

APPENDIX III

THE IN-BETWEEN PLACES

Panaji

The etymology of this name is hotly disputed. Panaji, Panjim once — and still the preferred appellation by many Goans — figured for the first time as 'Pahajanikhali' in the copper plate inscription of the Kadamba King Tribhuvanmalla, also known as Vijayaditya, dated February 7, 1107 (Etymology of Village and Place Names' in *People of India - Goa*, Volume XXI). Supposedly the word described the charitable deeds, *Purta Dharmas*, of Gandgopal Kelima, who was then administrating the area. Other etymological theories abound. Dr. V. T. Gune in *Gazetteer of Goa, Daman And Diu*, Vol I claims that *panja* (the root of Panaji) means a small boat in Sanskrit and *khali* mean a canal or a creek. José Nicolau de Fonseca, on the other hand, mentions in *An Archaeological and Historical Sketch of the City of Goa* that Panaji, then (1879) known as *Ponji*, was the vernacular word for "arable land that cannot be inundated". Dr. P. P. Shirodkar, the director of the Goa Department of Archives and Archaeology, refutes Fonseca's theory on the ground that Panaji then was "almost a cluster of islets with marshy and not arable lands" and suggests that Gune misread Palajanikhali as Panjanikhali and arrived at an incorrect conclusion. Instead, he theorizes that Panaji then was part of the Taleigaon village, and Panaji meant nothing more than the "extreme end" of the village.

The Adil Shah Palace: The Palace, also known as the Idalcão, and presently the State Secretariat and the Legislative Assembly, in the heart of the city, built right over the *Mandovi*, was once the fort of Adil Khan, the Sultan of Bijapur. It was captured by the Portuguese in 1510 and served as the Portuguese Governor General's residence. It once had, according to French traveller François Pyrard de Laval (1570-1621), very good lodgings and was where the incoming viceroys/governors resided till they were sworn in. Today, it is a chaotic assemblage of government offices. From the Adil Shah Palace to Fontainhas (also known as Mala, and often described as the city's Latin Quarter) is a 20-40 minute walk, depending, of course, on the reader's interests and stamina.

The Mhamai Kamat Mansion: Cheek-by-jowl with the Adil Shah Palace, in the heart of the city, is the sprawling 250-year-old Mhamai Kamat mansion. It is a monument to history. Heritage buffs see it as the only extant authentic specimen of Hindu architecture in the city. It is perhaps the best in its genre in Goa. Other comparable houses have been razed and in their stead multi-storied, often hideous, structures built. These were two of the internationally most famous Goan addresses.

The Mhamai's original surname is Kamat, the name of Gowd Saraswat farmers and landlords. They were great devotees of Goddess Mahamaya, one of the main deities of Guirdolim village, (the ruins can still be seen) and hence appended Mhamai to their name. The Mhamais were not only one of the three largest brokering houses on the West Coast of India but also engaged in diplomacy, intervening when occasion arose on behalf of the neighbouring Indian princes and their clients, and the rulers of the Portuguese Empire, decrepit by then but an empire nevertheless. They were privy to many secrets, the State's and their own, and had excellent relations, as good brokers must, with all their clients, however diverse their interests and their views on religion, politics and statecraft might have been.

Several Indian princes, particularly those with their seats close to Goa, like the Sawantwadis and the Kudals, were clients of the Mhamais. Once they had to broker the release of two Sawantwadi noblemen held by the Portuguese. The Sawantwadis and the Kudals had been at times at loggerheads and their relations with the Portuguese see-sawed according to exigencies. The Mhamais' was not an easy task, but they had a cool head and a large heart, the perfect combination for success in business and diplomacy.

The Mhamais at their prime traded in anything that had a source of supply accessible to them and a market anywhere in the world. So they traded in socks made by the inmates of the Anjediva (an island south of Goa) penitentiary and rated as the best in Asia, in slaves imported from Africa and opium produced in Malwa, now in Pakistan. And, of course, in textiles, faiences, artifacts... They were also state revenue farmers and occasionally, interpreters, translators and, as stated, agents of diplomacy.

