



By JASON KEITH FERNANDES

Text of the presentation at the Memorial meeting for Dr. Teotónio de
I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
Souza, Casa de Goa, Lisbon – 23 March 2019

The evil that men do lives after them;

The good is oft interred with their bones;

So let it be with Caesar.

William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act III, Scene 2.

I should begin by saying that I am quite shocked by a recent trend that I have noticed, especially in evidence following the death of Manohar Parrikar, former Chief Minister of Goa, to unreservedly praise public figures and not reflect on the negative aspects of their characters or interventions in society. The failure to reflect on the less appealing aspects of their personality is an indication of the troubled times we live in, where critique is seen as criticism, and disrespect, and not tolerated in the least.

Critique, I would like to point out, is dispassionate reflection, examining both the positive and the negative, and reflecting on the larger reasons for these traits. Therefore, today I would like to dispassionately reflect on some aspects of Teotónio's life. I would like to begin by tackling the elephant in the room: the difficult person that Teotónio was, especially in professional contexts.

Teotónio was a cantankerous person, quick to take offense, often unwilling to graciously acknowledge the work of younger scholars, especially if they didn't bow before him. Woe to the person who contradicted him, he would often mount a tirade against them publicly pulling their work apart.

It would be easy to attribute these clearly negative features to Teotónio alone. His flaws, though his own, were flaws born of the larger social, and particularly Goan, context into which he was born, and within which he worked and contributed.


Vai Acontecer na Casa de Goa...

Encontro Chá das Cinco

Sábado
23 de Março - 16H30


Desafie os seus amigos a se juntarem a nós neste encontro ao redor de uma mesa com delícias goesas, através do nosso bazar de doces e salgados, acompanhado de uma agradável chavena de chá, na companhia dos amigos.

Programa:
17H30 - Conferência sobre a vida e obra do Prof. Teotónio de Souza, que foi um historiador goês, fundador e diretor do Centro Xavier de Pesquisas Históricas, com sede em Goa, no Alto Porvorim. Em Portugal desde 1995, *Teotónio de Souza*, foi chefe e presidente do Departamento de História da Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias de 1999-2014. A conferência será proferida por Constantino Xavier, Jason Keith Fernandes e Sandra Ataíde Lobo.



Contamos com a vossa presença...

Agradecemos a confirmação da sua presença até o dia 22 de Março, através dos contactos que disponibilizamos.

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ing for Dr. Teotónio de
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It is my consistent argument that the Goan community, whether in Goa, or spread through the diaspora does not recognize the work of its children. Any one doing interesting work, and not belonging to a powerful family or caste group, essentially works alone to no applause from the rest of the community. Any recognition from the community comes too late in the day, once they are dead, offering as a result no comfort to persons who struggle substantially to articulate new perspectives and embark on new initiatives. One could take Teotónio's case as a perfect example. I know of only one recognition of Teotónio as a scholar, the festschrift titled *Metahistory. History Questioning History. Festschrift in Honour of Teotonio R. De Souza* and I am pretty certain that it was not initiated by any Goan institution.

Working single-handedly and not receiving any recognition, often has a corrosive impact on one's soul. It makes one bitter, makes one constantly beat one's own drum and unwilling to acknowledge the work of others. After all, the logic goes that if no one is going to recognize my work, then I must do so myself, right?

This is not merely in the case of Teotónio, but in the case of a number of Goan trail-blazers that I have had the opportunity to witness, and this pains me. To re-emphasize, what marks Goan communities is not only a lack of institutionalization, but also a failure to take academic investment seriously. Over the past few years there has been a growing international scholarly interest in Goa. As wonderful as this may be, this is also a danger because Goa is | 2

being defined by those who are not Goan, and it is their agendas, that will determine the representation of Goans. I believe that Teotónio was aware of this problem. He sought to articulate a Goan identity that was different from the Portuguese, and because he sensed that he was a lone voice making this argument, it contributed to his cantankerousness. This is not to say that I agreed with his position. Born into a different generation, my perspective of Goan identities is substantially different. While Teotónio's position was fairly Indian nationalist and nativist, my own attempt is to combat Indian nationalism. But I think we would agree that there has to be a greater investment by Goans in representing themselves.

A good amount of Teotónio's unpleasantness, I believe, emerged also from the peculiar social location that he occupied. Brahmin, but not quite. I was made aware of this when reading the Introduction to his book, *Goa To Me* (1994). I was struck by the amount of personal history that he revealed and personally found it a very brave and honest text. This text demonstrates the viciousness of the caste system among Goans, where we are unable to create a vibrant healthy Goan identity because we are forever caught up in emphasizing rank, and therefore difference, rather than building community and emphasizing similarity. I have an anecdote of my own to offer. My first experience in Lisbon was to attend the meeting of Goans from across the world organized by the Casa de Goa some years ago (2007?). I was in Coimbra for a month at the time and took the opportunity to have lunch with Teotónio prior to the meeting. At our lunch Teotónio filled me in on his appraisal of the Goan communities in Lisbon, pointing to inter-caste conflicts and how at the time the Casa da Goa was dominated by brahmins.

Arriving at the Casa de Goa armed with this knowledge, I was greeted by an individual who asked me that ancient Goan question, "where in Goa are you from?" a question designed not so much to open a conversation, but to locate you in the caste hierarchy. While I do not normally play this game, offering that I grew up in Pangim, or in Dona Paula, this time round I slipped indicating my roots in Divar. "Ah!" responded this individual "We are from Margão!", putting me firmly in my place. Never again, I promised to myself, would I play this game. It is not my intention to suggest that this is currently the case with the Casa de Goa, but this is an attitude that we need to deal with, and firmly.

I will end these reflections here, I suspect I have already taken up well more than my fair share of the allotted time. I thank you for your attention, Casa de Goa for this invitation, and wish eternal rest to Teotónio, and thank him for the work he has done.



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