
HOSPITAL REAL: UNFOLDING ITS HISTORY

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Received: Aug. 2019 Accepted: Sep. 2019 Published: Oct. 2019

Abstract: The Royal Hospital was a very famous institution founded in 1510, for the treatment of sick soldiers. The management of the hospital oscillated from the *Santa Casa da Misericordia* to the Jesuits and for a brief period to the Order of *St. Joao de Deus*. Various regulations were introduced time to time increasing grants for the hospital, as well as for streamlining the functioning of the hospital.

Upto the mid-17th century, the Royal Hospital witnessed the heights of success as evident from the accounts of foreign travellers. The day in the hospital would begin at 5 in the morning. The various personnel were required to attend mass, followed by the surgeon, physician along with the Superintendent and nurse, doing their rounds of visits to the patients, personally administering their medication and monitoring their diet. Strict check was kept on visitors.

Post mid-17th century, the Royal Hospital faced a steady decline. The hospital attendants shirked their duties and now the mortality rate in the hospital was high. In the latter part of the 18th century, the hospital was totally neglected. After temporary shifting, it was finally transferred to Panjim in 1842, with a new designation- Military Hospital.

Introduction: Afonso de Albuquerque, the great Portuguese conqueror and statesman had founded a very famous institution in 1510, soon after the conquest of Goa by the Portuguese. It was called the Royal Hospital meant for the treatment and care of his sick soldiers, to enable them to recover from their wars of conquest, fatigue of the long sea voyages and infectious diseases prevailing in the City.

The regulation of 1526 made it clear that the Royal Hospital was to cater to the needs of the Portuguese working on the ships, while those Portuguese suffering from incurable diseases, were to be treated in the *Hospital da Misericordia*, run by the *Santa Casa da Misericordia*, in the City of Goa.

The Role of Albuquerque: The Hospital was situated adjacent to the Chapel of St. Catherine. Albuquerque had erected a long range of low buildings to serve as a hospital, where these sick soldiers were then lodged. For their treatment, medicines and other articles of necessity were purchased with funds from the public treasury.

This was Albuquerque's pet project and as such even when he was in far off lands on distant expeditions, it always drew his attention, as evident from the fact that at one point of time in 1515, when his Secretary Antonio da Fonseca was on a mission from Ormuz to India, he gave him specific instructions to visit this hospital. Further, Albuquerque issued orders to the Factor of the City of Goa, directing him to supply the hospital with a bale of sugar.

On its part, the Crown too was most concerned about the functioning of this institution and gave directions to hospital authorities that the sick in the hospitals of India, and more so in the Royal Hospital should be cared for gently and lovingly. Accordingly rules and regulations were framed in 1520, to streamline the hospital and thereby place this infant hospital on a firmer footing. The Factor was now directed to provide funds for the monthly expenses of the hospital. All purchases made by the purchaser for hospital needs, had to be done with the sanction of the Factor. Also the building was renovated and enlarged.

The hospital now began to attract not only the ailing soldiers, but even others who were fit, would use various excuses to seek admission here. Hence the Portuguese authorities now adopted rigorous

measures to deter such admissions. Patients seeking admission in the Royal Hospital had to fulfil certain formalities, such as providing the hospital with their detailed case history.

Santa Casa da Misericordia takes over Hospital Management: The Royal Hospital run by the Factor of the City, was facing serious problems of mismanagement. The subsidy of 3000 was being misappropriated by the hospital authorities. Hence the Government persuaded the *Santa Casa da Misericordia*, to take charge of the institution, after which in 1524, the *Santa Casa* took over its management, but subject to certain terms and conditions.

Some of the terms are as follows:

1. An annual grant of 3697, was to be allotted to the hospital, which was to be paid quarterly, out of the Royal revenue.
2. In case the funds were insufficient, then the Holy House of Mercy would spend its own funds, which would be reimbursed later by the government.
3. The hospital was also entitled to receive annually in kind 114 gallons of wine, one barrel of vinegar and a quarter barrel of oil from Portugal, exempt from custom duties.
4. The hospital was to be free from Royal and ecclesiastical control.
5. Only the administrator and members of the Holy House, were entitled to appoint personnel in the hospital.

Regulations and Statutes: Fresh orders were issued in 1524 by Dr. Pero Nunez- Superintendent of the Public Exchequer to the Factor not to allow embezzlement of medicines outside the hospital. It had already come to their notice that the *boticario* (in-charge of the pharmacy) was selling medicines outside the hospital, thereby violating the rules and regulations of the hospital. Hence, now on, medicines prescribed by the hospital doctors had to be entered into a register and signed by the clerk. The Regulation of 1526 created the post of an *escrivao* (clerk) responsible for the maintenance of accounts. Some other abuses were also banned.