The Mhamai house, tradition has it, was never locked, quite simply because it couldn't be locked from outside. It can only be bolted from within. In other words, it had to be at all times lived in. Its inner courtyard is one of the finest specimens of traditional Hindu architecture. It may no longer be the rendezvous of the elite, but when the Portuguese were here and at the peak of the family's business fortunes, the Governor General, their next door neighbour, would at times drop in. The river was much broader then. And the family's sail ships, in which they travelled for business, pleasure and rituals at Narve, the point of the holy confluence, stood at the ready just outside their door. The house was of strategic importance to the Mhamais. No one really knows how many rooms the house has. Once all the city's beggars were fed lunch by the family, a good, tasty and nutritious meal, and any student who could not find lodgings in the city or who not afford them, was entitled to free board and bed at the Mhamais. Some of those beneficiaries of the Mhamai largesse rose to high positions in business and various professions.

The Mhamais are a big family. Many of the members converted to Christianity and rose to positions of power, like the Gomes, the Gomes Pereiras and the Barbosas. But they still keep up the old ties. Now when they enter the house, to very effusive manifestations of love and kinship, the first thing they do is to remove their shoes and go to the *sanctum sanctorum*, where a rare and sacred shell is enshrined and pay their respects to the family deity.

The sacred shell too has a tale to tell: the late Dr. Pundalik Mhamai, the then *Maioral*, the senior-most member of the family, the *karta* in Indian usage, told me that an ancestor had in the course of his shipbroking chores, gone to the cabin of the chief mate of a Portuguese ship that had arrived from Mozambique. He saw on the sailor's desk, serving as a paperweight, a rare conch, with its opening to the right. Once, it is believed, Hindu gods had crossed the Indian Ocean. This shell, for him, was 'evidence' of it. "It probably had been left on the coast of Mozambique by a divine retinue," in Dr. Pundalik's view. His ancestor begged the chief mate to let him have the shell. "It is divine to me. It's just a paperweight to you." He offered to replace it with gold of its weight. But the Portuguese would hear none of it and in fact apologised. "I'm sorry your God was so terribly misused all this time." That shell, now fitted with a gold border and encrusted with precious stones, is enshrined in the *sancto sanctorum* of the Mhamai house. It is exposed for public veneration on the day of *Ananta Chaturdashi*, the eleventh day after the Ganesh festival, and huge crowds throng to pay obeisance.

The family's relations with the Portuguese could not be better or more cordial. The ladies of the house and their Portuguese counterparts were on intimate terms. They exchanged

recipes, at least such of the Portuguese delicacies that did not infringe the prohibitions of the Hindu religion. They were invited to the official receptions at the Palace even after the Governor General's residence was shifted to Palácio do Cabo in Dona Paula and the Mhamais' business fortunes had suffered a severe setback.

But on one point the Portuguese were firm. Neither the Mhamais nor any other Hindu resident of Panaji, could practise their religion in public. So, they evolved alternative liturgies. Ganesha had to be immersed at the end of the yearly rituals. They had the river all around them but were forbidden from performing the ceremony. Nor could they buy — or make — an idol. So they devised a 'paper Ganesha'. Ganesh was drawn on paper and it was stuck on the inner side of the lid of one of the huge wooden boxes that they kept in their storeroom - they had so many that the Ganesha box had to be marked with a special code; the other boxes also had their labels: rice, sugar, flour etc. On the day of the festival the coded box was opened and the deity propitiated, quietly, but solemnly nevertheless. And since they could not immerse the idol as prescribed by the ritual they instead immersed the offerings they had made, fruits and flowers, in a well that they had sunk in the house. The 'paper Ganesha', asserted Dr. Pundalik, was still in its secret place. And it is venerated to this day. He also showed us the well, a small, shallow and neat aperture in the ground.

The family had other rituals to perform and the liturgies of some of them could not be modified, lest they lost their meaning and purpose. So they went by their sail ships to Narve, which was part of Maratha territory. Cremations were particularly agonizing. They had to wait for night and as long as they had the body in the house they couldn't move out or eat any food. Normally those who attend a Hindu funeral leave the house in broad daylight. If not they have to remain in the house for twelve days. At the Mhamais' house this was a frequent occurrence. When night fell they lifted the bier into the boat and sailed to Narve, often against the tide and with contrary winds. But that was trouble worth taking, in Dr. Pundalik's view. The harsher the penance performed, the greater was the chance of the dear departed being favourably received in heaven.

