

O HERALDO

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The Battle for Delhi

As the national capital goes to the polls for its 70 Assembly seats, all eyes are once again on the fierce electoral contest between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) led by former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Despite its dominance in national politics, the BJP has failed to make inroads into the Delhi Assembly, struggling to cross double digits in two consecutive elections.

This election presents a new challenge for Kejriwal, who faces anti-incumbency sentiments after nearly 12 years in power. The political dynamics have also shifted significantly, with the AAP and Congress contesting separately after their alliance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. This division of opposition votes could work in BJP's favour. Additionally, the presence of Asaduddin Owaisi's All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIM-IM) in Muslim-majority constituencies could further fragment the electorate.

The BJP, having lost six consecutive elections in Delhi, is making yet another attempt at victory. Previously, the Congress dominated the capital for 15 years before AAP's meteoric rise. However, the Congress has been a diminished force in Delhi, failing to win a single seat in the last two Assembly elections. Now, with a renewed strategy, the party is aiming to reclaim its lost voter base, particularly among Muslims and Dalits.

Kejriwal's leadership has been tested in recent months. His imprisonment created a leadership vacuum, leading to disarray within AAP ranks. Upon his release, he took dramatic steps to regain public trust—resigning as Chief Minister, vacating the official bungalow, and aggressively engaging in outreach programs. Whether these efforts will translate into electoral gains remains uncertain.

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the Congress, meanwhile, faces challenges beyond Delhi. The party's organisational structure is in shambles in states like Haryana, Bihar, and Maharashtra, with many districts lacking leadership for over a decade. Political analysts argue that unless Congress revitalizes its cadre, it will continue to struggle against regional parties that have eroded its traditional vote bank.

Women voters could play a decisive role in these elections. With 72.36 lakh women eligible to vote, their influence is significant. In Maharashtra's Assembly elections last year, BJP's 'Ladki Bahin' scheme contributed to a sweeping victory. Recognizing this, all major parties—AAP, BJP, and Congress—are actively courting female voters with welfare promises.

In the 2020 Delhi elections, AAP secured nearly 60% of the women's vote, while BJP garnered only 35%. A slight shift in this demographic could alter the outcome, making women's support a crucial factor in this high-stakes battle.

Muslim voters, comprising 13% of Delhi's population, are weighing their options carefully. Many see AAP as a flawed but viable alternative to BJP, which they perceive as antagonistic toward minorities. The Congress, on the other hand, is attempting to reclaim Muslim support, bolstered by Rahul Gandhi's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' campaign. However, Congress' ability to convert goodwill into votes remains questionable.

Some analysts argue that while Muslims prefer Congress ideologically, they may strategically vote for AAP to prevent BJP's rise in Delhi. The dilemma highlights the complex interplay of identity politics and electoral pragmatism.

The BJP's recent victories in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh suggest a well-oiled electoral machine. The party surprised many by appointing unexpected candidates as Chief Ministers, signaling an organizational shift away from personality-driven campaigns. In Maharashtra, the Rashtriya Swam-sevak Sangh (RSS) played a crucial behind-the-scenes role in ensuring BJP's win. Will the RSS influence be a game-changer in Delhi as well?

Some speculate that BJP's top leadership harbours concerns about post-Modi succession. If elections become too reliant on a single charismatic figure, the party could face internal power struggles in the future. Meanwhile, questions are being raised about Kejriwal's ability to govern if legal hurdles prevent him from assuming the Chief Minister's office again.

Delhi's electoral landscape remains unpredictable. The AAP, despite its governance record, faces credibility challenges due to corruption allegations. The BJP, though formidable nationally, has consistently underperformed in Delhi. The Congress, once a dominant force, is struggling for relevance.

comment



VICTOR FERRAO

Goan susegado culture has a transgressive and rebellious ways of addressing this psychopolitics. It is a great resource that cannot be given up as suggested by our honourable CM. It has to be embraced and sharpened in order to be mindful of the consequences of the psychopolitics that is brewing around us

Susegado – A Goan Art of Happiness

The Goan Susegado Culture is an art of happiness. It is attitude to life that marks the uniqueness of Goans. This peaceful, content, calm, confident and laidback attitude came under tremendous attack of the Chief Minister of Goa in recent days. It is an assault on Goa, Goans and Goan-ness to deny Goan Susegado life. Unfortunately, our CM has misconstrued Susegado as laziness and, thus, de-goanised Goan-ness. Goans are not lazy. They are industrious but know how to live happy life.

