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Goa and Portugal: A Past without a Future?
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I would like to begin by first thanking Rafael Borges Pinto for extending the invitation for me to speak with you today. Secondly, and of course, my thanks to Nova Portugalidade for hosting this conversation, and to all of you for your presence here.

To many there is a perception that the relationship between Goa and Portugal is in the past. The first question that many metropolitan Portuguese ask of a Goan they meet is whether people *still* speak Portuguese in Goa. The answer is often in the negative. Until recently my own response was that Portuguese was *never* widely spoken in Goa and it was the language of the elite. My view changed when I encountered an interesting anecdote at a dinner party in Lisbon which suggested that the Portuguese language was effectively killed off in Goa after the annexation of the territory to India. Persons who were seen as pro-Portuguese faced harassment, and people who spoke Portuguese did so fearfully. This put a completely different frame on the issue, where I realised that given increasing levels of education in Goa from around the 50s, even though there is no denying that the Portuguese language was linked with the elites, it is possible that Portuguese would have been more widely spoken if it continued to be the medium of instruction in the Government primary school. Unfortunately, this possibility was killed, and despite valiant efforts in Goa, by such institutions as the Fundação Oriente and the Instituto Camões, and I must particularly signal the efforts of the Director of the Instituto Camões in Goa, Delfim Correia, and an increase in the interest in the Portuguese language, there is still a certain animosity towards the language in Goa.

This is to say, any evaluation of the relationship between Goa and the Portuguese language needs to acknowledge the animosity of the Indian state, and Indian nationalism. Any attempt at an Indo-Portuguese relationship, or a Luso-Goan relationship that does not acknowledge this fact will effectively be wasting its efforts. This was an argument I advanced recently when critiquing the Prime Minister António Costa's visit to India which was motivated, so it seems, primarily by opening up Indian markets to Portuguese commercial interests and industry. While this is all very well, the tragedy of this strategy is that it sought to downplay Goa in Portugal's relationship with India. This is not surprising given that from what I have perceived there is a strong lobby within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that sees Goa as a liability for Portugal. Goa is the past, they say, let us re-create a new relationship with India.

There is no problem in creating a new relationship with India. The problem is that the Portuguese continue to be represented by Indian nationalism as tyrannical, fanatical, and this image continues to be reproduced in film and popular discussion. As such, without addressing

this image, Portuguese interventions in India are always in fact under a sword of Damocles, because the moment there is scope for misunderstanding, out will come the same old stereotypes prejudicing Portuguese investment and intervention in India.

To return to the question of the Portuguese language, however, even while recognizing the importance of the Portuguese language to developing a relationship between Goa and Portugal, I have to also confess that I do not subscribe to Pessoa's famous phrase "a minha pátria é a língua portuguesa". This is to say, I do not concur that one can reduce the Portuguese identity to a knowledge of, and love for, the Portuguese language. Over the past couple of years, I have heard a string of Portuguese diplomats and others indicate their hostility to the idea that Goans have a right to Portuguese citizenship. These diplomats argue that these Goans know nothing of the Portuguese language, nor of Portuguese history, nor, do these people, they argue, have any love for Portugal.

Too often, Portuguese-ness is understood by metropolitan Portuguese as monuments and artefacts, they forget that the people are also products of Portuguese expansion. After all, there would not even be a Goa, or a Goan identity were it not for Portuguese intervention, and as such Goans are also producing Portugal, whether they recognize it or not. Persons in Goa are Portuguese, regardless of whether they know the Portuguese language or not, whether they know the details of Portuguese history or not. They are Portuguese because the law recognizes their Portuguese nationality, a law which – it must be said – is centuries old. Very often, when people in Lisbon ask me if there is still some Portuguese presence in Goa, I tell them, "You are speaking with Jason Keith Fernandes, son of José Manuel Fernandes and Philomena Dulcine Goveas." I am a Portuguese presence as I live and breathe!" And just like me there are thousands of people that produce a Portuguese-ness because of their names, their daily activities, etc.