A time came when the family's best calculations failed. So did their business. All that was left of a glorious past were their books of accounts and bundles of correspondence, some of them in tatters and no longer decipherable. The family made them over to the Xavier Centre of Historical Research, in Porvorim, a plateau across the river. There they are treasured and consulted by scholars from all over the world interested in trade in India two centuries ago.

The mansion, it is believed, had once belonged to a legendary beadmaker, a certain Pondekar. The Pondekars, it is believed, had been in the house from the time of the Sultan of Bijapur. Beads were extensively used by the Muslims for curtains, knick-knacks, necklaces and bracelets for the tenants of the *zenanas*, and the Pondekars supplied them. A visit to the Mhamais' mansion is still an aesthetic pleasure: past the little shop selling glass panes by the main portico, past a corridor where an ancient tailor, once the city's best shirt-maker, stitches furiously on his sewing machine, into an ample courtyard where the family (the most well-known of the mansion's residents is historian Shankar P. Mhamai) now entertains the hundreds that throng the house for the ritualistic meal served on *Ananta Chaturdashi*. Beyond is the typical Hindu kitchen, so typical once and now so rare a sight, that it was featured by Madhur Jaffrey in one of the BBC's cookery programmes celebrating India's 50 years of freedom. The glory of the Mhamai mansion may have faded, but it still has stories to tell.

The Church of the Immaculate Conception of Mary: It was erected, that is, given the status of a church, in 1660, according to the *Directory of the Archdiocese of Goa*. According to Padre Gabriel Saldanha (*História de Goa vol II História Arqueológica*), it was built before 1541, as a hermitage the exact date remaining unknown, according to Antonio de Menezes (*Goa - Notas Históricas vol I Pangim, através dos séculos*). Archbishop Dom Pedro Pacheco, claimed, in a letter dated January 10, 1714, found in *Monções do Reino* (the yearly reports written during the lay season, the monsoons), that it was "the first in the East," a claim open to doubt. Its most outstanding feature is its majestic staircase, which, according to some, reminds one of the much larger and older church of Braga in Portugal. But before it was instituted as a church it was a hermitage, but we could not find the date. It was rebuilt in 1870.

Altinho: The church is a landmark in more ways than one. Four roads meet at its footsteps. The road to the right leads to Altinho (Portuguese for small height, a hillock), the city's elitist district, once sparsely populated. Some of the old villas, most of them with a Mediterranean façade, still stand. New constructions now crowd the area, alas not all of them aesthetically impressive. In Altinho lived, till he was abducted and killed by the British intelligence agents in 1942, the German Consul General, Mr. Koch, a master spy who was responsible for the sinking of a large number of Allied Ships in the Indian Ocean. He operated through the transmitters of a German ship, the *Ehrenfels*, anchored at Mormugao Port, then Portuguese and, therefore, a neutral port. Along with the *Ehrenfels*, the other German merchant ships of the Hansa line, *Braunfels* and *Drachenfels*, and an Italian ship, the *Anfora*, had sought refuge in the Goan port at the outbreak of World War II. Koch and his accomplices, one of them a young Indian nationalist stationed at Bombay, a Bengali called Gupta, had sent to their doom, in a deadly spell of six weeks, 46 Allied ships with a total capacity of 250,000 tons. Eventually, Koch and his wife were kidnapped and shot dead in the woods of Castle Rock, a logging station on Goa's eastern border, then in British Indian territory. The Axis ships were scuttled in a daring operation by 14 volunteers of the Calcutta Light Horse and four from Calcutta Scottish, both of them part of the Auxiliary Forces and in their daily routine, executives and employees of British commercial establishments in Calcutta (James Leasor, *The Boarding Party*). It was a feat as remarkable for its daring as for its unprincipledness. It was an operation greatly lauded by Lord Mountbatten, who reaped its benefits when he was appointed, in July 1943, Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia. A film, *The Sea Wolves*, was made in 1980 on this World War II incident in Goa, with some big stars on the cast: Gregory Peck, Roger Moore, Trevor Howard and David Niven amongst others. The former German Consul's house still exists.

