



## Translation and social action: The case of Munshi Premchand's literary works in Goa

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**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to discuss the relevance of the translation into the Portuguese language of some of the short stories by Munshi Premchand (1880-1936), one of India's greatest writers in Hindi and Urdu, by Evágrio Jorge (1925-1978), a Goan Freedom Fighter. These translations, and their publication in the Goan newspaper *O Heraldo/Herald*, took place during the transition of Goa, from a Portuguese colony (1510-1961) to a state of the Indian Union. I argue that these translations were not random but due to Premchand's critical portrayal of some aspects of Indian culture – the exploration of the peasantry, the caste system, the condition of women, communalism— they can be interpreted as Jorge's desire to call the attention of his fellow countrymen to the situation of Goa under the new Indian aegis. Jorge's translations stand as a warning to Goans, who had fought for the end of colonial rule, to maintain a critical eye on their new social and political status.

**Keywords:** translation; literature, social criticism.

### 1. Introducing Premchand in Goa

Exploring the archive of Goan newspapers during and after the Portuguese regime (1510-1961), it can be stated that literature follows unsuspected paths that cause the literary work of some writers to end up illuminating other cultures in times of crisis or change. In this process, newspapers are unique technologies of recognition (Orsini, 2023) that allow literary narratives to travel across alphabets, languages, audiences and cultures. Such is the case of the great Indian writer in Hindi and Urdu, Munshi Premchand (1880-1936), some of whose short stories, from his vast work, were translated into Portuguese, from their English version, by the journalist, writer and translator from Goa, Evágrio Jorge (1925-1978). Like Premchand, Jorge understood literature and multilingualism as tools of integration foremost in the fight against communalism and social injustices. Jorge's translations appeared in one of Goa's most iconic newspapers, *O Heraldo (Herald)*, which was



published in Portuguese until 1983, when it switched to English and continues to be published today, with a weekly page in Konkani.

Due to his political activism in favour of the end of the Portuguese regime in Goa, Jorge was arrested in 1946 for practicing Satyagraha and in 1947, he was sentenced to five years in prison at Fort Aguada in Goa, being released in 1950 under the amnesty of the Holy Year. Persecuted by the police, he ended up emigrating to Bombay, now Mumbai, like many other Goans. While living in Mumbai, he contributed as editor of the biweekly newspaper *Azam Goem* in Konkani, edited by T. B. Cunha (1891-1958), one of the most preeminent Goan nationalists, thus joining the Freedom Fighters who, from the neighbouring state of Maharashtra, fought for the end of the colonial regime in Goa. In 1955 Jorge began working in the Konkani section of the international service of All India Radio in New Delhi, then in Mumbai and, finally, in Goa. It was during his exile, when he travelled throughout the subcontinent, that he became familiar with the work of Munshi Premchand (Shirodkar, 1986).

Upon his return from exile to Goa after 1961, Jorge was involved in the linguistic conflict over which of the local languages, Konkani or Marathi, would be the official language of Goa, since Portuguese had lost its status as an official language. Although spoken by different segments of society and in different registers, Konkani and Portuguese were associated with the Catholic community of Goa, while Marathi was associated with the Hindu community. Following the Indian Constitution that allows each state to choose its official language, Goans had to decide which would be the new official language of Goa. If Marathi were chosen, Goa would be annexed to the neighbouring state of Maharashtra, whose official language is Marathi, and Goa would risk losing its cultural identity and fail the aim of political autonomy. In 1967, an Opinion Poll was held and Goans were asked to vote for or against integration with Maharashtra. Goa was divided between integrationists and anti-integrationists (Assunção, 2019). Former Freedom Fighters like Jorge were in favour of the Konkani language and against integration with Maharashtra. Even great Goan writers such as Laxmanrao Sardesai (1904-1986), who published over four hundred short stories in Marathi, began to write in Konkani and Portuguese as a strategy to defend Goan cultural identity. Finally, Konkani was chosen and in 1987 Goa became a new state of the Union.

Our aim in this article is to discuss how, at this time of transition between the colonial and post-colonial periods, Jorge's translations of Munshi Premchand's short stories into Portuguese—still the language of the Goan elite—and their publication in *O Herald*, after the 1967 Opinion Poll, can be understood at different levels. On the one hand, it was Jorge's way to help Goans reconnect with Indian culture through the work of one of its greatest writers. On the other hand, given Premchand's straightforward critique of certain aspects of Indian society --the exploitation of the peasants, the caste system, communalism and the status of women—these translations can be read as Jorge's call to his fellow countrymen to reflect on the situation of Goa under the aegis of India, once the colonial regime had come to an end.

## 2. Evágrio Jorge: Multilingualism and social inclusion

As a journalist and Freedom Fighter, in favour of the end of the colonial regime, Jorge wrote several articles in Konkani, English and Portuguese such as “Why I Offer Satyagraha” (1946), “Salazar



Ani Goem” [Salazar and Goa] and “Goenche Utthau Ani Bonddam” [Uprisings and Revolts in Goa] (1956), “Salazar’s rule in Portugal and the Goa Case” (1959) among several others (Jorge, 1975). Simultaneously, his defence of a fair and inclusive Indian society as well as Goa’s cultural identity become evident in the writers he chose to review in *O Herald* in the 1960s and 1970s. In one of his articles on the Goan writer Vimala Devi (1932-), entitled “Vimala Devi e sua atividade cultural” (“Vimala Devi and her Cultural Activity”), Jorge (1970) makes a critical reading of the short stories that make up the author’s short-story cycle, *Monsoon (Monção)* (Devi, 1963). In it, he highlights some of the problems that “[...] liberation [the new Indian regime] had not been able to resolve” (Jorge, 1970, p. 2, our translation)<sup>1</sup>, including casteism and communalism, denounced by Devi in her book. Jorge (1970, p. 2, our translation)<sup>2</sup> understands that it was necessary to put an end to them: “[...] only then will we form a single, Indian society, based on our nationality”.

