

## O HERALDO

The Voice of Goa - since 1900

Time to demand  
Right to Recall

In the 62-year history of parliamentary democracy in Goa, this is perhaps the second time that Goa has witnessed a two-day Assembly session or less. The Opposition has charged that while in Kerala, the legislature meets for 50 days in a year and Karnataka for 60 days in a year, for the Goa legislature, the yearly count is only 26 days.

If people are the ultimate sovereigns in a democracy and government is of the people, by the people, and for the people, then surely a two-day session is the lowest point of democracy in Goan history. In fact, a new word can be coined to say it's de-mock-racy - attempt to mock the demos (people). In fact, Goa has had a horrendous past few months: in terms of the number of rapes, murders, kidnapping, assaults at shacks, crushing inflation, collapse of law and order, unrestrained destruction of the environment, filling of fields, violation of construction and building laws, massive job scams, and more.

Given this socio-political-economic and ecological assault on the state and its people, does the government not find the necessity to discuss these issues? Does the government not have the courage to provide an opportunity to the depleted Opposition, which has been destroyed by the devouring of its MLAs, to question them on the floor of the House? The Opposition has rightly charged that the government - even with its brute majority - appears to be scared to face Question Hour, which is a weapon of parliamentary democracy to hold the government to account.

Since the people cannot hold the government and the ruling MLAs accountable on a day-to-day basis, the parliamentary system has devised mechanisms of accountability to keep the elected representatives on their toes. These include: Question Hour, adjournment motion, Zero Hour, half-hour discussions, discussion on bills, discussion on the budget, cut motions, discussion of Governor's address, censure motions and more. Presently, the Pramod Sawant-led BJP government has a brute strength of 33 MLAs in a house of 40, plus the support of the Independent MLA from Cortalim. It is widely speculated that it also has the covert support of at least two Congress MLAs, 1 AAP MLA and many Congress party men. Why is it scared of the Opposition despite this is something that flummoxes the public?

Many of the job scam agents are alleged to have links with the party. The Suleman Siddiqui saga has completely tarnished the face of the government even as the government has denied all the allegations made by Suleman. In his first video, Suleman has alleged that he was beaten in the presence of the SP and an MLA and asked to surrender land. Recently it is alleged that Suleman said that the second video attempting to incriminate the Opposition, was made at gunpoint. The government has not been able to convincingly fend off these grave allegations. The assault on tourists and locals at the shacks, the touting and gangs allegedly operating in the Bardez beach belt, the crimes against women and kidnapping of children have touched a point never seen in the history of Goa.

Yet, it is shocking to note that the government has nothing to discuss in the Goa Assembly after a period of six months and holds a symbolic two-day session. One day has passed by delivering the customary Governor's Address, with no discussion of any sort in the afternoon of February 6. That left the Opposition with just February 7, where the Green Cess Scam, as alleged by the Opposition, was discussed. Apart from that, hardly anything substantive came up. How much business can be transacted in a day? Plus the government suspended the rules to steamroll pending bills. How can the Opposition hold the government to account on so many issues of such gravity, which are tarnishing the image of Goa? How can the people hold the government accountable through their elected representatives through the five-year term? Or do the government and elected representatives want to be accountable only at the time of election, by molly-coddling the naive people of Goa, by dishing out goodies and cash for votes?

In such a seemingly hopeless situation, a massive people's movement, beginning from Goa, for the Right to Recall is the only way out. The Right to Recall has been introduced in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Himachal and Haryana at the Panchayat level. This will be historic, since Goa has many firsts, such as the Opinion Poll, to start a movement to dismiss the elected MLA for defection, corruption, scams, interfering in police cases or other such grave matters. This is the only way people of Goa can ensure accountability, especially from governments with a brute majority and who do not bother about people's issues, going by the way Goans are suffering on a daily basis.

## comment



SAMIR NAZARETH

The rise of false  
equivalence casts a shadow  
over India's achievements

I recently read a post on LinkedIn about how there has been a shift from "Can India keep pace?" to "Look at what India is achieving." As proof of this metamorphosis, the author of the post gave the example of an American of Indian origin now holding a senior position at Google.

