



ANAIS DE HISTÓRIA DE ALÉM-MAR

Vol. III (2002)

ISSN 0874-9671 (impresso/print)

ISSN 2795-4455 (electrónico/online)

Homepage: <https://revistas.rcaap.pt/aham>

Down memory lane

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Como Citar | How to Cite

Varadarajan, Lotika. 2002. «Down memory lane». *Anais de História de Além-Mar* III: 515.
<https://doi.org/10.57759/aham2002.47009>.

Editor | Publisher

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DOWN MEMORY LANE

I met Luís Filipe for the first time when he attended the First International Seminar on Indo-Portuguese History organized by Father John Correia-Afonso in Goa in 1978. This introduction has since developed into a warm and lasting friendship. We have continued to meet both at successive IISIP organized in different parts of the globe as well as during his trips to India and mine to Portugal.

My exposure to the manifold areas in which he excels has been a gradual process. Emerging from the cocoon of Anglo-Saxon scholarship which prevailed at the time in India I never ceased to be amazed by the linguistic abilities of Luís Filipe which have enabled him to deal with a range of original sources. His is a totally uncircumscribed mind. In a historiography dominated by the written word he has known how to deal with sensitive and fragile source material derived from the oral and visual. It was his perceptive empathy with the «other» which prompted the Portuguese postal authorities to seek Indian sensitivity on the pictorial elements proposed to be incorporated into a postage stamp to be released in celebration of the voyage of Vasco da Gama to the Indian west coast. This proved a fruitful «encounter» albeit in a twentieth century setting.

The originality of his mind no less than his meticulous scholarship is evident in all the areas touched by him. For me the most revealing has been his recent work on the botanical aspects of the journey of plants across three oceans during the Discoveries. Not content with Greek and Latin sources he has also analyzed linguistic terms used by Brazilian Indians. Having nurtured a generation of young scholars, one will watch his new academic venture with great interest.

LOTIKA VARADARAJAN