Likewise, in the tribute paid to Luiz de Menezes Bragança (1878-1938), Jorge (1966a, p. 1-2) highlights the attitude of the great Goan journalist and thinker against discrimination and communalism when he points out that “[...] Menezes Bragança fought valiantly for the rights of the Goan people” and “[...] by fighting for the Democratic Republic, he earned the gratitude of the Hindu majority of our population, which until then had been trampled upon” (Jorge, 1966a, p. 1, our translation)<sup>3</sup>. Jorge’s (1966a) inclusive attitude is also evident in his multilingualism. Thus, joining the efforts of the anti-integrationists, while he defended the Konkani language, he also fought for Portuguese to continue being one of the languages of Goa. For Jorge (1966a), Portuguese was a symbol of Goan culture. On September 5, 1966, Jorge (1966b) published an article in the newspaper *A Vida* on the second centenary of the birth of the Portuguese poet Bocage (1765-1805), who had lived in Goa for two years; in it, Jorge (1966b) makes a distinction between politics and culture:

This fact went unnoticed in this environment (Goa), which only freed itself from the Portuguese yoke five years ago. But the political yoke is one thing and cultural exchange, to which all people should aspire, is another, for a greater rapprochement of humanity and the realization of the ideal of a United World (One World) (Jorge, 1966b, p. 3, our translation)<sup>4</sup>.

In his 1970 discussion on Vimala Devi, Jorge highlighted the work being done by the author, resident in London since 1973 (See Lobo, 2014; Spina, 2019), to write the first book on Goan literature in Portuguese, *Indo Portuguese Literature (A Literatura Indo Portuguesa)* (1971), together with her husband, the Portuguese writer Manuel de Seabra. In this article, Jorge (1966b) noted the need to support the literary work of the few Portuguese-speaking poets and prose writers who still existed in Goa, and to have them published in Portuguese magazines around the world. At the same time, he remarked that, along with English, Hindi and Marathi, the study of the Portuguese language should be encouraged among the younger generations, for a better integration with the world.

<sup>1</sup> “[...] libertação [o novo regime indiano] não tinha podido resolver” (Jorge, 1970, p. 2).

<sup>2</sup> “[...] só assim formaremos uma sociedade única, indiana, na base de nossa nacionalidade” (Jorge, 1970, p. 2).

<sup>3</sup> “[...] Menezes Bragança pugnou valentemente pelos direitos do povo goês” e “batendo-se pela República Democrática, tornou-se jus à gratidão da maioria hindu da nossa população, que até então vivia espezinhada” (Jorge, 1966a, p. 1-2).

<sup>4</sup> “O facto passou despercebido neste meio, que só há cinco anos, se libertou do jugo português. Mas o jugo político é uma coisa e outra o intercâmbio cultural, a que todos os povos devem aspirar, para maior aproximação da humanidade e a realização do ideal de um Mundo Unido (One World) (Jorge, 1966b, p. 3).

Jorge also defended the translation of Indian literary works into Portuguese as well as the translation of literary works in Portuguese into Konkani, as a tool for integration. In the same article on Vimala Devi, Jorge stated that he intended to translate the author's work, *Monção* (1963), into Konkani, while also foregrounding the importance of encouraging translations of classical Indian literature and modern authors such as R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandava, Nayantura Shagal, Kushwant Singh, Raj Anand, some of whose works, according to Jorge, were already circulating in Brazil and Portugal. The names of these authors, founders of Indian Literature in English, show how familiar Jorge had become with Indian literature during his exile in Bombay. To this end, Jorge (1965, p. 3) translated into Portuguese Indian legends such as “Xacuntala”. Nonetheless, in his efforts as a translator of Indian literature, Jorge focused mainly on the work of Munshi Premchand selecting those stories that clearly demonstrate the latter's revolutionary vision of literature and its usefulness to introduce radical social changes. Premchand was, in fact, one of the Indian authors in the vernacular languages who most inspired Goan nationalists. T. B. Cunha (1953), in his article on Mulk Raj Anand, defined Premchand as a writer who, through a stark Realism, portrayed the working class in all its rawness.

### 3. Munshi Premchand: Literature, multilingualism and social inclusion

According to Harish Trivedi (2017), during the centenary celebrations of Munshi Premchand (1880-1936), he was portrayed as one of the *panch devata*, that is, one of the five iconic figures of modern Indian literature. Born in northern India, in the village of Lahmi near Banaras, Premchand was baptized as Dhanpat Rai. From an early age, his parents called him Nawab because of his intelligence and dedication to his studies. Premchand studied at the local government school where the languages of instruction were Urdu and Persian, and at the Mission school, where he became familiar with Western culture. His first nom de plume was Nawab Rai, but he changed it to Premchand when his first collection of short stories, *Lament for the Motherland* (*Sozevatan* in Urdu), published in 1908, was censored by the government for its revolutionary quality. Like Evágrio Jorge, Premchand also made his literary debut in newspapers, publishing his first short stories in *Zamana*, a periodical in Urdu from Kanpur, between 1905 and 1920 (Orsini, 2004). He was a teacher, school administrator and edited several periodicals during his lifetime, like *Hans* (The Swan, 1930) and *Jagaran* (Awakening, 1932) (Trivedi, 2017).

Premchand realized that his writings would gain a wider audience if published in Hindi, which, in 1918, Gandhi had declared to be *rashtira bhasha*, the national language of India (Trivedi, 2017). He then began to switch between both languages, writing in one and translating into the other and vice versa. During the linguistic conflict in India – Hindi vs. Hindustani – over which would be the national language of India, Premchand defended Hindustani. The only difference between Hindi and Hindustani is that the latter, spoken by the common person, recognizes elements in common with the Urdu language. Precisely, Premchand's endeavour was “[...] to craft a language that would be equally intelligible to the speakers of both Hindi and Urdu” (Asaduddin, 2017, n. p.).