This selectiveness of where success began, and what constitutes it is getting contagious. This is not surprising given the last decade has focused on making Indians believe they had been under a '1,200 years of slavery' mentality while simultaneously promising to extricate India from this alleged debilitating belief. Is it any surprise then that many today hold that 'India achieved freedom in 2014'?

Donald J Trump, the 45th and 47th President, for all his 'America First' bravado and Make America Great Again (MAGA) promise was probably inspired by what is transpiring in India. A potential matter of pride for India? Interestingly, by promising to Make America Great Again he inadvertently claims America has not been the greatest country on Earth, even though many Americans think otherwise.

The desire to change narratives in a short span requires proof to bolster and augment its assertions. This 'padding' which includes comparing apples with oranges and other types of false equivalences eventually only diminishes what it intends to celebrate



Part of democracy is electing leaders who have negative things to say about their country before coming to power. The success of such negativity begins the process of revisionism which is construed as new found positivity. This manifests as their recognition of what they conceive is the country's true greatness allegedly stifled earlier.

The desire to change narratives in a short span requires proof to bolster and augment its assertions. This 'padding' which includes comparing apples with oranges and other types of false equivalences eventually only diminishes what it intends to celebrate.

Today, it is not surprising that Indian citizens laud the success of those who have given up their Indian passport. Thus, Indians celebrate and are visibly proud of the success of this American of Indian origin senior

Google executive, and many others like him - Satya Nadella and Sundar Pichai for example. Such pride does not mention the Indian institutions that gave them their break. It was the, now much reviled, Nehruvian model of socio-economic development that ensured education in these institutions was affordable. Possibly, a requirement for these revisionist celebrations is that the basic foundations for success be swept under the carpet.

The fact that these Americans of Indian origin are doing well speaks highly of their educational foundation in pre-2014 India. But such success is not a recent phenomenon. There is a long history of Indian migrants to America succeeding in their adoptive nation. Kalpana Chawla, the first American of Indian origin to fly to space graduated in Aeronautical Engineering from Punjab Engineering College; Vinod Khosla co-founder of Sun Microsystems completed his engineering from IIT Delhi before heading to the US. Sabeeh Bhatia, the co-founder of Hotmail graduated from BITS Pilani. The first American of Indian heritage to serve in the US House of Representatives was Dilip Singh Saund. He represented California's 29th district between 1957 and 1963. Saund graduated from University of Punjab in 1919. These Americans of Indian heritage were highly successful, they were recognised and celebrated. However, their accomplishments in the USA were hardly tom-tommed in India as a sign of India progressing. If there was nationalistic celebration it was for the attributes of the country which shone in her former citizens.

To assert that proof of the parent country doing well is the success of those who are no longer its citizens is akin to forcing a square peg into a round hole. The pride that flows from such forfeits doesn't ring true. Celebrating this false equivalence opens a Pandora's box. Indians' pride for their country should then face an inflection point now that Gautam Adani has been indicted by the US Justice Department. Similarly, the fact that Indians form the second-largest illegal immigrant population in the US, as per Pew Research, should diminish pride about India's much heralded economic growth, as would the fact that approximately 97,000 undocumented Indian immi-

grants were apprehended at the US borders or that in 2023 Indians constituted 18% of the illegal crossings to the UK via small boat. Pride for the country should have been reduced after a Swiss court sentenced Prakash Hinduja, his wife, son and daughter-in-law to jail for exploiting domestic workers. That the case is under appeal is not much of a salve. Does pride for India diminish when Rishi Shah, a billionaire American entrepreneur of Indian heritage is imprisoned for fraud? How do Indians perceive India when M Night Shyamalan's movies flop?

The Atal Bihari Vajpayee government began the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in 2009 to celebrate the achievements of the Indian diaspora. To then claim nothing happened before the last 10 years, and suddenly be proud of India's achievements, and to link India's stature to the success of former Indian citizens is to do injustice to India, and the spirit, tenacity and grit of her people.

Being fixated on success post a certain period is to celebrate in a vacuum. It denies the effort and sacrifice of many that came before. And what is worse is, it creates a precedent for future generations to embellish what they believe they have achieved by forgetting the past they stand on.

