

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, GOAN DIASPORA AND THE CASTE DYNAMICS IN ASSOLNA, VELIM, CUNCOLIM (GOA)

Dr. Sachin Savio Moraes*

Abstract

This paper presents how the upward social mobility brought about due to Goan diaspora and the socio-economic linkages with the sending society, contributes to the structuration of the caste structured society in to a class structured one, thereby leading to a new structure of the village. The paper findings are based on interviews with twenty four respondents and participant observation undertaken for a period of thirty months in three villages i.e Assolna, Velim and Cuncolim in Goa. The entire process of change from caste based society to a class based society is deliberated with the help of seven hallmarks of the diaspora households in AVC. However, it is the alterations and magnitude of performing these acts that have contributed to the emergence of 'dominant/elite class'. The 'Dominant/elite class' which comprises of the diaspora households, influences the rest of the Christian households with reference to the seven hallmarks. It is these seven hallmarks that contribute to the motivation to migrate, thereby resulting in a culture of migration in AVC.

Keywords:

Goan Diaspora,
International migration,
Socio-cultural,
socio-economic,
dynamics,
caste,
class.

* **Parvatibai Chowgule College of Arts and Science (Autonomous), Margao-Goa**

1. Introduction

For any study on Diaspora, analyzing the genesis of Diaspora is significant in the understanding of the contemporary dynamics in the social and cultural sphere. In AVC and in Goa, the origin of Goan diaspora lies in the transformations brought about due to colonization of Goa from the 16th century till the 20th century. The people of AVC and Goa in general were largely dependent on subsistence agriculture and the AVCian society was characterized by a system that encompassed the socio-religio-economic aspect of the society in the form of the 'Gaonkari system'. The 'Goankari system' was a socialist system, in which all aspects of the society was governed by the people themselves.

The colonization of Goa and AVC by the Portuguese led to the transformation of Gaonkari to Communadade thereby reducing the system to the economic aspect. Further, the transfer of control of land from the villagers to the Portuguese administration disrupted the livelihood strategies of the people thereby contributing to poverty like condition. The colonization by the Portuguese also transformed the religious beliefs and culture of the people, which forced some to migrate to distant lands and some accepted conversion to Christianity. However, large majority in AVC lived a marginal life. In-order to cope with such a situation, the people had to look for every available opportunity elsewhere. Thus, the Roman Catholics in AVC found a great opportunity during the Napolie wars in the 19th century, as the new way of life that was enforced and adopted by the converts made it easier for Roman Catholics to migrate across the seas during the 19th century, as there was no food restriction as compared to the Hindus. This process of international migration that began in the 19th century in AVC radically reshaped the social, cultural and economic context in which migration took place in the future generation. The 'mobility transition' [1] in AVC began as a consequence of colonization in AVC. Consequently at the macro level, international migration has increasingly enabled the Roman Catholics in AVC to earn an additional income. The additional income have triggered socio-cultural changes in AVC due to the diaspora's exposure abroad, the changes being desirable have mobilized the mind sets of ACVian Roman Catholics to increase their propensity to migrate.

In the 21st century every able bodied youth in AVC thinks international migration is the fastest means to success. Hence, in the present day scenario the diaspóra's family in AVC is well to do

due to the generations involved in international migration, yet the youth think of migration as the best option. This refutes the popular view that poverty is the root cause of labour migration. Hein de Haas (2003) in his PhD thesis uses the transitional migration theory and states that ‘the theory predicts that development, in its initial stages, tends to lead to an increase of out-migration instead of reverse’. He further states that ‘migration as a means of development shouldn’t be seen strictly from the material dimension, rather educational development and knowledge of other societies also contributes to capabilities of a human and thus contributes to development’. He further reiterates that ‘such type of development also tend to increase the aspiration of people, leading them to migrate in order to fulfill these aspiration [2]. Thus, in AVC people migrate for both the aspects of development i.e. economic and social. The Roman Catholics in AVC have been migrating for the past 175 years and the Goan AVCian diaspora have maintained close links with AVC contributing immensely to the socio-economic changes thereby resulting in a transformation of caste based society to a class based society. This change of caste to class and the resultant culture are presented with the help of the seven hallmarks or characteristics of the dominant class.