Altinho is still the residential district of the high and mighty. The Archbishop lives in the area. He has an imposing palace with a private chapel with an extremely well-crafted wooden altar, a parlour with exquisitely carved wood furniture, an impressive gallery of portraits of former prelates. He also has immense power and financial resources and runs some of Goa's best educational institutions. Here also live the Chief Minister, the ministers, the judges of the high court, top bureaucrats, the local capitalists and socialites. For whatever reason, the State's mental hospital, named the Institute of Psychiatry and Human Behaviour, is also located in the area.

Fontainhas: The road to the left of the church leads to Fontainhas, or Mala in its original appellation, described as Goa's Latin Quarter. It is a quaint, generally single-storied,

residential district, once the address of many a Goan aristocrat and intellectual. The ward's chapel, dedicated to St. Sebastian, is very beautiful. Among other icons, it has an exquisitely crafted image of Christ crucified. Its outstanding feature are its piercing eyes — piercing with reason: when the Tribunal of Inquisition exercised its awesome authority in Goa, and sentenced to torture and death the "heretics" and the "blasphemers", also the "sodomites", the hapless victims were ordered to look at that image and beg forgiveness in the hereafter.

On the abolition of the Inquisition, the crucifix was first transferred to the Governor's Palace when he resided in the Adil Shah Palace, and eventually, after Portugal became a republic in 1910 to St. Sebastian's Chapel.

Dona Paula: The road going from the church in the northerly direction leads to the market, a sight foreigners find amazing, the Campal, another elitist residential ward, the stadium, the Kala Academy, the Gaspar Dias beach (also known as Miramar) and Dona Paula, at the tip of which, on the headland facing the sea, stands *Palácio de Cabo*, renamed Raj Bhavan, which has been the Governor's residence since 1918. It was, previously, a convent of Reformed Franciscans. The palace has a private chapel, which is thrown open to the public every Sunday and on festive days, particularly August 15, because in the Catholic calendar, it is the day of Virgin Mary's ascension (alive) to heaven. The tombstone of Dona Paula, a Portuguese lady - the most chaste woman according to a version, according to another an impenitent seductress - can be seen in the chapel.

The legend of Dona Paula is worth recounting. Dona Paula is the most famous of the Portuguese sirens — and there are a good many of them. Legend has it that she was the lady-in-waiting of the Governor General's wife and in course of time the governor fell victim to her beauty and charms. They were found out, as adulterous lovers generally are. And the governor's enraged wife had her stripped, bound and rolled over the cliff into the sea. But in a way the governor's wife had been kind and allowed Dona Paula to keep her string of pearls, a gift of love from her confessor.

Whatever Dona Paula's special attributes might have been, the whole area, once a fishermen's cove, has been named after her. It now houses some of Goa's best hotels, India's premier scientific organisation, The National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), and is the most expensive and much-sought-after residential district. It is also the site of the British cemetery, a remnant of Goa's brief occupation by the British (1797-1813) at the peak of the Napoleonic wars. Further down the road, at the tip of the Cabo headland is the Governor's Palace, a magnificent Indo-Portuguese edifice. Right now, the Palace is being shored up. Most of its wooden beams have decayed and are being reinforced with steel trusses. The Cabo hill itself is shifting and is being "stitched up", a complicated engineering enterprise.

The Linhares Bridge: This masonry bridge, a remarkable engineering feat for the time, was built on the initiative of the Municipality of Goa in the regime of Dom Miguel de Noronha, Count of Linhares, the 23rd Viceroy, who governed Goa from October 1629 to December 1635. Legend has it that it was built by a Jesuit padre, "by the light of a single candle in just one night". It was actually built between 1633 and 1634. The fact remains that the bridge still stands, while the nearby Nehru Bridge built according to "modern" technology (Russian in this case) took more than 15 years to build and collapsed in less than 17 years. The bridge and the causeway, a total of 3.2 kms, links Panaji to Ribandar,

and through it, to Old Goa. It was built at a cost of £ 3,333. A rumour of the time was that the Viceroy had made money on it. Perhaps as the consequence, much to his anger, his effigy was once found hanging over the bridge!