Finally, when celebrating these achievements let's not forget that besides the grit and tenacity of migrant Indians it was the welcoming and accepting attitude of their adoptive countries that was instrumental in their success.

There are enough reasons to be proud of India without resorting to false equivalence and scouring foreign shores. The reasons are not limited to - the technical ingenuity of ISRO; reach of A R Rahman and Diljit Doosanji's music; sacrifice and service of Kailash Satyarthi and Aruna Roy; writings of Geetanjali Shree; sporting prowess which span from Major Dhyan Chand, Milkha Singh, P T Usha, Shiny Abraham, Ramesh Krishnan, Aslam Sher Khan, Vijay Amritraj to Neeraj Chopra; the start-up ecosystem. The achievements of these diverse people in these diverse fields are a matter of pride and prove the importance of India's rich diversity. Jai Hind!

(Samir Nazareth is an author and writes on socio-economic and environmental issues)

## people'sedit

## LOVE BEYOND BOUNDARIES

SUKRITI KAUL

India, often described as a land of unity in diversity, is home to countless cultures, languages, and traditions. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Gujarat to Arunachal Pradesh, every region adds to the richness of our national identity. Yet, despite this diversity, certain societal norms continue to place restrictions on something as fundamental as love.

For generations, love and relationships in India have been shaped by social boundaries, including caste, religion, region, and even gender. However, love is not a matter of social conformity, but a deep emotional connection that transcends barriers. It is time for Indian society to recognise that love, in all its forms, deserves acceptance and respect.

## The barriers to love

One of the biggest challenges faced by many couples in India is societal opposition to inter-caste and interfaith relationships. Families often place tradition above personal happiness, believing that marrying within one's community preserves cultural values. Young couples who choose love over societal expectations often face resistance, emotional distress, and, in extreme cases, violence.

Family honour is sometimes prioritized over individual happiness, making it difficult for couples to marry freely.

Similarly, love across state boundaries is sometimes viewed with scepticism. India's rich cultural diversity should be a source of strength, yet relationships between people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds are sometimes met with resistance. Differences in language, food habits, and customs are often seen as obstacles rather than opportunities for growth. However, when two people from different backgrounds unite, they create a fusion of traditions that enriches both families and strengthens the nation's social fabric.

While discussions about inter-caste and interfaith relationships are becoming more common, the acceptance of LGBTQ+ relationships remains a significant challenge. Although the decriminalisation of Section 377 was a historic step forward, social acceptance of same-sex relationships and gender diversity is still lacking. Many LGBTQ+ individuals continue to struggle with prejudice, family rejection, and legal barriers in securing the same rights as heterosexual couples.

Love should not be defined by gender. It is a universal human experience that deserves dignity and recognition. A progressive society is one that does not just tolerate but embraces all forms of love.

## The need for change

For India to truly embrace its diversity, societal mindsets must evolve. A strong relationship is built not on shared caste, religion, or language but on core values such as:

- **Respect** - Accepting differences and celebrating them.
- **Kindness** - Supporting one another through life's challenges.
- **Equality** - Ensuring love is free from discrimination.
- **Integration** - Bringing together different cultures to create harmony.

Families, communities, and policymakers must work together to create an environment where love is not restricted by outdated norms. Education, awareness, and open dialogue can help break down prejudices and promote inclusivity. Schools and media play a crucial role in shaping perceptions.

When young minds are exposed to diverse narratives of love and relationships, they grow into adults who value respect over rigidity.

Legal reforms must also support love in all its forms. While the Supreme Court has taken progressive steps, such as decriminalising same-sex relationships, more needs to be done. Legal recognition of same-sex marriages, protection of interfaith couples from harassment, and stricter action against honour crimes are necessary to ensure that love is not bound by fear.

Love is one of the most powerful forces that unite people. It should never be confined by artificial boundaries. Whether between people of different castes, religions, States, or genders, love should be celebrated for what it truly is—a bond of respect, kindness, and mutual understanding.

