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Glimpses of India

- I. A Baker from Goa _____ Lucio Rodrigues
II. Coorg _____ Lokesh Abrol
III. Tea from Assam _____ Arup Kumar Datta

BEFORE YOU READ

Activity

Discuss in class

1. What images — of people and of places — come to your mind, when you think of our country?
2. What parts of India have you lived in, or visited? Can you name some popular tourist destinations?
3. You may know that apart from the British, the Dutch and the French, the Portuguese have also played a part in the history of our country. Can you say which parts of India show French and Portuguese influences?
4. Can you say which parts of India grow (i) tea, (ii) coffee?

I

A Baker from Goa

This is a pen-portrait of a traditional Goan village baker who still has an important place in his society.

OUR elders are often heard reminiscing nostalgically about those good old Portuguese days, the Portuguese and their famous loaves of bread. Those eaters of loaves might have vanished but the makers are still there. We still have amongst us the mixers, the moulders and those who bake the loaves. Those age-old, time-tested furnaces still exist. The fire in the furnaces has not yet been extinguished. The thud and jingle of

reminiscing
nostalgically
thinking fondly of
the past



the traditional baker's bamboo, heralding his arrival in the morning, can still be heard in some places. Maybe the father is not alive but the son still carries on the family profession. These bakers are, even today, known as *pader* in Goa.

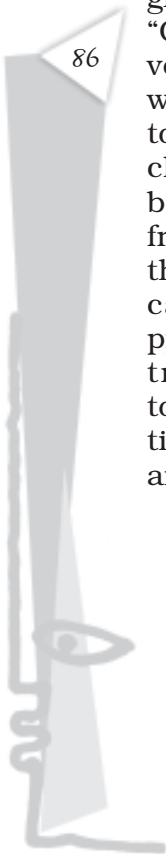
heralding
announcing

During our childhood in Goa, the baker used to be our friend, companion and guide. He used to come at least twice a day. Once, when he set out in the morning on his selling round, and then again, when he returned after emptying his huge basket. The jingling thud of his bamboo woke us up from sleep and we ran to meet and greet him. Why was it so? Was it for the love of the loaf? Not at all. The loaves were bought by some Paskine or Bastine, the maid-servant of the house! What we longed for were those bread-bangles which we chose carefully. Sometimes it was sweet bread of special make.

The baker made his musical entry on the scene with the 'jhang, jhang' sound of his specially made bamboo staff. One hand supported the basket on his head and the other banged the bamboo on the ground. He would greet the lady of the house with "Good morning" and then place his basket on the vertical bamboo. We kids would be pushed aside with a mild rebuke and the loaves would be delivered to the servant. But we would not give up. We would climb a bench or the parapet and peep into the basket, somehow. I can still recall the typical fragrance of those loaves. Loaves for the elders and the bangles for the children. Then we did not even care to brush our teeth or wash our mouths properly. And why should we? Who would take the trouble of plucking the mango-leaf for the toothbrush? And why was it necessary at all? The tiger never brushed his teeth. Hot tea could wash and clean up everything so nicely, after all!

rebuke
an expression of disapproval; a scolding

fragrance
scent



Oral Comprehension Check

1. What are the elders in Goa nostalgic about?
2. Is bread-making still popular in Goa? How do you know?
3. What is the baker called?
4. When would the baker come everyday? Why did the children run to meet him?





Marriage gifts are meaningless without the sweet bread known as the *bol*, just as a party or a feast loses its charm without bread. Not enough can be said to show how important a baker can be for a village. The lady of the house must prepare sandwiches on the occasion of her daughter's engagement. Cakes and *bolinhas* are a must for Christmas as well as other festivals. Thus, the presence of the baker's furnace in the village is absolutely essential.

The baker or bread-seller of those days had a peculiar dress known as the *kabai*. It was a single-piece long frock reaching down to the knees. In our childhood we saw bakers wearing a shirt and trousers which were shorter than full-length ones and longer than half pants. Even today, anyone who wears a half pant which reaches just below the knees invites the comment that he is dressed like a *pader*!

