

**REMARKS ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE 'HISTORIES OF  
GOA' PROJECT, MUSEUM OF GOA, 14 MARCH 2015**

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It is an honour and privilege to be associated with the Museum of Goa (MOG) that will soon be opened in this splendid setting and to have been invited by its Director, Subodh Kerkar, to take the floor during the announcement of the 'Histories of Goa' exhibition project.

MOG will be a place of connection and interconnection, of artistic cross-fertilization and mutual encounter. All of these processes are integral to what we call 'globalization', a set of processes that will provide the broad framework for my remarks. I use the term 'globalization' to refer to the extreme compression of time and space that is occurring today in highly accelerated and intense ways. This time-space compression has radically accelerated and intensified different kinds of flows: of objects (goods, services, finance and other resources); of meanings (language, symbols, art forms, knowledge, identities) and of people – among whom artists are in the vanguard – across regions and intercontinental space.

There is both a negative and a positive side to these flows of course, but mine is the more positive perspective, for I see globalization as a driver of artistic cross-fertilization, unfolding far more in a Schumpeterian process of 'creative destruction' than just steamrolling all variety out of the world.

Accelerated today, globalization is in fact a historical process that has been unfolding slowly over many centuries, during which Goa and its people have been fortunate enough to play a prominent role, spinning many webs of cultural relationship with the rest of the world. Goa has long been and remains today a laboratory and microcosm of cultural globalization.

Artists everywhere are at the forefront of the dialectical relationship cultural globalization has brought about between the universal and the particular. The relationship is nicely encapsulated in the term *glocalization*, which was adapted by

Western scholars from a Japanese management theory term that refers to the capacity to 'think globally, act locally', in other words the capacity to bridge both the universal and the particular. The central dynamic of the global culture to which Goan artists, like their counterparts everywhere, are today contributing, is a twofold process: the particularization of the universal on the one hand and the universalization of the particular on the other. In other words, globally defined values and practices are increasingly adapted at the local level, just as, globally, the celebration of difference becomes a value in itself. The local has itself a global product...

Reading this landscape, one sees the emergence in the late twentieth century of a global culture as such, characterized by simultaneous homogenization and diversification. While an actually existing world system, understood as the planetary reach of Western capitalism, had engendered a culture consisting of standardized commodities destined for mass consumption, this process itself had also engendered a new kind of *repluralization*. This is particularly striking in arts practice, with ever increasing exchange, fusion and hybridization among and between different repertoires and forms. New loci of cultural production are emerging and are exerting significant trans-national influence through hybrid forms that work with, or blend in with, Western and other forms and repertoires re-interpreted in terms of locally specific perceptions, understandings and styles. This is certainly what one can observe at the ongoing 2014-2015 Kochi Muziris Biennale, notably in the 'Janela: Migrating Forms and Migrating Gods' collateral exhibition co-curated by Valentina Levy and Subodh Kerkar and in which the works of Kerkar and 12 other Goan artists explore cross-cultural connections of many different kinds dialogues with the work of artists from China, Italy, Japan, Korea and South Africa.

Artistic practice has taken on an increasingly inter- or trans-cultural dimension, often through the merging of traditions where audiences are confronted with the particular as well as the universal by virtue of acts and performances that blend the codes of different cultures.

Yet it is not all sweetness and light. Many hard questions still arise. Who is calling the shots? Who has the power to define these contents and legitimize them? What is going to be allowed into the repertoire? Who are more or less

visible on the global stage? Who articulates what is taken to be 'universal'? Who are the winners and losers in the global cultural game? In what forms are agency and dominance exerted in the cultural domain today? How powerful are the countervailing forces challenging hegemonic tendencies? Who are the cultural entrepreneurs, institutions and organizations in this respect? And here of course I am imagining a very important role for MOG in both the Goan and the national Indian 'artscape'.

Finally, a few words on the consciousness of the global that is the hallmark of so much contemporary art, which increasingly turns the global dimension into a central part of what is being argued, shown or seen. Hence a significant global artistic dimension is now that of the world viewing itself. A world in which the West is once again becoming, as it was earlier in human history, only one element in world society, having increasingly have to take on board references and constructs which the West itself has played little or no part in making. In the meantime, however, many Western-originated ideas have been appropriated by all: concern for human rights, for the environment, for sustainability, for gender issues, for the fight against Aids, for global governance, for the strengthening of civil society, or against corruption, child abuse and rape, and many more. These concerns are manifestations of a shared civilizational project for which the globe is the ethical reference point and action frame.

Today's globalism is like a categorical imperative: wherever there are deeds to be done, do them in the light of the needs of the world as a whole. As the twentieth-century German philosopher Karl Jaspers put it, 'now it is the totality which has become the problem and the task'... The world closes. It is the earth's unity. All essential problems have become world problems, the situation is the situation of humanity'.

In the realm of culture, surely this requires us to recognize and contribute towards the elaboration of a true 'Culture of cultures' – as a phenomenon at once profoundly mixed and essentially plural, albeit often skewed and unbalanced, but as a sure pathway towards changing the whole world for the better. I am sure that MOG will rise effectively to this challenge.