Ribandar: Raibundar (Ribandar, the Royal Quay) is now just a pale memory. Raibundar, or the royal landing place, was at first corrupted into 'Rabandar', then 'Rebandar', and finally into Ribandar. In the monsoon of 1510, the Muhammadans, having taken back the city from Albuquerque, built here a redoubt. After the second capture of Goa by the Portuguese in the November of the same year, a house was built at Ribandar for a *thanedar*, an officer. This officer was enjoined to keep watch on the goods which passed through the river and collect taxes. Ribandar became the residence of many Portuguese noblemen once, since the city and the suburb of São Pedro had become unhealthy. The highlight of the area once was the Palace of the Count of Ribandar, built between 1640 and 1680, which has had a chequered history. For a while the palace was even converted into a bakery. The Count's heiress is said to have fallen in love with a local fisherman, and left no trail of herself. The Count's much-written-about chapel dedicated to St. Anthony, is in a dilapidated condition, but still retains much of its old beauty. The nuns who now own the chapel are desperately looking for benefactors who might help them restore it.

Ajuda Church: Nearby is the Parish Church dedicated to *Nossa Senhora de Ajuda*, Our Lady of Help. It is believed to have been built by a Portuguese merchant, "before 1623," probably in 1563, in fulfilment of a vow made to Our Lady when his ship, loaded with precious cargo, in dire straits, on the African coast, was saved by Our Lady. The original Ajuda Church is said to have been built on the exact dimensions of the ship. The church was rebuilt in 1711. It has a very interesting architecture which, at first sight, substantiates the legend that the edifice replicates the ship saved by Our Lady of Help. We thought we would offer the reader some excellent photographs of its interiors. But the Parish priest disregarded the authorization given to us by the Archbishop and unceremoniously showed our photographer the door.

Before the church was built, there was a hermitage (1551-1554) here, dedicated to Our Lady of Immaculate Conception. It was in this hermitage that the relics of St. Francis Xavier (more on him later) were temporarily kept on their arrival from Malacca, via Cochin, till the arrangements for a solemn ritual in the capital city of Goa were completed. Tradition has it that, on the arrival, in 1554, of the relics, then described officially as the Incorrupt Body, the bells of all the churches, from Ribandar to the city of Goa, pealed of their own accord.

Coming from Panaji, at the crossroads near the Ribandar Causeway, to the right is Chimbél, a village where, according to Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe, one of his ancestors, lived along with other Africans, two other lads of the royal family of Monomotapa who had accepted Christianity and was, probably, the first African royal to do so. (Padre António da Silva Rego, *Documentação para História das Missões Portuguesas no Oriente* in a monastery. This ancestor was eventually ordained a priest and said mass at the conventual house of Santa Bárbara. One of the other two Monotnatapa, it is believed, died in a tragic accident. Chimbél is also famous for its Charis (also known as Zos), who are excellent carvers of wood and once ivory. One of them, Waman, traces his origins to Bichon, the artist who sculpted the famous statue in "classic pose" of St. Francis Xavier, seen at the entrance

of the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Old Goa and most, if not all the altars of the city's sixteenth-century churches. The Charis now turn out exquisite carved furniture. But, as in the case of all good artists and craftsmen, they take their own time.

The work turned out by Goan woodcarvers is outstanding. "Elaborate workmanship, complicated skirts, twisted and turned" — that is how a leading Portuguese critic, Francisco Hipólito Raposo saw Indo-Portuguese woodwork. He was writing in an issue (dedicated to Indo-Portuguese art) of *Oceanos*, commemorating Portugal's 500 years at sea. The Charis prospered and flourished because the number of churches and shrines, and with them of altars, pews, pulpits, icons went on increasing phenomenally in the first three centuries of Portuguese domination. Closer to the end of the seventeenth and till the first half of the nineteenth century, Goan householders began to expand and rebuild their old houses and did it lavishly, uninhibited by modern constraints of space and economy. Andrew Ciechanowiecki, who wrote the three very competent chapters on Spain and Portugal for Helen Haywards' excellent *World Furniture: An Illustrated History* puts it felicitously: the patrons of those marvellous works of art lolled in "unearned wealth." Nor did they have, in their time, "as many luxuries (as today) competing for favour." They could, therefore, pursue their notions of grandeur, perfection and comfort with single-minded devotion. Luckily for us, many of the owners of the houses were also very imaginative and people of refined tastes.

