# Old Goa

## Where Spirituality Bonds With Splendour

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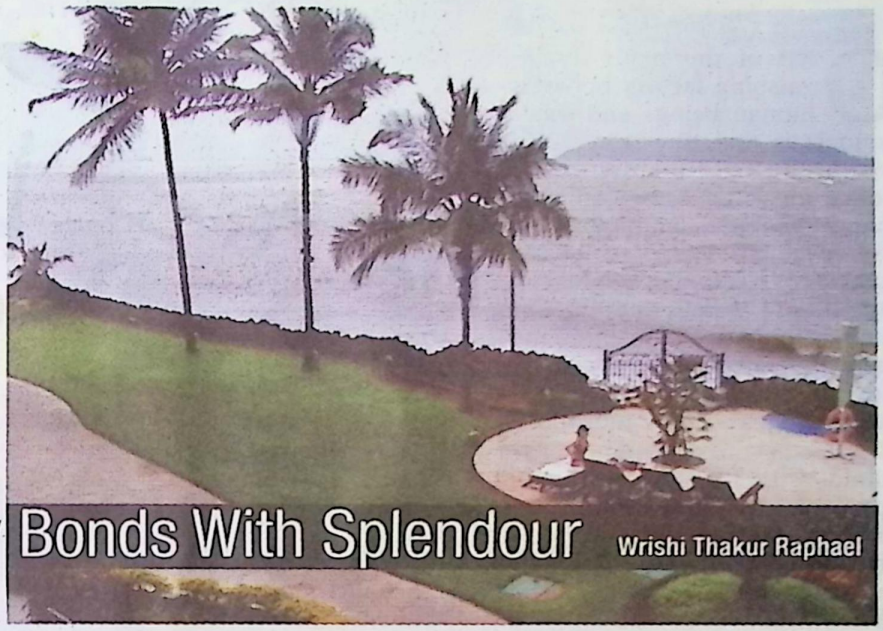


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GOA, the only Portuguese colony in India, was under Portuguese rule for 400 years, during which Old Goa was its capital till the mid 18th century. Its superb collection of old cathedrals, churches & monasteries richly deserves the title 'Rome of the East'. A walk through Old Goa illuminates the era of immortals saints who consecrated their lives to establish the teachings of Jesus Christ. Its churches, many of which are simply colossal in magnitude & astounding in architectural exquisiteness, bestow due piety & reverence to cornerstones of Christian fellowship & belief. Built mostly in Renaissance & Portuguese Manueline fashion, quite a few of them are recognized world wide as UNESCO World Heritage Monuments.

**1) BASILICA DE BOM JESUS**

The Basilica de bom Jesus (est. 1594) houses the tomb of Goa's patron saint, St. Francis Xavier. St. Francis Xavier was a Portuguese missionary who was sent to Goa in 1542 by the King Dom Jao III, where he converted 30,000 people. He also preached in Makao, Japan & Indonesia until his death in China in 1552. The star features of the Basilica include:

**a) The Main Alter:**

The towering statues of gilded cherubs and angels can induce vibes of piousness even in Lucifer's soul. On either sides of it stands the Alter of St. Michael & the Alter of Our Lady of Hope.

**b) The Tomb of St. Francis Xavier:**

This marble & jasper tomb took its sculptor Giovanni Foggini 10 years to build. The four bronze tablets on the tomb show various scenes from the saint's life. In it lies the earthly remains of St. Francis Xavier which miraculously have shown no signs of decay. What is most remarkable is that,his body was not embalmed like Egyptian mummies. The exposition of the relics of St. Francis Xavier takes place once in every 10 years from the Basilica to Se Cathedral. The last time the exposition took place was in 2004-05.

**c) The Wooden Pulpit:**

This enormous wooden pulpit hangs from wall on the right hand side for someone who is coming inside the Basilica. The Figures of Jesus & several Evangelists are intricately carved on this gigantic pulpit.

**2) SE CATHEDRAL:**

Thought to be the largest church in Asia, Se Cathedral was built over a period of 80 years. The central nave is 249 feet with 15 alters which grace the interior. The gilded high alter, *Piece de Resistance,* is dedicated to St Catherine of Alexandria. A total of eight chapels have been erected for worship.

**3) CHURH OF SAINT CAJETANS:**

Built in 1651 by Italian friars of the Theatine order of Golconda, this church is dedicated to St Cajetan, the founder of the order. The intricate wood carvings and the 16th century Renaissance paintings make this church one of the most picturesque of its kind.

**4) CHURH OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISSI:**

The gilded crucifix & the statue of Our Lady with Baby Jesus, is what catches the eye, once one is inside this 487 year old church. Other monuments are those of the four Evangelists & of St. Francis. The spectacularly patterned floral frescos may be easily compared to the likes of Sistine Chapel of Rome.

In a world of constant turbulence & turmoil, where terms like virtues & benevolence seem to have lost their meaning, it's only ideal to seek refuge in the cradles of our conscience & faith. As a matter of fact, our conscience can always find support in the realms of our religious values & norms. While ambling down the streets of Old Goa my faith was exalted as I pondered the thought of how the immortal saints of old, persevered to show reverence to the All Mighty & brought reality to the teachings of my Lord Jesus. Their faith in the Lord moved mountains, cured diseases & gave hope to those who had none. Faith will lead us through this good fight called life.