

International Migration, Goan Diaspora and the Caste Dynamics in Goa: A Structuration Approach

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ABSTRACT

The Goan Diaspora emerges out international migration, which is a three hundred year old phenomenon. The birth of the Goan Diaspora is centered around the socio-economic changes brought about in 'Goa' due to the process of Portuguese Colonization for 451 years. The colonization of Goa contributed to the disruption of the ganvkari and caste system. However, the upper caste continued with their hegemony for the entire period of Portuguese rule.

In this paper a humble attempt is being made to present the role of Goan Diaspora in the upward social mobility of the left-behind family members. This is made possible due to the socio-economic linkages of the Goan diaspora with the sending society. We would like to present the upward social mobility as a dialectic process that 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 showcased through the emergence of 'dominant class'. The 'Dominant class' which comprises of the 'diasporic' 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. The culture of migration is a duality centered around the agency and agents thereby resulting in the transformation of caste structure to class structure. The analytical framework is based on Anthony Gidden's Structuration theory.

KEY WORDS: International Migration, Goa, Goan Diaspora, Caste, Class, Structuration.

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 to the 20th century by the Portuguese rule. The Goan Diaspora is a product of the Goan emigration that can be broadly classified in to colonial period (early 16th till the first half of the 20th century) and post colonial (1961 till date). Goan emigration thus has a commonality when compared to Indian emigration (Jayaram, 2004). However, the reasons for migration in the colonial and post colonial period differ for Goa in comparison to India. The reasons being religious persecution, the policy of no development by the Portuguese and the confiscation of lands belonging to the village communes, whereas, for India the

reason for migration was employment opportunities in different colonies of the western powers. Goan migration was neither indentured like India nor promoted or sponsored by the government. The Goan migrants were free and had to pay for themselves. Thus, the historical context and the reasons for emigration from Goa to the different parts of the world makes Goan migration unique as compared to India. Hence, Goan Diaspora is a unique category as compared to the Indian Diaspora. The Goan Diaspora refers to “people who are of Goan origin who have migrated, settled or scattered away from Goa and who maintain their links with their families, villages, socio-cultural organization and institutions, have thoughts of returning and who keep coming to Goa either to reunite with their family members or just for the love of the mother land (Brubaker, 2005). In the researchers opinion the Goan Diaspora comprises of two categories of international migrants. The first category is of individuals and families of Goan origin who have settled in foreign countries and want to comeback. Second consist of those who stay away from Goa in foreign countries or international waters for more than six months and who come and go back but don't reside permanently.

Further, The Goan diaspora is spread in 130 countries of the world that number close to 400,000 thousand Goans of which vast majority of the Goan Disapora consists of Christians (74 percent), followed by Hindus (20 percent) and Muslims (6 percent) (GMS, 2008) . In our study we have consider only to the Christians because of the history of migration among the Christians and the population composition of the field.

The colonization of Goa and Assolna, Velim, and Cuncolim by the Portuguese led to the transformation of Gaonkari to Communadade thereby reducing the system to the economic aspect. 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 (Sequeira, A., & Henn, A. (2001, April 25-28). 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 of AVC in particular found a great opportunity during the Anglo Portuguese treaty of 1878 and the British occupation of Goa during the Napoleonic wars. The Anglo-Portuguese treaty allowed the British ships to be anchored in Goa. As there was a need for staff on these ships, Goans were hired. When the ships left Goa for British India, the Goan staff also accompanied. The treaty also developed railways in Goa, which was of great significance in terms of communication, transport and travelling to British India. The majority of the people who migrated were Roman Catholic men, 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 (Mascarenhas-Keys, 2011). This process of international migration that saw large scale migration in the 19th century AVC, radically reshaped the social, cultural and economic context in which migration took place in the future generation. The ‘mobility transition’ (Zelinsky, 1971) 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 diapsora'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) presents 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. 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.

METHODOLOGY

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 forty 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 interview method involved the preparation of a guide by the researcher that helped in the eliciting of responses that denoted the interviewee's experience of the phenomena that was being investigated (Kyale, 1996, p.11). Varied interpretations of the role of diaspora in socio-cultural dynamics were generated through the responses of different interviewees. Nevertheless, getting people to speak about their lives was a difficult task, the researcher however, was able to get a sizeable number of respondents through the technique of snowball sampling, wherein one person lead me to another (Scheyvens & Storey, 2003, p.47). A total number of thirty interviews were undertaken depending on the availability and willingness of different categories of people as per the need of the objectives of the study. However, the total number of thirty interviews was not chosen on the basis of any rule, although the rule for undertaking qualitative study involves a sample of five to twenty five respondents (Cresswell, 2007, p. 60-64). The number of interviews was based on the sampling technique of Denzin and Lincoln (1994). The sample included participants from all the castes groups.

