

THANK YOU GOA!

You have retained your charm and continue to fascinate visitors

By Menin Rodrigues (Karachi, Pakistan)



Thank you GOA! You have retained your charm and continue to fascinate me. Your people (and now me too for quite many years) love you deep within. Your glory, majesty and charisma are your heartbeat - be what you are, have been and will be in the future.

Amidst all the drumming of what Goa is today and what it should be, **that's all I can say to a blessed land and its adorable people** – simply because there is a connect between us.

My recent two weeks here were as enjoyable, absorbing and gratifying as they have been on two other visits. It takes me back in time. This time however, there was more to see, research and experience as I drove freely through the winding village roads (as good as any in urban cities) and towering coconut trees to meet people, share their joys and observe the ever-changing infrastructural character of Goa.

There seemed to be an unbridled urgency in making Goa a destination of a different kind than what Goans are accustomed to and which may not be necessary. **I hope and pray for Goa to sustain its glorious exquisiteness and alluring magnetism for visitors like us.**

I also felt blessed to be here as Goa celebrated with much love and reverence the sainthood of Blessed Joseph Vas, the proverbial son of Goa and patron of Sri Lanka. The visit to his birth place in the village in Benaulim and the sanctuary in the Sancoale village where he started his missionary work, including the spring-water trough of St. Joseph Vas and the peeling of church bells in all of Goa at the stroke of 9.00 a.m. on January 14, 2015 was indeed, a rare and heart-warming experience for me.

Now that Goa has one of its own as a Saint, I am sure there would be one more reason for overseas Goans to come 'home' to celebrate the feast days of both saints Joseph Vas and Francis Xavier! **For Pakistani Goan pilgrims, both feast days (Dec 3 and Jan 16) fall well within the 3-month visa restriction!**

Attending Mass in Konkani at 7.00 am on each of the 14 days I was in Goa was another gift of divine grace. My cousins suggested timings of the English masses but I could do that in Karachi and preferred the Konkani services, which was indeed a novelty for me. Many, many moons ago, we used to have Konkani masses back home but all that is now a faded memory. While meeting some of the priests **I invited them to visit Karachi to encourage the local Diaspora to regain its true Goan spirit!**

What impressed me most at Mass were the loud unifying responses of the congregation, as well as joining the choirs in the singing – the church reverberates in awesome testimony of reverence of the faithful.

At our Colva church I requested the choir to sing **“Zuze Zuze, Amchea Bhava”** – the hymn dedicated to St. Joseph Vas, so that I could record it and possibly introduce the same in our churches in Karachi. I hope I am able to do this when I return. It seems difficult though as the Goan Diaspora is miniscule in comparison to the large numbers of Urdu-speaking Catholics in Karachi, and elsewhere in Pakistan.

Moving on, one of my research plans was to ascertain the similarities in the design elements of the Monument to Christ the King (1931) in Karachi and the Cristo Rei (Christ de King) monument in the Assolna village in Salcete. My curiosity was to find out if the designer was the same person (Mr. M.X. Andrade designed the Karachi edifice) or two different people, and if

different, who was inspired by whom! **It was confirmed by Mr. Bennet Paes of Assolna, whose grandfather built it, that the Goa monument was an inspiration from the Karachi monument and was completed & blessed in 1937!**

When I visited Bardez in the north to trace my mother's family in the Candolim village, I was fascinated with the opulent interior of Our Lady of Hope Church, and with life in that part of Goa. It was quite vibrant and colorful as my enterprising friend Claudio Pacheco entertained me to a super lunch-fare in his Parra home, and then a whirlwind tour of Calangute and Baga beaches, and the Saligao village and its distinctive Church. Goa has few sidewalks for pedestrian use but this I saw happening in the north which is a good development.

Talking of developments, garish housing schemes are coming up all over the state, some planned meticulously while others not very appealing. Notwithstanding the commercial intent of developers and the need for upgraded homes with modern amenities, concerted efforts must be made to protect the heritage and uniqueness of Goa. In any case, Goa Tourism needs to be commended for the excellent network of roads.

Coming to my culinary experiences while in Goa our daily intake had increased so much that a polite 'no thank you' would upset our hosts. Everyday there were four to six different dishes for our choosing, each one tastier than the other. **A variety of luscious fish with red masala a specialty of my Cousin Rafael's restaurant was simply irresistible!**

While on the subject of fish, a visit to the fish market in Margao was intriguing. Fish, fish and more fish, lobsters, clams, mussels, crabs of many kinds, and to top it all the women in the stalls! How cool it was to see these fishmongers dressed festively in colorful outfits, hair combed neatly with fresh flowers, and loads of gold jewelry – necklaces, bangles, earrings, rings – wow! They were so friendly, courteous, with each one having a sales-pitch that could entice any first-timer like me to buy the whole catch!

That afternoon, we drove to Martin's Corner and enjoyed a delectable array of food and drink in the company of, apparently, the who's who of Goa. I thought I would brush shoulders with Sachin, Amitabh or Shahrukh but ended up dining with some hoity-toity folks in flashy cars.

My experiences this year were as diverse as in celebrating the 100TH birthday of Dumelina Mascarenhas e Rodrigues in my ancestral village of Colva to the First Holy Communion celebrations of family friends in Vasco and Margao. The centenary landmark was a fabulous occasion as 1000 people who attended the afternoon luncheon bee-lined to greet the grand-

old-dame who nonchalantly 'blessed' every individual (including me!) as we wished her another 100 years!

At the magnificent Ravindra Bhavan cultural complex in Margao we attended the 3-hour theatr called '*Undhir Muje Mama*' with a full house of 1000 people. It was a long cherished wish that came true as I had not attended a Theatr on previous visits. **The last time I attended a Theatr was in Karachi almost 45 years ago!!** The play was well-written, had a good plot, good acting, and lively music; it was hilarious too as we burst into splits of laughter. The solos and duets highlighted many a family, communal and state issues. **I would like to invite Theatr Groups of Goa to Karachi on cultural visits. We would be happy to host you!**

On the same day within a space of another hour, we were treated to the blockbuster movie "*Nachoyiam Kumpasar*" based on the life of the legendary Goan crooner Lorna! What an epic movie, nostalgic, loved the screen play and the actors/acting and the quality of production. Apparently, the movie is hot out of the blocks and tickets were hard to get but somehow we were lucky to get a few. **Adieu Goa, until we meet again!**

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Menin Rodrigues (menin100@gmail.com) is a historian, social worker and entrepreneur in Karachi, Pakistan. He has traced the history of Goans in Pakistan dating back to 1815 (www.goansofpakistan.org).