

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

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Professor Rosa Maria Perez is bracing for criticism from her fellow-Portuguese - the anthropologist from Lisbon has just written a book on Goa that counters the colonial and post-colonial view and argues Hinduism, not Christianity-



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THE TULSI & THE CROSS

has always been the dominant religion and the prism through which society interprets itself. Consequently, the caste system applies here as well as it does elsewhere.

In her book "The Tulsi and The Cross" -- launched at the IIT-Gandhinagar on Saturday where she is currently a visit-

ing faculty - Prof Perez particularly focuses on devadasis who in the past lived in a temple that has since become a tourist attraction devoid of them. Yet, they and their children remain stigmatised in spite of education and jobs.

Prof Perez, who teaches at ISCTE-Lisbon University Institute, and is currently a consultant for the European Commission, has an uncanny attraction for what she calls the "unseen" part of the society -- "I have always liked looking at the bottom, the unseen part of the society," she says.

She had earlier published a book titled "Kings and Untouchables: A study of the Caste System in Western India", the field work for which was done among the Wankar community of Voltera village in Dholka taluka - she used to travel six hours - three hours to just get there, she recalls.

Her research on these "unseen" communities has led her to explore what she calls the "ethics of observation" - she even teaches an elective on this topic - where a researcher must tread carefully that the community she studies, usually downtrodden and vulnerable, is not damaged by the body of work produced from the study.