

## Synopsis of "Goa. Confession of the Psychedelic Oyster"

Semi-autobiographical Novel"

A psychologically revealing, flash-back-filled first person account of a small time wheeler dealer's transformational ideological crusade, taking him from the 'Wild East' corruption of 90s Russia, via the illusory psychedelic liberation of Goa's tropical beach paradise – viewed through the prism of a narrator stranded in the farcical existential vacuum of awaiting justice from the Indian legal system.

The novel "Goa. Confession of the Psychedelic Oyster" contains 160,000 words on 560 pages and includes 55 illustrations. The book was first published in Russian in Goa, India, and the first edition of 5,000 copies was sold out. It is a semi-autobiographical novel written from the first person perspective. Each chapter consists of two parts: 'Inside' and 'Outside'.

The novel's main character, a Russian guy named Vasiliy, gets sent to an Indian prison for drug charges that could earn him a sentence of between ten to twenty years. Not admitting his guilt, Vasiliy begins to recall how he managed to go from being a conscientious citizen to ending up in jail. Each 'Inside' chapter, focusing on Vasiliy's existence and experiences in the prison, ends with events similar to those with which the accompanying 'Outside' chapter, tracing the lead up to his arrest, begins. As the two parallel storylines unfold, the reader is shown the cause-effect relationship of the events they describe.

Vasiliy's story commences when, as a young Russian businessman, he meets one of the country's richest oligarchs, a former alcoholic who is trying to overcome the pervasive problem of alcoholism in his homeland. He offers our hero a special path: to lead the movement for the legalization of marijuana in the country. They both believe that they can change the world for the better by switching people from alcohol to soft drugs. In order to change the xenophobic attitude towards marijuana smoking in Russia, they devise a plan to open a retail chain selling clothes made out of hemp. The Hemp brand soon becomes fashionable and popular, but GosNarkoKontrol<sup>1</sup> causes problems, trying to ban the chain. Things do not go as smoothly as hoped. A faulty collection of hemp clothes is received from the suppliers and the high rent in the city's most expensive mall absorbs all the profits. The oligarch's managing director, Dymkov, threatens Vasiliy with death if he does not return the \$75,000 invested in Hemp, so he sets off for India in search of new fabrics and hemp clothes.

Horrified by 'wild' Delhi, by chance Vasiliy meets some young Israeli travelers and together they travel across the whole of India to the state of Goa. Vasiliy's new friends teach him an ancient religious ritual for smoking hashish. While traveling our hero discovers another side to India, not described in the guidebooks. During his journey, Vasiliy witnesses the extraordinary poverty and spirituality of India, and begins to reassess his basic values.

Having reached Goa, Vasiliy visits his first trance party and understands that the tropical paradise is inhabited by people just like him, like-minded individuals who were so lacking during

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<sup>1</sup> The Federal Drug Control Service of the Russian Federation

his life in Russia. He falls deeply in love with Goa and has no desire to return home. Under the influence of psychotropic drugs he is trapped by his own illusions, seeing his new purpose in life as changing the lives of others and preaching about the psychedelic revolution in consciousness.

Vasiliy is visited by his former and current wives, who tell him that doing business in Russia has become difficult and unprofitable since the election of the new president. He explains to them that Indian legislation is very lenient in relation to drug dealers, and that the police are so corrupt that any problem can be resolved for \$100. His judgment clouded by hashish and feelings of impunity, Vasiliy starts selling psychedelics, while condemning alcoholism and not considering himself to be a drug dealer. He calls himself a psychedelic revolutionary. After half a year in India, he returns to Russia, assesses the situation there and decides to go back to Goa.

Vasiliy opens the first Russian restaurant on the beach in Goa. His wife and friends, Denis and Ilka, come to help him. Life is getting better and business is going well, but his grumpy wife complains that she would prefer to live in a big city in Russia rather than in a small fishing village in the middle of nowhere. In order to wait out the rainy season and to make a final attempt to save Hemp, Vasiliy goes to Nepal with his family and friends and buys new fabrics to make hemp clothing.

In Nepal Vasiliy meets Grisha, the former host of a popular Russian TV show and brother of a famous actress, who tells him how he served a five-year sentence in a Russian prison for five ecstasy pills. An old Australian smuggler teaches Vasiliy the finer points of hashish. He also meets Sasha, who has escaped from a Goan prison. However, Vasiliy fails to see all the signs pointing to his destiny, and he also decides to become a smuggler. He wonders increasingly frequently whether the path of the psychedelic warrior is really right for him. The ease of making money, as well as the permissive attitude of the police in relation to the traditional religious drug, hashish, set Vasiliy and his friends on the slippery slope of smuggling and selling drugs. One of their new friends, Fox, tries to commit suicide following an overdose. Two other new friends, Romashka and Zont, are thrown into prison. Lesha and Larisa are wanted in Russia for smuggling. Ilka posts half a kilo of hashish to her grandmother in Russia and the old woman is arrested. Nevertheless, Vasiliy goes ahead with his plan to buy two kilograms of hashish and smuggles it across the border from Nepal to India.

