

O HERALDO

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# Women's safety mere rhetoric?

A chilling crime was committed at a flat in Cansaulim on the night of January 22 and 23, when a mentally challenged teen was heinously gangraped by five men. The main accused, a resident of Chicalim, is believed to have befriended the 19-year-old at the Margao KTC bus stand, following which he abducted her and brought her by bus to the Vasco bus stand. According to the police, he then made the victim ride pillion on a scooter to the Dabolim junction, following which he contacted four other men, all residents of Vasco, who arrived in a four-wheeler and took the teen to a flat at Cansaulim. There, the main accused allegedly raped her, following which the other four also indulged in the crime themselves and then abandoned her by the roadside at Nuvem only to be found by a Good Samaritan.

When the victim later told her mother about her shocking ordeal, the latter complained to the Fatorda Police and a massive hunt was launched. Digital mapping helped the police arrest all the five accused within just two hours.

While the police's timely response and swift action is commendable, it is sincerely hoped that the gravity of the case is not dismissed just because the five accused men have been arrested. Yes, sophisticated technology may have been used and the police may have brought on their A game to nab the accused, but let us not forget that the crime the five men committed was most horrific and depraved. Rape itself is a gruesome act, but what is even more shocking is when the victim is mentally challenged and is charged upon by sexual predators nonetheless. The perpetrators deserve the harshest punishment possible to not only dissuade them from committing such crimes in the future, but to also demonstrate to other individuals having criminal mindsets that committing such gruesome crimes will invoke strict punitive measures.

This case evokes disturbing memories of the R G Kar Medical College and Hospital case in Kolkata five months ago, when an on-duty doctor was raped and murdered in the most gruesome fashion. What riled up citizens further was the sentencing of the prime accused, Sanjay Roy to life imprisonment, when many expected that the sessions court at which the case was being heard would slap the death penalty on him. Apart from being dismayed by the sentencing, citizens also alleged that the state of West Bengal was attempting to cover up the murder.

The judge, in his order sentencing Sanjay Roy, said, "In the realm of modern justice, we must rise above the primitive instinct of 'an eye for an eye' or 'a tooth for a tooth' or 'nail for a nail' or 'a life for a life'. Our duty is not to match brutality with brutality, but to elevate humanity through wisdom, compassion and a deeper understanding of justice. The measure of a civilized society lies not in its ability to exact revenge, but in its capacity to reform, rehabilitate and ultimately to heal."

The order turned out to be great disappointment, particularly for West Bengal's doctors who had vehemently protested the heinous crime and the government's response to it. However, in what is considered to be a respite, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) filed an appeal before the Calcutta high court a few days ago seeking enhancement of life imprisonment to the death penalty for the convict. What comes of this appeal is yet to be seen.

Women, in the meanwhile, continue to shudder in fear, worrying about their safety in a day and age when they should ideally have equal freedom as men to move around without a care in the world. It is high time the government and the enforcement authorities concerned take stern and decisive action against rapists and all other sexual predators. They should refrain from dumbing down such horrifying cases when they instead choose to highlight the breakneck speed at which the rapists were nabbed or the high-tech mechanisms used during investigation. They should instead focus on dealing with the perpetrators with an iron hand. Otherwise, nothing will change and women safety, which is 'promoted' and shouted out from the rooftops by the authorities will remain nothing but mere rhetoric.

Our Constitution does not make a distinction between a poor Goan and a rich Goan or for that matter a poor non-Goan and a rich non-Goan. The former in fact comes to Goa in search of a livelihood while the latter most often comes in search of pleasure and even has the money power to bend the laws and policies to make a slice of the 'Goa paradise' their own



BY INVITATION  
SUSHILA SAWANT MENDES

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s we celebrate the 75th anniversary of our Republic, it is time for stock taking of brotherly and sisterly relationships among ourselves. There is a Goan-non-Goan binary at the State level and the majority-minority binary throughout the nation, Goa included. Rabinathan Tagore's dream for the future of a complex Indian society which was at the precipice of becoming an independent Republic was, "a world not broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls".

Liberty, Equality and Fraternity are important tenets of any liberal political philosophy. A Republic gives equal power to all its people to elect and constitute a government of their choice.

It is essentially not a monarchy and its functioning is non-arbitrary and based on the law of the land. India's independence struggle and thereafter the emergence of constitutional democracy saw the necessity of the 1789 French revolution triptych, 'liberté, égalité et fraternité'. The entire French society based on social and economic inequality was violently upturned on the 'guillotine'.

Fraternity involves the upliftment and empowerment of the downtrodden and ensures human dignity and national integrity (42 Amend.1976) to all Indian citizens. It is the foundational political goal of our constitutional democracy. The framers of our Constitution especially Babasaheb Ambedkar stressed on the inseparability of these three ideas and the importance of fraternity in our country, where society is divided on the basis of different hierarchical social differences.