2. Research Method

In this study we have generated data through the qualitative methodological orientation. The qualitative data was based on the thirty semi-structured interviews with men and women aged fifty and above having their family members abroad. These interviews were undertaken during the thirty month period of this study. All caste and class groups were accommodated. The snowball sampling method was used for the purpose of interviews. The interviews were recorded and simultaneously certain points were noted. After the interview, the recordings were transcribed and efforts were made to look out for the common themes that evolved from the interviews so as to code the data [3]. The researcher also made use of participant observation during the above mentioned duration of the study.

3. 1: THE EMERGENCE OF THE NEW CULTURE VIZ-AVIZ THE ‘DOMINANT CLASS’

The emergence of the of the new culture among the left behind families of the Goan diaspora in AVC has been possible due to the cultural and economic exchanges maintained by the Goan

diapsora with the families left behind in AVC. The new culture among Goan diaspora families in AVC has emerged due to the evolution of hallmarks that have come to characterize the left behind families of the Goan diaspora in AVC. These hallmarks and its impact on the rest of the Catholic Goan society in AVC have been analyzed with the help of the subsequent aspects listed below.

1. International migration

The international migration is become the hallmark of the Roman Catholics in AVC, thereby contributing to the increasing numbers of Goan diaspora. The International migration of Roman Catholics and the positive ripple effect it has had on the economic and social aspects on the AVCian society has contributed to the development of a culture of migration. The exposure of the non-migrant Goans to the Goan diaspora's success, wealth and statuses that have been enhanced in the sending AVCian society motivates many non-migrant Goans to migrate. International migration in AVC is perceived as the main or the only avenue of upwards social mobility among the youth, as many of them in AVC feel that there are no opportunities in Goa or even if there are, the salaries are too low and thus they are unwilling to work and invest their time in AVC or Goa [2]. Thus, the success of Goan diaspora enhances the aspiration, ambitions, life projects and dreams of thousands of educated unemployed Roman Catholic Goans in AVC to the decision to migrate abroad, thereby forming a culture of migration in AVC.

2. Remittances and development

The Goan diaspora have contributed immensely to the culture of remittances. It has become a tradition among the Goan diaspora to remit the money to their country of origin. The remittances are send due to various reasons i.e. love of the family, moral obligation towards parent, maintenance of the family and to improve one's status in the society. The remittances transferred by the Goan diaspora have contributed to the improved standard of living among the Goan diaspora families left behind. The remittances have fuelled an increase in the purchase of various consumer durables and means of transportation i.e. bikes and cars that have been discussed in chapter four. This has been possible due to the high variance in the salaries in Goa and abroad. The remittances send by the Goan diaspora also helps the families left behind to upgrade their wardrobe by buying new clothes for every single celebration. The remittances send

have propelled consumerism in AVC, in the west consumerism was born due to industrialization but in AVC it is due to the Diasporas exposure with the west that has contributed to it, as it can be seen in another Indian state of Kerala ‘It has been found that Keralites spend a large share of their income to the consumption of consumer durables and luxuries. A still interesting thing is that this consumption is not to satisfy any basic human needs but to quench some of the hidden social needs and that is vertical social mobility’ [4].

Families left behind also use the remittances for the up gradation of the living arrangements by either renovating their existing houses or by building new ones. The building of a huge house or renovating an existing one with all the modern amenities contributes in the enhancement of the family status in the village, the larger and well furnished is the house the better is the status of that family. Thus, the status of the family is not dependent on birth but rather the material prosperity one acquires through hard work and taking risks by migrating abroad. The non-migrant Goan in AVC aspires to have an economically secured life, which will help them to achieve those things or aspects that they feel relatively deprived when compared to the Diaspora families in AVC. Nevertheless, it seems not only material factors that incite people to leave. Migrating tends to be also associated to the idea of personal liberty [5]. Further, the building of new houses helps in the nuclearization of families.

3. Nuclearization of families

The nuclear family is become a hallmark of the left behind members of the diaspora family in AVC. The nuclear family emerged in AVC in the early 50’s among the diaspora family members left behind. Therefore the phenomenon of nuclearization of family is not a new one when compared to the rest of India. The benefit of the nuclear family which is strongly associated to liberty has motivated the people to migrate abroad and send remittances for the building of a house. The building of the house, the improved status and the success of the nuclear family has further motivated the non-migrant Goans to migrate.

