



GOA DOURADA

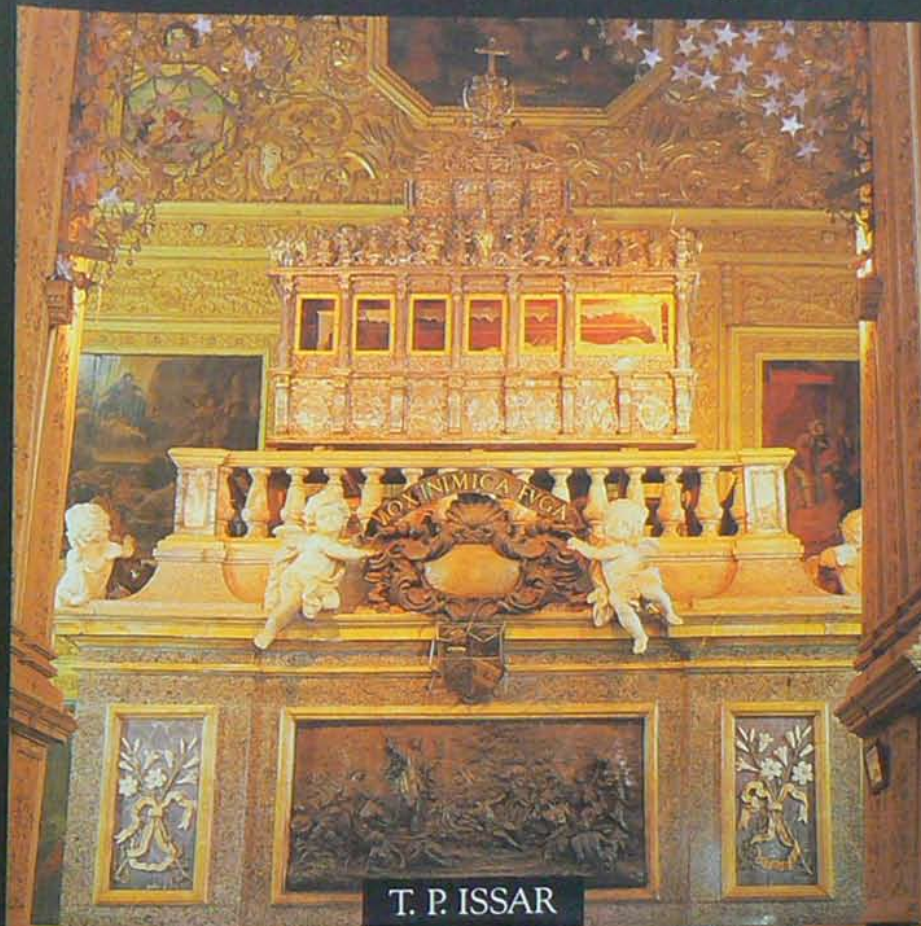
THE INDO-PORTUGUESE BOUQUET

T. P. ISSAR

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## ABIDING MEMORIES Struggles and Achievements

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचार ।  
असक्तो ह्याचरन् कर्म परमान्याति पुरुषः ॥१९॥

*M/s Narcinva Damodar Naik is one of the oldest and prestigious business houses of Goa. It was founded in 1896. And it is marching into the second century of its existence with the same confidence, adherence to values and enthusiasm as of the men of vision who started the business. The firm was started during times that were far from ideal. The founders nurtured and developed it with the stoicism that was their main virtue. This enterprise survived two world wars, the recession of the thirties, several contretemps in the community, and Goa's struggle for freedom, with the single-mindedness that characterises the Naiks, known as the Naik-Shankwalkars.*

*This volume carries a special addendum as a tribute to the founders of the Naik family and a commemoration of the first centenary of the firm, M/s NARCINVA DAMODAR NAIK.*



There is a Konkani song, sung by the Catholics of Goa, that runs something like this "When the flute is played memories of you come to me." In another song, "There is a festival in Marcel. I feel like dancing." Those are the sounds and images of a past hazily remembered, but nevertheless much yearned for, by a community that was abruptly and in fact brutally, torn away from its traditions and forced into the ways of its Portuguese conquerors by a ruthless brigade of sixteenth century Christian evangelists whose 'valorous deeds' are sung in epic poetry by their over-indulgent compatriots. Theirs, say their bards, was a mission on behalf of 'the true God' achieved with "the cross in one hand and the sword in the other."

In pastoral Goa the flute was the favourite instrument. Shepherds played it while they grazed their cows, the sacred Go. Once, so green were the pastures and so many the cows grazing on it that a mythical visitor, who strayed into the land, named it the land of Go. In the homes of the landed gentry the flute symbolised peace of mind and harmony. It was the instrument one propitiated the gods with and rekindled old loves.