Last week Prof Anand Kumar, ex-Professor of JNU, in his lecture at the Goa University discussed the concept of 'othering', beginning with the family, the community and later the region symbolized by the State and last of all the Nation. A child is born with no knowledge of this concept till the members of the family defines 'others'. This may be based on caste, community, language or region -unfortunately none of these factors is based on logical reasoning or scientific temperament. We make friends with people we respect for their strong character and helpful nature and these remain our life-long friends. Caste, community and religion are most often extraneous factors in this process.

Community and regional loyalties create imaginary enemies. One can be loyal to one's family and community without adhering to these divisive tendencies. Goa's fight against colonial rule was a long struggle of over four centuries. Both Goans and non-Goans lost their lives in this struggle. Karnal Singh of Punjab is a shining example of a young lad, just married being shot dead at Patradevi. Members of the Goa

# ARE WE WEEDING OUT FRATERNITY?



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Vimochan Sahayak Samiti who offered satyagraha in 1955/56 were mostly non-Goans, who risked their lives to make Goa free.

We depend on migrants to build our houses, our roads and even provide utility services in our homes. Tagore saw God in "the tiller tilling the hard ground and the path maker breaking stones". Our Constitution does not make a distinction between a poor Goan and a rich Goan or for that matter a poor non-Goan and a rich non-Goan. The former in fact comes to Goa in search of a livelihood while the latter most often comes in search of pleasure and even has the money power to bend the laws and policies to make a slice of the 'Goa paradise' their own.

Our beaches and the long years of lusitanization have wrongly depicted Goa as a land of 'Wine, Women and Song'. Our Goan diaspora is found over the world, especially in UK, Canada, USA, Germany etc. Goans have migrated to other parts of India like Bombay, Calcutta, and now to the IT hubs of India like Hyderabad, Pune and Bangalore. Even so, the non-Goans are considered by some as 'weeds'. This narrative originates from the fear of the people of this small State being overwhelmed with Goans becoming outsiders in their own land-the fear of the diminishing value of their land, language and culture. Kana-digas feel the same in Bangalore and Maharashtrians in Mumbai. Due to the smallness of Goa, this fear of being overwhelmed is, "very real".

With so much emigration out of Goa for better job prospects, we have to depend on the so call migrant labour for our day to day requirements. Most Goan houses employ maids from Jharkhand, Bihar and Orissa.

Every non-Goan is not a suspect. In today's world 'brothers or sisters' cannot be defined by blood relationships but on trust, support and friendship. Fraternity in society is an extension of practising it in our work spaces and communities. The so called 'oneness' is based on the underlying hate of an imaginary other and helps to maintain status quo in society. This supports the already advantaged section at the cost of the continued domination of the disadvantaged.

At the national level, jingoistic and communal sentiments are aroused and provoked for vote bank politics. The majority-minority divide is indicative of the fact the majority vote is required to get any government elected. To further this existing divide is to ensure that the majority is brought together and mobilized as a separate group or unit.

People have been divided on communal and linguistic lines-new nations have been born but cannot live together in peace as good neighbour. In times of internal problems, the call of danger from a neighbouring nation is enough to ignore our existing problems and rally together to fight this imaginary external enemy. All ethical and religions values imbibe the necessity to be good to our neighbour, as in times of an emergency they are the first to come to our aid. However even a six-month-old child belonging to the 'other' religion is killed during riots. Animals kill only for survival, they have no race or religion and above all they protect their infants from wild beasts and predators.

The shared history of our nation has been disfigured by the caste system, and is in conflict with the principle of equality as well as the idea of frater-

nity. One of the main objectives behind the introduction of affirmative actions by India, like the reservation system was to attempt at equality between extremely different social groups in terms of their access to social and economic goods and facilities. Years of suppression and inequality was meant to be replaced by a level playing field to seek opportunities. We have caste consciousness of unity in India, but this remains non-friendly and distant to members of other caste groups, and is often hateful to members of so-called lower caste groups.

India today has essentially fraternity within its caste communities and caste groups, but not across them, so forging political unity remains an almost distant dream. The need for fraternity is increasingly replaced with the rant verbosity of pugnacious nationalism and fundamentalism which chastises a home grown religious minority as its adversary-fanaticism and fraternity cannot co-exist. Although caste is determined by birth and not merit, we still cannot let go of it, knowing that it corrodes the fraternal fabric of our nation.

Throughout the world, the discourse is shifting to identity, which in turn fosters 'othering'. There is need of laws, policies and regulations which discourage people settling in a small state like Goa, rich or poor and a need to encourage for those to go back to their native place after their work life ends. This necessitates deep thinking. To convert land there is no need of much thought but to deal with the fear of land grabs and second homes of the rich, is for public intellectuals and decision making movers and shakers to ponder with honesty and integrity, so much missing in present times. Goa with all that it has to offer must remain a tourist destination but not a destination for life!