Further, the interviews were semi-structured and a very friendly atmosphere was provided to the interviewees (Bryman, 2008). However, while undertaking the interviews of the cases there were a few constraints that researcher faced, these constraints involved completing the interview in one go, cancellation of the interview or at times refusal on the part of the interviewee although they had initially agreed.

The researcher made use of the ethnographic strategy of participant observation because of his life world involvement in the villages of AVC for the last twenty years. Further, sliding to autobiography his own experience of the phenomena could be best documented. 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 (Bryman, 2008).

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

1. CASTE DYNAMICS

The caste dynamics is a result of six factors i.e. international migration, Change from agricultural and traditional occupational dependency to service dependency, Sanskritization, Intergenerational upward social mobility, diminishing rigidity of caste based occupation and diminishing caste endogamy. These factors have led to the transformation from Caste to Class. The Transformation from Caste to class has been a gradual process that is based on the emergence of new culture among the dominant class or class of international migrants (Goan Diaspora). This class of international migrants are made up of all the caste groups and are dominant not only due to the share number but also due to the influence the 'Diaspora Class' has on the varied socio-cultural aspects of the villages of Assolna, Velim and Cuncolim.

2. FROM CASTE TO CLASS: THE RISE OF THE DIASPORA ELITE IN AVC

The emergence of a new dominant class among Goan diaspora families in AVC is rooted in cultural and economic exchanges with their migrant relatives. Traditionally, caste defined social status, but international migration has restructured this hierarchy, making wealth and lifestyle the new markers of prestige.

Migration has become the primary means of upward mobility, with remittances playing a key role in improving living standards. These funds fuel consumerism, house renovations, and nuclear family structures, reshaping social dynamics. Education, particularly English-medium schooling, is prioritized to prepare children for global opportunities, reinforcing the cycle of migration.

Diaspora families exert influence through sponsorship of village events, church donations, and grandeur in celebrations. Their financial contributions secure social prestige, compelling non-migrant Goans to emulate them despite economic strain. The granduerization of weddings and religious functions, once simple affairs, now mirrors the lavish style of diaspora elites, intensifying social competition.

This transformation signifies a shift from caste-based social positioning to a class system driven by economic affluence. The 'diaspora elite' have become AVC's dominant class, setting cultural trends that others feel pressured to follow. This new hierarchy, shaped by global exposure and material wealth, highlights the profound impact of migration on Goan society (Moraes, 2017)

3. THE EMERGENCE OF THE NEW SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Goan diaspora has significantly altered the social structure of Assolna, Velim, and Cuncolim (AVC), shifting from a caste-based hierarchy to a class-based stratification. Historically, the AVC society was organized along caste lines, with the Chaddos (dominant caste) and the Sudras/Mundcars/Kunbis (subordinate castes) occupying distinct social positions. However, international migration since 1952 has transformed this structure. Migrants, particularly from subordinate castes and economically weaker sections, have improved their socio-economic status through remittances and cosmopolitan exposure, enabling them to emulate the dominant caste in lifestyle and occupation. This phenomenon has resulted in the emergence of 'social clones,' where previously marginalized groups have adopted characteristics of the elite, leading to a decline in traditional caste distinctions (Moraes, 2017)

A major consequence of migration has been the vacating of traditional blue-collar occupations, now largely undertaken by migrant laborers from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh. These

