

Our Growth and Progress

At the time of liberation, the Chamber had about 300 members on its roll and the annual subscription was Rs. 12/-. Hence the Chamber had to manage with an annual budget of Rs. 3600/- only. It was functioning in rented premises with the assistance of a peon. The late Jose Antonio Goveia who was the President of the Chamber for 12 consecutive years from 1951 to 1962 and the Treasurer Shri R B K Ghanekar had to do all the work of drafting and typing the memoranda, press notes etc. Today, things have changed, the Chamber has a well equipped office with sufficient staff and an annual budget of around Rs.21 lakhs. There has been a manifold increase in its activities.

Before liberation, the Portuguese Government had given representations to the Chamber on only 3 bodies viz Technical and Commercial High School, Economic Department and Import-Export Junta. After Liberation, the Government of Goa and the Central Government recognising the contribution of the Chamber in the development of the territory started granting recognition on a number of Government Committees and today it has a representation on more than 50 committees, important among them being Planning Board, Mormugao Port Trust, Town and Country Planning Board, Industrial Development Corporation etc. When the first informal consultative council was established soon after liberation by the Lt. Governor T Shivshanker, the Chamber was given the honour of deputing its representative on the Council. Shri M S Talaulikar who was duly elected to represent the Chamber did an excellent job of the assignment.

The idea of having its own premises was originally mooted in 1929 and to arrange for the necessary funding, a proposal was made to the Government to impose a small levy on imports to raise funds for the Chamber's building. The move somehow, did not take shape. The idea was revived in 1959, where a regular building committee was formed. The Committee had approached the Governor General Vassalo de Silva for allotting a suitable plot for the Chamber at a central place in Panjim. The Governor General reacted positively on the proposal of the Chamber having its own building but regretted his inability to allot any government plot for the purpose. Instead he offered a monetary contribution equal to twice the amount the Chamber could collect from the members. But by the time the Chamber could secure the necessary plot and draw the necessary plans, Goa's liberation took place and the matter obviously came to an end. In the meantime, the Chamber succeeded in purchasing a plot on which the Chamber's building stands at present. The plot was purchased on 2.7.1960. However, the foundation stone of the building was laid six

years thereafter as on 23.4.1966. The building which was built at a cost of Rs. 4 lakhs was formally inaugurated by the Industrial Magnate Sri Arvind Mafatlal on 10.11.1968, H. E. Lt. Governor General Shri Nakul Sen was the Chief Guest on the occasion.

Goa's liberation posed a number of problems before the Chamber, as a result some policies of Government of India and which were running counter to those adopted by the Portuguese Government for a small place like Goa. The most important issue over which the trading community was agitated was of licensing of imports of commodities. The simple plea put up before the Government of India was to allow the six hundred and odd importers some breathing space to enable them to adjust smoothly to the changed system. A five member delegation headed by a senior businessman Shri Valentino Pinto was sent to New Delhi in February 1962 to meet the concerned authorities and discuss the issue with them. The authorities apparently showed signs of sympathizing with the Chamber's plea and the delegation came back with high hopes. Since nothing seemed to have been happening as far as actual framing of an import policy for Goa for quite a few months, the Chamber thought it fit to send another four member delegation to pursue the matter and have a meeting with the Commerce and Finance Ministers and specially the Prime Minister.

All that the Chamber was demanding was a foreign exchange allotment of Rs. 6 Crores per year for the period of 3 years as against the 1961 figure of imports of 17.5 Crores. Unfortunately, the Commerce and Finance Ministers were not available but during the delegation's meeting with the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, who took the delegation to the Prime Minister explained to him the gist of our memorandum and added that the matters were being sorted out and a sympathetic view was being taken regarding formulating an import policy for Goa, Daman and Diu. After a long wait, an import policy allowing Goan importers "25% of Half of Best years imports" would be allowed. Why it could not be drafted to say "12.5% of Best years import" was enigmatic to everyone. But to the utter disappointment of the business community, the policy which was announced in the Official Gazette was never implemented. Members of the Chamber were very much agitated over the cursory treatment meted out to it by Delhi bureaucracy and had even suggested embarking on non-peaceful methods to make the Government at Delhi see reason. Unfortunately, Chinese war broke out and senior members of the Chamber advised against any steps which would place Government of India into difficulties.

The Chamber, as a sequel to changed economic set up, adopted a new constitution which was approved by its General Assembly on 12.4.62. The name of the institution was changed to Goa Chamber of Commerce & Industry. An important provision of the amended constitution was the direct election of the President who would select the other office bearers of his own choice from among the elected members of the Managing Committee. There was a consensus among the members of the Chamber to give the honour of Presidentship under the new constitutions to stalwarts who had shaped Goa's economy. In accordance with this concept Mr. V D Chowgule became the 1st President under the new constitution, followed by Mr. Vasant Rao S Dempo and the late Mr. V M Salgaocar, all of them prestigiated the office of the President by their initiatives and endeavors to place the Chamber on the all India Map. The Chamber's elections have been by and large a smooth process without any rancour among the candidates. Except for the 1944-45 election, the result of which became an issue to approach the Court for the necessary action, elections of the Chamber have been merely a formality.

Goa which had an import oriented trading economy before liberation had to necessarily switch over to a production oriented economy in order to keep pace with the development taking place in other parts of the Country. A seminar, the first of its kind, entitled "Springboards into the 70's" was organised in 1970 to focus the attention of the Goan business community on the need of Goa's industrialization. It was presided over by Mr. V.D. Chowgule, then President of the Chamber and inaugurated by Mr. B R Bhagat, Union Minister for Steel & Mines. The Seminar evoked a tremendous response and the process of Industrial Development was set in motion. The Chamber also commissioned a study in the potential of economic development of Goa and it was released in a printed form in July 1970. The participants in the seminar had a unique opportunity to listen to the views of experts and professionals from industrial fields of the Country.

The Government of Goa reacted to the proceedings of the Seminar by appointing a working group under the Chairmanship of Secretary. Industries, to decide on the follow-up action. Since then. The Chamber has been organizing, on a regular basis, a series of seminars on topics of vital importance to Goa, Seminars on Development of Tourism, Fisheries, Industrial strategy for 80's and Beyond, Free Port are some of the important ones which the Chamber organised with the assistance of Government and Semi-Government agencies. Besides, workshops on various subjects related to trade and industry have been held on a regular basis. A joint taxation committee was formed, having as its constituents the GCCCI, GMOEA and GMA to put up a common front with the concerned authorities for the solution of some common problems.

Three delegations of this committee visited Delhi and it was gratifying to know that a satisfactory solution was found after meeting the Officials and Ministers concerned in respect to the issues of "Depreciation" and "Investment allowance".