4. Education

The Goa diaspora has contributed immensely to the education of the left behind family members. Education especially English education of the children is given top most priority when the Goan

diaspora establishes the family of procreation. Going to English medium schools has always been the hallmark of the families of Goan diaspore in AVC from the 20th century, this tradition is evident from the fact that many Goan families in the early 20th century migrated to British India in places i.e. Poona, Bombay, Calcutta, Karwar and Belgaum in order to get their children educated in English medium schools. The focus on English education was based on the motive of international migration and white collar jobs in British India. The educational skills that the children acquire is based on the role expectations of the children in the AVCian society, with boys generally acquiring those skills that are in demand abroad and girls acquiring those skills and knowledge that are essential for seeking a job abroad or in Goa as seen in chapter six. Thus, one's sees a disparity in the types of skills learned or acquired by the boys and girls. The Goan diaspora's family culture in AVC influences the choices of both boys and girls in AVC.

5. Sponsoring of village tournaments and cultural events

Another characteristic that has emerged as a hallmark of Goan diaspora family in AVC is the tradition of sponsoring village tournaments and cultural events. When the International Goan returns to his village for holidays or various other celebration in the family or village, the villagers expected them to make contributions in organizing village tournaments i.e. football or volleyball, which were quite popular in the villages of AVC. These tournaments served as a means of entertainment to the villagers and still continue to excite the villagers. The International Goan on their return from abroad would not mind sponsoring a few hundred or a thousand rupees for organizing such tournaments. As in doing so their names would be announced and through which they would gain in the hierarchy of status in the village.

The international Goan would also sponsor cultural events i.e. the *khell tiatr* during carnival, the *tiatr* during important village church or chapel feast and the Christmas tree party in the church or their respective *vaddo* (ward). The one who sponsored the cultural function would then boast to his friends and relatives or the friends, relatives and villagers would talk about him/her to others. These gossips of who sponsored the tournament brought good name and status to the family of the one who sponsored the event. Thus, many international Goan's on their return would sponsor's such tournaments and cultural events as they knew that through such contribution they were gaining by improving their status in the eyes of the villagers. Therefore, in the present day

this practice still continues among the diaspora Goans and their families, however many non-migrant Goans in AVC also feel the need to sponsor such activities in the village so as to keep up with their status or to improve upon the status and be on par with the diaspora family left behind in AVC.

6. Contribution to the development of the church, chapel and its feasts

The Goan diaspora have a strong sense of attachment to their churches, chapel and feasts. Whenever the church or the chapel is being renovated or if a new chapel was to be built. The Goan diaspora have contributed a lot of money in the development of churches and chapels. The churches and chapels administration acknowledge the contribution by announcing the same for the obligatory Sunday mass and by also inscribing the names of the benefactors on the stone that is built inside the walls of the church and chapel. This does not mean that the other members of the village do not contribute anything but their contribution is much lesser as compared to the diaspora families left behind.

The Goan diaspora not only contributed money for the developmental works of the church and chapel but also sponsored several useful things in the church and chapel i.e. fans, benches, porticos, hymn books, organ, sound system, chalice, candle stands, statues of various religious figure and painting of the church or chapel etc. The families of Goan diaspora also sponsor the chapel feast in their respective *vaddo*. All such contribution helps the left behind family of the Goan diaspora to acquire social prestige and therefore succeed in upgrading their status or maintain their status. When the members of the Goan Diaspora family in AVC, does these acts of contribution, it creates a sense of inferiority among the non migrating Goan catholic families in AVC. The non-migrating Goan catholic families also follow this practice of contributing towards the development of the church and chapel or the celebration of the feast, because if they don't do so then they would be losing on their status. Thus, in order to maintain or gain social prestige the non-migrating Goan families also try to contribute. However, at times it becomes difficult for such families to keep pace with the Diaspora families left behind in AVC, thereby prompting them to also think of migration.

