



edited by
JERRY PINTO



Reflected in Water

writings on
Goa

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PENGUIN BOOKS

For Goa and Opium

Teotonio R. de Souza

A gravestone in the nave of Bombay's Gloria Church is our only real reminder of the opium smuggler who tried to liberate Goa.

'Within this tomb lie the mortal remains of Rogério de Faria, Knight of the Order of Christ and Portuguese businessman in Bombay,' reads the Portuguese inscription on stone, which was transferred from the Fort Chapel in Mazagaon, around 1813.

It offers these details: 'He was Director of the Portuguese factory at Surat and Consul General of Brazil in India. Born in his native land Goa on 14 October 1770, died in Bombay 15 March 1848. The outstanding services he rendered to the Portuguese and Brazilian nations in the important posts he occupied, the honour and honesty he displayed in his business transactions, the hospitality and frankness with which he welcomed nationals and foreigners, his philanthropy and generosity in dealing with the afflicted, made him widely known and gained for him much esteem, consideration and respect.'

It's a long description, as far as epitaphs go. But, like so much funerary prose, it fails to tell of the adventures I began to reconstruct when a large chunk of Rogério de Faria's business correspondence with the Mhamay Kamat Agency House, from Panjim in Goa, came into my hands. Dating back to the period between 1789 and 1830, these papers included business reports, balance sheets, lading bills, bills of exchange, receipts, and a few friendly letters. Mhamay House was essentially a tax-collection agency for some levies. The Mhamay papers throw up an intriguing figure, who never steps out of the shadows of history but certainly had an active role to play.

This is a revised and updated version of the essay 'Capital Input in Goa's Freedom Struggle: The Bombay Connection', in *Indo-Portuguese History: Old Issues, New Questions*, ed. Teotonio R. de Souza, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1985, pp. 102-13.

Rogério de Faria was probably born in Santa Ines, his mother's village. His father, João began business in Calcutta, initially as Bruce, Faria & Co, one of a few Goan business houses there, along with the Souzas and Barrettos. João de Faria had three ships of his own, *Margaret Crawford*, *Boa Esperança* and *Gloriosa*. Perhaps in the early days of the business he ventured out with them, but when his son grew up he would stay in the city to look after the shop while Rogério would go on business trips to Pulo Pinao, Canton and Macau. In one of his letters to the Mhamays, Rogério explains that due to his father's health problems, he decided to move his base of operations to Bombay in May 1803. He registered himself as a Portuguese citizen domiciled in Bombay.

I believe that this was a shrewd business move and not motivated solely by his father's ill-health. Many small Indo-Portuguese firms had tried their luck in the commercial world of nineteenth-century Bombay, all lured there by the change in the fortunes of the opium trade. (Most would fail to survive beyond the first quarter of that century.) The East India Company was establishing a growing monopoly over the cultivation and sale of opium in Bengal, so Malwa opium had become a hugely profitable item of export trade to China. Nearly two-thirds of the exports escaped English control (and taxation) by being shipped through Portuguese-held Daman.

Despite living in Bombay, Rogério de Faria had maintained good contacts with the Portuguese authorities of Goa. When Napoleon invaded Portugal in November 1807, the royal family was helped by the English to move to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in 1808. Faria began to trade directly with Brazil, and when his ship entered Rio for the first time, he was made Knight of the Order of Christ by the Portuguese king, John VI. Apparently, Faria had little regard for honours that did not bring him financial benefits, even if it did entitle him to be called 'Sir' in Bombay's high society. Writing to the Mhamays in November 1811, he complained that he had received an honour, but no exemption in customs duties to maintain it. However, he managed to exploit his standing with the Portuguese authorities to the full to promote his business interests.

From the 1820s, he had joined the country traders who were shipping opium directly to Lintin, bypassing Macau. When Brazil

became independent in 1822, he became the honorary consul of Brazil in India, and in 1826 won the directorship of the Portuguese trading counter of Surat for three years. By then, Rogério de Faria had become a prominent figure in Bombay. It appears that Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, the most glamorous Parsee figure of the mid-nineteenth century, started his prosperous career as a clerk in the firm of Rogério de Faria. Reporting the death of Sir Rogério's daughter, Miss Margaret de Faria, the *Bombay Gazette* of 7 October 1889 added that Sir Jamsetjee had made his first voyage to China in a ship belonging to Sir Rogério de Faria.

