

seminar

web-edition

THE MONTHLY SYMPOSIUM P.O.BOX 338 NEW DELHI 110001

Founder Editors: RAJ & ROMESH THAPAR

a symposium on India and the
Portuguese speaking world

symposium participants

- THE PROBLEM

Posed by **Sunil Khilnani**, Director, King's College India Institute, London and **Constantino Xavier**, Ph.D. candidate, Johns Hopkins University, Washington D.C.

- HISTORICAL LINKS AND FUTURE POTENTIAL

Constantino Xavier, Ph.D. candidate, Johns Hopkins University, Washington D.C.

- FROM CHRISTIANIZATION OF KARMA TO LUSO-TROPICALISM AND LUSOSPHERE

Teotonio R. de Souza, Professor and Head, Department of History, Universidade Lusofona, Lisboa, Portugal

- BRAZIL AND INDIA: SYNERGY BETWEEN BIKINI AND BINDI

R. Viswanathan, Indian Ambassador to Argentina, Buenos Aires

- LUSOPHONE VISIONS OF INDIA

Jorge Roza de Oliveira, Ambassador of Portugal to India, New Delhi

- WHAT HAPPENED TO INDIAN LITERATURE IN PORTUGUESE?

Everton V. Machado, postdoctoral researcher, Centre for Comparative Studies, University of Lisbon



cover design by www.seshdesign.com

Next month: Immunization and Vaccines

Institute of the University of Lisbon

- SEEING INDIA THROUGH BRAZILIAN EYES

Oliver Stuenkel, Assistant Professor of International Relations, Getúlio Vargas Foundation, São Paulo

- GOA AND LUSOSPHERE ART

Vivek Menezes, writer and photographer, Goa

- TOUCHING TIMOR-LESTE

Nitin Pai, Founder and Fellow for Geopolitics, The Takshashila Institution, Chennai

- EXPERIMENTS IN CULTURAL NEGOTIATION

Paulo Antônio Pereira Pinto, Ambassador of Brazil to Azerbaijan, Baku; previously first Consul General of Brazil in Mumbai

- FOR A NEW EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE SOUTH

Shiv Visvanathan, social science nomad

- FACTFILE

- IN MEMORIAM

Bal Mundkur - *One of a Kind* and *The Art and Loss of Mario* by **Gerson da Cunha**

- BACKPAGE

From Christianization of Karma to Luso-Tropicalism and Lusosphere

TEOTÔNIO R. DE SOUZA

THE Portuguese arrival in India marked the beginning of the age of modern globalization that has been sustained until very recently in conditions that were favourable for the western domination of the globe. Adam Smith analyzed the origin of the wealth of nations in pre-Gamic and post-Gamic eras. It is presently experiencing tremors that were predicted by Andre Gunder Frank in his *ReOrient*, which the bulk of the western sociologists and economists sought to ignore. For Gunder Frank the past five centuries saw an ephemeral rise of the West, exploring and exploiting the pre-existent

markets of China and India. He saw these making a comeback.

The initial Portuguese motivation to seek entry into the Asian markets was a mix of economic and religious strategy. The messianism of King Manuel of Portugal wished to deprive the Turks holding the Holy Land from their financial means of sustaining it with control of Asian trade. The religious motivation got diluted after his death and was replaced with Tridentine fanaticism that saw the *Estado da Índia* infected by the spirit of Counter-Reformation, implemented with the missionary zeal of the Soci-

ety of Jesus and the inquisitorial methods of banishing *dharma* and *karma*. Strangely, five centuries later, both are holding their ground and the karma is still haunting the pioneers of the modern globalization. All the colonial efforts at Christianizing it have failed to produce the desired results.

Expansion of Christianity has always been advocated as essence of its mission to reach the ends of the earth, incarnated in the cultures it meets, replicating the incarnation of Jesus. We need to study Christianity of Asia, not merely a Christianity in Asia. The Asians need to assume their active role in the globalization, instead of continuing to feel victimized and at the receiving end. The Catholic Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conferences born at Taipei (Taiwan) in 1974 has placed it on record that the history of Christianity was being 'newly returned' to the Asian peoples themselves.¹ That is a recurrent point in the thought and texts of the FABC conferences: the vision of a 'new world being born' in Asia since the end of the colonial period.

The FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference) has affirmed time and again that the church's missionary proclamation and activity must be in close dialogue with the realities of the continent and must seek to respond to the 'signs of the times'. Another recurring theme is 'dialogue', as the 'basic mode of mission in Asia', meaning dialogue with histories and cultures, religions and religious traditions, and life situations of poverty. This dialogue cannot any longer be strategic adaptations tried by De Nobili and Ricci and which fizzled out as a result of the cultural superiority of the European imperial church leadership.