As Aamir Mufti (2016) explains, both Hindi and Urdu originate from a single but diffuse corpus of narratives in the vernacular languages of Northern India. The author goes on to say that it was the Orientalists who associated Hindi with Sanskrit and Urdu with Persian, in their desire to



codify Indian languages and literatures. For Premchand this division was not only linguistic, but also cultural and religious. Thus, he made a point of saying that he wrote in “[...] Hindi in the morning and in Urdu in the afternoon” (Orsini, 2004, p. 4). By 1920, Premchand’s short stories were published in some of the most important literary journals in Hindi of the time, and his short stories with female characters, which make up half of his work, were published in the radical feminist journal *Chand* (Orsini, 2004). He wrote thirteen novels and three hundred short stories in Urdu and Hindi. If Jorge understood the literatures in Konkani and Portuguese as part of the same literary system, Premchand was in favour of creating a forum of writers in all the languages of India.

Regarding his views on literature, like Jorge (1970), for whom literature should be a reflection of life, for Premchand literature needed to be a mirror of the truths of life. In his article, *The Aim of Literature*, he states that literature could not be dissociated from the day-to-day life of society, nor be limited to a privileged elite (Premchand, 2004). Thus, one of his main objectives was to renew Indian literature. If in the past literary narratives, written with the support of a patron, had referred to a world of fantasies, heroes and princesses and focused on stories of love and feelings, now it was necessary to face the real problems that affected society and consider the condition of the subaltern:

It is the duty of a writer to support and defend those who are in some way oppressed, suffering or deprived, whether they be individuals or groups. He pleads justice on their behalf and considers himself successful when through his efforts the court’s sense of justice and beauty is awakened (Premchand, 2004, n. p.).

For Premchand, ethics and literature were one. The new literature should not be limited to portraying the beauty that wealth can buy, but the raw beauty of the oppressed, their poor houses, their rustic clothes, and their simple speech. These characters should be the centre of literary narratives:

They cannot acknowledge that beauty exists also in starving and naked people. For them, beauty lies in a beautiful woman, not in the poor and ungainly mother who is toiling hard after putting her baby to sleep on the hay. If our artists have decided that beauty definitely dwells in painted lips, cheeks and eyebrows, how can it have anything to do with tangled hair, cracked lips and sunken cheeks? (Premchand, 2004, n. p.).

Rather than focusing on the individual and his or her own satisfaction, for Premchand literature should be concerned with the community and meet its needs. Therefore, more than a pastime, literature should be a space in which many of the problems affecting society are discussed and attempts made to solve them:

A literature which brings no challenge to our tastes, which does not provide us with mental and spiritual satisfaction, which does not awaken strength and dynamism within us, which fails to raise from slumber our sense of beauty, and which does not produce in us true determination and true resolve to overcome difficulties—such a literature is of no use to us today and it is not even worthy of the name (Premchand, 2004, n. p.).

Premchand's literary style has been called Social Realism. According to Orsini (2004), he intended to create plots that, more than fictional stories, should recreate life as it is, and the beings



that inhabited them, more than characters, should be like real human beings. It was for this reason that his son, Amrit Rai, also a writer, nicknamed him “Soldier of the Pen” (Orsini, 2004, p. 26). But, in line with his belief that through a joint effort society could be improved, for all their raw Realism, Premchand’s short stories exude “[...] a view of life in which goodness, virtue and self-realization are ultimately bound to prevail over all misunderstanding and temporary ill will” (Trivedi, 2017, n. p.). This, in a way, shapes Premchand’s style of short story writing. Most of the stories are about very few characters whose individuality is portrayed with great insight and, though brief, the plots are very intense and reveal that though the life of the oppressed was bleak there was always a ray of hope.

Premchand was one of the Indian writers who most fought against colonialism. He thus chronicled in his literature the Indians’ fight against the British colonial regime. As the Indian critic, Namwar Singh points out:

Premchand was the unique epic-chronicler [*maha-gathakar*] of our struggle for freedom and it will be no exaggeration to say that he occupies in this regard an unrivalled place in the whole of Indian literature. If one wanted to find in any one Indian writer the very pulse of Indian life, its struggles and its setbacks, its sorrows and its anguish, in all their depth and all their wide scope, over a period of three decades right from the Partition of Bengal in 1905–06 up to 1936, when he passed away (Trivedi, 2017, n. p.).

But, as Singh also points out, Premchand was not interested solely in narrating historical facts. His focus was also on communalism, the caste system, the extreme poverty of many, the condition of women, among others. Undoubtedly, for these reasons, he stood out among the Indian writers of his time and was a model for many Goan Freedom Fighters. Berta Menezes Bragança (1911-1933), editor of the resistance newspaper, *Free Goa* (1957-1961), which she published from her exile in Bombay, published several of Premchand's (1957) short stories, in their English version. Her desire was that her Goan readers would follow the example of this great writer. Not only that, but she also wrote a series of short stories that were published, first in Bombay newspapers, and later collected in the book *Tales from Goa* (Bragança, 1991), in the same style of Social Realism, learnt from Premchand. These stories dealt with land ownership, the condition of the Adivasi community in Goa, the behaviour of the Goan middle class, influenced by European culture, and the condition of Goan women. If the theme of her stories was adapted to the culture of Goa, the objective of her literature, like Premchand’s, was social reform.