When Sir Edward West, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Judicature of the Bombay Presidency, and his wife visited Goa in 1824, Rogério de Faria was instrumental in making arrangements for their stay in Goa through the Mhamay House.

Abbé Cottineau, another well-known contemporary French visitor to Bombay and Goa, was a guest of Faria, and describes his house as 'commanding a most lovely view of the sea, the ramparts, the suburbs, the city, the Colaba island, and the west coast as far as the so-called Malabar Point'. He also recounts that Sir Rogério's old father was fairer than the son, who was then a widower with one son and nine daughters. Abbé Cottineau attended João Faria's funeral, on 9 May 1828. Cottineau dined with the family, and tells us that after dinner Sir Rogério smoked a pipe in the Indian fashion whose reed passed through a cooler. This suggests that Rogério may have been smoking the opium he smuggled.

But as Bombay rose to power as a great commercial city, Sir Rogério's homeland was going through a spell of instability, as Portuguese liberal politics spilled into Goa in the early 1820s. In 1821, a copy of the royal decree accepting constitutionalism in Portugal was sent to Bernardo Peres da Silva, a doctor and one of the first native Goans to be elected to represent the colony in the Portuguese Parliament. A liberal coup on 16 September 1821 had deposed the Viceroy Count of Rio Pardo and established a junta. In the political turmoil that followed, the Goans grew in political maturity. It became apparent to them that the liberal proclamations of the Portuguese did not coincide with their native self-respect and their desire for self-rule.

The liberal-constitutional regime had provided the Goans the opportunity to send their elected representatives to the Parliament of Portugal. The system actually favoured the Portuguese-educated landed gentry, but there was wide popular support for the elected representatives, generated by a groundswell of anti-colonialism that had no other viable outlet. In spite of the efforts of the white settlers to manipulate the elections, they could find no popular support for their candidates. Bernardo Peres da Silva, on the other hand, won every election held from 1822 till his death in 1842.

During his first term as elected representative, da Silva fought on the side of the liberals in Portugal. He had to go into exile to England and then to Brazil, where he survived by giving private tuitions. His son, serving in the Portuguese military, had been actively involved in defending the liberal cause of Prince Regent Pedro. He took part in the expeditionary force that left from island Terceira (in the Azores archipelago) and landed in Oporto, where it won a decisive victory for the liberals in 1834. As a reward, Prince Pedro appointed Bernardo Peres da Silva as Prefect of the Portuguese State of India. It was a new designation that was adopted for provincial governors under the liberal political reform also in Portugal. But da Silva's arrival in Goa on 10 January 1835 created panic among the white beneficiaries of the erstwhile regime. It was not unjustified. The new broom was intent on sweeping clean. He began reforming the administration and making fresh appointments in the Departments of Justice and Finance within a week of taking office. The old guard brought off a coup and forced the Prefect to leave Goa on the first of February, after barely a fortnight in power. His many native supporters and some white sympathizers could do nothing against the military opposition led by the whites and 'descendentes' or mestiços of Goa. They were themselves soon forced to seek security outside Goa, along the coast from Malvan to Daman.

Bernardo Peres da Silva fled to Bombay, where he spent five months preparing an expeditionary force to recapture Goa. Perhaps he was seeking to recapture the glory days of the expeditionary force that gained Portugal for the liberals in 1834. Not everyone was impressed. The *Bombay Courier* of 26 May 1835 described the composition of the expeditionary crew: 'Sr. Peres it seems is determined to follow the

example of Don Pedro in this country, and for this purpose has collected out of the Bazar a body of nearly three hundred as ragged-looking fellows as ever were seen.' The report continues: 'The quantity of opium smuggled this year into Damaun, over the revenues of which he possesses some control, having been much greater than usual, unexpected resources were placed at his disposal, and everything has since gone smoothly up to the present moment.' It concludes: 'It only remains to be seen whether fortune will continue to smile and as a few days will now settle this momentous question, we shall not venture to hazard an opinion regarding it.'