Between 1565-1584, the Royal Hospital was subjected to at least two sets of statutes, which increased the grants for the hospital from 4000 *pardaos* to 6666 *pardaos*, 200 *reis* to cope up with the increasing inflation and to spend on consumer items for patients and salaries to staff.

Also in 1573, a new *pauta das mezinhas* (price list of medicine) was sent, which was revised after 30 years and approved by the Viceroy. In fact it was the *boticario* of the hospital, who had asked for this revision. Around 1570, the conditions in the Royal Hospital began to deteriorate, owing to the lack of funds, poor medical care and lack of hygiene, but the *Santa Casa* continued to supervise the affairs of the hospital till 1591.

The Jesuits entrusted with Hospital Administration: The hospital administration was then entrusted to the Jesuits, who as a matter of fact had declined to take its charge on earlier requests, but eventually did take it over. It was not an easy task for them. They went about collecting clothes for the sick and often carried beds, full of bugs to clean them up in sea water.

Thereafter several times, they tried to give up administering this hospital, their authorities even having instructed them to do so. But the King of Portugal insisted that they continue their responsibility, as he was pleased with the way the hospital functioned. In fact, His Majesty Dom Felipe commended the work of the Jesuits, in his letter dated 25th February 1595 and ordered the Viceroy to hand over to them regularly a sum, to help the Jesuits run the establishment. The hospital was allotted an amount of 11630 *pardaos*.

Also, to help with the coping up of the hospital expenses, the Viceroy of the time Mathias d' Albuquerque, allotted a part of the revenue of the City of Goa amounting to 500 pounds annually. But in course of time, the authorities here, paid scant attention to the order.

Changing hands again- From Santa Casa da Misericordia to Jesuits: Owing to financial difficulties, within a period of five years, the Jesuits snapped all ties with this establishment, thereby forcing the *Santa Casa de Misericordia* to take over the hospital once again. The financial crunch definitely reflected on the edifice. It was falling into decadence and required urgent repair and renovation work or else would crumble into pieces.

The building was reconstructed in 1597, under the direction of the Jesuits, who once again took over the charge of the hospital, on being assured of greater punctuality in the payment of the amount necessary for its maintenance, which in a few years was increased to 1000 pounds.

Hospital Lay-Out: It was a two-storeyed building, indeed a huge majestic structure, which could even be mistaken for a palace, completed in 1609. The wards of the hospital were spacious, well ventilated. There were separate rooms used as repositories, for storing the day to day articles, and for arranging clothing including night gowns, there were drawers. It had porticos and galleries embellished with scripture paintings. There was a symbol of Royal arms on its facade and bore the inscription *Hospital Real* (Royal Hospital), which is now preserved in the Museum at Old Goa.

Sources of Revenue: Now funds accumulated from the fines imposed in the High Court, were diverted towards the upkeep of this institution. But this was only a dot in the ocean and hence more amounts were sanctioned by the Crown, which included the money acquired from the amount charged to merchants, to obtain licences on their voyage to China. From this source, the Government eventually granted only 4000 *xerafins*. As deficits still continued, another trip to China was recommended by the local government.

Under the guidance of the Jesuits, the hospital became an institution to be reckoned with, acquiring international repute. For a brief period, the administration of the hospital exchanged hands, with the Order of St. Joao de Deus taking over on 20th February 1688, but once again the Jesuits held charge until they were expelled from Goa in 1759.

Accounts of Foreign Travellers: Upto mid-17th century, the Royal Hospital witnessed the heights of success and universal acclaim as evident from the accounts of foreign travellers who visited Goa in the 16th and 17th centuries, and spoke in such eloquent terms not only of the splendid structure, but also the discipline and order prevailing therein, which became a landmark of the hospital.

The testimonies of these foreigners, in one accord lavish praises on this institution, which was basically meant for military men, but which in course of time became the refuge of other government servants as well, because of the privileges it offered. Vincent Le Blanc- a traveller admitted as a patient in this hospital in the mid-16th century, says that it was beautiful in appearance and well provided for. Linscothen- a Dutch traveller speaks highly of the internal management and order prevailing in the hospital in 1583. He further states that these hospitals in India were a must for the Portuguese to relieve and heal them of their various sickness and diseases or else life would not be worth living for them here.

Testimony of Pyrard de Laval: Francois Pyrard de Laval- a French traveller describes his experiences here in 1608. Pyrard is all praise for the Jesuits, who administered this palatial institution, in so admirable a fashion, that many declared it superior even to the Hospital of the Holy Ghost in Rome or the Infirmary of the Knights at Malta, the two leading hospitals of Europe at that time; superior in terms of comfort, convenience, neatness, usefulness and luxury.