#### 4. Back from exile: Jorge’s translation of Premchand’s short stories

Still in exile, Jorge (1954) translated Premchand’s story “Only one Voice” (“A Voz solitária”), that focuses on the theme of caste, untenable in the new democratic Indian nation and the future free Goa. Back from Bombay, he translated several other stories by Premchand: “Forgiveness” (“Perdão”) (Jorge, 1968e)<sup>5</sup>; “The Village Well” (“O poço da aldeia”) (Jorge, 1968a); “One and a Quarter Ser of Wheat” (“Um punhado de trigo”) (Jorge, 1968b); “Temple” (“A Casa de Deus”)

<sup>5</sup> This same story had been previously translated as “True Conversion” and published in the periodical *Free Goa*, edited by Berta Menezes Bragança, in the edition of April 10, 1957.



(Jorge, 1968c); “The Necklace” (“O Colar”) (Jorge, 1968f); “Resignation” (“Resignação”) (Jorge, 1968d).

According to Trivedi (2017), Premchand’s short stories began to be translated into the other Indian languages -- Gujarati, Bengali, Marathi and Tamil— as well as European and Asian languages - -English, German and Japanese-- during his lifetime. What Trivedi does not mention, however, is that in the 1950s, Evágrio Jorge started translating them into Portuguese. Perhaps, this omission has to do with the fact that even if in the nineteenth century, Portuguese had been considered a vernacular language by the University of Bombay, unlike English, it did not acquire the level of a *bhasha* (vernacular language) though it was one of the mother tongues of many Goans (See Lobo, 2014). We do not know what version of Premchand’s stories in English Jorge used for his own translations into Portuguese: whether he used versions of the originals in Hindi or in Urdu, or their translation into one or the other language by Premchand himself, or a later version in one of the *bhashas*. As Asaduddin (2017) explains, even Premchand acknowledged that in the process of translation, many times, the writer prevailed over the translator and he made changes along the way when translating the stories from one language into the other, respecting the characteristics of each language.

Trivedi (2017) observes that the passage from Urdu to Hindi also implied a certain adjustment in the tone of the narratives as the translations were conditioned by the readership to which they were addressed or even the space in the periodicals where they would be eventually published. Perhaps, this explains why when comparing the translations of Premchand’s stories into English collected in *Premchand. The Complete Short Stories* (Asaduddin, 2017) to the translations published in *O Herald* in Portuguese, there are some noticeable differences. Maybe this is due to this palimpsest of translations or because, like many other translators, Jorge tuned the stories to a Portuguese readership. As an example, the short story “Forgiveness” (Premchand, 2017a), which takes place in the Iberian Peninsula, during the occupation of the Muslims and their conflict with the Catholic population, in Jorge’s translation starts with a reference to Portugal that is not present in the English version (See below). As the story can be read as an analogy of what had happened in Goa between Catholics and Hindus, during the colonial regime, the reference to Portugal was more meaningful for a Goan readership. In addition, the main character in the English version is called Daud, the Arabic male name for the Hebrew, David. In his translation, Jorge adopted the latter, more familiar to the Goan readership in Portuguese who were, mainly, Christians.

Caste is one of the most recurrent conflicts portrayed in Premchand’s tales that Jorge chose for translation. As Parog Parobo (2015) explains, although untouchability in Goa was, in some way, weakened by the conversion to Catholicism, caste, as a privilege and status, continued to be one of the characteristics of that society. What the Portuguese did, explains the author, was to desacralize caste, but not to abolish it: while the Christian message was spiritual, caste was social. Thus, in the context of religion, caste was associated with the place that each of its members occupied in the church, in rites and in festivals. The Goan Catholics were divided into Bamons (Brahmins), Chardos (Kshatriyas) and Sudir (Sudras). According to Parobo (2015), what the colonial state did was to accelerate the Brahmanization of Goan society, since the upper-caste Goans, Bamons and Chardos used the colonial state to foster their own interests. They were the ones who dominated the lands and the temple during the colonial regime. In the 1960s, after the Indian takeover and the first

democratic elections, the Bahujan Samaj emerged, a conglomerate of the subordinate segments of society: tribals or Gawdas, Bhandaris or rural workers, Kharvis or fishermen (Parobo, 2015). Unlike the colonial era, when the lower classes of society depended on the government to introduce changes or on the landowners to alleviate their misery, the members of the Bahujan Samaj now understood that only through the establishment of a collective identity and political mobilization could they discuss the ownership of the government with the upper castes.

According to Asaduddin (2017, n. p.), Premchand's "[...] most trenchant critique was reserved for caste injustice, whereby people on the lowest rung of the Hindu caste system, and beyond the pale of the caste system, were considered untouchable and were compelled to live a life of indignity and humiliation". In one of the stories translated by Jorge, "Only One Voice" (Premchand, 2017b), the focus is on a reformer who, inspired by Gandhi, calls on Indians to review their attitude towards the untouchables. In the story, a crowd of believers has gathered on the banks of the Ganges, awaiting, with religious fervour, a solar eclipse. Amidst the murmur of the congregation stands out the voice of a speaker who, in the context of an India already freed from English colonialism, exhorts those present to change their attitude towards the untouchables:

My dear friends, it is *our* duty—yours *and* mine. No other duty is more important, more fruitful and more auspicious for our nation. We acknowledge that their customs and traditions and their habits are pitiable. But believe me, it is all our own doing. We alone are responsible for their shameful social condition. There is no remedy for this except that we rid ourselves clean of the prejudice and contempt we harbour in our hearts against them. It's not easy to do this. The filth that has accumulated over thousands of years cannot be cleaned up so easily. We will require great sacrifice, courage and selflessness to embrace those whose shadows we avoided, whom we treated worse than beasts. We need Lord Krishna's sacrifice, Lord Rama's courage and the selflessness of Chaitanya and Govind. I'm not suggesting that you go and establish a marital relationship with them right away, or start eating and drinking with them. But is it impossible to show them common sympathy, ordinary human kindness and normal courtesy? Is it really an impossible task? (Premchand, 2017b, n. p.)<sup>6</sup>.

