

How Goa Resisted Culturally For 500 Years: Local Indian Culture in a Harsh Environment

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Goa before the arrival of Portuguese had institutions of gram sabhas and mahajan sabhas. Albuquerque conquered Goa in 1510. Muslim population was put to the sword, and women captured. Hindu temples were razed to the ground - no vestige left today except in museums and memoirs.

Conversions began in 1541 with concerted efforts by lay and church authorities to lusitanise - conversion by offering gifts, and other material benefits. Physical and moral violence, coercive conversion of orphans, expulsion of infidels and demolition of temples authorized, imposition of Portuguese language, habits and customs. Laws proclaiming Portuguese king's order to destroy all temples were set in motion, and temple properties handed over to college of St. Paul. Viceroy's orders to throw out Brahmins marked the beginning of ethnic cleansing.

Advent of tribunal of the Inquisition in Goa was established in 1560. Hindus were tried and convicted after being accused of preventing conversion. Villages were deserted, fields flooded, commerce ruined, public coffers empty. Viceroy authorized the Portuguese captain to set fire to all the temples. More than 288 temples were destroyed. People took shelter in areas beyond the effective control of the Portuguese. Hindu sacred places were profaned with viscera and blood of cows. Religious ceremonies were banned. Forbidden were marriages per Hindu rites, riding on horses, use of palanquin and coloured umbrellas.

Brahmin leaders were targeted for conversion with promises for high posts. Some Brahmins who were opportunists converted, majority preferred to leave behind their properties and flee outside Goa to territories loyal to their religion. Hindus were not opposed to Christianity, but did not want to leave their religion. Relentless conversion action continued with orphans forcibly taken and baptized and catechized by Christian priests.

Edict of the Goa Inquisition ordered compliance of several prohibitions, such as age-old customs of Hindus; denouncing was encouraged; perjurers made a living by blackmail. Viceroy reported large scale migration and ruin of commerce. Eventually Hindus became free from oppression on declaration of republic. Hindus and Christians were drawn to the freedom movement in India. Goa liberated from Portuguese rule on 19 December 1961 - four hundred and fifty one years since their arrival.

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