Pyrard recalls that after his harrowing experiences in Cochin, this hospital was nothing short of a paradise for him. It overlooked the Mandovi River and the nearby islands of Divar and Choraõ, occupied a large area with courtyards and pleasant gardens, where the sick could breathe fresh air. The corridors were decorated with pictures portraying Bible scenes. The hospital had separate wards for various

illnesses. Each patient was provided with a set of pyjamas, towel, handkerchief, *chinelos* (slippers), besides table, paper fan, jug of water, chamber pot and other articles.

On being brought here, Pyrard was offered a beautiful bed, varnished in red, having a comfortable mattress with silk coverings, fine cotton bedsheets, pillows of white calico; a barber attended on him, while food was served in Chinese porcelain i.e. of the Ming variety, a porcelain which was a rarity in Europe at that time. Indeed, he was offered the luxuries that were unknown to his class in Europe.

Yet another German foreign traveller- Alberto de Mandelso pays rich tribute to this hospital, referring to the kitchen and the pharmacy, as well stocked sections of the hospital, with items required for the sick, not forgetting the saloons and galleries as well.

From the writings of foreigners as well as the rules and regulations of the Royal Hospital found in the archives, one gets a gage of the internal functioning of the hospital.

Mordomo, the- in-charge of the Institution: A very distinguished Jesuit known for his good character was at the helm of affairs. He was designated as *Mordomo* (Superintendent) and was the overall in-charge of the institution, with all other officers being accountable to him and all other matters being conducted under his personal supervision. He performed several duties including the purchase of goods, checking into cleanliness, discipline, maintenance of accounts and selection of staff. He would arrange for the best doctors. The *Mordomo* was elected monthly. Lack of sufficient time, very often curbed his initiative to implement reforms, in the functioning of the hospital, because soon it was time for a new *Mordomo* to be elected.

Itinerary of the Day and Diet of Patients: The day would begin at 5 o'clock with the ring of the bell. The officers were then required to proceed to the chapel for mass. After this, the surgeon, physician along with the Superintendent and nurse would do their rounds of visits to the patients, who were lodged in separate rooms, according to the nature of their diseases. At the same time, the surgeon would also visit the ward of the wounded patients. After this the hospital staff would gather at the admission counter to admit new patients. The medication was prescribed by the physician, after which a nurse or hospital attendant, would personally administer medicine to each patient, while the Superintendent ensured that the directions of the physician were strictly followed. Hospital attendants or nurses had to reside in the hospital premises itself, because they had to report for duty very early and visit wards till late night. The nurse was paid a monthly amount of 1000 *reis* as per the regulation of 1584.

The patients were given a proper diet. Breakfast was served at 9 am, after which the sick rested till 1 o'clock. The hospital authorities would regulate the items of daily consumption and ensure that there were no shortages, with the patients being served in porcelain dishes or sometimes even on silver plates. The patients were given bread, soup and other nutritious food, which included boiled or roasted chicken, other meats, rice, vegetables, pickles, eggs, milk, jam and some sweets for dessert. On feast days of their patron saints and certain special occasions, there was a veritable spread of food items. The Chief Physician also had a good knowledge of diets to be recommended to his patients. Those who visited the sick were also welcomed to partake of these meals, but were not allowed to give the sick outside eatables and fried stuff. Since visitors were still carrying food for patients and at times firearms as well, the above instructions were issued by Viceroy Mathias de Albuquerque to hospital authorities, which had the force of regulation issued by the Crown. After lunch, the sick were advised to take a short nap.

At four in the evening, there would be yet another round of visits by the Superintendent and an attendant. Supper was served early at 5pm, during which time the hospital staff would clean up the wards. Food was served as per medical advice, after which, the hospital authorities would ask the patients whether their needs were satisfied. By 8 in the evening, all patients would retire to bed. All along, strict silence was maintained in the wards.

Bleeding was used as a remedy for all kinds of fevers. The hospital had no running water. So water had to be brought in by slaves from the springs of Banguenim.

The hospital had a separate room, for those on the verge of death, so that their loud sighs and groans did not have an impact on the rest of the patients. Priests assisted these patients till their very end, to cater to their spiritual needs.

Occasionally, when the Viceroy, Archbishop and other high functionaries of the State visited this Hospital, they distributed to the patients, large amounts of money. On recovering, when patients left the hospital, if the hospital authorities felt that the latter were financially weak, they would not only give them a set of clothes, but also some money, besides returning to them their own articles that they had carried while admitting themselves in the hospital, which were registered in the hospital inventory, no sooner the patients admitted themselves.