Solar dos Colaços

Less than 100 metres down the road from the Ajuda Church, in the general direction of Old Goa, is one of Goa's most sumptuous mansions, perhaps the only one facing the river. Admission, of course, is subject to the owners' permission. Of late, the owners consent to their magnificent mansion being used, subject to their satisfaction, for receptions/parties and other celebrations.



It is a unique mansion. Built in baroque style with an imposing façade, it commands a spectacular view of the islands of Chorao and Divar and the historical churches of Old Goa. The mansion consists of two wings. Construction of the west wing was started around 1730

by João Colaço and was completed in 1745 by his son Nazário Colaço. This part of the house has the family dining room and the mansion's private chapel - the *Oratório*. The east wing, with its elegant ballroom and its minstrel gallery, was a later addition. It was completed by another descendant, José Bernardo Colaço, in 1825. He was for a while a judge in Diu. And this fact seems to have given rise to a legend, apocryphal according to the family, that the ground near the front facade, below the corridor built in the style of the monasteries of the time, was meant to receive the *esquife* of the Governor of Daman. *Esquife* is an ambiguous word, which could mean a skiff, a small boat, or more gruesomely, a coffin.

Nazário Colaço II had the title of *Fidalgo Cavalheiro* conferred upon him by the King of Portugal, in 1890. The title raised him to the status of a nobleman and it was then that the house was named *Solar dos Colaços*, "solar" meaning in Portuguese the residence of a nobleman. Nazário Colaço II was an artist and a craftsman. His work can be seen throughout the house, the doors of the ballroom and adjoining bedrooms, the quaint carvings and paintings on display in the shrine. He also executed the centrepiece inlay on the parquet ballroom floor consisting of sixteen different types of wood, including wood from guava trees in his orchard. The ballroom itself is furnished with intricately carved Goan furniture, mirrors, chandeliers and a camphor-wood chest inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The bedrooms have four-poster beds, carved washbasin stands and a full-length mirror.

Typical of the ambivalence of the times, Nazário Colaço II carved a sideboard of his dining room with scenes from the Ramayana. But that brief incursion into the family Hindu ancestry is counterbalanced by the strident Roman Catholicism of the family's private chapel. The altar, the main feature, is dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary. Legend has it that José Bernardo Colaço found the statue of Our Lady in the sea, off Aguada.

São Pedro: At the foot of the Mount of Rosary, between Ribandar and Velha Goa, is the parish of São Pedro, the western suburb of the city. This parish comprises two villages, Banguenim and Panelim. The church is remarkable for its austere exteriors and once rich iconography. Unfortunately, in recent years, many of the icons have disappeared. They were probably stolen and smuggled out of Goa by a very active network of dealers specialising in icons and antiquities.

Fountain of Banguenim: Banguenim was famous in the early seventeenth century for its pure water, and supplied the whole city. According to a traveller, it represented Lucretia, out of whose wound ran the water which was highly valued by the people of all classes. Lucretia, as the reader might recall, was the wife of Lucius Tarquinius Collatinus, and was raped by Sextus, a son of the Roman Emperor Tarquinius Superbus (i.e. the haughty). Distraught, Lucretia killed herself; the people were so enraged that the Tarquinius were expelled from Rome and the republic was established.

However, an ironical usage of the time was "Já bebeu água de Bainguinim", i.e. 'has already drunk water from Banguenim,' a not-so-subtle reference to the prevailing corruption in the administration.

This fountain is now in a dilapidated state, the water is but a trickle, but is still valued for its supposed medicinal properties. The area is supposed to be the stomping ground of a powerful spirit who can make or mar your destiny. A small shrine has been built by the old outlet of the fountain and it is common to see car drivers slowing down at its approach and dropping a propitiatory gift in cash or kind.