



Full Citizenship in India: CAA, OCI and Dual Citizenship for Goans
It is heartening to note that the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the National Register of Citizens (NRC), and the National Population Register (NPR) – (CAA complex) – have taken root in Goa. It is critical that Goans be part of a movement opposing the furthering of a Hindu state.

The protests against the CAA complex have vibrantly brought the issue of Indian citizenship, how it is obtained and proved, and the qualifications that are expected of a citizen, to the fore. However, we are also concerned about some crucial and pre-existing issues that impinge on Goan citizenship and reduce Goans to second class citizenship within India. We refer primarily to the manner in which the rights of Goans to be citizens of *both* Portugal and India are frustrated by the Indian state, and secondly, the manner in which the recognition of the Konkani language solely in the Nagari script effectively reduces Catholics in Goa to second-class citizenship.

The Al-Zulaij Collective has, on various occasions, highlighted that the right of citizenship is sacred and cannot be taken away by the state. Yet this is precisely what has been done to Goans when the Indian state indicates that Goans cannot affirm their right to Portuguese citizenship and also retain Indian citizenship. Faced with a lack of decent and lucrative employment opportunities in Goa, and increasingly oppressed by the cultural chauvinism in the country, many Goans are forced to give up their Indian citizenship when they reclaim the Portuguese one.

It should be recollected that the Goan right to Portuguese citizenship – recognised in 1838 – predates the existence of the Indian state, and yet Goans who affirm their rights to Portuguese citizenship are prevented from continuing to politically affirm their interest in Goa, which forms part of the sovereign territory of India. The right to Portuguese citizenship is in fact similar to the one which was fought for by the subjects of the British Raj but which they could only achieve in 1947 as a result of the freedom struggle against the Raj. In the Goan case, Portuguese citizenship was the result of a long struggle by various Goans over centuries to become effective citizens of the Portuguese state. And yet, Goans are being prevented from benefitting from their anti-colonial struggles, by the actions of the Indian state.

The only crumb that they have been granted is the ability to registers as Overseas Citizens of India (OCI), a possibility after the 2005 amendment to the Citizenship Act, 1955. Further, as if that was not bad enough, there are now additional provisions for cancellation of OCI registration, under the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, if the Government perceives the OCI cardholder as violating any law so notified. Close on the heels of this change, is the



affirmation by the Government of India through an affidavit before the Delhi High Court that OCI holders are not entitled to any of the fundamental rights of a citizen of the country. It is important to stress that the voice of Goans legitimately asserting Portuguese citizenship, can now potentially be further stifled or silenced, by threatening them with cancellation of OCI status. This means, for instance, that from the airport at Mopa to the marinas on the west coast and the Naphtha containing boat off Marivel (now removed), the OCI whose home and family are firmly anchored in these areas runs the risk of never being able to come home if he or she speaks against these undesirable projects.

Much of the anger against the CAA complex is in fact the release of the pent-up frustration that Muslims have felt for generations against the suggestion that they are loyal to Pakistan rather than India. Goans, and especially Catholics in Goa, face a similar experience regarding Portugal. Goans relived this experience when in a recent altercation between the MLA Alina Saldanha and a railway officer, the latter stated that Goans were Portuguese and not Indian. Saldanha's response, where she asserted that she was Indian and not Portuguese, was not dissimilar from that of Muslims in India who continually affirm that they are Indian and not Pakistani. Yet, as the experience of Muslims in India has amply demonstrated, the mere affirmation of Indianness is not sufficient to resolve the problem, rather what is necessary is the acceptance of one's Indianness even as one also asserts other identities.

Much like the offensive attitude of the railway official, the nature of Indian nationalism is narrow and culturally chauvinistic. This narrowness is not only manifested in the Indian state's obstinate attitude in not allowing dual citizenship for Goans but also in the cultural politics within Goa. Every Goan is aware of the long history of the struggle for the recognition of the Konkani language as *the* language of Goa. While the agitation for the recognition of Konkani used the support of people who used the Roman script, that script has yet to receive official recognition. The Goan governments and members of civil society have ensured that this script, although widely used for centuries now, is not recognized as a legitimate script of the Konkani language.

Thanks to the exclusion of the Roman script, there exists a decades-long refusal of state patronage to art forms, like *Tiatr* and *Cantaram*, that use the Roman script, and a determined attempt to destroy Roman Konkani by refusing to allow it to be taught in schools. This refusal has effectively made the communities who most use the script, i.e., the Goan Catholics, into second-class citizens in Goa. It is very clear that, in addition to despising the social groups who use the Roman script, the fear against this script is that its vibrant culture, which is overwhelmingly Catholic, will mark Goan culture, when the attempt by all Brahminised groups is to portray Goan culture as only Brahmanical and Hindu. The result is that Konkani is used as an instrument to marginalize and minoritize groups within Goa.



In other words, these minoritized groups are not recognized as full citizens. It is imperative that the two issues of recognition of the right to Portuguese *and* Indian citizenship, (dual citizenship for Goans), and the recognition of the Roman script, are taken up by the Goan opponents of the CAA complex. The failure to do so raises the legitimate fear that the mobilization will be one more movement in Goa that while drawing on the energies of Catholics in Goa, fails to give them justice, and also fails to address the fundamental issues that impact on Goan citizenship within the Indian Union. This pattern was seen during the Konkani language agitation when, although much of the energy of the movement was drawn from Catholics who speak the variant scripted in Roman, it was Nagri and the dialect associated with the Saraswat caste which were made official.

The failure to take up these issues is also not difficult to fathom. Since its integration into India, the political landscape of Goa has been marked by a form of Hindu nationalism. Most of the popular leadership in Goa do not adequately challenge this Hindu nationalism, nor have they tried to innovate new forms of politics. Therein lies a fundamental reason why, despite calls to Goemcarponn and the like, we are unable to address the plethora of problems assailing us.

As has been eloquently articulated by Sumeet Samos, fighting to protect ideas of secularism and the clarion call for harmony, slogans like ‘Save the Constitution’, are like “temporary band aids and not long-term solutions.” Such slogans only obfuscate the fact that the current CAA complex is the result of decades of creeping majoritarianism underwritten by the Indian State’s nationalism and now ironically reinforced by a galloping globalization that seeks to flatten identities and thus rob people of their moorings.

The current moment in India calls for a fundamental challenge to these tendencies and can only be sustained by the recognition of the legitimate demands from various regions and minoritized groups that constitute the country. As we have elaborated, in Goa, these demands must necessarily include the rights to dual citizenship and the recognition of the Roman script. Without these, one will be guilty of merely perpetuating the contradictions of the Indian State’s nationalism that have condemned most Goans to second-class citizenship in this country.



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