The speaker draws the attention of those present to the fact that India was now a nation and, in a modern state, it was even more shameful that the untouchables should still exist. In his speech, one can hear Gandhi's words: when it is impossible to introduce changes at a collective level, each individual can change his or her own behaviour, thus contributing to the common good. In both ways, society can improve. In the speaker's speech, the untouchables had become compatriots, equal before the law, in the new nation. What must have led Jorge to translate this story into Portuguese was that differences of class and caste were also rampant in Goa, fact that should be unacceptable now that Goa was no longer a colony but a state of a democratic nation.

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<sup>6</sup> "Amigos", dizia o orador, "para nação e para nós próprios não existe nada mais vergonhoso do que o facto de termos os sem-casta. Nós tratamos estas criaturas humanas como cães e evitamos ainda as suas sombras. O modo de viver deles é um estigma perpétuo na nação. E nós, só nós somos responsáveis por isto. Prometam-se meus irmãos, esta tarde, nas margens do sagrado Ganges, neste solo sagrado de Kashi, que haveis de tratá-los com simpatia, afeição e cortesia. Lembrem-se que não lhes fareis nenhum favor. Fazeis favor a vós próprios e ao país. Não é também uma tarefa fácil – não qualquer coisa que possa ser conseguida dentro duma noite. A doença atacou-nos por muitos anos. Há-de demandar toda a nossa coragem – a coragem de Ram e Krishna – para abraçar estes nossos compatriotas. Não peço que comecem por casar com eles ou convida-lo para vossas mesas. Mas é pedir demasiado que os tratem como criaturas humanas? (Jorge, 1954, p. 2).



Certain differences can be noticed between the short story in English and its translation into Portuguese that might be due to the different versions used for translation. However, one aspect that calls the reader's attention, while comparing both texts, is that in the translation into English, the speaker makes a point of saying that it is his as well as the members of the audience's civil responsibility to rid themselves of the prejudice of caste. Only in that way, adds the speaker, will they be able to serve the new nation. In Jorge's (1954, p. 2) translation into Portuguese, rather than speaking of the rights of citizens in a democracy, the speaker seems to emulate Gandhi when he makes an appeal to the audience to treat the untouchables with "[...] empathy, affection and kindness" in order to serve the nation.

Then, both versions of the story, in English and in Portuguese, assume the same tone when the speaker appeals to his audience not only to feel compassion for those marginalized by society but also that those who accept his challenge should stand up:

The sun was setting on Mother Ganga whose waters had swelled with pride and love, shimmering brighter than saffron, more lustrous than gold. An awe-inspiring silence had fallen around. In the silence, the passionate appeal of the sannyasi merged with the waves of the Ganga and the spires of the sky-kissing temples. The Ganga laughed wanly like a disappointed mother, while the gods hung their heads in sorrow and did not utter a word. The sannyasi's impassioned call rose to the sky and dissipated, unable to move a single heart in the audience. There was no dearth of patriotic men there. There were hundreds of worthy college students who had staged plays on the theme of patriotism, journalists who were ready to sacrifice their lives for their country, office bearers of nationalist groups, merchants and money lenders who bowed their heads in devotion before the images of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, learned professors of reputed colleges, and government officials who read about the nation's progress in newspapers and rejoiced. There was also a whole battery of senior lawyers and advocates wearing gold-rimmed spectacles. But the fiery words of the sannyasi did not melt a single heart, as these hearts were made of stone, devoid of sympathy. They had intentions but lacked the determination to act; they could clamour like children but lacked adult resolve (Premchand, 2017b, n. p.)<sup>7</sup>.

The text in English begins with an idealized description of the Ganges, which is absent in its companion in Portuguese, showing that while the first was addressed to a Hindu audience, for whom the Ganges is a sacred river, the second was directed to a Catholic one that, during colonial times, had moved away from Hinduism. Nevertheless, in both texts the speaker's words are pervaded with a certain irony when referring to the members of the audience, all of them belonging to the Indian elite. They had all been impassioned nationalists who had advocated a return to Indian traditions, as a strategy for fighting the British, and were devoted to Rama and Lord Krishna. However, they still discriminated against the untouchables. Undoubtedly, this section of the story was very meaningful for a Goan readership too. This is why both versions are quite close. It was the Goan intelligentsia,

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<sup>7</sup> Punha-se o sol sobre o Ganges. Reinava um silêncio sepulcral entre a multidão. Ninguém se movia. Parecia que as palavras do orador tinham-se afogado no Ganges. Os nacionalistas ferrenhos, os animados académicos das Faculdades que estavam na dianteira de todos em encenar dramas nacionalistas, jornalistas que sustentavam que dariam as suas vidas pela Terra-Mãe, membros de partidos políticos, 'seths' (ricachos) devotos que despendiam horas perante os ídolos de Ram e Krishna, Professores de Faculdades, funcionários que se gabavam de ser nacionalistas, advogados com óculos de aros de ouro, todos estavam lá – em milhares. Mas ninguém tinha a coragem de levantar-se e aceitar o desafio. Como nacionalistas de água doce – quase como crianças – faltava-lhes a determinação de homens. Estes eram os mesmos indivíduos que saltariam com mera menção de qualquer coisa nacionalista, cujos olhos ficariam obumbrados do orgulho com a simples menção da palavra nação. Mas este desafio ninguém se atreveu a aceitar (Jorge, 1954, p. 2).

the Goan nationalists, the Freedom Fighters, who, like the Indian nationalists in Premchand's story—journalists, lawyers, wealthy men, university professors—had fought for the end of Portuguese rule in Goa, just as the Indian bourgeoisie had fought for the end of British rule. As Parobo (2015) explains about Goa, which also seems to apply to India, those who defended Portuguese Goa as well as those who wanted to reconnect with their Indian roots were members of the local intellectual elites. It was from this privileged perspective that they understood their society in which, for all their talk of democracy, the disadvantaged classes and castes were still marginalized.