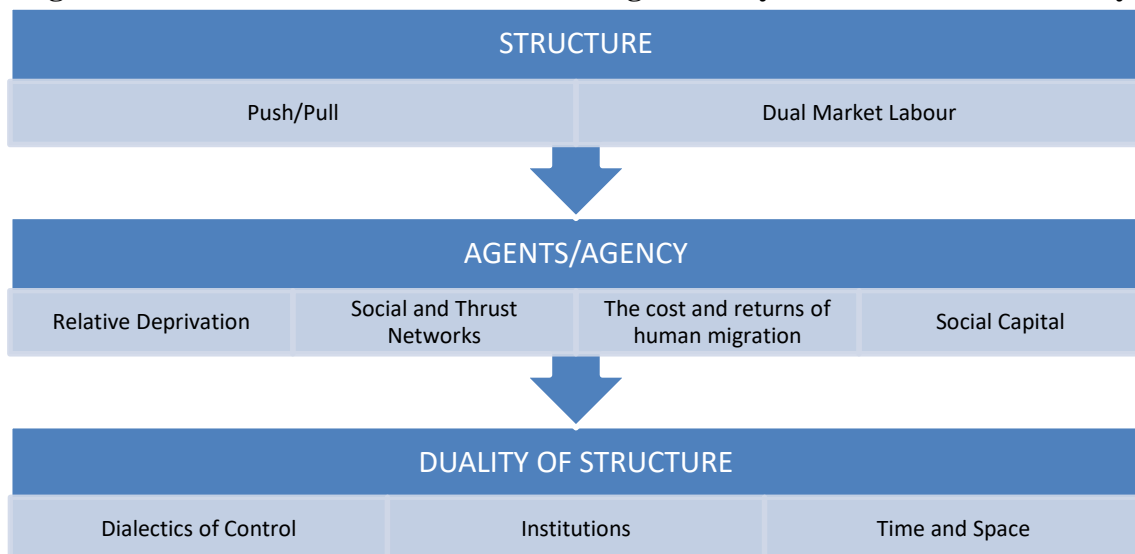
migrants occupy subordinate roles similar to those once held by local lower castes, effectively replacing them in the socio-economic hierarchy. Meanwhile, the Goan diaspora, comprising all castes, has formed a new 'diaspora elite' class. Their financial contributions, including investments in housing and religious institutions, have elevated their status in local society (Crawford, 2001). This elite class has bridged the historical caste gap and created a new stratification system based on wealth rather than caste (De Haas, 2003).

Although this transformation has contributed to socio-economic disparities between diaspora and non-diaspora Goans, the impact is localized to AVC and cannot be universally applied to Goan society. Furthermore, the socio-cultural benefits of migration often encourage non-migrants to seek opportunities abroad, reinforcing migration as a mechanism for social mobility (McMurry, 2001).

4. TOWARDS A STRUCTURATION APPROACH

Before attempting any study relating to diaspora, it is important to look the distinct factors in the sending society and receiving societies that contributes to the genesis of any Diaspora. This consideration gathers significance when the sending societies have undergone transformation due to the process of colonization. As in such societies the historical and geographical factors helps us in comprehending the contemporary socio-political and economic changes. In our study we have already seen in chapter three, that how colonization of Goa by the Portuguese from the 16th century, led to the development of the phenomena of migration both pre-liberation and post-liberation Goa. Drawing upon the theory of structuration, the distinctive character of the sending society and the process of migration helps us to believe that varying motives of migration contributes to varying diasporas. Therefore, there cannot be a universal thought with reference to Diaspora, as each place through which the diaspora emerges is distinct and the same holds true for AVC and Goa. Though, there could be similarities among different countries with reference to the factors that contribute to the genesis of international migration, having a grand universal theory of migration is problematic as every country is distinct. Therefore, Gidden's structuration theory in understanding the role of diaspora in the dynamics of the Catholic AVCian society is not an attempt to present a grand universal theory of migration and diaspora, but rather a humble attempt in having an in depth understanding of the phenomena of international migration and the socio-cultural structuration brought about by the diaspora on the sending society.

