

# Against British Rule and Indian Castes: The First Portuguese-language Goan Novel, *Os Brahmanes* (1866) by Francisco Luís Gomes<sup>1</sup>

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Francisco Luís Gomes (1829–1969) was typical of the indigenous elite that arose in Portuguese India, just as Bankim Chandra Chatterji epitomised that which emerged in the British Raj. Both men attacked the ‘superstitions’ of traditional India and viewed themselves as social and religious reformers, albeit one was Catholic and the other Hindu. Though both Gomes and Chatterji alternated between legitimising and contesting colonial rule in India, their opinions on the question developed in totally opposing ways. Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838–1894), the father of the Indian novel, a major figure in the Bengal Renaissance and the composer of India’s national song *Vande Mataram*, needs little introduction.<sup>3</sup> Francisco Luís Gomes, nothing less than the author of the first Portuguese-language Goan novel, is far less known. His work, *Os Brahmanes*, was first published in Lisbon in 1866. An English version appeared in *The Selected Works of F. L. Gomes: Memorial Volume*, translated by Joseph da Silva and published for the first time, according to the editors A. Correia Fernandes and Armando Menezes, in *O Anglo-Lusitano*, a Bombay newspaper, in 1889. Contrary to what one might expect, the plot of *Os Brahmanes* does not take place in Goa but in British India. Major points of interest for contemporary

scholars, therefore, are the new perspectives it opens not just for Portuguese-language Post-colonial Studies, but for Anglophone scholars. For Indian researchers, its vision of the notorious Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 is also of particular concern.<sup>4</sup>

Physician, journalist, author of economic and historical treatises in both Portuguese and French, Francisco Luís Gomes is the 'prototypical' Goan intellectual of the nineteenth century. A committed liberal and Catholic, at the age of thirty he was elected to the Portuguese parliament and, at a time when no other European colony sent members to a metropolitan legislative assembly, served three terms in the *Cortes Gerais* [General Assembly]. *Os Brahmanes* – the only time he ventured into the field of literature – is not only the first modern novel to denounce the abuses of colonialism and to *suggest* the withdrawal of a foreign power from the land it had usurped, but also the first openly to attack the Hindu caste system. In addition, it includes an interethnic marriage at the very moment when racist theories gained traction in the West, appearing in the wake of Gobineau's thesis<sup>5</sup> that interbreeding led to racial degeneration. Gomes's originality can be seen in the ambiguousness of the novel's title. For the author the 'Brahmins' are both the Hindu priestly caste, the highest in India's socio-religious hierarchy, and the European colonisers. If the former display feelings of superiority toward lower castes, the latter do so no less toward the colonised.

What did Francisco Luís Gomes hope to achieve with *Os Brahmanes*? He certainly had an aim in mind: his novel, 'exotic' though it might be, is clearly a *roman à these*. Its story is teleological insofar as based on truths and absolute values with which the author hopes to inculcate his readership. This goal is revealed in the novel's dedicatory letter. Here Gomes proclaims a need for the global application of the universal principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, as 'só então a regeneração do homem será completa' [only then would the regeneration of mankind be complete]. Although he claims to have avoided a 'social mirage', Gomes argues that even had he fallen into this trap it would have made no difference, since this 'mirage' is one of those 'utopias benéficas' [beneficial utopias] capable of raising the wretched above their misery and the fortunate above their egotism, as well as transporting each alike to the peaks of Mount Sinai, the only place that could reveal to them 'a bandeira da humanidade' [the flag of

humanity] which is none other than that flown from the top of Golgotha (1998, p. 12). These ideas – both evangelical and revolutionary – are represented in the novel by the Portuguese missionary Brother Francisco de Santa Catarina, the author's alter ego. A liberal, like his creator, this character has learnt his political convictions from the Bible and is a sworn enemy of both caste and British colonialism.

The genealogy of Gomes's thought shows a clear line of descent from the French Catholic Liberals and the so-called 'reforming' Romantics<sup>6</sup> (1830–50), such as Félicité de Lamennais and the novelists Alphonse de Lamartine and Victor Hugo. Their names shore up the Goan's parliamentary speeches and a close reading of *Os Brahmanes* shows their intertextual influence.<sup>7</sup> To these inspirations one must add the *zeitgeist* of Portugal during the *Regeneração* [Regeneration] spurred by belief in the progress of the country<sup>8</sup> (which Gomes wished to see extended to Goa). It is noteworthy that, despite its liberal constitutions, Catholicism remained the state religion of the nation. Many of Gomes's ideas concerning the future of India are comparable to those of the *Brahmo Samaj*, the Bengali reform movement with which Bankim Chandra Chatterji was associated and which was active at the same period.

These European sources constitute an ideological arsenal where Francisco Luís Gomes armed himself to fight against colonial abuses, European racism and Hindu caste discrimination. Nevertheless, the author's discourse is problematic for several reasons: while he denounces the pretensions of Europeans (or Whites) to superiority over the other races of the planet, an attitude which constituted the mainspring of colonialism, Gomes (perhaps unconsciously?) ultimately legitimises colonial rule. If we can take *Os Brahmanes* as an 'anti-colonial' novel, we must not lose sight of its exaltation of the Portuguese colonial model (it is the British domination over North India that the author decries). The whole question of colonial racism is problematic in Gomes's novel. While the European characters cannot understand that having dark skin does not deprive non-Europeans of their humanity, the highest moral qualities are given as innate attributes of the white female European in contradistinction to the depiction made of the Indian characters.<sup>9</sup> Gomes, despite his origins, gives us an image of India common to Western discourse at this time. Indeed, it can be said to

partake of the 'Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (Said, 1978, p. 3).<sup>10</sup>

I shall now summarise the plot of the novel, contextualising it as appropriate.