Restrictions on Visitors: In course of time, visits were restricted only to fathers and brothers. The doorkeeper was instructed to arrest and detain any visitor, who forcibly pushed his way into the hospital. The guilty would be deported to Daman for two years and if the doorkeeper too neglected his duties, he too would be exiled to Daman for two years. Ward boys violating hospital regulations, and carrying food to the patients, were to be warned for the first time and then sent to the galleys. In case they were below the age of fifteen, they were beaten up.

Letters from women, other than mothers and sisters were not allowed by the nurses. At times, even the letters of family members were scrutinised. Any other women sending letters were to be fined 10 *pardaos*. Such safeguards were necessary, so that the convalescent would not be disturbed and upset, while on the road to recovery.

Pharmacy: The hospital also had a pharmacy, under the charge of a pharmacist. As per the request of the Chief Physician of the hospital, orders were placed for medicines and drugs, which came all the way from Lisbon or Surat. The Portuguese had their factory at Surat. The pharmacist along with the authorities would check on the quality of the newly arrived stocks and would store the same in the pharmacy. The medicines included acids, alkalis, magnesium, salts, quinine, sulphates, tinctures, medicated soaps etc.

Medicines were then sent to the different wards, depending on the requirements of the patients, which included fresh purgatives, fresh cordial, plasters, jalap plant the roots of which were used in the extraction of the purgative drug, mercury, syrup, spirit, sulphur etc. Quinine was the most used drug compared to the others, perhaps because there were many malaria cases. The doctors would also check on these medicines, after which a hospital attendant would administer the same to the patients, while the *Mordomowould* ensure that the doctor's instructions were strictly adhered to. The pharmacist was not allowed to make compound mixtures or ointments without consulting the physician or surgeon.

The accounts regarding the drugs and medicines were presented by the Pharmacist to the Factor, who paid the amount to be spent quarterly. Expenses incurred on feast days and special occasions were separately listed and then added to the monthly expenditure, while the additional expenses on the maintenance of the hospital, its infrastructure and other needs came under the purview of the Viceroy.

Decline: By the middle of the 17th century, such a grand hospital as the Royal Hospital faced its steady decline, with the City of Goa falling into decadence and the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1759. This hospital which was world renowned and had once upon a time pampered the sick with refined and luxurious living, was also hit hard, as seen from the accounts of the French traveller, a botanist- Jean Baptist Tavernier, who visited Goa in 1641 and again in 1648 and remarked that on his second visit, he found that the hospital was ill- managed, the treatment for the sick was appalling, with the patients being made to bleed thirty to forty times, to rid themselves of the poisonous blood. The meal for the convalescents was frugal, consisting of tea and rice-gruel. Thirsty patients were even refused a glass of

water- unless bribed- on the pretext that it had been prohibited by the physicians. These are indicators to the corruption that prevailed at that time. The sick who admitted themselves then, left only to be carried to their graves. The mortality rate was high in the Royal Hospital. More than 1500 patients died every year, more so because of the dearth of competent physicians.

A unique practice which seems ridiculous today, prevailed in the Royal Hospital, as a post- operative therapy. It was the urine therapy whereby post- operation, a patient was asked to drink three glasses of cow urine for twelve days. It was commonly believed that this urine had medicinal value and would restore the patient's health and energy levels.

The Jesuits gave up the administration of the hospital, by the end of the 17th century, on grounds that it did not really benefit the norms of their vocation.

In 1688, The Hospital came under the control of the Order of St. John of God, as per the Royal Decree of 20th February 1688, but after some years, again the Jesuits were given its charge, as they had proved themselves in the field of medicine. Now the funds for the upkeep of the hospital came from the *Alfandegas* (Customs House) which donated two-thirds of its revenue acquired from goods brought from Malacca, China, Pegu, Bengal and Ceylon.

Change in Location and Designation: In the latter part of the 18th century, the Hospital was totally neglected. No longer was it clean, nor were the patients cared for. Its majestic edifice was in ruins, and the hospital in 1760, was temporarily shifted to the College of St. Roque and then to the Viceroy's Palace in Panelim, because the latter had already transferred his residence to Panjim. In 1842, this institution was shifted to Panjim, now with a new designation the Military Hospital, headed by the Chief Health Officer. It was here that the formal teaching of medicine was introduced.

By now, Panjim was the new capital, because Old Goa by now was abandoned, two main reasons leading to its downfall, one was the nature of her soil, which allowed the sewage and drainage to seep into the wells, thereby stagnating the drinking water and second, the increasing rise of malaria and other epidemic diseases which overran the City.

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