

64 DAYS

OF 18 JUNE 1946



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INTRODUCTION

History is meant for the future. It is a major learning exercise. We must learn what was good and what was bad and ugly, so it should not happen again. We must learn from past mistakes so that we do not repeat them. The primary purpose of this book is to help build a healthy and happy society through history.

The book is being released at a very important time. Today, India's Gen Z—those aged between 14 and 29—have made history by marching to Jantar Mantar in large numbers, calling themselves 'cockroaches', to demand changes in the education system, including the resignation of the education minister. It's fascinating to see that the last phase of Goa's freedom struggle was also led by a similar age group, mainly those born in the 1920s and 30s, often referred to as the 'Greatest Generation' or 'Silent Generation.' However, this Greatest Generation did not stay silent; they protested loudly and proudly in the streets of Goa back then, at the same age as today's youth. It is essential for today's Gen Z to learn from this inspiring history and move forward with a strong spirit to protect Goa and our country, ensuring they do not repeat the mistakes of past leaders.

Why only 64 days? And how can one day, the 18th of June, encompass 64 days? It is because '18 June 1946' was not a mere date; it was a phenomenon. This historic phenomenon lasted for 64 days. During his court-martial, Dr T B Cunha made a brief statement where he aptly described this phenomenon:

"...the movement is neither directed nor organised. This movement is spontaneous and based on the discontent of

the masses, which is economic in nature, stemming from issues such as supply shortages, unemployment, and others. Even Dr Lohia... started the demonstrations but was pushed by the crowd to take the action he did. For the people, the movement was not about demanding civil liberties, but merely about economic matters. It was Dr Lohia and those who followed him who steered the movement toward civil liberties."

These 64 days are documented and analysed from this perspective. Was the mass upsurge on 18th June—now called the Goa Revolution Day—aimed only at the issue of civil liberties? Or was it more economic in nature? What prompted the people, not from Madgao alone but from the whole Christian-dominated Salcete, to spontaneously come out onto the roads fearlessly, despite the terror let loose by the fascist regime of Salazar's Portugal? And then Panaji, Ponda, Vasco, Mormugao, Tiswadi, Bardez, and even Bombay? What was the political and economic situation in the 1940s that exploded in response to Dr Rammanohar Lohia's daring act of breaking the ban on public speaking? Why and how did it spread like a prairie fire?

It was a tiresome and complicated exercise to document all these facts as authentically as possible, since they are not all found in one place. Most freedom fighters have written memoirs with little regard for accurate dates, places, and even circumstances. A few others, like the voluminous official document written by Manohar Hirba Sardesai, are one-stop destinations for most events, but they are mere commentaries. Some facts are not found in any book written by a Goan freedom fighter or in government publications, but only in the special volume on the Goan freedom struggle documented by the Maharashtra Gazetteer. Veteran freedom fighters like Dr Pundalik Gaitonde or P P Shirodkar have analysed the entire independence movement very well, but both gave little importance to the spontaneous upsurge of the masses after 18th June. In fact, they deliberately concealed some ugly facts and bitter truths about the movement. Marathi books, especially those by J. S. Sukhatankar and a rare book by Dattatray Venkatesh Pai, have exposed these ugly facts. But to get a clearer picture, I had to dig

up facts by reading articles written by freedom fighters in newspapers and souvenirs released on different occasions of Goa's freedom movement—such as the Silver Jubilee of 18th June or when Dr Lohia came to Goa—as well as conventions and conferences held by freedom fighters' organisations. Still, I feel some facts might have been missed; I apologise for that.

I always wondered why common people had to take to the roads on 18th June, especially in such large numbers, during the rainy season, over the issue of civil liberties. The literacy rate in Goa in the 1940s was less than 10 per cent, and most of the literate were in the cities. More than Christians, the school-going children were found in the Hindu community. Except for the Brahmin and Chardo classes, the remaining Christian communities did not study beyond the compulsory primary education in Portuguese. Issues of civil liberties—such as freedom of expression, the freedom to write and read, and the freedom to speak—most affected the highly educated class. But here, on 18th June, the people who had gathered in Madgao were largely from the Christian-dominated Salcete taluka. They were not in the forefront, but were the general mass—the 'furious crowd' which we witness even today. And the actions that followed spontaneously after 18th June were more frequent in the Christian-dominated villages of the Old Conquests than in the Hindu-majority New Conquests. Even in Bombay, where more Christians than Hindus lived, thousands attended Dr Lohia's rally and a historic procession of 5,000 Goans. Because, as Dr Cunha pointed out, it was more of an economic issue, which also affected Goans living in British India as well as emigrants. It was steered toward civil liberties by Dr Lohia and local leaders. I have tried to tackle this angle in the book by analysing the eco-political situation during the Republic and the post-Republic fascist era.

Goa, Daman, Diu, Dadra, and Nagar Haveli were tiny Portuguese colonies in India, which Pandit Nehru described as "pimples on the face of India." But the issue of their freedom was not tiny. National leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, and even Dr Lohia brushed aside the issue of Goa's freedom, presuming that the Portuguese would quit India as soon as the British regime ended in 1947. But during these 64 days, they realised and even experienced

the international dimension of the issue. The Anglo-Portuguese alliance of the 14th century continued, and its echoes were even heard at the UN during this period. I have tried to tackle this briefly to help readers realise the worldview of the tiny Portuguese colonies in India. I have also included a revelation about the nature of Salazar's fascist regime that Goa experienced in the 20th century and how relevant it is today, in the 21st century.

