duties of serving meals to the husbands. The wife carried food to the husband when he was working in the field as shown in the proverb:

*Gozalint gozali, porsant bail ghovak visorli*

(The wife was lost in a group conversation, and forgot the husband in the field).

### **Migration of Goan Women**

Emigration of Goan to other parts of India started in the early centuries of the Portuguese rule . Women migrated in the company of their families to neighbouring kingdoms to avoid being converted to the religion of the rulers. After this period the emigration of Goan women slowed down.

Goan women started again migrating in large numbers in the twentieth century, for different purposes. They migrated mainly in two directions—to Africa and British India. Goan women who migrated to Africa were the ones who went there to join their husbands or as brides to Goan men settled there—Goan men in Africa were involved in pioneering work in many fields including medicine. Women who migrated to Africa were Catholics and belonged to middle and upper strata of the society. Goan women in Africa did not settle there permanently, eventually they returned home to provide their children with western type of education and to imbibe in them Goan culture.

Majority of women who migrated to British India settled in Bombay. They were predominantly of lower strata of the society. These women

were between the age group of 14 to 45 years and were generally unmarried or widows. They belonged to Christian and Hindu communities. In Bombay and other cities Goan women worked in offices, factories and as domestic help. Another group of women that migrated to British India were the *Bailadeiras*.

Majority of Goan women who migrated to British India worked in the houses of British and Parsi families. These women in Bombay were well known for their loyal and honest service. They were responsible in spreading the Konkani language, Christian doctrine and Goan culture among the children they helped to brought up.