In Goa, a new friend known as Hanuman warns Vasiliy that Tamir, the main Goan DJ and legendary founder of the Russian trance movement, sells drugs and informs the police about other drug dealers. But our hero refuses to believe him. The Goan authorities declare war on trance parties, banning them throughout the state.

To top it all off, Vasiliy's drug supplier is jailed. To be on the safe side, he heads to Thailand to wait for things to cool down. Having safely spent two weeks in Thailand, Vasiliy returns to Goa and nearly goes to prison for getting caught with drugs at a trance party. He manages to get off the hook by bribing a police officer, and the corruption of the Indian police strengthens his illusory sense of impunity. Meanwhile, his friend Sergei goes crazy and commits suicide, and another of his friends, Olya, also goes out of her mind from drugs. Vasiliy goes to look for her in Bombay, where he has to fight off burglars in the night.

One more tourist season ends. Vasiliy's wife goes back to Russia and he heads to Nepal. Two months later, his wife returns with bad news for him. Vasiliy learns that he is wanted for fraud in Russia, as his accountant stole the money intended for Hemp's tax payments and framed him for it. Now he is unable to return to his homeland. His friend Denis betrays him, scamming him out of his money. They part ways on bad terms, and he understands that you don't have any friends in the drug business. Back in Goa, Vasiliy meets a Russian restaurateur, Sergei, who proposes that they open a restaurant together. But due to being constantly stoned, or because he is just too naive, Vasiliy takes no notice of the fact that his new friend is also on Russia's wanted list for fraud.

Vasiliy comes across one of the people whose consciousness he helped expand three years previously. He sees that the man has in fact lost his mind, instead of making a quantum leap in perception. In his latest narcotic delirium, Vasiliy comes to an 'understanding' that unconditional love is actually a free sexual relationship without any restrictions; so he, his wife and friends throw an orgy with group sex. Understandably, his relationships with his wife and friends become strained, and Vasiliy heads to an ashram for a ten-day silent Vipassana meditation retreat. After selling his Hemp restaurant and having a fight with his partner Sasha, Vasiliy moves to the south of Goa, where he and his new partner Sergei open the 'USSR' restaurant. The business quickly goes down in flames, as Sergei scams Vasiliy.

Vasiliy's brother resolves his problems in relation to the wanted list in Russia and gets him a new passport. With a visa that expired a year ago and forged documents, Vasiliy travels through Nepal to Thailand, where he starts a legal new business, selling five-year Indian visas to Russians. In Nepal he meets Sveta, the ex-wife of Dima, who is destined to cause our hero to go to jail a month later. She tells Vasiliy the story of how Tamir sent Dima to set up a drug dealer named David and get him sent to prison. In Thailand Vasiliy meets the wife of Goa's main drug dealer, who opens his eyes to secrets of the drug business involving corrupt police officers. The protagonist sees this as a global conspiracy against the psychedelic revolution and conceives a plan to rescue Goa from bad drugs through setting up an MDMA laboratory.

A few days before his arrest, Vasiliy and his MDMA lab partner manage to synthesize the first samples of the drug. During the first deal, Vasiliy realizes that Dima, whom Sveta warned him about in Nepal, has brought undercover police officers with him. But our hero manages to temporarily outwit the corrupt cops, selling them the drugs and running away with the money. However, the police catch Vasiliy eventually, raiding his house, arresting him and throwing him in jail.

Vasiliy learns that the prosecutor wants to sentence him to ten to twenty years in prison for 20 grams of MDMA allegedly found in his apartment, which were not actually there. The farcical nature and hypocrisy of the Indian justice system shock him. In order to try to draw public attention to his fictitious case, Vasiliy takes a desperate step, slitting his wrists in a fake suicide attempt. His trick is successful: once Vasiliy is patched up, the frightened police chief asks him not to do it again, promising him only a few years in prison instead of ten.

While serving his time, Vasiliy meets another Russian prisoner named Viktor. They become friends and have philosophical discussions about the meaning of life and a range of interesting topics. During one of their disputes, Viktor tries to convince Vasiliy that he was wrong about the psychedelic revolution and explains why fate brought him to this place.

In prison Vasiliy exercises, smokes hashish (which is easier to get than tobacco), talks to the other inmates, and begins to understand a lot about the way things really are. He goes on hunger strike, demanding that the prison warden allow the inmates to buy vegetables. Vasiliy realizes that even though he is serving a sentence for a fictitious case, karma is punishing him for the people whose consciousness he helped to expand. He learns from another prisoner that his cell once hosted a drug dealer called Nick, who Vasiliy bought drugs from, Sasha, who Vasiliy met in Nepal three years previously after he had escaped from the prison, and even Zhora, who went crazy from drugs. Vasiliy discovers that the corrupt police chief who arrested him has also been imprisoned for corruption and involvement in the drug business.

After serving a year and a half in the hellish Indian prison, Vasiliy is finally released on bail. The book ends with the last chapter, where the police come to arrest him. The past of the 'Outside' chapters and the present of the 'Inside' chapters unite and unfold in a catharsis of understanding. Vasiliy realizes just how deeply mistaken he was seeing life through psychedelic rose-colored glasses.