As India continues to progress, so must our perceptions of love. A society that respects love in all its forms is one that truly embodies unity in diversity. It is only when we break free from the chains of outdated traditions that we can call ourselves a truly inclusive and forward-thinking nation.

NoMoZo - For a  
breath of fresh air

The 6th edition of NoMoZo at Porvorim will reportedly be inaugurated on February 9, by Bollywood star John Abraham. NoMoZo.

'No Motor Zone' is a festival that brings together fitness, culture, innovation, heritage and local arts. The idea behind NoMoZo is to reduce motor-vehicle pollution in a place by closing the road to allow children, adults and senior citizens to have activities there.

This event is also an opportunity for the community to come together. It is time to make the streets user-friendly and inclusive. Children will be able to spend their day fruitfully by learning something new and socialising with other kids. Senior citizens, who always shun traffic and sometimes fear crossing heavily motorised roads, will get a chance to relax in a non-polluted environment. However, the larger aim should be to send the message that we need to engage in non-motorised forms of transport.

People should increasingly use bicycles for travel as this will restore and maintain the physical

and mental wellbeing of the population. Reducing our dependence on cars is also good for the planet as it will reduce pollution and Greenhouse effect. The process may not be simple, but this is a practical and easy strategy that can help people see streets differently by temporarily taking cars off the street. It would be in the fitness of things to hold such events in other towns across the State as well.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Goans need to fight  
for their rights

The video of a Goan car driver travelling from Porvorim to Saligao being brutally assaulted by two rent-a-bike tourists in the middle of the road at Sangolda with helmets and fists after his four wheeler slightly collided with a scooter of a tourist went viral on social media.

Shockingly, most Goans, travelling along the same road during the incident, remained mute spectators and did nothing to

save their fellow Goan. Now, wasn't this shameful?

The Saligao Police have arrested the two tourists from Maharashtra and an FIR has been registered against both the accused.

Well, the reason why the domestic tourists of late are attacking Goans across the State is because they have studied all our weaknesses.

They know that most Goans are culturally/habitually susegad, have no unity and are just not bothered about what's happening around them.

Hey, when will our Goans really learn to assert themselves and fight to defend for their own rights/dignity or for their self-respect in Goa?

I think that as long as we Goans do not change our mindset/discard our old habits and continue living with the same old most indifferent 'mhaka kiteak podlam' attitude, we will continue to witness many more such unfortunate incidents in Goa in future. God save Goans and Goa...

Jerry Fernandes, Saligao

## letterstotheeditor

For letters to the editor contact us at editor@herald-goa.com.

All letters must contain correct postal address and telephone number. Letters are liable to be edited for brevity.

Iron will needed  
to save Goa

For the first time since Liberation, the State government has approved the Goa State Amritkal Agriculture Policy 2025 which bans conversions of all fields designated as rice, morad, kher and khazan and focuses on revolutionising farming through hydroponics, aquaponics, urban agriculture and vertical farming.

Sustainable practices shall take centre stage and special emphasis shall be laid on cash crops like cashew, mango, arecanut, rambutan and grapefruit.

Those releasing sewage and waste water into agricultural land will be penalised by GSPCB. Farmers owning over 4,000 sq mts of land shall be eligible for special incentives and subsidies for promotion of agro-tourism on their land.

All this sounds very good on paper, but with lakhs of acres of farmland being

converted with impunity to buildable settlement zones by the TCP Department under the guise of correcting errors in the masterplan the ban seems very difficult to implement on the ground.

Real estate sharks from Delhi and Mumbai are given a free hand to run riot in our State with super-mega projects on fertile land in the villages; the destruction of our beautiful Goa is facilitated by the ones in power. Builders will find new ways to circumvent this ban by greasing the palms of mantris and sarkari babus. Lofty intentions and cosmetic bans are not going to save our State, an iron will is required.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaulim

## A step to destroy Goa

The bill to amend the Code of Comunidades is a step to destroy Goa the State government whose only love is for vitamin M. There are protests all over Goa against massive real estate projects and the Supreme Court has told the Goa Government not to turn Goa into a concrete jungle. Is anyone listening?

Matias Lobo, Tivim