1. Gaudencio Rosales and C.G. Arévalo (eds.), *For all the Peoples of Asia* (FABC documents from 1970-1991), Orbis Books, N.Y., 1992, p. viii.

The missionary strategy of cultural adaptation was a sort of a paternalist concession to the Asian cultures. It is important to note that nowhere in the FABC documentation does one find any recrimination or resentment against the colonial experiences. I see it as the basis of all challenges: sublimating, without bypassing, the colonial experiences. I wish to recall here the advice of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in his *Glimpses of World History*: 'Our study of history has shown us that life is often very cruel and callous. To get excited over it, or merely to blame people, is foolish and does not help. It is much more sensible to try to understand the causes of poverty and misery and exploitation, and then try to remove them.'²

At a seminar organized by me in Goa in 1992, Benny Aguiar, the former Editor of the Catholic weekly *The Examiner* of Bombay and who had covered the last leg of the Vatican II and three synods of Bishops in Rome for the journal, spoke about the continued colonial inheritance in a paper entitled 'Decolonizing the Church'. He lamented that as a result of the colonial mentality for the majority of Catholics in India, Hinduism was a religion steeped in mythology, superstition and error. Any idea that non-Christian religions could be ways of salvation and often reflected rays of that truth which enlightened all men, was alien to their minds.

If God could have spoken through non-Christian scriptures, if the relationship between Hindu and Christians was to be marked by dialogue rather than conversion, if the aim of Christian educational institutions was to make Hindus better Hindus or Muslims better Muslims, then where was

2. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, OUP, New Delhi, 1997 (12th ed.), p. 435.

the point of the vast missionary endeavour of the Church down the ages as crystallized in the apostolate of St. Francis Xavier in Goa, they reasoned. Citing a survey conducted in 1968, three years after the Vatican Council, Aguiar concluded that Catholics in India had for so long lived in a ghetto that they were unaware of the changing reality around them.³

Benny Aguiar also cited Cardinal Parecatil speaking at the World Conference of Religions held at Cochin in November 1981: 'We must be humble, shedding all superiority complex in our approach to other religions... In God's providence every religion has a part to play in leading men to their destiny.' This conference was a kind of summit meeting of all dialogue groups that had sprung up in various parts of the country on the initiative of the CBCI Dialogue Commission.

I see the karma in this context as the cultural resilience of India, despite all colonial efforts at Christianizing it. I need not repeat much that K.N. Panikkar wrote in his *Asia and Western Dominance* (1953), much to the irritation of the former colonialists in India. At the end of about five centuries, the Portuguese system of Church *Padroado* was represented in its final phase by the archbishop patriarch, José da Costa Nunes, who was the subject of a couple of my critical essays, including one entitled 'A patriarch who cared for more than souls' [<http://recil.grupolusofona.pt/handle/10437/499>]. Before he arrived, Goa had witnessed a sudden surge of re-Hinduisation or *shud'dikaran* of thousands of *gavde*. After his arrival, the winds of political freedom started

3. Benny Aguiar, 'Decolonising the Church', in Teotonio R. de Souza (ed.), *Discoveries, Missionary Expansion and Asian Cultures*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 139-147.

blowing into Goa from across the ghats, worrying the patriarch about the political loyalty of his Goan clergy. [http://bit.ly/vkGpMA]

C. Gaston Perera, a Sinhala Buddhist and Member-Treasurer of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka, recently published *The Portuguese Missionary in 16th and 17th Century Ceylon* (2009), in which he takes potshots at the 17th century Jesuit historian of Ceylon, Fr. Fernão de Queirós and his more recent Jesuit defendants, Fr. S.G. Perera and Fr. V. Perniola. He sees them as downplaying the implications of violence in repeated complaints of the natives of Ceylon against the ill-treatment they suffered at the hands of the Religious, and particularly the Jesuits. These historians seem to see the accusations levelled against the religious as stage-managed by the Portuguese officials whom the Religious, posing as protectors of the natives, denounced for their high-handed behaviour in the villages controlled by them. Gaston Perera takes objection to the ecclesiastical historians, and Fr. Perniola in particular, for minimizing the missionary responsibility for violence as limited to a few cases. Gaston Perera is certainly not amused by Fr. Perniola's logic of distinguishing temples from idols in the historical references to destruction of 'pagodes',⁴ on the basis of his selection of Portuguese documents.⁵

I appreciate Gaston Perera's argument in the postcolonial context and his questioning the past historiography re-

lating the Portuguese religious conversions in Ceylon and his feelings of revulsion about the colonial manhandling of the 'natives' of Sri Lanka.⁶ He raises the ever relevant issue of defining the key concepts of conversion and force, and conveys an implicit warning that the 16th-17th century colonial actors need not be defended by the modern apologists without taking into account the evolution of those concepts over time. Particularly interesting are also the questions about the subaltern role of the native clergy and the racial discrimination. Linked with these are the questions about the intellectual arrogance of the colonialists, including the white missionaries.

