



## Diaspora, Nationality, and the Goan Catholics in England

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how Goan Catholics in England retain the cultural nationality of their home country while at the same time, having European citizenship. People from the former Portuguese colony in India can exercise the option of becoming citizens of Portugal subject to certain conditions. This facility of retaining Portuguese citizenship is an outcome of Portuguese colonialism in Goa.

The Portuguese colonial policy of lusitanisation and religious conversion had a consequence on the migratory patterns of Goans. Being more at home in a Westernised culture, it was mostly the Goan Catholics who migrated abroad. This trend has continued in post colonial Goa. There have been hundreds and thousands of Goan Catholics, who, after acquiring Portuguese citizenship, have settled in various European countries, preferably England. Though they possess Portuguese citizenship, culturally they retain their Indian nationality, their Goan identity. This paper focuses on one aspects of Goan culture that the Goan Catholics have retained in the diaspora- Music

### KEYWORDS

Citizenship, Nationality, Lusitanisation

While citizenship is a political concept deriving from people's relationship to the state, nationality is a cultural concept which binds people on the basis of shared identity. People from the former Portuguese colony in India can exercise the option of becoming citizens of Portugal subject to certain conditions. This paper focuses on how Goan Catholic retain their Goan nationality. With its focus on this cultural form, this paper elucidates how Goan Catholics retain Indian nationality while possessing Portuguese Citizenship.

### MIGRATION FROM GOA

In ancient Goan history, migration has influenced the demographic profile as well as culture of Goa. But the quantum of migration, specifically out migration, though prevalent was limited and sporadic. The scenario changed with the arrival of the Portuguese in Goa in the early sixteenth century.

#### The First phase of migration

The Portuguese came to Goa looking for spices and Christians. When the fabled Christians were not found, they set about converting the local populace to Christianity. Coercion formed an important tool of this conversion process. A large number of Goans left Goa to escape this Christianisation and Lusitanisation of Goa. These Goans went and settled in the areas surrounding Goa, which were mainly ruled by the British. The more popular destinations of these Goans were parts of today's Maharashtra like Bombay, Pune, Dharwad, parts of coastal Karnataka like Mangalore, parts of Kerala like Kochi, while some Goans even migrated as far as Karachi in Pakistan.

#### Second phase of migration

In the second phase (nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century), Goan migration was of socio-economic nature. It was the outcome of many factors. Among these was the British occupation of Goa and the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of 1878. Many Goans, worked on British ships that were stationed in Goa during the Napoleonic wars. When the British left Goa, these Goans went with the British, to work on building railway lines in Africa.

The economic decline of Portuguese Goa in the 1830s set off a wave of migration to British India. According to the Goa Migration Study Report (2008), the destinations were determined by economic factors such as opportunities for employment, or labour shortage. There was a huge demand abroad for staff who could cater to European style of food, drink, music, medicine and dress. This demand was met by Goan Catholics from

the Old Conquest. As they were familiar with the Western way of life and religion, they found the transition to Europe smoother than their Hindu counterparts, especially those from the New Conquests.

This trend of migration not only continued but also intensified in the early decades of the twentieth century. As before, it was mainly Goan Catholics who migrated though there was also a Hindu and Muslim minority who now began going abroad.

Goans also migrated to Portugal for the purpose of education. These included both Goan Catholics as well as Goan Hindus. Thus the colonialism saw massive migration from Goa. It also encouraged a specific type of migrant- the Goan Catholic. The migratory trends did not reduce after Liberation, though the pattern of migration, the type of migrant and the destination of the migrant underwent some modifications.

#### Third phase of migration

The third phase of Goan migration began in the post-colonial period and is mainly of economic nature. Goan migration to the Gulf comes under this category. Goans have also been migrating to the West (Europe, Canada, USA and Brasil) as well as to Australia, New Zealand. Migration to the west is generally a permanent one. Host of socio economic factors propel this migration- to avail of better job opportunities, living conditions and educational facilities.

The oil boom of the Gulf in the mid seventies, encouraged a large number of Goa to go the Gulf for work. One interesting feature of migration to the Gulf, was that unlike most other international migrations of Goans, here migration was not dominated by the Catholic community. Also this migration was mainly male migration, as migration to the Gulf was always temporary in nature.

#### Fourth phase of migration

A very popular form of migration has been that of people working on ships and cruise liners. Here again, it is mainly the males that migrate, or rather go to work on the ship. Most of these men are Catholics. These men are away from their family for large stretches of time, often a year, and return for just a month long vacation.

#### Fifth phase of migration

All through its rule in Goa, the Portuguese recognised the natives as citizens of Portugal with rights equal to that of any

Portuguese in Portugal. The rhetoric of equality was firmly established and constantly referred to by Portuguese Indians, whether living in Goa, or as migrants to British India or, indeed, British East Africa where many Goans lived and worked, as bearers of Portuguese citizenship ( Ferrao and Fernandes 2013). When India forcefully took Goa from Portuguese control in 1961, by an Act of Parliament Goans were given Indian citizenship. But the Goans were not explicitly asked to surrender their Portuguese citizenship and the ambiguity of the situation remained as both Portugal and India did not discuss the issue of retaining Portuguese citizenship. After Portugal joined the European Union in 1986, citizens of Portugal were recognised as being Europeans. This had major implications for migration. Availing of Portuguese citizenship became a very attractive prospect for those eligible as it made accessible the larger European labour market. Being a Portuguese citizen helps them bypass stricter European laws against employing 'foreigners' versus local talent. Since the last three decades thousands of Goans have been taking advantage of this facility and registering themselves as Portuguese citizens. The most preferred destination of Goans acquiring Portuguese passports is England, as the labour market in England has more scope.