Speaking of the weight of history, not only is Portugal critical to Goa, but Goa was, and is, critical to the construction of a Portuguese identity since the time of the expansion. It needs to be recognized that one simply cannot have a Portuguese history today without the role of Goa, and Goans, present in it. Goans are Portuguese even though they do not speak the Portuguese language, because their Portuguese-ness is embedded in the mere fact that they were once part of the Portuguese empire and Portugal inflects their daily life, just as Goa does the daily lives of metropolitan Portuguese – whether they recognize it or not.

Take, for example, the argument I recently made, that while Camões is without doubt Portuguese, he also is, note, *is* and not *was*, Goan. He is Goan because his poetry was written in Goa, it was marked by the fact of his presence in that tropical location and that space is intertwined with his poetry, as the translator of the poet Landeg White has recently pointed

out in the introduction to his book *Camões: Made in Goa* (2017). Without Goa, there would have been no Camões, no *Lusiadas*.



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This question of the centrality of the Portuguese language to the Portuguese identity of Goans is not merely a rhetorical point but a practical one because it involves the fate of the thousands of Goans with Portuguese citizenship in the UK. The state obliged to secure their interests is the Portuguese state, and given that many of these Portuguese citizens do not, as of now, speak Portuguese, it is incumbent, in my opinion on the Portuguese state, just as it is the obligation of any state, to speak to its citizens in the language that they know best. This is not to deny that the Portuguese language has a privileged relationship with the Portuguese state, and that these Goans should ideally begin to learn the language, as I am sure future generations will, but the Portuguese state *cannot* wash its hand off of them on the basis of the argument that they do not speak Portuguese. Indeed, it could be argued that the fact that these Goans do not speak Portuguese is a result of the historical failures of the Portuguese state, in particular the manner in which Portuguese rule in Goa was sustained by cooperation with upper caste elites – Catholic, Muslim, and Hindu.

I am not one who believes in the politics of apologies, but post-colonial justice, especially when these people are citizens of the Portuguese state, requires that Portugal recognize the structural violence of caste and work towards empowering these citizens. Speaking to them in any language that they can understand would be a part of this process of empowerment, helping them realise their Portuguese-ness. I should suggest that this would also ensure that the languages that the Portuguese state uses, such as in this case Concanim, also in this way becomes a language of Portugal. Similarly, Marathi, another significant Goan language, was utilized in the *Boletim do Governo do Estado da India* to communicate with those who did not speak or read Portuguese.

The discussion of the Portuguese citizenship of Goans raises one more issue that to my mind is critical to the question of Goa and Portugal. When the Portuguese state eventually recognized Indian sovereignty over Goa in the aftermath of 25 April 1974, it also recognized the continuing right of Portuguese citizenship of Goans. What the Indian state has done, however, is to effectively deny Goans the right to Portuguese citizenship while imposing Indian citizenship on them. To the Indian mind, Indian citizens cannot have two nationalities, hence Goans must choose either Portuguese or Indian citizenship. The moment that Goans assert their Portuguese citizenship, they not only lose the right to intervene in electoral politics in Goa, but are faced with a variety of impediments, both legal and, given the fact that we are suffering a particularly intense moment of Hindu nationalism, extra-legal.

What the India state fails to recognize, however, is that Goans are not acquiring Portuguese



citizenship anew, this is a right that they had when India annexed Goa, and continue to have, and that the right of citizenship is fundamental to human rights. As such, the Indian state cannot oblige Goans to give up their right to Indian citizenship if they chose to exercise rights under Portuguese citizenship. To do so is to effectively be a colonial presence in Goa. The resolution of this problem, which is critical to a continuing and healthy relationship between Goa and Portugal, should be something that the Portuguese state takes up, because, after all, not only does it involve Portugal's obligations as part of a decolonizing state, but these are, at the end of the day, the rights of Portuguese citizens that we are talking about. Given that Portugal intervened in the case of East Timor, I fail to see why this deprivation of a right by a colonial power is not similarly taken up now. Too often, unfortunately, the continuing rights of Goans as Portuguese citizens are not recognised as such by the Portuguese state.