### **Plot and Historical Context of *Os Brahmanes***

*Os Brahmanes* is set in Faisabad between 1845 and 1857, when the region was administered by the East India Company. It was only placed under direct Crown control after the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, the first rebellion of any great size in India against British domination. It was this revolt by Hindu and Muslim indigenous troops that inspired Gomes's novel.

The Irish Catholic Robert Davis is summoned to India to run the estate of his uncle, the wealthy but paralysed owner of a tobacco plantation. A widower with a five-year-old daughter, Robert reluctantly accepts, mainly for the opportunity to flee his creditors after gambling away his worldly possessions. Once in India Robert does not relinquish his European mores and habits. The narrator calls Robert a 'griffin', an Anglo-Indian term designating newcomers refractory to local ways. A Protestant, English family would no doubt have been a better vehicle to criticise the vices of Anglo-Indian society, especially given the scarcity in India of Irish Catholics. Gomes's choice is a narrative strategy: one of the author's 'theses' is that the Europeans were bad Christians for treating Europe's Other as inferior, and for that reason, as Lamennais argued, it was necessary to lead them to the rediscovery of their faith's true meaning. Here this function is carried out by Brother Francisco. Without a Catholic family Gomes's plot would not hold up, as there would be no logical reason for this character, the novel's true hero, to intervene in the affairs of a Protestant family. In any case, these British characters (uncle and nephew) are not far removed from the sociological reality of the times insofar as they fit perfectly into the two categories James McCearney discerned in the ranks of the East India Company: the first into the 'old hands' (in India before the 1830s) and the second into the 'levellers'.<sup>11</sup>

A less convincing aspect of *Os Brahmanes* is the profession and, indeed, the development of the Indian character sharing centre stage with Robert. Again narrative choices are determined by the

author's 'theses'. Magnod the Brahmin is the Davis senior's right-hand man and has helped ensure the old man's prosperity through his astuteness and intelligence. Here Gomes presents his second 'thesis':

Cego de fanatismo, e escravo da fatalidade de sua lógica, recusava aos párias e aos sudras, a simpatia que concedia aos irracionais. O princípio das castas, defendia-o, já se vê, com todas as forças. Era dogma. Fora Deus quem concedera aos Brahmanes o privilégio dessa reabilitação da queda original, que o cristianismo estende a todas as criaturas como um direito, e que promete a todos os infelises como a melhor esperança do futuro, e a mais doce consolação do presente. [Blinded by his fanaticism and slave to the truth of his logic, he refused to pariahs and shudras the sympathy he showed to animals. As we see him, he defended with all his might the caste principle he took as a dogma. God had given the Brahmins the privilege of rehabilitating themselves after the original sin, a privilege which Christianity extends to all creatures as a right, and which it promises to all the wretched as their greatest hope for the future and their sweetest consolation in the present.] (1998, p. 22)

Subsequently the author will make Magnod sink even lower, in order to show that, within Christianity, no one is denied salvation.

One day Robert's ignorance leads him to a violent altercation with the Indian, the turning point in the plot. Over dinner with friends, Robert summons Magnod. Magnod sends a message that he is unable to come, but the sepoy instead tells his boss, maliciously, that the Brahmin does not *want* to come. Enraged, Robert orders two low-caste servants to bring Magnod to him by force and Magnod is dragged foaming with rage into the dining room. All is lost for him: Magnod has been touched by members of a lower caste and, to compound matters, has a plate of 'impure' meat, thrown in his face. Thus 'polluted', Magnod loses his caste. Only after this tragic event do Robert's friends, more familiar with India than he, explain why Magnod disobeyed his summons: orthodox Brahmins avoid contact with Europeans when they are dining, as foreigners are considered outcastes and their food consequently impure.

This crucial moment in *Os Brahmanes* recalls the central episode in modern Indian history, the Sepoy Mutiny, also sparked off by a case of 'pollution'. The new rifle cartridges the British gave their native troops and which needed to be ripped open with the teeth before loading were made with 'impure' animal fat. The Western

reader unfamiliar with this episode is unlikely to see the parallel, however. Though Gomes digresses at length on the insurrection, he omits to mention its motive. The Sepoy Mutiny brought to light Indian animosity towards the British, which until then had been repressed. Likewise in the novel, Robert, in scorning a local custom, brings the Indian's anger at the Irishman's insensitive behaviour to the surface:

Fácil nos é compreender, com o carácter que conhecemos a Magnod, quanto o deviam incomodar os maus modos de Roberto, e quanto lhe devia ser difícil acanhar os gestos de dignidade, que o hábito de mandar vertera em toda a sua pessoa. [It is easy to understand, based on what we know of Magnod's character, how much the insulting behaviour of Robert must have vexed him and how difficult it must have been for him to repress the air of dignity with which the habit of command had suffused his person.] (1998, p. 23)