All the people in the crowd remain seated and silent, as if the old caste system still spoke louder than the new democratic regime. It is only a peasant, a simple man, who stands up and vows that he will make of compassion for the untouchables the goal of his life. In this way, Premchand criticizes those Indians who put their own interests and prejudices above the liberation movement, criticism that, through his translation, Jorge extends to his Goan compatriots.

For Jorge, as for Premchand, society also needed to be narrated from the perspective of the subaltern, fact that accounts for his translation of Premchand's short stories "The Village Well" ("O poço da aldeia" (Jorge, 1968a), "One and a Quarter Ser of Wheat" ("Um punhado de trigo") (Jorge, 1968b) and "Temple" ("A Casa de Deus") (Jorge, 1968c). In all these stories, through what Premchand defined as "masala": a mixture of experience, self-analysis, curiosity, insight and discernment (Orsini, 2004), he aims at bringing about an epiphany in the reader, regarding the condition of those relegated to the lowest rungs of society.

In "Temple", Premchand (2017c) both criticizes the Hindu priestly class and the condition of low class women who were doubly subjected to patriarchal society, due to genre and caste, without any kind of agency. If at home, they were at the mercy of the men of the family, at the temple they were at the mercy of the priests. Premchand's stories not only denounce discrimination against women, but also make a point of showing their determination, intelligence and work force. In "Temple", Premchand (2017c) places the narrative focus on a very poor woman, who belongs to a low caste, a widow with a sick son, who is faced with a puzzling situation: she is not allowed to enter the temple and offer her prayers to her God, as she had vowed to do if her son recovered, because she belongs to the caste of the *chamars*, the shoemaker caste. Only the rich zamindars, the landowners, were allowed to enter the temple. The inhuman treatment of the low-caste people had become so normalized that neither the temple guardian nor the devotees allow her to approach the image or even cross the temple threshold for fear she might soil it:

The *aarti* bells were ringing in the temple. Five to ten devotees were standing and chanting hymns of praise to God. Meanwhile Sukhiya went and stood in front of the temple. The priest asked, 'What's the matter? What are you doing here?' Sukhiya moved closer to the platform and said, 'I had kept a vow for thakurji, Maharaj. So I have come to offer puja.' In the daytime the priest worshipped his zamindar customers, in the morning and evening, thakurji's. He slept in the temple at night. His food was also cooked in the temple, as a consequence of which the statue of thakurji had blackened. He was very kind-hearted, and such a devotee that no matter how cold it grew, no matter how harsh the wind blew, he didn't even drink water without bathing. In spite of this if there was a layer of dirt on his hands and feet it wasn't his fault. He said, 'So, you want to come inside? The puja is over. Will you come and defile it?' A devotee remarked, 'She has come to purify thakurji.' Sukhiya said helplessly, 'I have come to touch the feet of thakurji, Sir. I have brought all the things required for the puja.' The priest said, 'How do you talk so ignorantly? Have you gone mad? How will you touch thakurji?' Till now Sukhiya had never had the opportunity to come to thakurji's door. Surprised she said, 'Sir! He is lord

of the world. Even the sinners get redemption after visiting him. Will he get contaminated if I touch him?' 'Aren't you a *chamarin*?' 'So hasn't God created Chamars? Is there some other God for Chamars? I have kept a vow for this child, Sir!' (Premchand, 2017c, n. p.)<sup>8</sup>.

In the English version, Premchand, through his narrator, mocks the priest attempts to keep his body purified and the temple guarded against low caste people, while with their own actions and attitudes he, and the rich devotees, daily polluted their temple and religion. Even when published in a serialized manner, Jorge's translation is abridged, when compared to the text in English. Nonetheless, he clearly conveys how much Premchand deplored untouchability. Though the description of the priest, present in the English version, is absent in the translation into Portuguese, the priest's hypocritical attitude is revealed in both texts through the short but vivid dialogue with the widow. For Premchand, literature would have an effect on its readers if the author, instead of talking about the characters, showed them in action, in their daily lives, as he does in this story, in which the woman's logic and the preposterous attitude of the guardian and the devotees of the temple are made manifest.

To portray the injustices of the caste system, Premchand shifts the narrative focus from the priest to the high caste devotees to the poor woman who questions what her society considers common sense. Unlike the priest, who soiled the image of the God, with his cooking, she understands that rather than polluting the image of the Deity with her touch, it is the Deity that would bless and sanctify her through her contact. After all, the Deity was the Saviour and had the power to change the destiny of men, while she was a poor woman who endured the penuries of life. The sarcasm and incredulity with which the temple guardian and the devotees treat the woman are in counterpoint with the irony with which the narrator portrays their fanaticism and blindness as seen from the woman's perspective. Premchand somehow empowers his feminine character as she, a low caste woman and a widow, dares challenge the established order with her apparently naïve but meaningful reasoning. She not only questions the concept of untouchability but also the fact that the God was for the chosen few who kept him locked within the temple. Moved by fear and ignorance, these "contractors of religion" (Premchand, 2017c, n. p.), as the woman dubs them, throw her out of the temple, causing the death of her child and, eventually, her own.