The reasons for this problem lie in the manner in which Portuguese political rhetoric has been structured subsequent to the Carnation Revolution, which involves essentially a simplistic inversion of the rhetoric of the Estado Novo. As such, if the Estado Novo suggested that all persons in the Portuguese state were Portuguese, then the response has been to uncritically recognize the persons in the former overseas provinces as non-Portuguese. I recollect some years ago when I first began to work out the ideas I hold today and would assert myself as Portuguese, well-meaning metropolitan Portuguese friends who see themselves as left-leaning, would condescendingly ask me, "but why do you want to be Portuguese, you are Goan, Indian!"

Now, I am not saying that all persons in Goa have to necessarily feel Portuguese; if they want to only feel Goan, or Indian, then this is their choice. However, if I can feel Goan, South-Asian, *and* Portuguese, why do I have metropolitan Portuguese people telling me that I am not? Why the assumption that I am a supporter of the Estado Novo, or living in a time-warp? Indeed, one could argue that these responses by metropolitan Portuguese are evidences of racist action because it allows for the metropolitan to decide who is Portuguese or not, constructs identities that are effectively racial for those who are from the former overseas territories, and in doing so effectively limits Portuguese identity to those who are white.

A lot of this confused positioning is the result of the blind adoption of post-colonial norms and theories that were developed in the context of the British Empire. It needs to be borne in mind that the British Empire did not extend citizenship to its subject populations. In the absence of even a rhetoric of being British, given that Britain's late expansion was informed by scientific racism, the most attractive possibility that subject elites saw was to assert the right to independent nation-states. This move effectively extended the logic of racism, rather than rejecting a racialized vision of the world, and demanding justice within the empire. The Portuguese case, however, precisely because of the rhetoric of the Empire, and the longer

history of metropolitan and overseas relations offered, and continues to offer, us a different possibility, of demanding justice within imperial relations. Further, it is not too late to work towards this question of justice, but the first step towards it would be to recognize that things in Portugal were, and are, different, and that marching to the tune of Anglophone postcolonial certainties is not necessarily the answer for us.

At this point of time, I should stress that I do not think that Portugal was unmarked by racism. Further, I know that the situation in the African territories was unlike that in Goa, where there was an in-principle extension of citizenship to all. Indeed, the situation in Goa may be so dramatically different that we can only extend this example with caution. I also want to highlight that the rhetoric of the *Estado Novo*, as radical as it sounded, was marked by a deep cynicism. This rhetoric that it utilized was in fact harvested from an earlier age, when the universal ideals of the Catholic faith allowed for the creation of a universal identity, in this case directed by the Portuguese Crown. But even in early modern Portugal it is not as if there were no tendencies towards racist exclusions. But we do not need to remain trapped in acknowledging that there was racist violence. I think that even as we recognize this fact of racist violence, we should focus on is the fact that the rhetoric was present and it allowed, and indeed, allows us to create possibilities for a different world. Imagine how empowering it is for a person who is not white, who has not grown up in the metropole to be nevertheless able to affirm that s/he is Portuguese, even while affirming other identities! It is here that the question of postcolonial justice begins to be affirmed.

I would like to pause at this moment and look at another dimension of the relationship between Goa and Portugal. I have noticed for a while that there are some Goans who have a very fixed idea of what is Portugal, in their vision it is metropolitan Portugal which decides what is Portuguese and what is not. I think that this is a sad situation largely because the relationship between Goa and Portugal has never been one of a mere transfer of technology and culture. It was not a case of Goans simply and blindly copying metropolitan behavior. Rather, Portugal was an instrument of a larger conversation, as has been amply demonstrated by Paulo Varela Gomes in his book *Whitewash, Red Stone* (2011) where he argues that the churches in Goa are not Portuguese churches but Goan churches. He points out that these churches were the result of assembling European features to meet local needs within a local format. They may look Portuguese, but they are in fact Goan. Of course, I would add that Goan-ness and Portuguese-ness are not exclusive identities, but each inform the other. Similarly, the case in other spheres, Catholicism and European behaviors were adopted to claim citizenship. Note that the citizenship rights of Goans were not simply the result of a metropolitan gift. Rather, they were the result of Goan exertions whether in the case of the famous *Bernardo Peres da Silva*, or other Goan members of the Portuguese parliament. It is for this reason of century long struggles for citizenship that we cannot let go

of this citizenship issue so lightly.