Marcel, a village in Teeswadi, the

island county, not far from modern Old Goa, was founded by Madhav Mantri, the Goan general and devout Brahmin in the service of the Vijayanagar empire. He reconquered Goa for his king from the predatory Bahamanis and then governed it as best as he could, dispensing justice, restoring the confidence of the people and rebuilding the Saptakoteshwar temple that had been destroyed by the erstwhile rulers. The village was beautiful, the river running by it, the Ghats beyond, a bevy of green islands scattered around, some tiny, others large, the likely remnants, it is theorized, of a major cataclysm. The disintegration of Gondwana land, perhaps? Whatever the nature of the cataclysm, Madhav Mantri named the village he created Machalapura, after his mother Machambika, a beautiful woman. The Portuguese changed it to Marcela, one of those many changes they imposed, but in hindsight, hardly altered the essence of Goa. It is to this Machalapura that, half a millennium after her sudden conversion to new faiths and new ways of life, in nostalgic reverie the Catholic folkinger longs to return. In aeons past, her ancestors had danced at the festivals of the splendid temples of Machalapura.



## THE WAYSIDE SHRINE, THE PIAZZA CROSS AND THE LAMP TOWER



HE wayside shrines and piazza crosses are among the most remarkable and the most elaborately-worked creations of Goan Baroque-Rococo. The cross-crowned shrines are essentially niches of private worship in the Hindu tradition, instantly accessible to the lay worshipper for lighting a lamp or mumbling a quick prayer, much as a Hindu would on catching sight of a Hanuman or Ganesha shrine or a *tali vrindavana*.

The piazza crosses are a Goan adaptation of the simpler Syrian crosses of Kerala (which are usually somewhat unpretentious compositions of three tapering blocks, topped with an over-size cross). They differ from the shrines in their smaller size and the prominence of the cross. However, the decorative treatment of the two—delicately worked stucco on laterite—is the same.

It is almost as if, while working on the stucco moulding of these shrines and crosses, the Goan artisan, equipped with a particularly pliable tool—like a cake-icing-dispenser—was showing off all the decorative devices which he had employed while shaping church facades and interiors. You have them all here—in exquisite baroque curves and concaves and in the rococo abandon of volutes, sinuous stems and twisted columns.

Not only is the concept of these shrines and crosses essentially Hindu, but also the thought behind their elevation. Cognoscenti<sup>20</sup> see in their shape a very noticeable suggestion of the tapering *shikhara* of the Hindu temple, complete with the finial.



Cross at St. Alex Church, Kurltor, and in the piazza fronting Espírito Santo, Holy Spirit Church (facing page) at Margao. The Goan artisan showed off, in these "bits" of stucco moulding, all the decorative devices—baroque curves, rococo volutes and twisted columns—which he had employed while shaping church interiors. The Portuguese architect provided the general stylistic scheme.

<sup>20</sup> José Pereira (ibid.) sees the composition as a square-octagonal-round sequence—square base, octagonal superstructure and a round base at the top for the cross. Drawing a dotted line along these stages, one could see the profile of a Hindu temple.



## VELHA GOA—THE FORSAKEN ROME OF THE ORIENT

**O**NCE the gateway to a bustling city, celebrated as the 'Jewel of the Indies' and 'Rome of the Orient', the still-standing—though somewhat diminished—Arch of the Viceroys marks the point where the city was reached from the landing, long before the causeway linking Panjim to Velha Goa was built.

Built of locally procured granite blocks—the porous, darkish red stone which gives most buildings of Goa their quaint texture—the Arch now overlooks a ferry-boat jetty, the unlikely-looking successor of a setting which at one time received mighty ships bringing soldiers, exotic horses, churchmen and incoming viceroys. This was also the site of an important shipyard, an arsenal, a foundry, barracks, the custom house, warehouses and, last but not least, the Viceroy's Palace and the Senate building, which sprang into view a little further up.

Proceeding from the Arch and the Viceroy's Palace to the town, the visitor entered what was then called *la Rua Drecho*, 'the straight street',

which was the name given to the principal shopping mall of the city, around which radiated numerous roads, plazas and smaller bazars.

Hardly any trace remains of the Viceroy's Palace and the buildings which filled the entire waterfront. But moving on one sees, on either side and a little further, some remarkable buildings which have survived, and which richly reward the visitor.