The honourable Chief Minister seems to want to make Sisyphus out every Goan. The Greek myth of Sisyphus narrates a story where a man was condemned to carry a stone every day to the top of the hill. Unfortunately, someone brought the stone down the hill in the dark of the night. Hence the man had to again take the stone to its destiny, the top of the hill next morning. This happened every day and thus Sisyphus was condemned to live an absurd life that made him carry the same stone every day on top of the hill. Albert Camus enabled us to look at the absurdity of modern life with the help of the myth of Sisyphus. We do live absurd life of Sisyphus. We are condemned to carry the same stone every day. Our work is monotonous. We have become cogs-in-the-wheels of the capitalist system. The demands of efficiency and high productivity have brought us under the

regime of division of labour that has given us the stone of Sisyphus. Goans are also pushed by the absurdity of modern life. Although, they had been compelled to take the avataara of a Sisyphus, Goans have found a way to cope with the demands of that meaningless life. The unique Goan attitude of susegado culture is a Goan way to contest the demands of being Sisyphus pushed on them by the modernity. This is why it seems unfair

to Goans when someone in such a high position sees them as lazy. Michel Foucault thought us to think power differently. He thinks power as mainly operating on our bodies. He speaks of disciplinary societies where power becomes disciplinary practices that produce docile bodies. In fact, modernity produced disciplinary societies. It employed disciplinary regimes to produce docile bodies.

Foucault teaches that disciplinary societies use enclosed spaces like factories, schools, religious spaces, prisons etc to discipline bodies. With the coming of digitization and surveillance, we have entered societies of control indicated by Gilles Deleuze. Today we do not need disciplinary practices. In fact, we seem to live by the command to freely enjoy. But we are still under a watch. There is no hiding place under the sky. With the growth of digitization and AI, societies of control have come to stay.

Societies of control also employ biopower. Biopower is a bodily regime. Goan susegado culture is bodily as well as psychopolitical. It being primarily an attitude to life, it is definitely a great psychopolitical power. It has the power to resist the societies of control that are growing around Goans. Goa is not free from society of control. The growing digital world and the coming of the smart phone as well as the promised smart city that is failing to arrive, puts Goa on a fast track of becoming a society of control. Hence, the mental as well as physical attitude of susegado culture is a great antidote to the coming assaults of society of control. In fact, it appears to be foolish to advise Goans to give up our age old wisdom of susegado culture.

Societies of control still operate with biopower. Given the fast pace of modern societies, people are pushed to become ultra-Sisyphus. Pace of carrying the same stone on top of the hill is accelerated. Each of us is living an accelerated life. This life of an accelerated Sisyphus is viewed as taking us to an achievement society. Smart Goa appears to take us to an achievement society. Such societies are breaking down. Byung Chul Hans, teaches that our accelerated societies are fast becoming burn-out societies. He teaches us

that power in burnout societies becomes psychopolitical and mainly operates on the mind. The coming of social media as well growing infocacy, big data analytics, predictive analytics along with the developments in AI are set to increase the gradients of the psychopolitical power.

The growth of Psychopolitical power has made us hackable. The data that we leave on social media platforms like the Facebook, Instagram etc has taken away our privacy and we have become objects of data analytics which is then used to manipulate us to take decisions that we may not take if we considered things carefully and critically.

Goan susegado culture has a transgressive and rebellious ways of addressing this psycho-politics. It is a great resource that cannot be given up as suggested by our honourable CM. It has to be embraced and sharpened in order to be mindful of the consequences of the psychopolitics that is brewing around us. The resistance to mind control and manipulation of psychopolitics requires us to become Schizos who do not walk the roads of infocacy and so called smart architecture of the achievement society.