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# Goa, a land of lost opportunities

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hen India gained Independence, the freedom fighters got involved in planning of a new democratic governance system and the enactment of The Constitution of India. An excellent governance documents, where people where the centre of their concern. India then faced abject poverty, starvation, illiteracy, huge unproductive population, unjust and unfair caste system and a rigid parochial mind set. A huge task and a tall order; those who took up the responsibility to form the government, did so with courage and dedication and minimised most of these ills that Indian society then faced, so that those now in power could boast of a Modern India.

When Goa was liberated in December 1961, 14 years after India's freedom, Goa was not like the then India, when it gained Independence. There was no poverty, there were no huge number of landless labourers, there were no pressing need for homes for the homeless.

Compared to rest of India, Goa was a State with many resources. Mining then was a stable industry, with many employed and a study flow of funds to the exchequer. Tourism was also on the rise as Goa soon became preferred destination for international tourists

Marian Pinheiro

and a revenue earner. Goan youth were at the cross roads of their career choices, whether to go out to sea or the Gulf or be home bound and may be take up a job with much less, pay and perks and no opportunity for quality education.

It's unfortunate, that the freedom fighters were sidelined in the process of Government of India, taking over the territory of Goa. May be because, ultimately, it was an act of conquer and surrender? The liberated territory came under the army's administration with Lt. Gen. Candeth, the Military Governor. On 8th June, 1962, the Military Government gave place to civil rule with an informal Consultative Council.

On passing of the Constitution (Twelfth Amendment) Act, 1962 on 20 June, 1962, the territory of Goa, Daman and Diu was conferred the status of a Union Territory with retrospective effect from 20 December, 1961. The Government of Union Territory Act, 1963 came into force on 13 May. 1963.

The 1st General election of liberated Goa, Daman and Diu, was held on 09/12/1963 and elected 30 members of First Legislative assembly. On January, 9,

UPFRONT

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1964, for the first time, members of first legislative assembly of Goa Daman and Diu, legislative met at Adil Shah palace. On May 30, 1987, Goa the union territory Goa was formed into a new state known as State of Goa.

The very first elections in Goa, were based on party lines with Maharashtra wadi Gomantak Party capturing 14 seats followed by United Goans Party with 12 seats and the Indian National Congress with just 1 seat and Independents getting 3 seats, with this kind of political concoction, the focus of the elected representatives were focused on capturing power and the process of party hopping began resulting in totally overlooking, aspiration and needs of the people of Goa. This political slugfest continues even to this day.

So, from the beginning, the political culture in Goa, wherein the elected politicians in Goa, were always, worried about their future political prospects and hence looked towards Delhi in all they did. This trend continues even now. Further the administrative officials, came from Delhi, as Goa was part of the AGMUT cadre. For these officials, Goa was a holiday destination with not much of law and order or other crowd related issues like in other States. May be as remanences of the Conquest of Goa in 1961, they looked at Goa as a place to be enjoyed and exploited for their own personal and family leisure and entertainment.

This attitude and approach, were reinforced by other politicians and even central ministers from North India, and

Delhi, resulting in many of them accumulating properties, and setting up various businesses in Goa. Local politicians more or less acted like bell boys on call for these big wigs to fulfill their own personal ambitions and wealth accumulation. None of them actually loved Goa nor cared for its people or their welfare and progress.

All these resulted in decades of lost opportunities for Goa. If these leaders were really concerned about Goa and its people, Goa would have had much better and more educational institutions of excellence and institution of Health sciences and hospitals. Goa would have been the most prosperous, economically, educationally and Healthwise. Goans would have been occupying positions like Sundar Pichai -Google, Satya Nadella of Microsoft, Leena Nair of Chanel, Arvind Krishna of IBM. Shantanu Narayen of Adobe Systems, Nikesh Arora of Palo Alto Networks, Jay Chaudhry.

The present government initiatives is to facilitate entering of profit oriented private corporates, to enter higher education and medical education in Goa instead of investing in these areas to make these affordable accessible for the common people.

Many opportunities for local people

to excel have been lost, because political leaders' year after, party after party, had only one agenda, self-promotion and self-enrichment. Persistent and sustained corruption has made mining in Goa a cancer. The contemporary governments have opened the gateway to land grabbers, drug lords and pimps in the name of tourism. Goa has become a land of opportunities for all the above kind of people, except the people of Goa especially, the poor and the common and the rural folks. The scenario is aptly described by 85-year-old freedom fighters Sushila Narayan Padiyar's and Ramdas Prabhugaonkar, "that Politicians now are more concerned about one's own development, rather than thinking about Goa's welfare first." (mesofindia.indiatimes.com/on 19th December 2021.).

There is an ancient Native American saying "Never follow a leader who is more in love with power than people." But that's what is happening in Goa. With the kind of lawlessness that is happening in Goa, one can only raise one's hands in total surrender to God and Nature "Save this beautiful land for God's sake."

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