



# KHOBOR

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Dear Friends,

I want to wish you and your families a Happy New Year. As I write these few lines, my thoughts are with the Tsunami victims who lost everything and need your help. Please help in any way you can the countries ravaged by this tragedy. Send in your contributions to the relief organizations that are genuine and offer assistance to people in need. Please help.

On a lighter note, my thoughts reminisce about friendships and get-togethers we had for the last two years during my tenure as a president of the organization. I enjoyed the challenges and the highs and lows that came with the position. My congratulations to the incoming president, Mr. Francis D'Souza and his committee. I ask all the members not to shy away from organizational events. To repeat a famous quote that says "A culture cannot be preserved if its members remain exclusive". Therefore, you should participate in the cultural events, to reward those who spent a lot of time and effort in organizing these events. I trust that more and more members will be active in the organization. This will ensure that future generations of Goans in Virginia, District of Columbia and Maryland inherit a bit of Goan flavor to spice up all the wonderful things that this great country of ours has to offer. Please do your part to nurture and sustain this organization and thereby maintain your Goan heritage.

Finally I offer my special thanks to all who assisted in the organizational events during the last two years. Please continue to support your organization by sending in your contributions on time. Your assistance is essential for maintaining the stability and continuity of the association. Remember that it is your organization, be passionate about it. Take care and all the very best for the future. Rosario.

**Special thanks to...** On behalf of the former GOA committee, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to Lavinia Fernandes, our former Vice President, for taking care of our hospitality. Lavinia did the center pieces, wrapped presents for the May Ball, took charge of the picnic arrangements, and was always helpful with her beautiful smile. Claudette Brito

## Traditional Goan Wedding—Lavinia Fernandes

For those of you who have been 'party' to a traditional Goan wedding (Not seen in the "English speaking World these days") I am sure this will bring back some of that nostalgia.

### Marriage Customs in Goa

The first step if you want to get married in Goa is the act of the proposal or the "utor". Among the agricultural communities and other laboring castes the encounter takes place in the early hours of the morning. Among the wealthy it takes place late evening.

The ultimate proposal is worded in a very poetic manner, as in a typical Kunbi community.

Says the boy's family to the girl's (it is always the boy's family that has to ask for the girl's hand in marriage in the Catholic community), 'We have smelt the perfume of a sweet flower in your garden. We have come to ask for it.' Replies the girl's family: 'In that case you may take this fire stick and enter the house.' The fire stick is a symbol that they are in favor of the match.

After the utor begins a long series of dos and don'ts, well before the day of the

## CONGRATULATIONS! JESSICA M. BRITO



### 2005 GEOGRAPHY BEE

JESSICA M. BRITO, 5th grader of St. Catherine Labouré School won the school-level competition of the National Geographic Bee on January 13, 2005, competing against the 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. Jessica will be competing at the State-level very soon.

### Marriage Customs in Goa ... continued.

The betrothal is sealed when the bridegroom sends the gift of fulam (flowers and sweets). These are to be distributed to the neighbors. The bride then gets her "denem" (trousseau) ready. She takes with her several items in sets of seven each. That makes seven towels, pillowcases, bedsheets, handkerchiefs, nightgowns and even seven undergarments. Seven is thought to suffice her for a very long time.

The "saddo" takes place a few days before the wedding. It is the name of the dress and the ceremony of cutting and sewing the dress. Saddo is to be worn on the first day after the marriage. It has to be red in colour or red and white. All neighbours gather and the professional "ovio" (songs of praise) singers are called in. The tailor sews the dress while the women sing in the background. There's coconut cake and tea to go around for everybody. The people leave a tip for the tailor on their way out. Both the families have a "bhuim jevonn" before the wedding. This is a ritual meal in honour of the ancestors. All kith and kin have to be present for this meal. In the well-to-do Catholic houses today it goes by the name of "bikariam jevonn", (meal for the poor/beggars). It has taken the form of a charity luncheon for the poor, as ancestor worship is regarded as a pre-Christian tradition. However, the poor are asked to pray for all the family's ancestors. A couple of days before the wedding is the ceremony of "chuddo". These are the bangles worn by the bride for her marriage. The bangle seller is brought in, and with friends and neighbours singing ovios in the background, the bride puts on 30 green and red bangles, 15 on each hand. Green stands for fertility and red for a married life.

Traditionally married women had to wear glass bangles throughout their life. They had to be broken on the coffin of the husband. The bridegroom's family has the privilege of asking for an "vojem" a gift of several sweetmeats and bananas, from the bride's family. These are later distributed to neighbours and relatives. The kunbi traditionally held group marriages a couple of days before the Mell, the spring festival which is today merged with Carnival. Between 25 to 30 couples got married. The entire village would resound with the ghumots (earthen drum) and dulpods. A day before the marriage, the bride's toilette begins. The "ros" is a ritual where the bride is ceremoniously massaged with coconut juice. It is meant to make the skin smooth and soft. A large bowl is placed before the bride, who sits in the bathing room. Each relative drops a coin in the juice, takes a palm full and massages the bride. When all the juice is over, the woman who had ground the coconut gets the money. The bride has to fast on the day of the wedding. Once she steps out of the house, turning back to take a look is considered taboo. If she drops a kerchief or her purse, she should not retrieve it either. She gets another one if it is at hand. The items are left to the devil who might have gone with the bride, had she picked them up.

Before proceeding to the church or temple the bride goes to her immediate neighbours for their blessings. After the wedding reception is over (which is usually late in the night), the "vorr" or the bride's marriage party and the bridegroom's family see each other off at the "sheem" or border of the village. This is known as the "portonem". Both parties draw an imaginary line across the road with the foot. One male representative from either family stands on each side of the line, and snaps a blade of grass in a mock tug of war. Each one throws a glass of feni on either side of the sheem for the guardian spirits and have a "sangvonn" for the guardian spirits and ancestors seeking their protection for the newly wed couple and their families.

The parties then vend their way home to the drumming of ghumots and dulpods and singing of ovios all the way, but not before the men have had their 'one for the road'.

The "saddo" or the dress worn on the first night should not be washed by the bride. She should leave it in the wash bucket with a currency note tied to the skirt. The first relative who chooses to wash the dress gets the tip.

On the third day the new son-in-law is invited for lunch at his in-laws house. It is his first visit. The party includes the bridal couple and their relatives and friends. It is customary for the son-in-law and his friends to lift off any item that they like, provided it is small enough not to be noticed. This is a joke played on the bride's family.

As soon as the bridegroom's party leaves, the bride's family gets busy trying to find out what is missing -- a hand mirror, an ash tray, a cell torch, a crystal wine glass, or probably your favourite perfume! As a tradition you cannot ask for the things back. But the generous sons-in-law of today religiously return all items after a day's suspense and a good laugh

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