OLD GOA

Tucked between the mighty Western ghats and the Arabian Sea, Goa is a narrow strip of undulating land with wide spread sandy beaches and lush green vegetation, supposed to have been reclaimed by the legendary Parashuram, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. It was known as Gomanta, Goapuri, Gomanchala, Gopakapura and Gova in ancient times. The Greek geographer, Ptolemy, of second century A.D. referred this area as ‘Kouba’, while the Arabs mentioned it as ‘Sindabur or Sandabur’.

The Prehistoric man inhabited Goa from the times of Early Stone Age. Later it was ruled by various dynasties from 4th century A.D. onwards like the Bhojas, the Silaharas, and the Kadambas who ruled Goa from 11th to 13th century A.D. Malik Kafur, the General of Alau’d Din Khilji over ran the whole of Goa and destroyed its capital Gopakapattan on the banks of Zuari. In 1369 A.D. Goa came under the reign of Vijayanagar empire, experienced a cultural revival and founded Brahmapuri at the village Goali Mauli on the island of Goa. Bahmanis succeeded in conquering Goa in 1472 and shifted the capital from the banks of river Zuari to the banks of Mandovi in Ela, (the present Old Goa). Subsequently the power passed from the hands of the Bahmanis to the Adilshahis of Bijapur (1490). Yusuf Adilshahi developed the port at Ela, which soon became an important emporium of Indian Ocean trade.

Duarte Barbosa, a Portuguese traveler who visited Goa around 1500 A.D. described that the city of Goa was inhabited by many Moors (north Africans), respectable men, foreigners, rich merchants, gentlemen, cultivators and other men at arms. It was a place of great trade in merchandise. It had a very great port to which flocked many ships from Mella Ailen, Ormuz, Cambay etc.

Soon after the landing of Vasco-da-Gama at Calicut in 1498, Portuguese Governor Afonso de Albuquerque conquered Goa by defeating Ismail Adil Shah, the Sultan of Bijapur in Goa, in 1510. Thereafter, with advent of religious orders like the Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans, Augustinians, Carmelites, Theatines, and others, many sumptuous chapels, churches, convents, monasteries and a Cathedral, all of unsurpassed architectural beauty were erected in Old Goa, which besides having many royal, public and secular edifices, served as an administrative capital for the Portuguese in the east. Though the churches were modeled on the European lines, they were marked by certain limitations due the Church with windows near the roof with rounded towers gives an impression of a fortress church is Manueline in style.
Exterior of the Church is of Tuscan Order while the main entrance is in Manuelleine style. The main altar is Baroque with Corinthian features. There are no aisles but only a nave, which is rib-vaulted. The internal buttress walls, separating the chapels that supporting the gallery on top, have frescoes showing intricate floral designs.
to climate.

The road called Rua Direita (High Street) was the principal thoroughfare of the city, lined on both the sides with stately buildings where bankers, jewellers and other traders of different countries carried out business of Arabian and Persian horses, slaves of both sexes, music, embroidery and several other useful arts. There were several other buildings built here like the royal depot of tobacco, senate house, customhouse, the Royal Hospital, the Aljube or the Archbishop's prison, docks, various important public establishments such as mint and the gun foundry, now in ruins.

Towards the close of 16th century, Goa was a flourishing state, keeping pace with the rapid growth of the Portuguese power in the east. When the economic conditions of Goa deteriorated with the rise of Dutch, French, British and the Marathas, the Portuguese were no longer able to maintain the splendor of Goa. People suffered much from scarcity of provisions which coupled with the epidemic that struck the populace and the consequent decline of commerce, reduced the city to ruin. This caused the capital to be shifted finally to Panaji. All that remains of historic Old Goa are some of the major historical monuments while the rest have been razed down or destroyed by the ravages of time.

The construction of most of the churches at Old Goa was started when the Renaissance in Europe was heading towards a transformation into Baroque. The salient features like twisted shafts, broken cornices surrounded by curved pediments, wavy scrolls, flying figures with a touch of Classic Orders and profuse interior decorations with intricate details of ornamentation emphasized by gilding in gold were followed in the construction of churches in Goa.

Largely, all the churches at Old Goa were built of laterite stones; however, basalt was used for pilasters and columns for decorative purposes. The churches were plastered with lime. Though these belong to various orders, they are almost identical on plan so far as the various components like the belfry, altars, choir, sacristy etc. are concerned. Differences, however, are noticeable in locations of their components and sizes.

CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF ROSARY: Was the earliest amongst the existing churches built in Manuéline style (1542-49) on the Holy Hill.