Having lost his caste, Magnod abandons his family and heads to the forest to commit suicide. Unable to bear the shame, his wife Bima kills herself. It is Robert, visiting Magnod's home with the intention of begging forgiveness, who finds the woman's body. Her children are sleeping peacefully nearby with their dog. The police and a crowd of onlookers arrive. Brother Francisco offers to take care of the children and the guilty Robert. The children are baptised Catholics, given the names Thomas and Emily (the author never mentions their birth names) and are sent to live in London with Helen, Robert's daughter. The three will be raised as siblings. In the meantime, Magnod, who has met a Thug, decides not to kill himself but to join this sect of murderers and avenge himself on Robert.<sup>12</sup>

Magnod's initiation into the sect, dedicated to the worship of the goddess Kali (or Bhawani, in the novel), matches historical record. Or almost: Gomes shortens the process, imagines a man who was not born in a Thug milieu joining up<sup>13</sup> and replaces the sugar used in the ceremony by salt. Moreover, the idea of a Brahmin joining the Thugs is a surprising one, as religious criminals were usually of lower-caste origin. There is another error, which is not linked to the Thugs but which suggests the author's intentions with regards the role played by Magnod. Told to perform an animal sacrifice to prove his sincerity, Magnod is forced, with great reluctance, to noose and kill his dog Muphti, who had followed him faithfully after the Brahmin had abandoned his home. How could a Brahmin

have owned a dog? As Balbir (2002, p. 34) reminds us, this animal is generally considered ‘unclean *par excellence* and associated with the untouchables’. Rather than a lapse on the author’s part, the dog symbolises a watershed in Magnod’s fate. As the narrator makes clear, ‘the celebrated dog of the Pandovas, so glorified in the Mahabharata, to which lord Indra did not hesitate to open the gates of heaven, had not shown more devotion than Muphti’. In the *Mah\_bh\_rata*, King Yudhisthira, at the moment he ascends into heaven, refuses to abandon his faithful animal (forbidden entry because of its uncleanness). As Biardeau (2002, p. 725; translated) explains: ‘his lifelong vow is to strive never to abandon – *muc* – someone who is afraid or attached to him, even though it might cost him his life’. Yudhisthira’s dog symbolises none other than Dharma, which the King was sworn to embody. In *Os Brahmanes*, Magnod, who sacrifices his own dog, is juxtaposed with Yudhisthira’s example. This parallel allows us to interpret the dog’s name, *muphti*, as a corruption of the Sanskrit term, *mukti*, which means ‘freedom’ or ‘salvation’. Indeed, the root form of the word is identical to that used in the *Mah\_bh\_rata* (*muc*). Contrary to Yudhisthira, Magnod does not save his dog and does not preserve Dharma. Joining the Thugs represents the ultimate forfeiture of his caste, the journey of a Brahmin to the antipodes of his religion, where sacrifices, the basis of its rites, are, when all is said and done, ‘euphemised’ (Van Woerkens, 1995, p. 212). Gomes (1998, p. 37) writes: the Thug ‘inverte tudo, e na inversão é lógico. Chama ao mal bem, ao crime virtude, ao criminoso santo, ao inferno céu, ao demónio Deus’ [inverts everything, and is logical in his inversion. He calls evil, goodness, he calls crime, virtue, he makes the criminal a saint; turns hell into heaven, transforms demons into gods].

Soon after Magnod’s initiation, old Davis dies, having changed his will in favour of Robert. But his testament, the new document, has disappeared along with some valuable jewellery. Magnod was the culprit. All that is left is the previously revoked will, which names Richard David, Robert’s brother, as the inheritor and recommends that he marry his niece. Robert is ruined and finds it difficult to support the three children in London. Brother Francisco comes to his aid and sells the few valuables that he possesses for their upkeep. A mysterious man, a Jew named Sobal, comes to Faisabad. He purchases Robert’s debts and begins to blackmail him. The children grow up. Helen, Emily and Thomas find out that Robert is ruined

and scrape together enough money to travel to India. Thomas is in love with his adopted sister, but her father is strongly opposed to any union and wants her to marry Richard in accordance with the will. The immoral dandy Richard (now in India to claim his inheritance) seduces Emily, who falls pregnant, Richard flees and the young Indian woman falls seriously ill. After entrusting her baby to Helen, Emily dies in agony. Richard is murdered and the supposedly vengeful Thomas accused of the crime. Sobal discovers Emily has had a child and tells Robert that Helen and Thomas are the parents. Thomas attacks Robert, as Sobal has also told the young man that his adopted father had murdered his biological father Magnod. In order to protect Emily's secret, Helen confirms that the baby is theirs during Thomas's trial. At the courtroom a surprise twist occurs: Sobal appears unexpectedly and declares that the child is in fact Emily and Richard's and that he himself murdered the father to avenge the honour of his daughter. The mystery Jew is none other than Magnod, who is then imprisoned. During the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, Magnod escapes prison and takes command of the movement in Faisabad. His first concern is to wreak revenge on Robert. However, after Brother Francisco tells him of the sacrifices Robert has made to educate Emily and Thomas, Sobal repents and returns the will he stole from the Irishman. The novel ends with the marriage of Thomas and Helen. Though Brother Francisco passes away before the marriage, he 'estava no céu, e dali assistia a estas festas. Deus ouvira a sua súplica' [looked down from heaven upon the celebrations. God had answered his prayers] (1998, p. 189). Magnod is baptised at the same time (oddly enough he does not return to prison). The Portuguese missionary is the true hero of *Os Brahmanes*. It is he who manages to assuage the conflicts that pepper this fantastical story and guides the characters to their happy end. It is through Brother Francisco that Magnod converts to Catholicism and that Thomas and Helen can finally marry. This union alone strikes a blow against both European 'Brahmanism', i.e. colonial racism (or, to be more precise, the idea that miscegenation causes racial degeneration) and Brahmanism, *strictu sensu*, since according to the socio-religious precepts of India a European woman was an outcaste unfit to marry an Indian man.