These questions remain very relevant till date because they continue to challenge the postcolonial studies. Even though the colonial flags have been lowered in most of the former colonies, the intellectual arrogance has turned more subtle after the denunciation of 'orientalism' by Asian scholars like K.N. Panikkar, Jalal Al-i-Ahmad and Edward Said.⁷

Much of the discussion of the conflicting interests of the local Portuguese officials and the Religious has regional parallels throughout the Portuguese colonial presence in Asia and elsewhere, and so is the Jesuit handling of that historical past, with some rare exceptions that confirm the rule and

6. Gaston Perera, like many other former colonial subjects, may heartily denounce the colonial vocabulary, but I support the idea of continuing its use and extend it also to the former colonial masters as an expression of the equality professed in the postcolonial times.

7. Teotonio R. de Souza, 'Orientalism, Occidentosis and Other Viral Strains: Historical Objectivity and Social Responsibilities', in Pius Malekandathil and T. Jamal Mohammed (eds.), *The Portuguese: Indian Ocean and European Bridgeheads* (Festschrift in Honour of Prof. K.S. Mathew), Tellicherry, MESHAR/Fundação Oriente, 2001, pp. 452-479.

like few swallows do not make a summer. Had Gaston Perera glanced through the Jesuit apologetic literature produced in India till recent times, he would not engage in beating the dead horse and would classify his Sri Lankan clerical apologists as *déjà vue*.

There is the classic apology of Fr. H. Heras, an early representative of Jesuit historical studies in India, namely his *The Conversion Policy of the Jesuits in India* (1933)⁸. He was provoked by the accusations levelled against the Jesuits by Boies Penrose in his *Sea Fights in the East Indies in the years 1602-1639*.⁹ Penrose wrote that 'the Jesuits were fanatics, and like all fanatics they did irreparable harm,' and that the date of the arrival of St. Francis Xavier in India marked the beginning of the decline of the Portuguese power in the East.

It was too blunt an accusation for Fr. Heras to digest. This and other instances cited by Fr. Heras in his Introduction, such as Richard Burton's *Goa and the Blue Mountains*, he classifies as expressions of bigotry and lack of critical capacity for handling historical material. However, for Fr. Heras, 'The Providence of God is a biblical dogma, besides being the first cause acknowledged by the Philosophy of History.' Among his other pious principles of research methodology, we read that 'miracles wrought by St. Francis Xavier himself, miracles which the impartial historian cannot but accept,' and 'the protection of the State was a new means that God made use of for obtaining numerous conversions.'

The German Jesuit Historian, Fr. George Schurhammer, one-time member of the Bombay Province of the

8. H. Heras, *The Conversion Policy of the Jesuits in India*, Indian Historical Institute, Bombay, 1933.

9. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1931, pp. 56-57.

4. Gaston Perera, *The Portuguese Missionary in 16th and 17th Century Ceylon: The Spiritual Conquest*, Vijitha Yapa Publications, Colombo, 2009, pp. 146-148. Cf. C.R. Boxer, 'A Note on Portuguese Missionary Methods in the East', *Ceylon Historical Journal* X(1-4), July 1960-April 1961, pp. 77-90.

5. V. Perniola, *The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka*, III, Tisara Press, Dehiwala, 2003, pp. 360-65.

Jesuits wrote his masterly four volumes on *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times* filled with vast archival information from all quarters, corrects mistakes of old chroniclers and past histories, but seemed unable to let go the crawling crustaceous that miraculously recovered the crucifix of his saintly hero!¹⁰

Getting back to the apologetic tradition of the Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture, another Jesuit director of that Institute, namely Anthony D'Costa wrote *The Christianization of the Goa Islands* (Bombay, 1965) wherein he legitimizes whatever violence was involved in the conversion methods as 'the rigour of mercy', a reference to the parable of the Wedding Banquet in the New Testament (Mt. 22), but he prefers to attribute it to Francisco Paes, a treasury official in 16th century Portuguese India.