We cannot submit or Oedipalize to the demands of achievement society. Goan susegado culture does what it takes to become anti-Oedipus who will refuse to toe the lines of achievement society. The achievement societies breaks down into burnout society. In fact, the Goan susegado culture is a double edged sword. It being a bodily practice, it re-energizes the body and it being a mental attitude, it has the power to rebel against the reigning psychopolitics.

The psychopolitics works on our mind by converting us into Oculus. It increases our desire to see. The achievement societies wants us to see how it feels to achieve what it deems as good life/smart life. Hence, the challenge is to resist this eye of power that desires to see. We, therefore, have the challenge to become anti-Oculus. Goan Susegado will go a long way to enable us to live with dignity and freedom alongside of the changing contours of our society.

(Fr Victor Ferrao is an independent researcher attached to St Francis Xavier Church, Borim, Ponda)

people's edit

'VALUE' OF THORNS!

KAJAL CHATTERJEE

Despite very humble salary/pension, arriving ready with a packet of much much significant amount or offer of the same!

Flooded with resources and immersed in luxury - - - if somebody opens his "liberal heart" with offer of a much much ridiculous amount , another wealthy offers another meagre amount riding with a caveat "You have to see that the medical treatment of X does not stop because of lack of money" with his offer lesser than even daily hospital expenses!

And also there exist individual who simply walks in the hospital and pay a huge amount through his credit card without my asking!

No I didn't ask anybody for even Rs 1. Rather I would prefer "break-up" of all my/family savings till I reach the amount of bare survival of myself and family and only thereafter would I ask money from them who have voluntarily offered the same despite their financial limitations.

While bed of roses hardly teach the practical side of individuals (with their goods and bads), crown of thorns certainly do!

Else how could I have fathomed the mindset of my acquaintances or determined my position in their lives!

Had I not landed in a major personal cum family crisis, how could I have got reconnected with M with whom our personal relationship came to a dead stop since mid-August 2024 following the RG Kar hospital horror!

In reply to his forwarded WhatsApp post which I didn't like for the political and class content embedded in it; I just offered my counterpoints firmly, but in most humble way possible.

But M counter reacted in a bit taunting way and I also did the same and thereafter absolute silence from our part though we had shared an extremely cordial relationship till his retirement on 2017 and thereafter remained in virtual connection everyday literally!

Last October, he arrived in our office to bid goodbye to one of our colleagues on the verge of retirement. This was the first time our 4 eyes met after stoppage of all communication since mid-August! Yet we simply ignored each other as if we are simply "unknown" despite sharing close bond for a quarter of a century!

Without indulging in the debate whether both or one of us had mixed ideological relationship with personal relationship; the ultimate fact remained that apparently our relationship had arrived to a permanent closure.

But that I was in complete wrong has been proved when my mobile rang to see with much stardom that the caller is none other than M! After stunned silence of 5-6 months from our end, M couldn't hold himself up any more when one of the most popular figures of our office circulated the news of the medical-related crisis I have landed myself!

When I responded, his verbal language of concern from deepest core of heart was not only overwhelming, also it seemed that the deafening silence of more than 5 months hadn't happened at all! And yes, M formed the second person (not related through blood) to offer money in own accord, thereby once again proving that relative is not necessarily associated with blood, rather association with soul forms the main determinant factor.

And since our unofficial coordinator of sorts have circulated the news of crisis to almost all personnel of office (working/retired), at least 2 others had also surely received the news who also had stopped conversation with me after realising that my opinion revolving the RG Kar issue stands in opposite pole of theirs!

But while M promptly responded with the most positive attitude possible, other 2/3 remained as frozen as ice; thereby proving that the iceberg named M was indeed very "weak" enough to melt when call of humanity gets heard on the horizon!

Yes, the true picture of individuals come out in open only when one has to sport crown of thorns or lie upon bed of arrows!



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Closure of Keri SEZ issue

Last week, and after 18 years, the State cabinet agreed to take back 123 hectares (12 lakh sq m) of land which had been allotted to Meditab Specialist Ltd for establishing a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) at Keri in Ponda Taluka. Since the Goa Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) had financial crunch and could not buy back the land, the government stepped in and decided to pay Rs 33 crore to the company for the land.