As the choice of Premchand's story for translation into Portuguese shows, Jorge's time in exile and his travels across the subcontinent had allowed him to have a different view of the caste system both in India and in Goa. Although, as Parobo (2015) observes, the so-called pollution of the untouchables was less of a problem in Goa than in other parts of India, caste differences were still

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<sup>8</sup> "Ressoavam os sinos do templo. Era o tempo de oferecer preces. Poucos devotos estavam de pé em volta. Sukhiya também dirigiu-se para lá e ficou de pé diante do templo. O guardião perguntou rudemente. 'Que quer?' Sukhiya foi até os degraus e disse, 'Maharaj, eu fizera um voto que guardaria oblatas aos pés de Thakurji, se meu filho recuperasse. Vim cumprir o meu voto'. O auditório do templo estava limitado aos devotos de alta casta. Não era de imaginar que uma mulher como Sukhiya se atravessasse mesmo a fazer uma proposta assim. Porém, controlando-se, o padre afirmou, 'Quer conspurcar todo este lugar? Vá se embora'. Um dos devotos disse com voz repassada de sarcasmo. 'Ela veio purificar Thakurji?' Sukhiya rogou, 'Deixem-me tocar os pés de Thakurji. Trouxe todas as coisas necessárias para'. 'Está doida, mulher?' retorquiu o padre, 'Como é que V. pode tocar os pés de Thakurji?' Sukhiya via o templo pela primeira vez. Surpreendida, ela perguntou, 'Sarkar, não é Thakurji o Salvador do mundo? Não ficam abençoados os pecadores em adorando-O? Como pôde Ele ficar conspurcado pelo meu toque?'. 'V. não é mulher da classe de sapateiros?', perguntou o Pujari. 'Mas não trouxe Deus os sapateiros ao mundo?', arguiu Sukhiya em vão. 'O Deus dos sapateiros não é diferente. Queira deixar-me cumprir o meu voto!' (Jorge, 1968c, p. 4).

blatant. Hence, Jorge's translation leads his Goan readership to reflect about the issue in Goa: What would become of Goa now, under the aegis of India? What would happen with the caste system? Could it be overcome with a popular government like that of Dayanand Bandodkar (See Parobo, 2015)? The attitude of the woman, defiant in her humility, somehow echoes that of the members of the Bahujan Samaj who wanted to fight for their own rights.

If Jorge and the Freedom Fighters had made a point of showing the imperfections of the Portuguese regime, as had the writer Vimala Devi (1963) in *Monção*, now Jorge, like Maria Elsa da Rocha (1963) in her poem "Goa, esse teu sari" ("Goa, that sari of yours")<sup>9</sup>, makes a point of showing the weaknesses of Indian Goa for which Goans had fought so hard:

Goa,  
drink the light  
of Freedom's torch  
in long gulps  
if you want.  
But girl,  
first fix  
the creases in that dishevelled  
sari of yours.  
[...]  
But be careful,  
child!  
Have your friend the breeze  
tell the old Himalayas  
to close the curtains of the Ghats,  
for strange winds  
might snatch away  
with lusty, greedy  
fury  
pieces  
of your shabby garment  
(Rocha, 1963, p. 2)<sup>10</sup>.

As Assunção (2019) notes, the tone of Rocha's poem is one of caution and uncertainty about the new social order. This feeling was shared by many Goan Freedom Fighters. Upon her return to Goa after her exile in Bombay, Berta Menezes Bragança, another Freedom Fighter like Jorge, devoted herself to improving the living conditions of all Goans, particularly those belonging to the lower classes and castes; she warned them not to submit to the Rupee God in the new Goa (Desai, 1990). Now the enemy was not the Portuguese, but corrupt politicians and stagnant social customs that went against the principles of a democratic nation. Thus, she carried out different social activities with the aim of educating the population, organizing the subaltern to fight for their rights, inspiring

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<sup>9</sup> "Goa, /bebe a luz/ do facho da Liberdade /a longos haustos /se os quiseses. /Mas filha, /dá antes um jeitinho /às pregas desse teu sari /desarranjado.//Mas menina, /sê cautelosa! /manda a brisa, tua amiga, /dizer ao velho Himalaia /que cerre a cortina dos Gates, /que ventos insólitos /te podem arrancar /com fúria libidinosa,/ gananciosa /pedaços /desse teu pobre manto" (Rocha, 1963, p. 2).

<sup>10</sup> Dave Smith, translator.

the youth to work for an egalitarian society and eradicating poverty (Desai, 1990). Like Menezes Bragança, Evágrio Jorge understood that the struggle for Goan society had not ended, but had just begun, and his translations seem to imply that.

Another social issue that also concerned Premchand, as well as Jorge, was that of communalism. Orsini (2004) remarks that, unlike many Hindu intellectuals of his time, for Premchand, Indian society should be secular, and he was in favour of the integration of Hindus and Muslims. If Premchand was familiar with the ideals of Hinduism, early in life he was also introduced to the study of Islam. He was sure that the future of India very much depended on the relationship between both communities. As Asaduddin (2017, n. p.) observes, “[...] this, coupled with his inherently secular temperament, provided him a unique vantage point from which he could write fairly and fearlessly about both communities in an even-handed way”.

One of the stories that portrays how he opposed religious sectarianism and orthodoxy is “Forgiveness” (Premchand, 2017a). The two religious groups involved in the story are Muslims and Catholics that, in a way, accounts for Jorge’s choice of the story for translation. The story takes place in the Iberian Peninsula, when Muslims ruled not only Spain but also Portugal. Hence, this story can be read as an allegory of Goa where, as in the Iberian Peninsula, the dominant religion had changed with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1510, the imposition of Catholicism and the diaspora of many Hindus. Then, in 1961, with the arrival of the Indians, and the departure of the Portuguese, there would perhaps be a new change in the predominant religion in Goa, causing again the departure of many Goans and the arrival of many Indians.