Rogério de Faria decided to bet on the side of the expeditionary force. Things were not going well for him. Following the end of East India Company's opium monopoly in 1813, the British authorities had taken measures to force all exports of the commodity through Bombay, making it difficult to smuggle through Daman. Sir Rogério saw a chance here of repairing his fortunes badly shaken by the British administrative controls and the growing competition among Bombay merchants. He decided to raise money to help equip the Force, hoping that if it did take Goa, he would be suitably repaid in cash or concessions. To this end, he issued bills in favour of Sir Jamsetjee of Bombay and Motichund in Ahmedabad. The bills were to be paid by the Prefect on taking charge of the Daman administration in cash or through exemptions of customs duties.

The liberals did not seem to have learnt from the centuries-long Portuguese 'história trágico-marítima' of frequent shipwrecks. The anxiousness to carry more goods home always caused delays in loading, and consequently, Portuguese ships would leave harbour late and run into storms. Bad weather and overloading did more damage to Portuguese shipping than the English, the Dutch or the pirates. Bernardo Peres da Silva's expeditionary force had left Bombay on 27 May, disregarding public warnings of the advancing monsoon that had set in since some days at Cochin. Right enough, the two gunboats were wrecked by a thunderstorm and the Force was back in Bombay on the fifth day in a wretched condition and with heavy casualties.

The *Bombay Courier* had the following editorial comment on 6 June 1835: 'The Portuguese corvette with Sr. Peres, returned yesterday, after an unavailing attempt to contend against the south-west

monsoon, which appears to have been totally forgotten in fitting out the expedition against Goa. The rest of the small craft which accompanied her arrived here a day or two previously, and are now scattered about the harbour in a disabled state. Thus, we presume, a stop has been put to the efforts against Goa for some months at least, if not forever.'

The Prefect left Bombay to entrench himself in Daman. Sir Rogério decided to call in his debts. Bernardo Peres da Silva received a bill for Rs. 67,957 from Sir Rogério de Faria's son-in-law and partner, for expenditure on arms supplied for the defence of Daman and Diu, as well as the expenses of the failed expedition. The Prefect was unable to put up the cash: the bureaucracy of Daman questioned the legality of his procedures for clearing the debts.

Unable to repay his creditors, Faria's reputation in the business world was shaken. Sir Jamsetjee sounded a warning in a letter to Faria on 29 July 1835: 'You seem to be quite ignorant of what the result will be in the end . . . I trust you will write to Daman confidentially and see that the matter is arranged without delay as we must hold you responsible.'

By December 1838, Sir Rogério was bankrupt. In his short, but informative life account of Sir Rogério, published in Gujarati in 1874, Rathanjee Framjee Wacha says that Sir Rogério had no one to look after him during the sunset of his life, and that Sir Jamsetjee assisted him while he was alive and provided a bungalow and regular living allowance to his descendants in perpetuity. This is confirmed by Sir Jamsetjee, who wrote on 26 November 1838 to William Jardine in Canton: 'You will be sorry to hear poor Sir Roger de Faria delivered his affairs to the Court, his assets apparently 50 per cent which will keep him out from going to jail—my good friend . . . I have some regard to his family and cannot help avoiding this large number of persons to provide with.' Sir Jamsetjee seems to have honoured his feelings and granted a lifelong pension to Rogério de Faria and his immediate family members.

That was not the only loss Faria had to bear. He also lost his only son a couple of years before he died, almost a grand old octogenarian. His son (born 1813) died of tetanus after an accidental fall from horseback two days after Christmas of 1846. He was buried at Fort

Chapel where his father would also be interred, two years later. He had been consular agent of the Portuguese since 1841. All his daughters were married, excepting Margarida Conceição de Faria, the sole heir to her father's fortune, or whatever remained of it. She seems to have kept up the tradition of lavish hospitality until her death on 26 September 1889 at the age of seventy-three, particularly towards Portuguese dignitaries passing through Bombay and poor Goan students who sought her assistance.

Was Rogério de Faria a sentimental old fool who wanted freedom for his native land, or was he taking a calculated gamble to shore up his business in hard times? I am inclined to see mixed motivation. But History always keeps some secrets and Faria's will remain in its shadows.