If conversation is what will ensure a future to the relationship between Goa and Portugal, what are the steps we can take to ensure this conversation? Indeed, I think that metropolitan Portuguese endeavours ought to play this role as a facilitator of larger conversations.

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I would like to reference the Monte Music Festival, conceived if I am not mistaken by Sergio Mascarenhas former Delegado of the Fundação Oriente. In what has become a highlight of Goa's cultural calendar, held at the Capela da Nossa Senhora do Monte in Old Goa, the Fundação Oriente organizes a festival of Indian *and* European classical music annually. While it is possible that this hosting of the Indian and European was the result of having to deal with local hostility to anything Portuguese, the festival demonstrates that Portugal is not merely a messenger of a narrowly conceived Portugalidade, but is, as it has always been, a messenger for a conversation with Europe, but also with the rest of the world.

I have, for a long time, suggested that metropolitan Portugal, not just the state, but civil society as well, or especially, should institute scholarships that would allow promising Goans to come to Portugal for some sort of education or extended period. One need only look at the work of Sonia Shirsat, who came to Portugal to learn the fado on such scholarships, and is today churning out fadistas by the dozen in Goa! It is also critical to enable these scholars to gain access into metropolitan Portuguese society – no simple task, let me assure you. An appreciation of contemporary Portuguese society is critical if we are to take this relationship into the future. This necessarily requires that the award of scholarships is supplemented by a mentoring process that allows for a single experience to continue as a longer, if not lifelong, engagement. But more than all of this, what is critical is an immersion in the history and institutions of this country and our common past, given that too many of us in Goa are woefully illiterate about our own past, more familiar with histories of British India, or potted histories of Goa.

Similarly, I believe it is critical for metropolitan Portuguese to come to Goa, and other places in India where Portugal had a substantial presence. As a Portuguese priest indicated to me about a month ago, it is when you go to Goa that you realise what being Portuguese meant. I don't believe that he meant this in a chest-thumping manner, marveling at the work we did *over there*, but the complexity of what it means to be Portuguese and that it involves something more than being a member of a medium-sized country of the EU.

In this context I would like to share with you an argument that I have been forwarding about the South Asian nature of the Portuguese. To do this I refer to the term *Namban*, which often refers to Japanese art made in the period when in conversation with the Portuguese.

Namban, quite literally, means Southern Barbarian. Which south, could the term refer to I

inquire. It could, of course, refer to the south of Europe, but I would rather imagine that it refers to the South of Asia. It is this South-Asian-ness of the Portuguese identity that I believe that visiting Portuguese should seek to recover, rather than simply wallow in the greatness of the monuments, and in looking to speak in Portuguese. I would rather see metropolitan Portuguese learn Concanim, Marathi, Urdu, Malayalam. Too often contemporary Portuguese identity formation is bound up in producing the Portuguese as white, and as members of the European Union – I would like to highlight the work of Sarah Ashby titled *The Lusophone world: the evolution of Portuguese national narratives* (2017). While I have no problems with the European Union, and indeed think it a great idea, an approximation to Europe does not have to imply a distancing of Portugal from a rich and complex past.

Goa and Portugal have a past, this much is clear. Both these spaces have influenced each other, such that one is not possible without the other. But do they have a future? While I believe that they do, they must if what we know as Portugal and Goa are to survive. However, this requires that we address a number of issues, first, recognize the animosity of the Indian state, and the fact that it refuses to allow Goans to hold both Portuguese and Indian citizenship effectively makes it a colonial presence in Goa. Second, ensure that the Portuguese state makes a determined outreach to Goans holding Portuguese passports, and not living in the Portuguese state. Third, become alive to the fact that we need to explore post-colonial models that are honest to our experience. Fourth, initiate structural interventions that ensure that there is space for continued conversation between individuals in Goa and Portugal.

Thank you all for your attention and I look forward to your comments and reflections.



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