In the story, very much like Hindus in the Konkan with the arrival of the Portuguese, it is the Christians who feel out of place in their own land, and where churches once stood, there are now mosques: “Muslims had been ruling Spain for several centuries. Mosques had been built in place of churches; the sound of the call to prayer had replaced the sound of bells” (Premchand, 2017a, n. p.)<sup>11</sup>. But it is not just the landscape that is changing; even high-ranking Christians are beginning to embrace the new faith so as not to lose their position in the new social order, as many Hindus had done in Goa in the sixteenth century: “[...] prominent Christian men and women were leaving the protection of the Messiah to join the brotherhood of Islam” (Premchand, 2017a, n. p.)<sup>12</sup>. There is, however, one gallant Christian who refuses to yield to the conqueror. His name is Daud and he represents the poor and needy Christians who, rather than enter the Kingdom of Islam, preferred to die in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. His counterpart, however, is an equally young and gallant Muslim, Jamal, who defends the faith of his people as much as Daud defends his. While the latter criticizes Islam for imposing its faith through violence, the former argues that “[...] the sword protected the eternal truth” (Premchand, 2017a, n. p.)<sup>13</sup>.

As the narrative makes clear, despite all their differences, their arguments and means of defence are similar. Unfortunately, both men draw their weapons and the confrontation ends with the death of the young Muslim. Daud has to run for his life. His decision to fight for his life reflects that of his compatriots: to remain discouraged or to stand firm on the battlefield.

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<sup>11</sup> “Vários séculos tinham passado desde que os muçulmanos governavam Espanha e Portugal. No lugar das catedrais, foram erguidas mesquitas. Em vez dos sinos da igreja ouvia-se o chamado de azan” (Jorge, 1968e, p. 2).

<sup>12</sup> “As pessoas respeitáveis entre os cristãos estavam a desistir do refúgio em Cristo e a juntarem-se à fraternidade islâmica” (Jorge, 1968e, p. 2).

<sup>13</sup> “A espada sempre guardou a verdade” (Jorge, 1968e, p. 2).

Paradoxically, Daud finds refuge in the house of Jamal's father, a devout Muslim. For the old father, Daud is the murderer of his courageous son. However, following his faith and tradition, he offers Daud, a man in distress, refuge in his house, as dictated by the Quran. Taking revenge on Daud would mean destroying the principles of his faith, which are above any human feeling or desire. That is why he does not denounce him when a band of Arabs arrives at his house in search of the bandit. However, the old man has to fight against his own feelings in order not to avenge his son's death. Sensing the old man's great pain, Daud feels sympathy for him: "It's not the fault of religion or nationality. If someone had killed my son then doubtless I would be thirsty for his blood too. It's just human nature" (Premchand, 2017a, n. p.)<sup>14</sup>. Daud offers his head to the anguished father to somehow ease his pain. In return, when the old Arab realizes that although Daud is the murderer of his son, he is also a true fighter for the cause of the Christians, he lets him go unharmed. Daud arrives home safely, but he is no longer committed to the destruction of Islam. On the contrary. He begins to regard Islam with respect. What unites the old and the young man is that they can see beyond the barriers of communalism. Premchand's (2017a) moral in the story also applies to the Goa that Jorge and many other Goans envisioned: a community in which living side by side in the same neighbourhood should not be enough. More than that, the members of the different communities should actually learn to commune with each other.

As we have seen in these three stories, for all their raw Realism and harsh criticism there is always a certain dose of idealism embodied in one of the characters who can see beyond their predicament. Such is the case of the peasant who answers the preacher's call in "Only one Voice" (Premchand, 2017b), the courageous woman who dares defy the rules of established religion in "Temple" (Premchand, 2017c), or the Muslim father who tends his hand to the Catholic killer of his own son in "Forgiveness" (Premchand, 2017a). The search for truth and compassion for the other are the beacons that guide Premchand's characters even in their darkest night and that, no doubt, was what inspired Jorge to translate all these short stories for the sake of his Goan readership.

## 5. Final words

If exile implies distancing oneself from one's own community, it also implies considering it from a new social context and a different perspective. Familiarity with other social paradigms makes us turn a critical eye to what has become so common and normalized in our own community that we can no longer see it. We understand that Evágrio Jorge's contact with Premchand's work during his exile, in the context of the new India, when the English had left the subcontinent but Indians faced serious social problems, made him reflect on the new Goa after the end of the Portuguese regime and at the beginning of the Indian era.

In this social and political context, Jorge's translation and publication of Premchand's short stories into Portuguese is significant at a literary, linguistic and cultural level. Premchand's vision of Indian society is replicated in Jorge's independence of spirit. Both men wanted a new era for literature in which the writer would have only one patron: the common people who needed a more just society and, in this context, translation and multilingualism were strategies for rapprochement

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<sup>14</sup> "Isso não tem nada a ver com raça ou religião. Se alguém assassinasse meu filho, eu também teria sede do sangue do assassino. Essa é apenas a natureza humana" (Jorge, 1968c, p. 2).



and coexistence. Also, like Premchand, Jorge was in favour of an inclusive society based on cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. To this end, both writers understood that literature should be secular and reveal the problems of society through realistic plots and individualized characters that were significant to its readers.

Regarding languages, they held the view that language was a cultural asset that should not be restricted or associated with a single community: languages belong to those who speak them. Thus, if Premchand was against associating Urdu only with the Muslims or restricting Hindi to the Hindu community, as his own writing reveals, for Jorge the Konkani language should have the same hierarchy as any other Goan language, while the Portuguese language belonged to any community that spoke it all over the world, including Goa, thus declaring Portuguese an Indian language.

Finally, by translating the work of this revolutionary author, Jorge brings to the forefront the themes of caste, untouchability, religious intolerance, extreme poverty and the status of women, in the context of a Goa that was struggling to find its own path after 450 years of the Portuguese regime. We read the translation of these stories as going beyond the literary to become a political act as Jorge's aim seems to be to raise Goans' awareness --in particular the leading classes who still spoke Portuguese-- about the injustices perpetrated every day against the marginalized sectors of society, fact that went against the principles of democracy, the new political regime in post-colonial India and Goa.

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