My personal reflections about Jesuit historiography and suggestions for its rewriting may be read in the published proceedings of a seminar that took place in Madurai in 1988 to mark the 150th anniversary of the New Madurai Mission of the Jesuits.¹¹ I quoted Fr. Julio Cesare Cordara, S.J. the last official historian of the old So-

ciety and who had witnessed the suppression. The Order 'was dearer to him than his eyes', and when he heard the sentence against it he almost fainted, but recovered to write his impressions and analyze the possible causes. He was accused by the Jesuits themselves of exaggerations, of childishness and of being an enfant terrible. But the late Jesuit General Janssens cited him in 1946 as 'no ordinary man', and as well-grounded in the Society's history. Cordara had found two types of causes for the suppression: natural (human hatred and malice) and supernatural (God's will). He believed that the Almighty had permitted it as a punishment for the Jesuit sin, namely the 'subtle vice of pride, from which God shrank back.' Cordara believed that one day the Society would be revived, but not until 'our pride has vanished.'¹²

John Correia-Afonso, S.J., one of the recent and prominent Jesuit historians and ex-director of the Heras Institute, published shortly before he died a brief history of the Jesuits in India till the suppression in 1773. He did not fail to admit that the chequered history of the Jesuits in India was characterized by sharp contrast of bright lights and deep shadows. He interprets it as the fate of pioneers who faced new situations and challenges. Correia-Afonso concludes his book saying: 'Like other pioneers, they have splendid achievements to their credit as well as tragic failures.'¹³ More honest and radical was a former director of the Xavier Centre of Historical Research in Goa, Charles Borges S.J., who concluded the Preface to his published

doctoral thesis as follows: 'The pages ahead have probed their (Jesuit) story, a story that had its flashes of brilliance, yet one that ended in failure.'¹⁴

The Jesuit historiography as characterized by *apologia pro domo sua* illustrates the continued difficulty in historiographical renewal in postcolonial times. We have seen recently the major work of Dauril Alden about *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, its Empire, and Beyond, 1540-1750*,¹⁵ focusing upon the financial structure and functioning of the Jesuit Order in the Portuguese empire, and quite a few interesting insights into the Jesuit hagiography and missionary methods in Asia by Ines Zupanov.¹⁶ *Tropicalized Christianity* of Zupanov is an *avatar* of Christianized *karma* that keeps worrying the Roman church till today in its post-Vatican II openness to inculturation in India.

These authors, just like the late Professor C.R. Boxer, have shown beyond doubt that no longer are the Jesuits, and other religious and missionary organizations, the only experts of their history. Lay historians can understand it as well, and at times even better. However, there is no alternative to hard work and competence to undertake adequate research that can cast light upon the march of the Asian society across time and space in its struggle for development, without re-

10. I have used the more recent and updated Castilian edition *Francisco Javier: Si vida y su tiempo*, Navarra, Compañía de Jesús – Arzobispado de Pamplona, 1992. Whatever the ideological limitations of the ecclesiastical historians, some of them, including Schurhammer, Josef Wicki, S.G. Perera and V. Perniola, have done a laudable contribution by providing us with source material that would be otherwise difficult to access. Several modern historians of Sri Lanka, both natives of Sri Lanka and former colonial powers, like Chandra da Silva, Jorge Flores, etc have followed the clues provided by these precursors, even though at times to contradict them. Jorge Flores in particular has provided a more extended picture of the Portuguese adventurers which were identified long back by Fr. Schurhammer, though not always acknowledging fairly this debt.

11. Anand Amaladass (ed.), *Jesuit Presence in Indian History*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand, 1988, pp. 14-23.

12. J.S. Cummins, 'The Suppression of the Jesuits, 1773', *History Today*, 1973, pp. 839-48.

13. John Correia-Afonso, S.J., *The Jesuits in India, 1542-1773*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand, 1997, pp. 271-72.

14. Charles J. Borges, *The Economics of the Goa Jesuits: An Explanation of Their Rise and Fall, 1542-1759*, Concept Publishing Company, Delhi, 1994, p. 16.

15. Dauril Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, its Empire, and Beyond, 1540-1750*, Stanford University Press, California, 1996.

16. Ines Zupanov, *Missionary Tropics: The Catholic Frontier in India (16th-17 centuries)*, University of Michigan, 2005.

ducing it, as D.D. Kosambi warned us, to episodes of the national or institutional histories of foreign powers or external agents.¹⁷

This is important for understanding a last ditch effort of the Salazar regime in the early '50s to test a political strategy of international luso-tropicalism as a way of salvaging the Portuguese colonial empire.¹⁸ The Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre was invited by the Portuguese government to visit its colonial empire, including Goa, and to convey his views to the international community so as to influence it against its policies for dismantling colonialism. Freyre advocated a Portuguese network of peoples linked historically with common feelings and culture (*bloco de sentimento e de cultura*). In the context of India's independence and the movement for Goa's integration, Freyre expressed his doubts if the caste system, among other problems, would ensure Goa's autonomy with a depth of cultural feelings (*sentido de profundidade*) outside the Luso-tropical world. During his guided tour to Goa, Gilberto Freyre was impressed by the Portuguese speech (*fala portuguesa*) he heard all around.