Though the *Se* and *St. Cajetan* stand closer along this nostalgic route, let us cross the imagined path of the *Rao Drecho* of yore and turn right towards the 'Taj Mahal of Goa'—the looming edifice of the *Bom Jesus*, whose facade, though unusually crowded with detail, hardly prepares the visitor for the depth and scale of the interior, and the gilt splendour of its altars and niches.

The laterite facade, mixed with black granite for its carved portions and features, is a three-stage composition of Corinthian and Doric columns, with rectangular and square doors and windows varied with circular openings at the



Road leading to the lower plateau of the 'Holy Hill'. Dominated by the church and convent of *St. Augustine*, this was once Velha Goa's elite 'Altiŝho', bustling with novitiate, worshippers, clergymen, palanquin-bearers, carriages, and aristocratic strollers.



the climb. Both the Tower of St. Augustine and the Church of Our Lady of Rosary, bespeak the sombreness of the place with its contrasting quiet and bereft atmosphere. Not surprisingly, one's thoughts echo Thomas Gray's famous elegiac lines and Ghalib's much-quoted couplet<sup>14</sup> bemoaning the transience of things.

The lonely part-tower of St. Augustine dominates the 'Hill' in spite of its desolate state. The main body of the church and convent are long since gone, but the last-legs remnant of one of the twin towers has defied weather and gravity after the facade collapsed in 1931. It stands there like the ne'er-say-die raised arm of a fallen hero.

Recorded contemporary descriptions of both the church and the convent are highly flattering, almost hyperbolic. Artist's reconstruction of the facade, based on old photographs (see pg. 86), shows a remarkable resemblance with the Bom Jesus Church—which is also without aisles—minus the twin towers. The church at Santana is another look-alike—with the same three stories, similar window-design, circular ventilators in the third level and almost identical twin towers—with only a slight variation in the design of the central pediment.



Mounted Portuguese nobleman with retinue, 17th century.

<sup>14</sup>The great Urdu poet's couplet translates as follows: "Not all, though some, have sprung again / in shapes of beautiful flowers. Burial still see glories which / will never, alas, be seen."





and-skirt which once told them apart, are being discarded (such a pity!) in favour of the salwar-kameez. You would have to see them in the church or the temple to know what religion they profess. The melting-pot sameness of the sartorial style and facial appearance, is the big change which has come about in Goa in the decades following 1962. With all that, Goa still has a distinct bouquet, which this book has sought to capture.



"Indigena Bardezana." Gom lady, late 19th century portrait.

PHOTOGRAPH BY A. L. LOPES, GOA, 1900

Richard Burton (*ibid.*) writes (this was some 150 years ago) about "Brahmin Christians" among Hindu converts who were apparently loth even after conversion to lose their high "pontifical" caste, and the "mestica", the mixed-blood people, who "compose the great mass of society at Goa", comprising "all classes from the cook to the government official." Burton goes on to say, "some half-castes travel in Europe, a great many migrate to Bombay for service and commerce, but the major part stay at Goa to stock professions and support the honour of the family.—The ladies (of these 'half-castes') affect the old Portuguese costume. A few of the wealthiest dress like Europeans. Their education is purposely neglected—a little reading of their vernacular tongue, with the Ave and other prayers in general use, dancing, embroidery, and making sweetmeats. The men dress as Europeans but the quantity of clothing diminishes with the wearer's rank. Some of the lower orders especially in the country, affect a full-dress costume, consisting in two, of a cloth jacket and black silk knee breeches.—As regards living, they follow the example of their white fellow-subjects in all points except that they eat more rice and less meat."

As for "the native Christians", "...they always shear the head, cultivate an apology for a whisker, but never allow the beard or mustachios to grow.—For their women, the saree is their whole attire.—They (the native Christians) live principally on fish and rice with pork, fruit and bread when they can afford such luxuries.—(Leavened bread is much better-made here than in any other part of Western India; moreover, it is eaten by all those who can afford it.) In disposition, they are more quarrelsome than their "whitely-brown" brethren.—They are employed as seppos, porters, fishermen, seamen, labourers, munched bearers, workmen and servants."

Burton sees the "Hindoo" as "of a fair, or rather a light yellow complexion.—Some of the women are by no means deficient in personal charms.—(The men) wear the mustachios, but not the beard, and dress in the long cotton coat, with the cloth wound round the waist, very much the same as in Bombay. The head, however, is usually covered with a small red velvet skullcap, instead of a turban. The female attire is the saree, with the long-armed bodice beneath it; their ornaments are numerous; and their caste is denoted by a round spot of kumkum, or vermilion upon the forehead between the eyebrows."



Illustration by A. L. LOPES, GOA, 1900