

CELEBRATING SIX GLORIOUS DECADES OF GOA'S LIBERATION

- By Shri. Sudhir Kerkar,
Director, DIP

Goa, the tiny State of Indian Union which attained liberation from the clutches of Colonial Portuguese Rule is now celebrating 60th year of its liberation starting from [December 19](#), 2020 to [December 19](#), 2021.

To mark the commencement of this momentous occasion the Head of the nation, Shri. Ramnath Kovind is arriving in Goa on [December 19](#), 2020.

It was on [December 19](#), 1961 that the Portuguese Governor General of Goa Manuel António Vassalo e Silva – in a formal ceremony held at 8.30 p.m. in Panaji – signed the instrument of surrender of all Portuguese soldiers in Goa, Daman and Diu. This brought to an end 451 years of Portuguese colonial rule in India. It ended the last vestige of colonialism on Indian soil, making India's independence complete. The Portuguese were driven out 14 years after India gained independence from the British, and seven years after France ceded control of Pondicherry and its other territories to India.

The fact is that the unfortunate colonial phase in India's history both started and ended with Goa. This was the very first colony of any western European power in India. The Portuguese conquistadore Afonso de Albuquerque captured the Island of Goa (now known as Tiswadi taluka) on [25 November 1510](#), as many as 16 years before the Emperor Babar, founder of the Mughal dynasty, conquered Delhi on [21 April 1526](#).

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It is instructive to note that Britain's actual annexation of India began as late as 1757, after its victory in the Battle of Plassey. It ended within 200 years, in 1947. Thus, the period of Portuguese rule over parts of Goa's is longer than the combined period of rule of the Mughal empire, the Maratha Empire and the British empire over the rest of India. The

colonization of India began with the Portuguese, and they were also the last of the European colonisers to depart.

But Goans never, ever, mutely accepted the rule of the Portuguese. There were several major revolts against Portuguese rule through the centuries. This came about despite the fact that the manner in which colonialism developed in the Portuguese territories was distinctive from the process of colonialism that developed in the rest of the sub-continent, most of which was ruled by the British.

From mass conversions to the policy of 'official nationalism', the Portuguese attempted to bring about an identification among the colonised people with Portugal, to make them feel that they were Portuguese citizens, through a process of 'Lusitanisation'. While the British Macaulayan endeavour sought to create a class of people in India who were British in their 'manners, morals and intellect', the Portuguese in their Lusitanisation process attempted to make the people identify not just with a new language, but with a new religious belief, as well as a change in their culture, their thinking, their diet and in their manner of dress. This was especially in the 'Old Conquests' of Goa, annexed by

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the Portuguese between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. But, despite their best efforts over centuries, except for a tiny section of the elite, these sustained and strenuous attempts to imbue the people with the consciousness that they were Portuguese simply did not succeed.

Hundreds and thousands of freedom fighters suffered for their patriotism. Some spent decades in jail. Others were forced to go into exile for fear of long prison sentences. Merely shouting slogans could result in a term of 15 years of harsh imprisonment in the notorious jail at the fortress of Peniche in Portugal. Many leading Goan freedom fighters were incarcerated there. Goa's freedom [today](#) is based in no small measure on their great sacrifices. It will take too long to name them all. Indeed, it was not just Goa's own freedom fighters, but patriotic Indians from all over the country who participated in the historic peaceful

Satyagrahas of 1954 and 1955 and faced the bullets of the Portuguese army. But their sacrifices have not gone in vain.

When the Portuguese left in 1961, Goa it had little or no industry. It had no higher education except for a medical college and a pharmacy college. There were very few roads and no large bridges across the rivers in the coastal areas. Except for Portuguese government jobs and a few iron ore mines, there was no employment. Nearly one-third of the population had to migrate to other parts of the country or overseas to find work. Only three major towns had electricity. Just 30 per cent of the population was literate.

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Today, Goa is the state with the highest per capita Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) in the country; two-and-a-half times the national average. Goa's GSDP at current prices has increased at a compound annual growth rate of 10.65 per cent from 2011-12 to 2017-18. It has the highest number of vehicles per capita in the country. There is almost universal literacy among the younger populace. Goa's public health care system has been ranked among the best in the country. In October this year, Goa was ranked the best governed small state in the country in the Public Affairs Index 2020 released by the Public Affairs Centre, a not-for-profit organisation headed by former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman, Shri. K. Kasturirangan.

Goa has a well-developed social, physical and industrial infrastructure and virtual connectivity. It has two major railway lines. Two national highways cross the state. It has an international airport at Dabolim and will soon have a second international airport at Mopa, which is under construction. It also has a major port.

Tourist arrivals in Goa have been increasing every year. In 2018, Goa attracted over 70 lakh domestic tourists, among the highest in all states, and over 9 lakh foreign tourists. Apart from tourism, the pharma industry and iron ore mining have been the mainstays of the Goan economy. Mining has suffered a huge setback in recent years, but the state government is making strenuous

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efforts to revive it. All these are the fruits of Liberation. Goa has flourished after it was integrated into India.

But there are even greater plans in store. Chief Minister, Dr. Pramod Sawant's top priorities include the creation of new job opportunities for the youth, both in the private and government sectors. Eighty per cent of the jobs will have to be provided to locals in any new industrial venture in Goa. The government will also promote self-employment for youth by giving incentives to start-ups in clean, non-polluting industries, services, agriculture, dairy farming and fisheries.

In infrastructure, the focus is on building roadways, bridges and the international airport. In tourism, development of hinterland tourism and medical tourism is the priority. Goa can be an industrial hub for clean industries that are job-oriented, especially those that suit local Goans. Making Goa's cities and villages cleaner and more liveable through garbage segregation and collection, as well as by putting in modern sewerage systems, ensuring adequate water supply and uninterrupted electricity is a second priority.

Chief Minister, Dr. Pramod Sawant's vision is to promote Goa as India's best and most developed small state in all categories of development – health, education, per capita GDP and ease of doing business. The target is to provide the cheapest power in the country, some of the best infrastructure, to build a

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highly educated workforce and establish great health facilities to attract investors.

Most important is to remember that without harmony, there can be no peace. And without peace, there can be no progress. Goa enjoys peace despite religious diversity. Most Goans, across communities, are God-fearing and religious. It shows that devout religious identity is not at all prejudicial to communal harmony. Goa is truly blessed to have so much peace in diversity. It is the tolerance of the ordinary Goan citizen that engenders this spirit of unity.

- **Shri Sudhir Kerkar**

The writer is the Director, of Information and Publicity, Govt. of Goa.

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