Had Gilberto Freyre spent time and moved around more in Goa, he would have observed that neither caste nor religious differences were a serious threat to Goa's autonomy and integration into India, drinking from the well of common myths. Gilberto Freyre does, however, point out that the Portuguese had failed to recognize the capacity of Goans to govern themselves politically. He wonders why Goa could not have its own native as governor, and also records in his travel

diary *Aventura e Rotina* that Goa deserved to be treated as a quasi-nation and no longer as a sub-nation!¹⁹

A report sent to Salazar by Orlando Ribeiro, a noted Portuguese geographer and an admirer of Gilberto Freyre, after his study visit to Goa in 1956, expressed his disappointment about the Portuguese language and cultural impact in Goa. He affirms that he found Goa to be the least Portuguese of all its colonies, including Guinea-Bissau that was 'pacified' only in 1912.²⁰ While Gilberto Freyre seemed ignorant of the long-term social conflict in Goa between the Goan natives and the *mestiços*, Orlando Ribeiro does not fail to point to this social feature as greatly responsible for explaining the cultural arrogance and 'ungratefulness' of the Goans towards the Portuguese, unlike the sentiments he had witnessed among Cape Verdians.

I have referred to the Jesuit reactions to provocations. Partly responsible for such reactions was also the work of the Bombay-based Goan A.K. Priolkar, who reprinted documentation relating to the Goa Inquisition and the Printing Press to mark the quarter centenary of the introduction of these institutions in Goa.²¹ Priolkar also focused his research on the language of the Goans, turning the contribution of Cunha Rivara in this respect in favour of his arguments in defence of Marathi. On the eve of Goa's liberation, Priolkar's research provoked the defenders of Goa's cultural identity to work harder

to prove the legitimacy of Konkani as the spoken language of the Goans and to recover its historic written expressions so as to enable Konkani to become the official language of Goa as a state in 1986. Earlier, Priolkar strengthened the case of the pro-merger lobby during the opinion poll in post-liberation Goa in 1967. In either case, it became clear that the impact of Christianity in Goa had made a dent in *sanatana dharma*, but its Konkani language and culture have survived in Luso-tropicalized Christianity.

To conclude, we have moved from the first phase of Christianizing *karma* and tropicalizing Christianity, to the second phase when Portugal faced the inevitable process of decolonization. It was unable to put into practice the luso-tropicalist strategy that came too late to mend the colonial relations that had been marked by disinterest and disrespect for Goa's traditional culture. We are now witnessing a more pragmatic definition of *Lusofonia*, which Fernando Santos Neves, founder Rector of the largest private University of Portugal, *Universidade Lusófona de Humanidades e Tecnologias* (Lisboa) and a leading Portuguese promoter of postcolonial Lusophony, formulates as having nothing to do with any veiled form of postcolonial domination.²² Portugal has recognized its new place in the postcolonial order and wishes that historic links are used for the common benefit and development of the *Lusosphere*. It implies that despite failures and mistakes, shared history has much that can bring us together to face common challenges and build a better future.

21. A.K. Priolkar, *The Goa Inquisition: The Terrible Tribunal for the East*, Rajhauns Vitaran, Panaji, 2008 (2nd edition), A.K. Priolkar, *The Printing Press in India: Its Beginnings and Early Development*, Marathi Sanshodhana Mandala, Bombay, 1958.

22. <http://bit.ly/rtbzu1>

17. D.D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, 2008 Reprint, p. xii.

18. <http://recil.grupolusofona.pt/jspui/handle/10437/527>

19. Gilberto Freyre, *Aventura e Rotina*, Livros do Brasil, Lisboa, s.d., p. 289.

20. Teotonio R. de Souza, 'Gilberto Freyre in India: Championing Transnational "lusotropicalism"', in M.A. Nayeem, Anirdudha Gay and K.S. Mathew (eds.), *Studies in History of the Deccan: Medieval and Modern* (Professor A.R. Kulkarni Felicitation Volume), Pragati Publishers, Delhi, 2002, pp. 253-262; <http://bit.ly/tCpzJ0>