Figure 1.1 Structuration Process contributing to the Dynamics of AVCian Society



A look at the figure 1.1 contributes to the curiosity in knowing what does the figure mean? The figure is the theoretical framework on which this study is based. Let us have a closer look to clear our ambiguities. The word 'structure' as per Giddens refers to as, "rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems...it exists in memory traces, the organic basis of human knowledgeability instantiated in action" (Giddens, 1984). A closer look at this definition presents several aspects to it, the most important being 'recursive'. In our study taking into account the historical perspective, the structure refers to the caste system, the system of administration, family, religious and economic system in the village, where in all these aspects as a whole makes up the structure and helps us in understanding why do people migrate at the macro-level. The reasons for diaspora at the macro-level can be explained through Lee's push and pull factors and the dual labour market theory. When we think of who migrates, we reach to the level of agents/agency. The agent is 'knowledgeable and capable subject' (Cloke, 1991, p.97). In this theory Giddens presents that the agents perform actions that have certain meaning or intention, as the agent is completely aware of the goal of the actions. Giddens states that every single action is 'intentional' (Giddens, 1979). Thus, under the structuration project of Giddens, agents are of great prominence because they are knowledgeable and the actions that they perform have well defined purpose. In our study the 'agents' refers to Goan Diaspora. The Goan diaspora refers to people who are of Goan origin who have migrated, settled or scattered away from their established or ancestral homeland that is Goa and who maintain their links with their families, villages, socio-cultural organization and institutions and have thoughts of returning and who keep coming to Goa either to reunite with their family members or just for the love of the mother land. These knowledgeable and capable subjects migrate for various individual reasons. At the micro level the reasons for the emergence of diaspora can be explained with the help of the relative deprivation theory and the social capital theory, wherein it was seen how Catholic Goans in AVC irrespective of caste migrated to different regions of the world, this need to migrate emerged only when they felt relatively deprived to a reference group within the AVCian society, the need to migrate also emerged out of the need develop individual merit by investing in education. The outcome and risk involved with diaspora were explained with the help of Social network and thrust theory and the cost and returns of human diaspora. These theories point out to us that the cost of diaspora comes at a price which may be high or low. The high price would be the issues associated with diaspora and the left behind and the low price would mean the gains as a result of diaspora and their linkages.

In Giddens structuration theory and its application to our migration theory we find next the concept of 'duality of structure' According to Giddens (1979), the duality of structure, "relates to the basic recursive character of social life, that shows the mutual dependence of structure and agency" (Giddens, 1979, p. 69). This mutual dependence of structure and agency further contributes to the changes in the society through the dialectical relationship between the structure and agency.

Thus, in our study the process of diaspora stems from the structure and the agency. This interaction between the structure that pushes (agents to migrate) and agency that decides to (migrate) influences change in the sending society, the society of the diasporas origin. This change has been discussed elaborately under the institution of caste in this paper. We see that in the institutional changes have been inflicted by the agents (Goan diaspora) in dual process. This dual process involves the changes that have been initiated by the Goan diaspora in the recursive character of social life i.e. caste, family and marriage, which has contributed to the establishment of the seven hallmarks within the left behind families of the diaspora. When certain practices with the institution of caste, family nad marriage has

been changed due to the influence of Goan diaspora, these practices as discussed under caste, family and marriage have become recursive over a period of time, this recursive nature of the new practices initiated by the Goan diaspora in the institution of caste, family and marriage have formed a pattern, thereby forming a new structure.

The change in the societal structure is related to the 'dialectics of control' which refers to "every actor has the power to persuade the structuration of the society". The actor who has no power is not an agent. (Giddens, 1984, p.70-74). In our study, the diaspora who are the actors influence the structuration of their society of origin. These actors use certain 'social institution' which according to Cohen (1989) refers 'regular practices that form a routine and are widely held and recognized collectively' (Cohen, 1989, p. 39). The agents in the given society make use of these 'routinised practices' to institutionalise them and contribute to change. In our study we seen how the routine practices of caste, family and especially marriage have been changed by the influence of Goan diaspora, the change in these practices have influenced the other Roman Catholic Goans of AVC in general. Thus, these practices are now carried out and recognized by majority of the members belonging to AVC. Thereby, contributing the structuration of the caste based structure to class based structure in AVC.

The structuration process does not take place in space or in quick time. The process of change is gradual; the change is to be understood with reference to 'time and space relations'. In AVC the structuration process is spread across a time of 175 years. Thus, the constitution, or development, of society is bound not only into the people and the structure of the society, but the structuration of society is also influenced by the historical and geographical processes that influence a society

CONCLUSION

Diaspora and remittances have enabled significant emancipation of individuals belonging to former socially subaltern groups i.e. Mundcars/Sudras/Kunbis as well as the poor from the Chaddi Caste in our case. Throughout AVC in Goa, 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 (Ensel, 1999). 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 (Crawford, 2001). The migrant elite class is formed due to a duality of recurrent practices in the form of the seven hallmarks that have in turn contributed to the emergence of the structure of the culture of diaspora household spread across time and space. 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 and the culture they display i.e the seven hallmarks. This development has prompted the members of the dominant caste who did not feel the need to migrate to 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 (McMurry, 2001). 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 serve the two upper classes consisting of the 'class of 'Diaspora elite' and 'non-migrant Goan'.

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