### Between Protestation and Legitimation

Throughout the novel, the reader is given to *learn* (in accordance with the aims of the *roman à these*, the didactic narrative genre *par excellence* that imparts eternal truths and values) not only how this Goan author viewed social relations in British India but also how he encodes coloniser and colonised as symbols. By means of the crisis in the plot, where the Brahmin Magnod is ‘polluted’, the author broaches two key themes: European racism and Brahminic purity based on caste prejudice. In the prologue, when Gomes demands the universal application of liberal Christian values, it is to combat these two scourges.

In Robert Davis we can see the author’s anticipatory response to the question posed by Césaire (2004, p. 12) in his *Discourse on Colonialism* of 1955, of ‘how colonisation works to decivilise the coloniser, to brutalise him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism’, the inner mechanics of which had been portrayed in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902). In the dinner scene where he clashes with Magnod, Robert recalls the Ronny Heaslop of E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924) insofar as the young magistrate is no less incensed when the moral superiority of his race is the object of banter. Robert goes as far as to call the Brahmin a ‘gentleman of colour’, almost a euphemism for the ‘brutes’ Kurtz dreamt of exterminating in *Heart of Darkness*. Couto is quite right about the central issue at stake in *Os Brahmanes*:

For Joseph Conrad writing about the same time, colonialism dehumanised the coloniser, brutalised him, personifying in himself the heart of darkness. So it is this corrosion that affects the Davis family. But it is Gomes who takes the argument further than Conrad; colonisation pollutes the colonised. It destroys their culture, their way of life and dehumanises them. (2007, p. 101)

There is no doubt that Gomes’s storyline focuses attention on the dehumanisation of the colonised, notably Magnod, but even Thomas, who falls prey to British prejudices: ‘A filha dos O’Brians não pode casar com um homem da tua condição’ [A daughter of the O’Brians cannot marry a man of your condition] (1998, p. 132), Robert tells him at one point; in another scene he advises Helen not to call Thomas ‘brother’ in public. Here the reader witnesses how the native is deprived of his self-worth by a colonialism that

arrogates to itself a 'civilising' virtue. We can see this process in the progressive depersonalisation of Magnod. What leads him to perdition, and impels the twists and turns of the plot, is the scorn (tainted with ignorance) of the coloniser toward local customs. Indeed, it is tempting to see here a denunciation of how colonialism alienates the individual. But the symbolic charge of the way Magnod's identity is destroyed undermines the critique of colonialism his ordeal implies. It is important to remember that Magnod's Brahmin status conditions his transformation, or, to put it another way, the fact that, from the point of view of Christianity, he embraces misguided values such as caste prejudice that prompt his downfall. Magnod's debasement serves to extol the salvation made possible by Catholicism. This reading is supported by the fact that his depersonalisation does not end at the close of the novel. On the contrary, Magnod is baptised with the name of the man who had been his sworn enemy, Robert Davis. The colonised is thus invested with the identity of the coloniser, bringing to completion the dismantlement of Magnod's ipseity. In essence, Gomes presents no other solution for the colonised man stripped of his identity than to wear a 'white mask'. Magnod's children also meet with the same fate. Thomas and Emily, sent away to Europe, do not even seem to have pre-baptismal identities, as the reader never gets original names.

The status quo, despite Gomes's denunciation of its abuses and suggestion that the coloniser should withdraw ('A pátria de Manu, depois de correr como uma moeda as mãos de Alexandre, Tamerlão, Albuquerque, Dupleix e Clive, deve voltar a seus antigos senhores' [The land of Manu, after having passed like a coin through the hands of Alexander, Tamerlane, Albuquerque, Dupleix and Clive, must return to its former masters]) (1998, p. 180) and also that 'os homens imparciais, que fazem questão da liberdade e não das raças, querem a Índia para a Índia' [impartial men who heed liberty and not race want an India for the Indians] (1998, p. 181), is ultimately endorsed by him.

*Os Brahmanes* represents, in truth, the critique of an inhumane colonialism incarnated by the British *via* the defence of humanist values bodied forth in the christocentrism of Portugal's overseas expansion. The true hero of *Os Brahmanes*, the 'diegetic double' of the author, the priest of Faisabad, Brother Francisco de Santa Catarina, is not only *Portuguese* (and so capable of incarnating higher moral values than the British who never concealed their

feeling of moral and racial superiority over their colonial subjects and acted accordingly) but also a defender of Portugal's religious interests via the *Padroado Português do Oriente*,<sup>14</sup> the only means by which Portugal could profit from the East after the decline of its influence there at the end of the eighteenth century.

Considering Brother Francisco de Santa Catarina's actions precludes any identification of Francisco Luís Gomes as 'independentist', a view some still hold today. This view is motivated by a letter the Goan wrote to Alphonse de Lamartine in 1867,<sup>15</sup> in which he demands, 'for India, this country that was the cradle of poetry, philosophy and history, and which is today their tomb', 'liberty and light!'<sup>16</sup> Yet few critics have noted (or else deliberately omit) that he goes on to state 'More fortunate than my countrymen, I am free. *Civis sum.*' Whereas colonialism normally placed the colonised 'outside history and ... society' (Memmi, 2006, p. 111), Gomes considered himself a full 'citizen' because he enjoyed the right to vote and to sit in the Portuguese parliament.<sup>17</sup> Here is his reaction in the 1860s to a Portuguese newspaper article concerning unrest in Goa and alluding to the local population's desire for independence (quoted in Pereira, 1892, p. 80):

O sentimento de independência é tanto mais forte e activo quanto mais profundas são as diferenças que separam os conquistadores dos conquistados, quando dum lado aparecem só senhores e opressores, e doutro escravos e oprimidos. É então a reacção da natureza contra a tirania. Portugal descobrindo povos, devassando mares não quis oprimir nem escravizar. Adiante da espada e quase como seu guia foi a luz. Não procurava escravos; queria cristãos, e cidadãos. E achou-os. Goa é uma província ultramarina de Portugal, e os seus povos são livres, como o podem e desejam ser todos os povos. [The desire for independence is all the stronger and more active the deeper the distances are that separate conquerors from the conquered, when on one side are ranged lords and oppressors and on the other, slaves and the oppressed. This reaction is one of nature against tyranny. In discovering peoples and oceans, Portugal sought neither to oppress nor to enslave. Before the sword, almost as its guide, was held the light. Portugal sought Christians and citizens, and found them. Goa is an overseas province of Portugal. Its people are free, as all people can and wish to be.]

In *Os Brahmanes*, during a digression on the Sepoy Mutiny, Gomes argues that in Portuguese India the Indians 'ficaram sendo cristãos e portugueses' [became Christians and Portuguese] (1998, p. 183).

Furthermore, in that same territory, ‘os meios mais poderosos da civilização são dois: a religião cristã e a instrução’ [the most powerful instruments of civilisation are two in number: the Christian religion and education] (1998, p. 182). For the author, the uneducated, pagan sepoys of British India had reduced the natural right of Indians to liberty and equality to a question of caste, given that their rebellion was motivated by ‘impurity’. On the one hand Gomes legitimises the uprising against the scornful coloniser (‘o sangue dos indianos despertava ao grito da guerra santa, de uma sonolência de séculos’ [with the cry for holy war, the blood of India was roused from several centuries of slumber] (1998, p. 170); on the other, it was their scorned culture, worthy of censure, that prevented the colonised from taking their destiny into their own hands. For Gomes, it is due to the ‘o ódio das diversas castas e o antagonismo das diversas religiões’ [caste hatreds and religious antagonisms] (1998, p. 181) (which he terms ‘ridiculous’ to boot) that the Sepoy Revolt failed: ‘Uma só religião, uma só dynastia, uma só casta, Índia fora invencível’ [One sole religion, one sole dynasty, one sole caste and India would have been invincible]. After the revolt, all Gomes could do was to suggest, via his novel, and to the British rather than the Indians, a way to resolve caste: the mass conversion of the natives to Christianity. The caste system would thus, in theory, be eliminated for good.<sup>18</sup>

For Gomes the Sepoy Mutiny was little more than ‘vengeance’ exacted on the British over the new rifle cartridges. This attitude is clearly reflected in *Os Brahmanes*. Magnod’s ‘pollution’ clearly echoes the rebellion’s immediate causes, and the way the ‘ex-brahmin’ revolts against his boss miniaturises the Sepoys’s uprising against the British. Indeed, Magnod joins the mutineers himself later in the story. His conversion to Christianity represents a success that the British themselves were unable to achieve, if the rumours at the time of the Mutiny are to be believed: through the impure cartridges, it was thought, the British had wanted to cause the sepoys to lose their caste and then convert them by force.

Gomes’s vision of India’s religious issues can be compared to that of the *Brahmo Samaj*, a Hindu reformist movement founded in the 1830s by the Bengali Rammohan Roy. Gomes and the *Brahmo* alike were influenced by Western ideas, each borrowed precepts from Christian doctrine (Roy having recognised that ‘Christianity constituted an elevated moral code’ (Markovits, 1994, p. 402;

translated), condemned *sati* (the immolation of widows), *thuggee*, caste, and the worship of idols. For Roy, 'it was possible to deduce an Indian monotheistic tradition from the *Upanishads*' (Boudineau, 1988, p. 10; translated). The monotheism of the *Brahmos*, centred on the *Brahman* [a 'Universal Soul', the 'Absolute'], finds its analogue in Gomes's Christian monotheism. A similar movement of repulsion for superstition actuates both Gomes and the *Brahmo*, as exemplified in the Goan's vision of a ridiculous multi-armed and multi-faced Brahma and the words attributed to lord Vishnu in Bankim Chandra Chatterji's novel *Anandamath* (1882): 'Eternal *dharma* does not consist in the adoration of three hundred and thirty million gods. That is a lowly and degraded *dharma*' (Chatterji, 1985, p. 258).

Nonetheless, as Markovits (2009, unpaginated; translated) reminds us, during the colonial period the Indian elites 'took an interest in Western science and humanities, but at heart not to acculturate and convert to Christianity, as some colonial administrators had hoped, but to reassemble their own religious and cultural universe so as to resist the pressure of Westernisation and Christianisation'. Gomes's objective was in fact the opposite of the *Brahmo*'s. Though his discourse matched theirs at points, the Goan's ideal was for non-Christians to convert and acculturate once and for all. The place assigned in *Os Brahmanes* to the characters of Magnod (converted), Thomas and Emily (parted from their natural environment, educated after the European fashion and thoroughly Christianised) exemplifies this ideal. Gomes, despite his ethnicity, and the passages in his novel and letter to Lamartine where he declares his love for Indian culture, contributes to the above-mentioned pressure to westernise and Christianise by peddling common Orientalist stereotypes. Through his portrait of the Indian Emily, Gomes makes the common association 'between the Orient and sex' (Said, 1978, p. 309). Through the Indian Thomas (who we are told resembles a mix of the Arab and Indian types (1998, p. 52)) Gomes invokes the spectre of racial determinism via Thomas's amorality (and that of his sister, who does not possess the 'virtues' of the 'white-skinned' Helen). In Magnod the reader familiar with Orientalist accounts will recognise the negative characteristics attributed to Brahmins. Within Gomes's novel we encounter all the 'run-of-the-mill clichés' – as Biès (1973, p. 241; translated) says of Jules Verne's India – of European writers: rich ottomans, opulent

palanquins, cholera, the *natch* of the temple dancers, the violence of thuggee, the cruelty of the sepoy, the sumptuous festivities of the nabobs, the vividness of outlandish landscapes. These are so many 'themes' that belong to 'a representation indicating submission to and divergence from Europe. To encounter India is to discover its dissimilarity, vividness, indeed magnificence, but also its condemnation to a backwardness without remedy' (Moura, 2003, pp. 55–6; translated).

Due to this 'backwardness without remedy', the suggestion made in *Os Brahmanes* that the British should withdraw from Indian soil is attenuated by the 'temporary utility' of their presence, an idea we also find in Bankim Chandra Chatterji,<sup>19</sup> nonetheless recognised as a father of Indian nationalism (see Bhattacharya, 1985, p. 27). Both Gomes and Chatterji denounced the greed of the British East India Company but expressed concern that the education of the common man should be expanded before India received independence. Gomes approved of British government control after the Sepoy Mutiny, but held that it was now necessary to educate the native subjects, to make them citizens and Christians as in Portuguese India. In *Anandamath*, set during a revolt in the Bengali countryside in the eighteenth century, Chatterji follows a similar line of reasoning with the East India Company and European schooling.

Francisco Luís Gomes, *in fine*, wanted to overcome the evils of colonialism by 'civilising' it, ironically the selfsame aim used to justify colonialism the world over. Gomes saw no ambiguity here. His aim was to remind Europeans (the 'Brahmins' of Europe) of their civilising duties, duties displaced by an ever-increasing cupidity. This aim explains his desire that the principles of '89 be applied universally. To Gomes, despite asseverations to the contrary in the West, these principles seemed to have been restricted to the metropole. This view did not impede his developing the 'historicist consciousness' that Dipesh Chakrabarty discerns in John Stuart Mill, who had read Gomes's work on economic questions and even received him in London: 'Neither the Indians nor the Africans were yet civilised enough to govern themselves. It was necessary that a degree of historical time should pass, that they should be given the opportunity to develop and become civilised (or, to be more precise, that they should undergo colonial domination and education) so that they could be deemed ready to take on this task' (Chakrabarty, 2009, p. 40). Religion, which characterised the

expansionism of Portugal, complicates this discourse, which derives from Enlightenment thinking. At the same time it helps us understand the ‘assimilated’ Francisco Luís Gomes’s identification with European colonial ideology, insofar as Goan Catholics of his time sought to associate themselves with the Portuguese coloniser to affirm themselves vis-à-vis other religious communities (Garmes, 2004, p. 11). Though *Os Brahmanes* may be considered an ‘anti-colonialist’ novel in the way it highlights and critiques the damaging effects on human relations and native culture of certain colonial practices, it cannot be deemed ‘anti-imperialist’. Edward W. Said draws a clear distinction between ‘colonialism’ and ‘imperialism’, affirming that ‘an imperialist and Eurocentric framework is implicitly accepted’ (1994, p. 240) in European Humanism and that liberal anti-colonialists ‘take the humane position that colonies and slaves ought not too severely to be ruled or held, but ... do not dispute the fundamental superiority of Western man or, in some cases, of the white race’ (1994, p. 241).

*Translated by Paul Melo e Castro*

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será livre a nós, goeses, cultivar a língua portuguesa tal como nos dá na real gana?’ [shall we Goans not be free to use the Portuguese language as we bloody well like?] (1991, 2).

- 5 The critique made by the Viscount Taunay in the *Revista Brasileira* (Abr–Jun, 1897, 264–77) entitled ‘Um Romance Goense’ [A Goanese Novel] provoked a response from GIP by letter, unpublished at the time, which would be included in the third edition of the novel published by Jeremias Xavier de Carvalho in Panjim in 1974.
- 6 Though the Shitya Akademi has published some translations from the Portuguese such as Álvaro Noronha da Costa’s translation of *Jacob e Dulce* (2004) and Paul Melo e Castro’s translation of the José da Silva Coelho story ‘Dr Olhada’s Prescription for Obesity’ (2015).
- 7 Though written from a Goan point of view, novels such as *Os Brahmanes* and Epitácio Pais’s novel *Preia-Mar* (Goa 1556, 2016), originally written in the 1970s, can be read productively in a national context, as can some stories by Ananta Rau Sar Dessai.
- 8 Um seu criado, ‘Revista do mez. Summario’, *A India Portuguesa*, 12 June 1867, n. 337, pp. 1–3.
- 9 O Chronista de Pangim, ‘Folhetim (ou scena comica) O Adormecedor’, *A India Portuguesa*, 10 July 1867, n. 341, pp. 1–3.
- 10 A mão do finado, ‘Rato da bibliotheca d’Evora’, *A India Portuguesa*, 17 July 1867, n. 342, p. 1.
- 11 Monte Christo, ‘Folhetim. Summario. Chi-Tung-Sé-Bú. O rato e a mão do finado. O Sr. Loyola e as pillulas de Holloway’, *A India Portuguesa*, 14 August 1867, n. 346, pp. 1–2.
- 12 O Investigador, ‘Pilherias do Sr. Rivara’, *A India Portuguesa*, 19 November 1867, n. 360, p. 1.
- 13 The debate will continue outside the feature spot with the articles: ‘As bravuras do sr. Rivara’ [Senhor Rivara’s Bold Moves] (8 April 1868, n. 380, pp. 1–2), ‘O sr. Rivara e a moralidade do pais’ [Senhor Rivara and the Morality of this Land] (17 April 1868, n. 381, p. 1), ‘As bravuras do sr. Rivara’ [Senhor Rivara’s Bold Moves] (17 April 1868, n. 381, p. 2), ‘Aos defensores do sr. Rivara’ [To Senhor Rivara’s Defenders] (6 May 1868, n. 384, pp. 1–2), ‘O Ultramar e o sr. Cunha Rivara’ [Senhor Rivara and the Overseas Provinces] (31 July 1869, n. 448, p. 1), among others.

### **Against British Rule and Indian Castes: The First Portuguese-Language Goan Novel, *Os Brahmanes* (1866) By Francisco Luís Gomes**

- 1 This article is a revised and updated version of one first published in French under the title ‘Un Goannais contre les castes de l’Inde et le British Rule’, *Bulletin d’études indiennes* (Association Française pour les études indiennes), vol. 26–27 (2010).

- 2 The author wishes to thank Claude Markovits for valuable information concerning the Irish in India and Nalini Balbir for explaining Sanskrit. This work was carried out as part of the FAPESP thematic project 'Pensando Goa' (proc. 2014/15657–8). The opinions, hypotheses and conclusions or recommendations expressed herein are my sole responsibility and do not necessarily reflect the ideas of FAPESP.
- 3 *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (1858) by the Bengali Pyari Chand Mitra (1814–1883) is the first Indian novel. But according to Boudineau in his introduction to the French translation of Chatterji's *Rajsimha*, this first work was 'still only a rough draft. It would fall to Bankim Chandra Chatterji to write the first mature Bengali-language novel' (1988, p. 12; my translation). It was in Bengal that native writers took the first steps towards adapting the European novel genre to India.
- 4 See, for example, my article 'The Rebellion in a 19th century Indo-Portuguese novel' (Machado, 2011) and that of Balaji Ranganathan, 'Francisco Luis Gomes's *Os Brahmanes*: The Uprising and Anglo-Indian Society' (Ranganathan, 2011).
- 5 Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau, *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1853–55).
- 6 A discussion of the 'reform' movement in Romanticism can be found in Löwy and Sayre, 1992.
- 7 On a strictly literary level, there is no doubt that the Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862) served as the model for *Os Brahmanes* (keeping in mind the discrepancy in terms of thematic ambition, narrative economy and even aesthetic tenets). Its influence can be seen in Gomes's frequent 'borrowings': characters are calqued, plot elements are transposed, terms of expression are paraphrased.
- 8 For a discussion of the Portuguese Regeneration see Marques and Sousa, 2003.
- 9 And this despite (or, *due to* as the Fanon of *Black Skin, White Masks* would say) the fact that Gomes was 'dark skinned', according to the French economist Chevalier (1870, p. 180).
- 10 Said, who locates scientific and literary Orientalism within the context of the Western expansionism, is often accused of having homogenised Orientalism (by making generalisations based on analyses concerning the Middle East) and of overlooking counter-hegemonic voices, a debate I will not rehearse here. In the case of *Os Brahmanes*, the interpretive grid proposed by Said seems entirely appropriate given that the 'balance of power' between East and West clearly appears via stereotypes and doctrinaire editorialising that mean the author's discourse is aligned with the hegemonic vision of the West concerning the East, promulgating a negative vision of India that is politically and economically motivated. Critics such as Varindra Tarzie Vittachi or Nevgat Soguk would not hesitate to include Gomes in the category of 'brown sahib' (Vittachi, 1962) or of 'Orientalised orientals' (Soguk, 1993).

