

Atomic Energy Central School No. 3 Rawatbhata

Handout Class: X

Sub: English Language & Literature

Chapter 7 - Glimpses of India Part 1- A Baker from Goa

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Module: 1/3

Introduction:

‘A Baker from Goa’ is a pen-portrait of a traditional Goan village baker who still has an important place in his society.

This narration revolves around the relevance of a baker in the Goan culture. As we have different cultures in different parts of our country, Goa has its own culture. This culture reflects the existence of rule of Portuguese in India. This pen-portrait dates back to the time when Portuguese ruled over the city of Goa. In this story, the author recalls his childhood days and children’s excitement on seeing the baker. They were enthusiastic to the point that they would run to him as soon as they woke up without even brushing their teeth.

About the Author:

Prof. Lucio Rodrigues is one of the literary geniuses that Goa has produced. He has an authority on Goan folklore. Prof. Lucio Rodrigues was a visiting professor of folklore at the Indiana University, USA in 1969. His essays in English, as well as those translated from Konkani, were published after his death in 1973. It was the revised edition of this compilation, renamed Ambolim. As a prolific essayist, he contributed to various newspapers and magazines such as The Navhind Times, The Times of India, Goa Today and others too.

The Time When Goa was under the Rule of the Portuguese:

The lesson begins with the memories of narrator when Goa was under the rule of the Portuguese. The memories highlight the importance of bakers, which is still maintained in the villages even after the Portuguese have left. The bakers are known as ‘Paders’ in Goa. The villages of Goa are still served by the mixers, moulders and the time-tested furnaces which these bakers used. The narrator says that the original ones may not exist, but their profession is being continued because their sons have adopted it.

The Musical Entry of the Baker:

When bakers come in the village in the morning they used to make a sound of the bamboo stick they carry. The same thud of the bamboo stick can still be heard in some parts of the village. The same jingling thud would wake the narrator and his friends during their childhood days who would go running to him without brushing or washing their mouth properly. The maid-servant of the house used to collect the loaves and children used to sort out the bread bangles for themselves.

Bread- Part of the Goan culture:

Bakery products were not only the items of food but were the part of the culture and traditions of Goa. This culture still continues. Different varieties of bread have different traditional value. It is evident from its presence at every important occasion. The special sweet bread which is called 'Bol' is a part of marriage gifts. Ladies compulsorily prepare sandwiches in engagements. Cakes and 'Bolinhas' or coconut cookies are eaten on Christmas and other festivals at present too. All these occasions make the presence of a baker in every village, very essential.

A Unique Frock of Baker:

The bakers of Goa had a unique dress up. They wore a unique frock of knee-length typically known as 'kabai' but during the narrator's childhood days, they wore a shirt and trouser of length slightly shorter than the usual ones. It was a part of their identity so much that even if someone wears that trouser length now, he is said to have dressed like a baker, or 'pader' as was said in olden times.

The Narrator Recalls the Baker:

During the childhood days of the narrator, the baker acted as their friend and companion. There was a fixed time of baker's visit. The baker used to visit twice a day before selling (while he was on the round to sell his loaves) and after selling his loaves (while returning back with his empty basket, having sold all the loaves). It was the sound of his bamboo stick that woke the children up. The children were so excited to meet him and choose from the bread bangles or 'Kankon' he made especially for them. Children desired to get the sweet bread-bangles. While the bangles were for children, loaves were for the adults that were generally collected by the maid-servant of the household.

Children's Curiosity:

As the entry of the baker was often musical with his bamboo stick, it attracted children. His one hand supported the basket on his head while the other banged the bamboo on the ground. His routine was go house to house and greet the ladies before handing them over the loaves. Due to

excitement children would gather and peep into his basket. The parents would scold the children and make them stand aside. Even he had to push children aside with a soft rebuke. But as eager as they were, they would climb a bench or the wall to peep into the basket. Due to eagerness they did not even bother to brush their teeth. For children it was unnecessary to pluck mango leaves from the branches to use them for brushing the teeth. In those days mango leaves were used for brushing the teeth in villages of Goa. They considered brushing unnecessary because the hot tea could effortlessly wash their mouth. They thought that animals like the tiger never brushed their teeth then why should they?

Monthly Record of Bills:

They also had their unique way of keeping the account of the bills. They would mark the entry of bills on a wall using a pencil and then. This would continue for a month. They would collect the money at the end of the month.

A Profitable Profession:

Bakery has continued to be a profitable profession, managing to keep baker's families joyous and prosperous. The baker's family and workers have always been happy and joyous. The baker was usually fat which was a proof of his richness. Even to this day, someone with a well-built body is compared to a baker.