CHAPEL OF ST. CATHERINE: The chapel of St. Catherine, first built in 1510 immediately after the conquest of Goa, in honour of St. Catherine, was later on repaired in 1550 by the Governor George Cabral and still later reconstructed in 1952. It has two short towers on either side of the facade and an altar in the interior. It was raised to the status of the Cathedral by Pope Paul III by a bull issued in 1534 and maintained the position till the new Cathedral was constructed.

BASILICA OF BOM JESUS: The church (1594-1605 A.D.) has a
main altar, four side altars, two chapels, a sacristy and a choir. The richly carved main altar is dedicated to the infant Jesus. Its facade decorated with Ionic, Tuscan, Corinthian and Composite pillars and pilasters, shows application of classical Orders. The added attraction of this church is the chapel containing the relics of the body of St. Francis Xavier. The Florentine sculptor Giovanni Battista Foggini was commissioned to sculpt the marble tomb of the saint in 1698 by the Duke of Tuscany Cosmas III. The rich silver casket containing the relics of St. Francis Xavier, was wrought by Goan silversmiths in 1636-37.

CHURCH AND CONVENT OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI: The church of Holy Spirit popularly known as the church of St. Francis of Assisi was built in 1517. Later on it was rebuilt twice, first in 1521 and finally in 1661. The ornamental portals of the church is in Manueline with trefoiled arch. The four stoned facade has two octagonal towers crowned with balustrades and pinnacles on both sides. The reminiscent of Gothic rib vaulted nave that has no aisles alongside is provided with six chapels and two altars. The main altar has Baroque with Corinthian features. On either side of the main altar, there are beautiful large wood panels in oil paintings, depicting scenes from the life of St. Francis of Assisi. The floor has large number of tomb stones with coat of arms which is profusely photo documented by the visitors. Where module of preventive conservation has been adopted by placing a wooden ramp to lessen the wear and tear. Presently the convent is housing the Archaeological Museum since 1964.

SE’ CATHEDRAL: The Se’ Cathedral (1562-1652) is the largest church, characterized by its Tuscan exterior, Corinthian columns at its portals with triangular pediments and the barrel-vault over the nave. The church had two towers out of which one collapsed in 1776. It has eight chapels and six altars, while the main altar is dedicated to St. Catherine of Alexandria. There is a reflection of Baroque tradition in wooden altars.

RUINS OF CHURCH OF ST. AUGUSTINE: The church of Our Lady of Grace popularly known as St. Augustine church (1602) is situated on the Holy Hill. The Augustinian Order established their convent in 1572. Later on the college of Populo was added to it in 1602. It was the largest church complex with seminary, convent, library, cloisters, dormitories, galleries and number of cells as per the travellers who quoted about the grandeur of the Church. The facade of the church had four stories with three arched door ways flanked by Corinthian columns and two lofty bell towers (46 m in height) on either side. The Portuguese Government banned all the religious orders in 1832 and by 1835 all the Augustinians were forced to leave Goa. Due to lack of maintenance and pilferage the huge vault of the church collapsed in 1842. Its facade and towers fell down in 1931 and in 1938. The Archaeologists excavated collapsed debries and brought to light the five altars, eight side
converts. St. Francis Xavier had a short stint as its Director of this college from 1544. As per the description of the travellers it had 200 teachers and 3000 students. In 1556 the first printing press in Asia was introduced here. The body of St. Francis Xavier brought from Malacca, was initially kept here.

OTHER MONUMENTS: The chapel of Our Lady of Mount is located further east of the Se' Cathedral complex on a hill which was built soon after the

chapels and a cloister. The interior of the church was profusely decorated with Azulejos (tiles). The scientific clearance undertaken between 2004 and 2008 further exposed the site followed by in-situ conservation, led to the identification of the Chapter Chapel where the relics of the Queen of Georgia, Saint Ketevan who was put to death in Shiraz, Persia were once kept.

CHURCH OF ST. CAJETAN: The church was built by Theatines in 1661, after St. Peter's church in Rome. It has a Corinthian facade with triangular pediment flanked by two bell towers and a central dome. The main body of the church is Greek cross on plan with four massive Corinthian piers supporting the dome. The ribbed vaults of the nave and aisles are coffered with floral designs. The main altar is dedicated to Our Lady of Divine Providence.

ARCH OF VICEROY: The arch of Viceroy built in 1599 A.D. by Francisco da Gama, in the memory of his great-grand father, Vasco-da-Gama was later on reconstructed in 1954 retaining the statue of Vasco-da-Gama on the river side and the statue of St. Catherine on the other side.

ASSEMBLED GATE TO ADILSHAH'S PALACE: The Palace of Adilshah was magnificent building which became the residence of the Portuguese Governors till 1695. The gate consisted of two basalt pillars having outer perforated stone screen with a lintel. The intricate carvings depict temple art features.

PORTAL REMAINS OF ST. PAUL'S COLLEGE: The college of St. Paul (1541) was founded for giving instructions to the new