7. Granduerization of various celebration

The Granduerization of the marriage celebration introduced by the Goan diaspora post 1990 has led to the claiming of higher status among the families left behind of the Goan diaspora. The granduerization of marriage celebration has had a profound impact on the various other Roman Catholics and their religious and family celebration .i.e. Baptism, 1st Birthday, 1st Holy Communion, 21st Birthday, Silver Wedding jubilee, Golden Wedding jubilee. All these celebration have taken the shape and form of wedding day celebration. Hence, various celebration have been ‘grandeurized’ on the model of marriage celebration. Which means that all the Roman Catholic celebration both religious and secular follow a structured pattern, which involves the religious ritual first and then a grand reception consisting of a march, cutting of the cake, toast raising ceremony, serving of snacks, playing of songs by a band, participation of people in dance, partaking in the buffet lunch or dinner prepared by the professional caterers, the whole function is organized by a Master of Ceremony (M.C) and captured by videographers and photographers. This practice of adding grandeur to all celebration has become the hallmark of the left behind families of the Goan diaspora in AVC. The grandeurization of various celebrations listed above is possible due to the remittances that the left behind families receive. By granduerizing the various celebrations, the left behind families acquire social prestige and hence claim a higher status compared to the non-diaspora families in AVC. The non-diaspora families in turn feel inferior and deprived in comparison to the diaspora family in AVC. This inferiority complex pushes the non-diaspora families in AVC to imitate the grandeur in the various celebrations as observed in the diaspora families left behind in AVC. This act of granduerizing various celebrations are undertaken, so as to be on par with the diaspora family in AVC.

However, the granduerization of various celebrations comes at a cost, in this race for superiority, dominance, power, prestige and status; the diaspora family left behind as well as the non diaspora family in AVC borrow money from their family, friends and even take loans from the bank. This has put pressure especially on the non-diaspora family in AVC, who find it difficult to pay the loans or return the money.

Thus, all the seven hallmarks of the diaspora family in AVC have contributed in the emergence of a new culture among the diaspora family in AVC. These cultural characteristics have become the common markers of the Diaspora family in AVC. The diaspora family through these cultural characteristics have managed to establish a dominant position in the AVCian society. The distinct cultural characteristics fuelled by the economic affluence of the diaspora families have ultimately led to the emergence of a new social class ‘the diaspora elites’ (see also De Haas 2003) [2]. It is the diaspora elites of AVC and the families left behind that have contributed to this new culture of granduerization of not only celebration but also religious events i.e. litany, *saibin* (our lady) and housing activity i.e. building and renovation of houses along with the practice of house warming (inauguration of the house). Thus, these common practices among the left behind families of the diaspora elite have contributed to the emergence of a class that is not only distinct from the non-migrant Goan but also drives these practices thereby forming the ‘dominant class’. It is the practices of the new ‘dominant class’ that the non-diaspora families try to ape in order to match them, as if they don’t follow these practices they would feel isolated alienated from their social self.

3.2: THE RESULTANT CULTURE OF MIGRATION AND THE NEW SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In AVC, there has been a gradual change in the relationships of one member with another, due to the change in the patterns of their causal interconnections and interdependence inaugurated by the Goan diaspora due to their socio-economic linkages in the sending society of AVC, thereby altering the structure of the villages vis-a-vis their positions they occupy in the hierarchy of the village stratification. Thus, this brings us to the question as in what way there has been a transformation in the caste structure of AVC . In order to understand how? we have to refer to the social structure of AVC pre-migration. In the social structure pre-migration one clearly saw how the society was stratified on the basis of caste. In AVC, we had caste groups like the *Chaddos/Chaddi* and the *Sudras/Mundcars/Kunbis*. The *Chaddi*’s were the powerful and dominant caste. However, after almost 60 years that is from 1952 onwards one sees a transformation in the social structure. The *Sudras/Mundcars/Kunbis* as well as the poor from the dominant caste, who had migrated to work outside India, have changed their life styles and occupation due to their status enhancing motive, this has been possible due to their cosmopolitan