In 2006, as a part of the Goa's SEZ policy, land was allotted to seven promoters, and one was Meditab. In December 2007, a white paper was issued by the government because the public had objected to the SEZ.

The report listed the concerns such as limited benefits of the SEZs, impact on water and electricity etc. In 2008, the SEZ policy was withdrawn and on June 24, 2008 an order was issued to cancel the allotted land. The promoters approached the court and in November 2010, the high court supported the State's stand to withdraw the SEZ policy. Now the matter is in the Supreme Court.

The above information raises some questions. Why was the policy announced and land allotted before the preparation of a feasibility report / white paper? Since the government has

agreed to buy-back the land at a price much higher than what it sold for in 2007, should it not ask the allottees to withdraw the petition? Or, do the allottees expect a better compensation from the Supreme Court. Hope it is a matter of who will blink first and not wink-wink and increased payment!

'Sopo' collection from matka bookies

It is a well-known fact that thousands of matka bookies employed by matka kingpins accept bets across the commercial capital, Margao along the lanes and by-lanes after paying the regular "hafta" to the law enforcing agencies. The authorities concerned were criticised for not taking sufficient action against illegal gambling, reflecting the broader concerns of the community. Matka bookies often target patrons near bars and restaurants, particularly post-working hours, exacerbating the gambling addiction problem.

Gambling has ruined families as it is an addictive game. It often affects the low-income groups who view it as a quick way to get rich. Citizens highlight the need for more strin-

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gent enforcement of gambling laws and greater attention from the authorities to curb the flourishing matka operations in Margao and beyond.

However, now it is learnt that the matka bookies will now have to pay a "sopo" fees to the Margao Municipal Council or risk the attachment of the gambling tables by the Municipal market inspectors. MMC is obviously eyeing revenue from matka gambling activities. Other civic bodies could follow suit. The question that arises is whether this is a step towards legalizing matka gambling.

If the matka bookies are paying the necessary "sopo" fees then there is no way that the authorities can put a stop to matka gambling. The business which was till now an underground activity will now be carried out openly right under the nose of the cops and the concerned authorities.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Uniform laws must to prevent illegal hoardings

Erecting banners and hoardings is the favourite pastime of political leaders and their sycophants. Banners glorifying the achievements of top leaders,

welcoming them back home from abroad, and profusely wishing them on their birthdays, rule the streets. Many self-styled "leaders" go on to announce the marriage ceremonies of their kith and kin through colourful hoardings with the photo of top leaders to attract public attention.

Shockingly, footpaths and medians that divide the roads are pet areas for the small-time politicians to show-off their sycophancy. Posters and advertisement hoardings are mostly illegal with no proper permission taken. The danger of these hoardings is that they are not scientifically constructed. The loose, oversized and hanging banners cause perennial danger to lives.

Courts have regularly banned hoardings or have taken states to task for disregarding rules. But barefaced politicians are adept at ignoring court orders. States like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Delhi have laws in place to prevent illegal hoardings although their implementation has been lax. Uniform rules and regulations across the country for erection of banners and hoardings would not be out of place.

Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

Budget falls short of expectations

Despite some positive measures, the Budget 2025-26 falls short of expectations in some key areas. There is no mention in the budget on structural reforms, there are no offers of incentives to spur private sector investment, and importantly the budget has failed to introduce any new healthcare schemes.

Another major slip-up is the lack of a clear strategy to tackle inflation. While the Economic Survey projected an easing of inflationary pressures, the Budget did not outline concrete measures to address the root causes of rising prices.

In spite of the fact that inflation continues to squeeze the middle class, the Union government is yet to present a robust plan to mitigate its impact. Also, expectations were high for significant investments in railway modernisation, electrification, and new routes. However, the sector has received an allocation of Rs 2.55 lakh crore in FY 25-26 when compared with Rs 2.62 lakh crore allocated for the previous financial year. This underwhelming budgetary support is likely to slow down railway expansion projects and impact key stakeholders.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai