

ISSN : 2395-4132

# THE EXPRESSION

An International Multi-Disciplinary e-Journal

**Bi-Monthly Refereed & Indexed Open Access e-Journal**



Impact Factor 3.9

Vol. 3 Issue 4 August 2017

Editor-in-Chief : Dr. Bijender Singh

Email : [editor@expressionjournal.com](mailto:editor@expressionjournal.com)

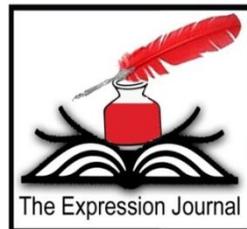
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(A Peer Reviewed and Indexed Journal with Impact Factor 3.9)

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## **AN ANALYSIS OF PORTUGUESE INFLUENCE ON GOAN CUISINE**

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### **Abstract**

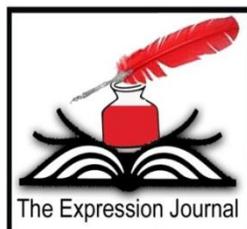
We live in a world where everyone takes their food seriously. In this multicultural world one may want to cling on to his roots as much as possible and food is one way to do so. Food is a reflection of culture, traditions, the shared past and heritage. But what really is only yours and not of anyone else? The coloniser has exerted great influence on their colonies impacting their cuisine as well. This paper analyses the influence of the coloniser on the cuisine of its colony. The Indian state of Goa is renowned for its beauty, people and food; but unlike other Indian states Goa was not ruled by the British, but the Portuguese for four hundred and fifty years. This makes the Goan culture different from the rest of India. A percentage of Goan still speaks Portuguese at home, live in Portuguese houses and listen to Portuguese music. A state which has remnants of the coloniser may also be influenced in matters of food. This paper uses the methodology of culture studies and post-colonial theory to analyse the influence of the Portuguese on Goan cuisine.

### **Key-Words**

Food, Culture Studies, Post-Colonial, Goa, Portuguese

**Vol. 3 Issue 4 (August 2017)**

**Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Bijender Singh**



## AN ANALYSIS OF PORTUGUESE INFLUENCE ON GOAN CUISINE

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### Introduction

Goa, a small state on the west coast of India is world famous as a popular tourist destination. But Goa is not just about the beaches, churches and parties; it is also celebrated for its cuisine. *Vindaloo*, *Sorpotel*, *Cafreal*, *Xacuti* are some of the famous Goan delicacies which attract a wide variety of people from all over the world.

Heritage is constructed over time; it reflects on the history, culture, heritage and shared past of a group of people. While one group's heritage might not be similar to another's, but as per *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage*, one group's unique heritage can be claimed by other groups. Food is a marker of cultural heritage which creates and reinforces traditions, culture, history and a shared past and present (Brulotte 1-2). While certain food is native to one particular group, it may share its heritage with another group. In a post-colonial set up the coloniser has influenced the culture in his colonies also having an effect on their food habits. In such a case the colonies may have a shared food heritage with the coloniser.

The Portuguese arrived in India in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and ruled Goa for four hundred years and fifty years before leaving in 1961. In these years Portuguese heavily influenced the Goan cuisine making it into what we know it today.

Edward Said in his *Culture and Imperialism* discusses the influence of the imperial past in culture.

Although that era clearly had an identity all its own, the meaning of the imperial past is not totally contained within it, but has entered the reality of hundreds of millions of people, where its existence as shared memory and as a highly conflictual texture of culture, ideology, and policy still exercises tremendous force. (Said 11)

As Said rightly said, the Portuguese element has entered the reality of Goan cuisine and still exerts a strong force on the same.

Portuguese influence on Goan food is seen with the arrival of fruits and roots like potato, tomato, pumpkin, aubergine, cashew nut, chilli, papaya, pineapple and guava. Herbs such as coriander, red and dried variety of chillies, garlic, and turmeric ground and vinegar were also

introduced by the Portuguese. Similarly beef and pork was introduced to the Christian converts, while beef and pork continued to be a taboo for the Hindus in Goa.

The coloniser not only brought along several vegetables and meat but also contributed in formulating a few delicacies which we continue to relish in Goa even today.

This paper analyses the Portuguese influence on Hindu Goan food as well as Catholic Goan food while using the methodology of culture studies and post-colonialism.

## Portuguese Influence on the Hindu Food

With the arrival of potato, the Hindus started using potato in many vegetarian dishes. There are variations of *Batatchi Bhaji* (potato bhaji) including dry potato bhaji with and without onion as well as a potato bhaji with lots of gravy and onion. The latter is made by very few families in Goa, my family calls it the *zavyanchibhaji* (Son in law's bhaji) which used to be prepared only when the son-in-law of the house would visit hence making it all the more special.

