



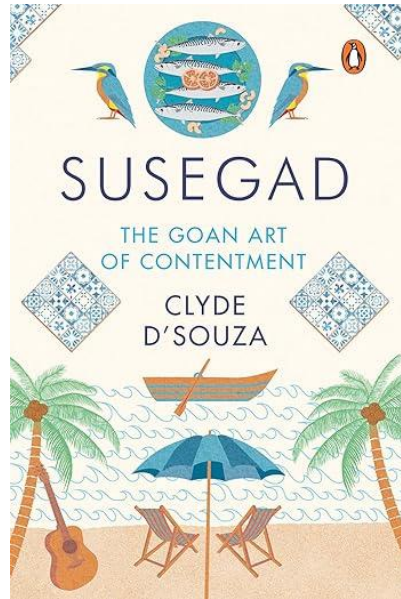
Susegad: The Goan Art of Contentment by Clyde D'Souza

G Narasimha Raghavan

In this insightful book, between pages 100 and 101, there are a bunch of photos depicting the personalities and liveliness of the small state in India, Goa. But, what caught my attention was the last photo. It was a picture of the façade of St Thomas Church's graveyard. On the frontage were written, in bold letters, in Konkani (the native language of Goa), translated in English by the author as: "*Me today, you tomorrow*". When

entering a graveyard, what slant of mind do we need more? This kind of sums up the idea of 'contentment'.

Goa usually bring out images of visually appealing beaches, good food and drinks, coconut lined depeopled roads, cozy and brightly coloured houses, not to mention the colourful celebrations and revelries. The author, Clyde, who has a background in media, effortlessly narrates the nuances of Goan life, smoothly balances the culture vs climate debate, and slickly describes what it means to be a Goan. The book has authentic contents because Clyde is a Goenkar.



So, what is this Susegad? It is the “*Goan was of taking a step back, slowing down and living in the present*” (Introduction). For many years, the concept of Susegad (derived from Portuguese), unknowingly or knowingly, meant a lethargic way of life, with no tinge of ambition or aspiration. This book purposely demolishes this very ill-informed notion. Susegad does not mean apathy and passivity. Rather, it has everything to do with quietness, peace and satisfaction, writes Clyde.

You will, on reading this book, discover a rich description of the ways of life of Goans, like what they desire to eat and drink, how different are their celebrations and feasts, what kinds of music do they crave for, among others. The author dedicates separate chapters for appreciating the essence of community living and their unique traditions. Consecrating the last chapter to the healthy life of Goans, the author goes on

to state that “...so many Goans live in close contact with nature. It’s quite normal to be employed in the cultivation of mangoes, cashews, teak, jackfruit and spices. Mangroves line the river banks and coconut palms front the beach side. It’s perhaps why indoor exercise is a bit of a foreign concept as many Goans are engaged in some form of physical activity that requires them to lift, pluck and cultivate”.

There are also interviews of Goans (like the famous Goan singer Remo Fernandes or Subodh Kerkar of the Musuem of Goa), prominent Konkani proverbs (with meanings, of course), brief made-up stories that one can relate to, and most importantly, personal tips from Clyde himself. At the end, the author is quite sure that many readers will get the idea of Susegad wrong, and hence cautions them: “...the art of contentment is not a magic potion that you lock into a feni bottle and pour out on stormy nights. It is just something that you enjoy and soon it becomes a part of your life”. Vasco Silveria is a celebrated chef in Goa, and his thoughts on susegad is this: “Owe no one, and let no one owe you”. This is Goan-gyan for you!

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