exposure and huge sums of remittances that have been sent to their families. This development has contributed in forming 'social clones' by social clone the researcher suggest that the subordinate caste's and the poor in general, have transformed itself into the social appearance of the *Chaddos*, as a result the system of caste has undergone a major transformation. The occupations traditionally undertaken by the subordinate caste i.e. the *mundcras/sudras* have no takers in the AVCian society due to the exodus of the subordinate caste abroad or a change in occupation in Goa itself, this development especially in the last three decades have created a gap and demand for such occupations. This gap has been filled by the migrants from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and also from Bihar and UP. There has been an infiltration of migrants in AVC involved with several occupation as discussed in chapter four, who now live as tenants in the premises of the *Mundcar/Sudra* as well as the '*Chaddos*' and the wives of these migrants work as maids or do some odd jobs in the premises of '*Patrao*' (literally meaning masters and comprising of the 'diaspora elite class' or the local Goan's homes). Whereas the men usually work as masons, painters, labourers, barbers, carpenters, plumbers and electricians, bakers and even grave diggers. These roles were once performed by the *Mundcars/Tenants/shudras*. Thus, one sees the emergence of a new subordinate class and that is the class of migrants. On the other hand, the Goan Diaspora and the family left behind in the sending society consist of all castes i.e. *Chaddos*, *Sudras*, *Kunbis* as well as the poorer families from the dominant caste. Thus, these groups of international Goan migrants have uplifted their status by going abroad. They have not only managed to be on par with traditional dominant caste, but have also managed to create a new class of 'Diaspora elite' who have become the 'dominant class' in AVC on the basis of a new life style/culture that is discussed above.

Analysing this transformation from caste structure to a class structure in AVC, one sees that Diaspora has profoundly affected the stratification system by taking up the better job opportunities abroad. In doing so they have remitted their incomes to the family members left behind thereby giving a lift to their status. For example, when somebody builds a house it not only has an economic value, but also contributes to the acquisition of higher status. Likewise, when someone contributes money to the renovation or construction of Church and Chapel it not only performs the inherent religious function, but also contributes to the prestige of the left behind family members [6]. The Goan Diaspora has also contributed to the fast paced bridging of

the gaps between the upper castes and the lower castes that have existed since centuries. In fact, in most of AVC-Goa, the diaspora has been instrumental in the development of a new system of social stratification, in which they occupy the position of elite [2]. What can be noticed in AVC-Goa is the emergence of an 'elite class', a class that is born out of international migration and it is this class that helps us to conceive the idea of the haves (diaspora elite) and they have not's (Non-diaspora Goans). This finding may support that diaspora and the remittances they send contribute to inequality among the members of the Goan society. However, this finding is not universal and may not be applicable to the entire Goan society. Therefore, we should be prudent not to over generalize, but this finding can be generalized for the villages of Assolna, Velim and Cuncolim.

Furthermore, this does not mean that international migration has divided the society in to haves and have not's. But the point is that due to the access of resources new classes vis-a-vis new criteria for stratification has emerged. It is interesting to note here that positive impact of international migration in the socio-cultural aspects motivates many other non-migrants to also migrate [7].

4. Conclusion

International migration, the Goan Diaspora and remittances have enabled the (at least partial) emancipation of individuals belonging to former socially subaltern groups i.e. *Mundcars/Sudras/Kunbis* in our case. Throughout AVC, international migration and the access to resources by the members of the sending society has challenged the established structure of society that was based on hereditary, kinship, race and ownership of land [8]. The emergence of new 'migrant elite' class has led to the death of the traditional elites, and the money power they command helps them to control the local affairs in the society [6]. Therefore, in AVC a low status caste group i.e *Mundcar/sudras/kunbis* and poorer sections from the dominant high caste have been able to acquire a higher social status through their new financial resources. This development has prompted the dominant caste who did not feel the need to migrate to also migrate, the reason is that the diaspora has been successful in forcing a change in the social stratification that is desired by the non-migrant class. Consequently, positive impact of the diaspora on the socio-cultural aspects motivates many other non-migrants to also migrate [7].

This fact can be observed throughout AVC not only among the left behind Roman Catholics but also among the Hindus and Muslims.

The restructuring of the village of AVC, due to the international migration of the subaltern groups i.e. *Mundcars/Sudras/Kunbis* has contributed to the transformation of the traditional social structure. The traditional social structure that was based on caste consisted of the *Bamonn's*, *Chaddos/Chaddi's* and the *Sudras/Mundcars* and *Kunbis*. However after international migration of the *Sudras/Mundcars/Kunbis* and the poor Goan Catholics belonging to the *Chardo* caste and the Sanskritization process that they underwent. They have become one with the dominant higher caste. Thus, AVC today consists of a new elite class emerging out of the international migration of the family members and which consists of all the caste groups. Hence, the lowest position which was vacant has been taken over by the migrants from outside Goa, who the serve the two upper classes consisting of the 'class of 'Diaspora elite' and 'non-migrant Goan'.

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