This fifth phase of migration has not only altered the demographic profile of Goa, it has opened a Pandora's box of issues like abandoned houses and empty villages in Goa.

Thus as we have seen, migration from Goa, which began in small numbers in ancient times, has today reached epic proportions, which have very serious implications for the present as well as future of Goa. Goa being a small state, such an exodus of migration, especially with the fifth phase is sure to have deep consequences on the identity and culture of Goa, and what it means to be in Goa, and being Goan. The Goan who goes to England on a European citizenship, retains their Goan, rather than Indian nationality. This paradox concerning citizenship and nationality is the focus of this paper.

### GOANS IN ENGLAND

Goans migration to England began with the establishment of Portuguese colonialism. With its natural harbour, Goa became the capital of Portugal's Eastern Empire, extending from Japan to Mozambique and developed a unique Indo-Portuguese culture. Many Portuguese seamen died in the tropics and so the Goans became part of the Portuguese seafaring tradition. They sailed on Portuguese ships throughout the Indian Ocean to the Far East, Africa, Brazil and Europe. Once they reached Europe, some of them remained there. The familiarity with the English language was an important reason for their preference of England. It might surprise some that how did Goans, ruled by the Portuguese speaking Portuguese colonisers become so familiar in English? Well, during the Anglo French war in 1782, British ships were stationed in Goa. Thanks to their Lusitanisation, many Goan Catholics found employment on these ships as butlers, cooks, and musicians. Hence they learnt their language. As economic conditions in Goa were dismal, quite a large number of Goans migrated to British India for employment. The Portuguese too did not object to the setting up of English medium schools in Goa which was very popular with the local populace. They in fact encouraged migration, as with the migration tax that they introduced, more migrations helped the Portuguese coffers.

But as mentioned earlier, it was the availing of Portuguese citizenship since the mid twentieth century that saw a rapid increase in the number of Goans migrating to England on a Portuguese passport. To get a Portuguese passport, one has to have Portuguese documents like a marriage certificate, identity certificate. A number of agents have set up business in Goa to facilitate the making of the Portuguese passport. The entire process costs two to three lakhs, and it now takes six months to even a year to make a Portuguese passport.

Of course, once they have Portuguese passports, Goans don't stay in Portugal for long. They quickly go to England. One migrant to England, explains the procedure once you arrive in

England. "The moment someone goes to the UK, the first thing they have to do is to get their National Insurance (NI). That is to cut taxes. You have to give them all details, then will they give you a date for the interview. It is compulsory, without that you don't you cannot get a job. Sometimes, some Indians take you, cash in hand. They don't pay you according to the wages because you don't have NI. And they cheat you. Indians hotels and all, they don't pay you. They ask you to work for long hours. Next you have to have a bank account also. So you can't have your utility bills because you are new there. So NI is a proof for that, so that you can make your bank account."

According to unofficial accounts, there are more than fifty thousand Goans in London. And these Goans, have used their new European citizenship to strengthen their Goan nationality.

The Goans in England try to retain almost every aspect of their culture and lifestyle in Goa in England. Their huge socio cultural baggage is what defines them, and makes them thrive so far away from home. In this paper, I will focus on one aspect of this baggage- music.

### GOAN MUSIC IN THE DIASPORA

During the process of Portuguese colonisation, music constituted one of the most effective tools of Lusitanisation. Western classical music was the sole form of musical expression permitted to the new converts. It was used as a vehicle for the transmission of the Christian doctrine and, in the converts' case, replaced the music associated with the practices of Hinduism considered heretical by the colonizer. Slowly local musical genres, combining both Western and Indian tradition, and sung in Konkani developed among the Catholic Goans.

Music is one of the most visible component of the Goan Catholic diaspora in England. There are several reasons for this. As this music is largely sung in Konkani language, playing it is a chance to use and promote the mother tongue of Goa. This music is also associated with Roman Catholic religiosity. Hence the frequency and popularity of its use increases. Thus as this unique genre of music is associated with two important markers of Goan identity- language and religion- its preservation and promotion is very actively pursued in the Goan diaspora in England. Drama is also a very important aspect of the Roman Catholic ambience in Goa. It forms an integral feature of every feast and festival in Goa. This form of theatre, specific to the Goan Roman Catholic is called *teatre*. *Teatre* is like a musical, with song dance and music forming an important part of the narrative. Every show in England that celebrates and depicts Goan culture, always incorporates *teatre*. This in turn brings to the fore the popularity of Goan music. A number of former musicians from Goa, have also migrated to England on Portuguese citizenship. They conduct music classes for the children of Goans settled in London. This ensures the sustenance and survival of this genre of music. There are a number of clubs and associations in London. These clubs and associations organise various cultural programmes throughout the year. At the major feast of Goa, including the innumerable village feasts are celebrated by the various clubs and associations. And needless to add, music forms an integral component of all these celebrations.

### CONCLUSION

In the twenty first century, all modern societies are beginning to live though a time in which nationality and citizenship are in essence problematic. The tendency to view Citizenship and Nationality as one concept is common. In my view, it is this myopia that makes States reject dual Nationality. At present, the issue of dual citizenship is simmering in Goa, with the Panaji Town Police booking two senior police officials, forty eight lawyers and over five hundred others for illegally having dual citizenship. Issues relating to fuzzy concepts like nation and nationality need a multi-pronged holistic approach rather than a blinkered vision. This paper shows that Citizenship and Nationality need not be invested in one country only. The

efforts of the Goans Catholics in England to retain all aspects of their socio cultural baggage, including music is a case-in-point.

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