- 11 The 'old hands' were 'men who had chosen to make their career in India and had grown fond of the land and its people' and 'made a moderate use of their privileges'. In turn, the 'levellers' were 'imbued with a sense of moral and intellectual superiority [and] animated by scornful hostility towards the elite Indians alongside a condescending pity for the peasant masses' (McCearney 1999, p. 26 and p. 37 respectively).
- 12 His vengeance goes on to become the driving force of the plot. Miranda (1995, p. 123) even sees in the name of the 'ex-brahmin' a portmanteau word formed of *magnum odium*. Couto (2007, p. 94) prefers *godman* to describe a figure emerging from the Hindu priestly caste. Moreover, one could see in Magnod a corruption of the name Meghan\_da ('The Thunderous One'), the son of R\_va\_a who vanquished the god Indra in the epic R\_m\_ya\_a.
- 13 Thuggee was a family affair for the most part. Amir Ali, in Philip Meadows Taylor's *Confessions of a Thug* (1839), which made these criminals famous in the West, also subverted the official image of the Thug, whose criminal propensities, according to ethnography and then medical science, were inscribed in the convolutions of his brain, and transmitted from generation to generation. But Taylor does not stray too far from historical reality in making Ali a child survivor of a Thug massacre. Being forbidden to murder children, Thugs would instead adopt them and raise them in their profession. See Van Woerkens, 1995, p. 308 and pp. 168–70 respectively.
- 14 The set of rights, privileges and duties conferred on the Portuguese crown in 1456 related to its evangelising mission in Asia and Brazil.
- 15 J. F. Gomes (2004, p. 300) argues that, in this letter, Gomes had been the first to demand independence for the *whole country* on the international stage. He expands this myth by stating that the ship upon which the novelist died on his journey back to India docked at Porbandar, the native city of Gandhi on the day the great Indian nationalist was born, *could it be more than a mere coincidence*. A poem in homage to Gomes by Augusto do Rosário Rodrigues, included in the Goan edition of *Os Brahmanes* (which carried a postface by the nationalist Evágrio Jorge) is entitled precisely 'the precursor of Gandhi' (see Gomes 1969, p. 171). More recently, in a work concerning the loss of Goa in 1961, the journalist Stocker (2005, p. 35) writes that 'Escritores, como Francisco Luís Gomes, advogaram a independência de Goa, em Lisbon e na Índia' [writers like Francisco Luís Gomes, argued for the independence of Goa, in Lisbon and India]. It is not difficult to find other Goan publications, whether in English or Portuguese, that aver the same thing.
- 16 The whole letter is reproduced in Cordeiro, 1871, pp. 294–7.

- 17 Gomes appears to have forgotten, however, that in Catholic Portuguese India the Hindu population did not enjoy the same rights.
- 18 It is important to remember that Christianisation had not eradicated the caste system in Goa. Indeed, it led to the emergence of a new caste, the *chardós*, next in rank to the Brahmins and to which Gomes himself belonged. Here we might ask whether *Os Brahmanes*, despite its fierce criticism of casteism, presents a partisan view: does the author merely shift the burden of the issue to Hinduism?
- 19 Obviously the path taken by Chatterji in his reflections on the subject is not the same taken by Gomes, insofar as the former is influenced by Indian metaphysics. As Nandy (2007, p. 77) argues, certain Indians, and Chatterji is an example, ‘felt ... a religious duty to be governed (due to a political fatalism anchored in cosmology)’.

### The Lives and Times of Gip and Francisco João Da Costa

- 1 Post-doctoral Researcher financed by FCT – Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, SFRH/BPD/97264/20. This work was carried out as part of the FAPESP thematic project ‘Pensando Goa’ (proc. 2014/15657–8). The opinions, hypotheses and conclusions or recommendations expressed herein are my sole responsibility and do not necessarily reflect the ideas of FAPESP.
- 2 Though Ismael Gracias affirmed that this pen-name was suggestive, nowadays its meaning is unclear. It might be an acronym, such as Goa/Great Portuguese India (Goa/Grande Índia Portuguesa), or have some other significance evident to his contemporaries.
- 3 Cf. Carvalho, 1974; Rebelo, 1989; Cunha, 2010; Passos, 2012; Lobo, 2013.
- 4 The pecora is a hoofed animal, somewhat like a deer. Perhaps the suggestion is of innocence and a lack of intelligence.
- 5 A girl who maintained traditional Catholic dress, originally associated to the Brahmin elites of Salcete in particular (cf. Dalgado, 1921, p. 162).
- 6 His quotation in the original Sanskrit of the *G\_yatr\_* Mantra suggests that he might have known the language (GIP 7.1.1893). What is certain is that he knew Marathi and read translations of Indian classics in this language (Costa 17.3.1882).
- 7 Not only did he refer to French- and English-language writers not translated into Portuguese, he also showed off with quotations in Latin and joked about his contemporaries’ lack of language skills. Yet, in his foreword to *Jacob and Dulce*, FJC affirms: ‘leitor assi\_duo de livros escritos em idiomas estrangeiros, nem eu sei como logro rabiscar em portugue\_s inteliigi\_vel’ [assiduous reader that I am of works written in other languages, I do not know how I am able to scribble in intelligible Portuguese] (Costa, 1896, p. iii). According to his biographer,