Potatoes are boiled and put inside *tonaks*. *Tonak* is a gravy item using a coconut base with lentils/pulses. Hindu households also prepare *pineapple tonak* during marriages or housewarming ceremonies.

Tomatoes are a part of many vegetable preparations. *Tooyie* a type of daal especially has a lot of tomato inside it, while no other daals have tomato in it.

*Khatkhate* is a popular Hindu dish which contains twenty one vegetables and is cooked in coconut gravy. Cashew nuts, potato are a part of *khatkhate*.

Most Hindu delicacies make use of potatoes and tomatoes which makes one wonder how the Hindus prepared their meals before the arrival of Portuguese and the vegetables they brought along.

## Portuguese Influence on the Catholic Food

Hindu food isn't that spicy while catholic food relies heavily on the chillies that the coloniser introduced to Goa. Apart from this Goan catholic food is known for lip smacking beef and pork delicacies which the converts were exposed to by the Portuguese.

One can notice that many dishes still maintain Portuguese names. Ayesha Saldanha's blog *Global Voices* elaborates on this. She writes that the name of the Goan delicacy "Vindaloo" is derived from the Portuguese dish "Carne de Vinhad'Alhos. While the Portuguese dish had vinegar as an ingredient, Goans substituted that with red wine and made an addition of Kashmiri chillies with spices modifying it and making it the *Vindaloo* as we know it today(Saldanha). *Vindaloo* is mostly prepared with pork but variants in chicken, prawns, fish also exist.

Another pork dish called *Sorpotel* which means confusion probably due to the mash of pork heart, liver and pork blood, belongs to the Alentejo region of Portugal. *Balchão* is a curry made with prawns in tomato and red chilly base; *Canja de galinha* a type of chicken broth served with rice and chicken is a Goan recipe but is given a Portuguese name. *Chamuça* is a Goan/Portuguese derivative of the Indian *samosa*. *Chouriço* is a spicy pork sausage and *Feijoada* is a stew made with meat, beans and cabbage was brought by the Portuguese. *AuGratin*, a baked dish with vegetables and cheese is another Goan favourite. *Chicken Cafreal*, a personal favourite is originally from the Portuguese colonies in the African continent.

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Feni is recognised as a true Goan drink, without the Portuguese bringing the cashews, this would not have been possible.

Desserts like *serradura*, *bebinca*, *arroz dos* are directly borrowed from Portugal and modified to suit the Goans.

## Conclusion

The coloniser exerted a strong influence on the Goan culinary scene by introducing vegetables and roots which were unheard of in Goa as well as India. Potato *bhaji* with its multiple variations would not have seen the light of the day without the Portuguese bringing in potatoes in Goa similarly the tomato based dishes would have been impossible without the introduction of tomatoes.

Apart from acquainting Goans with new vegetables, the Portuguese brought their own delicacies in the Goan palate. Delicacies like Vindaloo, Sorpotel, Balcao are their dishes which are directly borrowed by Goans and modified a little to suit the Goan tastes.

A close analysis reveals that the Portuguese influenced the Goan catholic kitchens more than the Goan Hindu ones. The catholic homes are heavily influenced by the Portuguese style of cooking probably as meat was brought to them by the coloniser which was(is) still a taboo for their Hindu counterparts. Religion has always been seen as a strong influence, and with a shared religion and a stronger influence the catholic households show more similarity with the Portuguese cuisine as compared to the Hindus.

In conclusion it can be seen that Goan food has been greatly influenced by the Portuguese; one cannot separate the Portuguese from the Goan food anymore. Similarly we don't think about the Portuguese while ordering for Vindalho, Cafreal or Feni, all these delicacies are recognised as Goan, nothing more. As Said reflects in his *Culture & Imperialism*,

We have never been as aware as we now are of how oddly hybrid historical and cultural experiences are, of how they partake of many often contradictory experiences and domains, cross national boundaries... cultures actually assume more 'foreign' elements, alterities, differences, than they consciously exclude. (Said 15)

Food a very strong element of culture is volatile and hybrid in nature. It easily lets foreign elements inside and enters in a union with anything which interests it. With such characteristics food is one of the first cultural aspects which undergo modifications when exposed to a different culture. Four hundred and fifty years is more than enough to influence the Goan cuisine and that is what happened in the Indian state of Goa. Goan cuisine underwent modifications getting heavily influenced by its coloniser producing delicious delicacies which are a product of union between the traditional Goan taste and the Portuguese gastronomies. The love child of their union is appreciated and celebrated by everyone making Goan cuisine one of the most loved cuisines in the world.

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## Bio Note:

I, Esha Nadkarni, a *susegaad* Goan am currently pursuing my M.Phil. in English Studies at Christ University, in the garden city of India. As a foodie and a literature student I decided to merge both my loves and investigate the connection between food and culture which led me to write this paper.



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