The baker usually collected his bills at the end of the month. Monthly accounts used to be recorded on some wall in pencil. Baking was indeed a profitable profession in the old days. The baker and his family never starved. He, his family and his servants always looked happy and prosperous. Their plump physique was an open testimony to this. Even today any person with a jackfruit-like physical appearance is easily compared to a baker.

plump physique
pleasantly fat body

open testimony
public statement
about a character or
quality



Oral Comprehension Check

- Match the following. What is a must

(i) as marriage gifts?	- cakes and bolinhas
(ii) for a party or a feast?	- sweet bread called bol
(iii) for a daughter's engagement?	- bread
(iv) for Christmas?	- sandwiches
- What did the bakers wear: (i) in the Portuguese days? (ii) when the author was young?
- Who invites the comment — "he is dressed like a *pader*"? Why?
- Where were the monthly accounts of the baker recorded?
- What does a 'jackfruit-like appearance' mean?





Thinking about the Text

1. Which of these statements are correct?
 - (i) The pader was an important person in the village in old times.
 - (ii) *Paders* still exist in Goan villages.
 - (iii) The *paders* went away with the Portuguese.
 - (iv) The *paders* continue to wear a single-piece long frock.
 - (v) Bread and cakes were an integral part of Goan life in the old days.
 - (vi) Traditional bread-baking is still a very profitable business.
 - (vii) *Paders* and their families starve in the present times.
2. Is bread an important part of Goan life? How do you know this?
3. Tick the right answer. What is the tone of the author when he says the following?
 - (i) The thud and the jingle of the traditional baker's bamboo can still be heard in some places. (nostalgic, hopeful, sad)
 - (ii) Maybe the father is not alive but the son still carries on the family profession. (nostalgic, hopeful, sad)
 - (iii) I still recall the typical fragrance of those loaves. (nostalgic, hopeful, naughty)
 - (iv) The tiger never brushed his teeth. Hot tea could wash and clean up everything so nicely, after all. (naughty, angry, funny)
 - (v) Cakes and *bolinhas* are a must for Christmas as well as other festivals. (sad, hopeful, matter-of-fact)
 - (vi) The baker and his family never starved. They always looked happy and prosperous. (matter-of-fact, hopeful, sad)

First Flight

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Writing

- I. In this extract, the author talks about traditional bread-baking during his childhood days. Complete the following table with the help of the clues on the left. Then write a paragraph about the author's childhood days.

Clues	Author's childhood days
the way bread was baked	
the way the <i>pader</i> sold bread	
what the <i>pader</i> wore	
when the <i>pader</i> was paid	
how the <i>pader</i> looked	





- II. 1. Compare the piece from the text (on the left below) with the other piece on Goan bakers (on the right). What makes the two texts so different? Are the facts the same? Do both writers give you a picture of the baker?

Our elders are often heard reminiscing nostalgically about those good old Portuguese days, the Portuguese and their famous loaves of bread. Those eaters of loaves might have vanished but the makers are still there. We still have amongst us the mixers, the moulders and those who bake the loaves. Those age-old, time-tested furnaces still exist. The fire in the furnaces had not yet been extinguished. The thud and the jingle of the traditional baker's bamboo, heralding his arrival in the morning, can still be heard in some places.

May be the father is not alive but the son still carries on the family profession.

After Goa's liberation, people used to say nostalgically that the Portuguese bread vanished with the *paders*. But the *paders* have managed to survive because they have perfected the art of door-to-door delivery service. The *paders* pick up the knowledge of bread-making from traditions in the family. The leavened, oven-baked bread is a gift of the Portuguese to India.

[Adapted from Nandakumar Kamat's 'The Unsung Lives of Goan Paders']

2. Now find a travel brochure about a place you have visited. Look at the description in the brochure. Then write your own account, adding details from your own experience, to give the reader a picture of the place, rather than an impersonal, factual description.

Group Discussion

- In groups, collect information on how bakeries bake bread now and how the process has changed over time.
- There are a number of craft-based professions which are dying out. Pick one of the crafts below. Make a group presentation to the class about the skills required, and the possible reasons for the decline of the craft. Can you think of ways to revive these crafts?

(i) Pottery	(v) Carpentry
(ii) Batik work	(vi) Bamboo weaving
(iii) <i>Dhurri</i> (rug) weaving	(vii) Making jute products
(iv) Embroidery	(viii) Handloom