Last but not least is the crucial issue of internal fights among the leaders, which undermined the spontaneous movement of the common masses and prevented it from becoming a strong movement for Goa's freedom. Would Goa have been freed even before India's freedom, given the mass upsurge it witnessed during these 64 days? Why did it not happen? What were the obstacles? Who created these hurdles? Why were the leaders fighting amongst themselves? Who benefited from it? I have tried to dig as deep as possible to find answers to these questions because they remain relevant even today, when the masses protest, and leaders defuse it. We need to study this history to learn from these mistakes and not repeat them.

THE 20-YEAR SAGA

Strangely, we have been witnessing this phenomenon every 20 years. After the Republic ended in 1926 and the dictatorial regime began, the explosion occurred in 1946. This final phase of the independence movement bore fruit. Goa was liberated and became part of free India in 1961. Freedom fighters were the heroes at that moment. They had a defined vision for Goa. But sadly, it was still a divided house in the first elections of 1963, held for the Assembly and the Lok Sabha. Rather than leading from the front, they followed other party leaders. For the 28 Assembly seats of Goa, a total of 39 freedom fighters contested. Only 10 among them could win. The Congress was headed by a veteran freedom fighter, Purushottam Kakodkar. They lost all the seats, which included 18 freedom fighters. In fact, due to the pro-landlord strategy pursued by the national party's local leadership, many freedom fighters left and joined the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), which won 16 seats, with 2 going to its alliance partner, the Praja Socialist Party (PSP). Six of the MGP winners were freedom fighters, in addition to the PSP

freedom fighter candidates. The United Goans Party (UGP) also fielded four freedom fighters, and two among them won. The Frente Popular, the Communists in disguise, had six freedom fighters among its eight candidates; they, too, lost miserably. For the two Lok Sabha seats, four freedom fighters contested: two from the Congress, one from the PSP, and one independent. The PSP candidate won in North Goa, with the support of the MGP. In fact, the PSP was the only party that had fielded only freedom fighters as its candidates. All three won the elections: two for the Assembly and one for the Lok Sabha. Due to this divided flock, Goa lost the opportunity for freedom fighters to rule the state.

After 1946, in free Goa, the state faced another major battle over the next 20 years. It was the Opinion Poll held on 16th January 1967 to decide on Goa's merger with Maharashtra. The actual battle was fought in 1966. Once again, the freedom fighters were divided on the issue and had become irrelevant in deciding Goa's political identity. The anti-mergerists won the fierce battle, in which nothing but the opinion of each and every individual *Goenkar* mattered. This opinion was created by five different groups that never came together: the Congress, the UGP, writers with the daily *Rashtramat*, Ulhas Buyao's *Jai Gomantak Kala Pathak*, and *Sangh Pradesh Jyot*, led by Shabu Desai, who was otherwise an MGP activist. Fresh Assembly elections were held within two months. The *Niz Goenkar*, who retained Goa's political identity, did not come together to fight the political battle for the Assembly. In fact, the UGP had split, the MGP had snapped ties with the PSP, and the Congress simply didn't contest. None of the writers or singers contested, except Shankar Bhandari, who garnered hardly 121 votes. Only the Dr Jack Sequeira-led UGP contested and once again won 12 seats, to sit in the opposition.

Goa remained separate, but as a Union Territory, ruled by New Delhi. It was neither a state nor did it have its own official state language. Within 20 years, the state experienced a historic mass agitation in 1986 for the official language and statehood. It lasted for 555 days. Finally, a compromise was reached to make Konkani the official language and to use Marathi for all official purposes. The official language bill was passed on 4th February 1987, and Goa was granted statehood on 30th May of the same year. The agitation was led by the *Konkani Porjecho Avaz* (KPA),

once again led by Konkani writers and artists from all genres, including Tiatrists. The KPA was actively supported (actually hijacked) by a major faction of the ruling Congress, as well as other political parties such as the Goa Congress and the Gomant Lok Pokx. Soon came the Assembly poll of 1989. Instead of turning this powerful force into a political entity, the KPA writers and artists preferred to merge the organisation with the Congress. None of the *Rajbhas* warriors was given tickets by the Congress. Some of the leaders who contested as Gomant Lok Pokx lost. Once again, the saviours of Goa missed the opportunity to come to power.

Yet again, after 20 years, there was a mass upsurge in 2006. A series of defections to topple the governments were nothing but part of the "business of politics" to convert and sell Goa's green land. It reached its height with the Regional Plan 2011. A statewide agitation led by Goa Bachao Abhiyan (GBA) compelled the Congress government to scrap the RPG11. It coincided with the Assembly elections in 2007. It was not only a green movement but a political outburst all across Goa. But instead of converting it into a political force for change, the GBA leaders parted ways as some elements within the organisation began to doubt their integrity. Due to these petty internal squabbles and disintegration, Goa once again missed the bus of having genuine leaders rule the state, even though people were all prepared for a change.

Once again, after 20 more years, the whole state is fuming today, with elections round the corner. "Enough is Enough", shout the masses aloud, all along the length and breadth of Goa. Across all political parties, land dealers are busy selling Goa, with strange bedfellows belonging to both the ruling and opposition benches in the Goa Assembly.

At this juncture, this book attempts to analyse the first mass upsurge in Goa in 1946. Due to internal squabbles, opportunism, petty ambitions, and a lack of political skill to feel the real pulse of the masses, the mass movements were punctured, and, unfortunately, the same politicians were voted back to power. Will history repeat itself? Or will we learn from the past mistakes and write a new chapter in Goa's history by fulfilling people's aspirations?

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