

O CÓDIGO DE SEABRA EM GOA
(Conclusão)

A CONFERENCE ON THE CIVIL CODE IN GOA

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CENTRE FOR INDO-PORTUGUESE STUDIES

By Ismenia da Veiga Coutinho

VAIKHUNTRAO DEMPO CENTRE FOR INDO-PORTUGUESE STUDIES was founded in March 1988 by the eminent industrialist Mr. Vasantrao Sinai Dempo in memory of his brother Mr. Vaikhuntrao Dempo who was a member of the Parliament in the Portuguese Assembly. It is managed by a Trust.

The aims of the Centre are the following:

1. to preserve the Portuguese cultural inheritance in Goa;
2. to project in India the culture of the vast Portuguese world that covers Portugal, Brasil, Moçambique, Angola and other Portuguese colonies;

3. to project the millenary Indian culture, ancient and modern in the Portuguese world;
4. to cultivate and maintain culture relations in view of Portuguese studies, in Goa, Daman and Diu, and other Portuguese communities;
5. to keep a museum, a library and a conference room;
6. to maintain an interchange of students for the development of studies in legal, medical, scientific, technical, literary, artistic and musical fields;
7. to promote the Portuguese language in Goa, Daman and Diu.

In view of the demand for classes of Portuguese language, the Centre found it convenient to start its activities with the implementation of the last objective by teaching Portuguese through modern methods. So far 60 students out of the many more who have enrolled themselves, have succeeded in the final test and obtained the respective certificate. It is worth mentioning that among our students there are not only youngsters who have taken Portuguese as their second language, but also professionals of various kinds, namely lawyers, doctors, architects.

Other activities

On the occasion of a visit to Goa of members of "Instituto Jurídico de Macau" led by Justice Salvador Figueiredo, in March 1989 the Centre organized a programme to enable them to have a fruitful exchange with the local juriconsults. Another similar exchange meeting is in the offing, this time with a group of lawyers coming from Portugal.

In April 1989 Dr. P.N. Bhagwati, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, released the first issue of the Goan juridical periodical Goa Law Times which is being published regularly under the auspices of the Centro.

In the same year the Vaikhuntrao Dempo Centre also organized in collaboration with the Cultural Group of Macau, a meeting of Teachers of Portuguese.

Almost all research scholars who have been coming to Goa in recent times to explore the wealth of first class elements, contained in our archives, libraries and in our socio-cultural life – particularly those from Portugal and the Portuguese speaking communities – always visit our Centre looking for information and contacts.

Among the visitors of the Centre His Royal Highness Dom Duarte Duke of Braganza is one of those who showed special interest in our work. He also, presided over a solemn session, to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the foundation of our Centre. The session consisted of a report of our activities during the first quinquennium and a talk in Portuguese on: *Perscrutando o fenómeno goês* (Probing the Goan phenomenon). On this occasion a bilingual (Portuguese and English) volume of verses *Toada da Vida* (Life's Refrain) by the then Director of the Centre, Dr. José Rangel, was released as the first volume by a series to be published under the auspices of the Centre.

The Duke of Braganza offered a precious collection of books as first step towards establishing at the Centre's Library a section under the name of "Fundação D. Manuel II". This collection comprises mainly of text books in Portuguese, English, French and German but mainly in Portuguese (language and culture).

From the long experience at the Centre it seems clear that there is still a vast scope for teaching Portuguese in Goa. A renewed interest in the knowledge of this language, not only among Goans but also among people from other parts of India, without distinction of age, sex, creed and community, is an undeniable fact. It may be mainly for pragmatic reasons, like in the case of students wishing a help for the study of their second language, lawyers wanting to consult legal books and documents in the original, historical researchers needing to read manuscripts and other sources of information or even businessmen being interested in trying their luck in the European Community.

But, even at the strictly cultural level, it is fitting that in Goa among the European languages Portuguese, after English which is the means of earning our living, should be given pride of place before the foreign language.