

O HERALDO

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# Parking no longer a walk in the park

**G**one are the days when one could confidently find parking for one's car even in Goa's busiest towns. Now, locating a spot to park even a two-wheeler is something of a herculean feat.

The lack of adequate parking spaces is felt across the state, but the issue recently came to the forefront after people living in Margao and Fatorda complained of busy roads in the state's commercial capital and its periphery being blocked by vehicles parked along both flanks. They demanded that the authorities concerned take swift action against this daily phenomenon, which they said constricts already narrow stretches in some parts and inconveniences commuters.

Buses and cars are even parked along the national highway that traverses through Fatorda and Margao, they said, and added that the resultant traffic congestion is worst felt during peak hours. Nightfall brings its own set of problems as sporadic street-lighting and poorer visibility mean that parked vehicles are often not spotted in time. Some residents claimed that due to this, they have seen motorists crash into stationary vehicles and sustain considerable injuries.

Then there is the issue of some vehicles being parked along roadsides through the day and night and some others remaining in their spots for weeks and months on end. The residents are right: Roads are meant for commuting and not to serve as parking lots. The alleged nonchalance of the traffic police in tackling this issue has often got their goat as the residents said that cops are quick to fine any vehicle that has halted briefly along a particular road but turn a blind eye to those that remain parked in no-parking zones for hours.

Vehicular density has increased exponentially across the state, and while the provision of adequate parking slots or zones should have also risen with it, this is not the case on the ground. It is often seen that residential and commercial complexes do not have sufficient spots to accommodate vehicles proportionate to the number of apartments or shops that are constructed in each such complex. This leaves some visitors with no choice but to park alongside roads and sidewalks, which in turn, results in severe traffic congestion. A similar situation is observed at almost every market in the state where parking zones are limited at best and non-existent at worst.

The solution to this lies with the authorities concerned. There are already construction rules in place which mandate that high-rises, residential and commercial complexes must have ample parking spaces within their respective properties. The hitch is in the implementation of these rules. While few developers follow the guidelines, others tend to scrimp on parking spaces and use the vacant area to build extra units instead. Sadly, few are actually pulled up by the authorities concerned.

Goa would do well to take a leaf out of bustling cities such as Mumbai, where land is a precious resource. To ensure that space is wisely used, many complexes in Mumbai have adopted mechanized parking systems, and even tower parking which enables up to 64 cars to be parked on a footprint of three cars. Having a few such facilities in Goa would greatly help in clearing up our roads and smoothening traffic flow.

Secondly, construction rules must be followed in letter and spirit for both, government and private buildings in that each such structure should make provisions to accommodate vehicles in proportion to their anticipated footfall. Non-adherence should invite strict penalties so that violators become examples for others who may themselves think of circumventing the rules. Until the government gets it act together, though, parking woes and the resultant chaos they cause will continue to haunt the state and its citizens.

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BY INVITATION  
Sushila Sawant Mendes

**T**oday Germany goes to the polls. Trends show that two of the front-runners, Friedrich Merz and Alice Weidel are both opposed to immigration. The future of the planet seems precarious as both USA and some European nations find migration and migrants as ills affecting their society. We always believed that migration economies grow but the political and cultural impact is taking countries far right. No doubt, the reference is to illegal migration but in present times, migration itself is under attack.

This month, three military planes from the United States brought 333 Indian deportees to India as part of US President Donald Trump's focus on halting illegal immigration to the country. These expulsions bring to light two facts, the Indian government strives to conceal. First, that of an economy unable to meet the challenges of offering enough work and prospects to its growing youth - these emigrate abroad, in search of a better life. India represents the third largest contingency of illegal immigrants in the US, with an estimated 725,000 people. Second, these expulsions show that Trump will not grant his Indian ally any special status, especially in terms of immigration.

Without migration matters, the Goa story cannot be complete. As the majority of President Trump supporters were anti-immigrants, they perceived the emigrants as an economic and cultural threat. The two deportees from Goa have brought us back once again to the migration question. Some elite armchair Goans have berated the two boys for illegally entering the US. Others have opined they deserve the inhuman treatment. The law of the land is always final and binding. An inquiry needs to be initiated to expose the touts who charge money in lakhs but indulge in illegal emigration of their unsuspecting victims. The poorest people in the country do not emigrate; they simply can't afford to.

Goans have always emigrated even during the colonial rule. Migration abroad was always seen as an economic haven but they never went illegally. "Jumping ship" to work ashore is of more recent origin. As Goans could speak good English, wore western dress and were well educated, they were welcomed in British East Africa territories like Kenya, Tanganyika, Zanzibar and Uganda. Most worked in the British railways and the custom houses and were experts in tailoring western clothes. Most of these returned back home after retirement. Some also emigrated to the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique, East Timor, Macau and to Portugal itself. After independence of the African countries many had the

# Migrants, migration and deportation



When home conditions are bad, locals with aspirations to improve their standard of living will be definitely exploited. The government of the day should rise up in dealing with fly by night operators who try to make a booty from the carcass of the misery

option of emigrating from Africa to Canada, UK, USA, Portugal and Europe.

Some advanced countries seek cheap labour and therefore the enforcing agencies there follow the soft glove treatment of selective arrest against illegal immigrants. Spain has decided to regularise immigrants without proper documents over the next three years. This decision will definitely influence the immigration policy of other countries in the European Union. In a recent World Bank Report (WBR) entitled, "Migrants, Refugees and Societies", it is found that Indians who migrate abroad often experience more than 100% increase in their income levels while Indians who continue to work in their homeland have to wait 20 years to get this hike. This is why Indians who go abroad remain there.

Failed emigration attempts are therefore acts of aspiration. The lower middle class want to rise in their status, the middle class also aspires upward mobility and the rich want to be richer! Money is raised in lakhs of rupees, to knowingly or unknowingly take an illegal route, often of their own volition! They do anything, engage dubious persons, lawyers to fulfill their dream. Even white collar jobs are sacrificed for blue collar jobs abroad. This only highlights the power of money. Our caste ridden society is often responsible for these "flights" abroad, where there is hope for a life based on self respect and dignity. In Punjab, parents often want to send their young to avoid drug addiction and unemployment.

It is perceived that emigrating abroad will improve the social status of the family. A Punjab Agricultural University study has concluded that in the years from

2016 to 2022, there were large scale immigrations and the reasons reported were corruption, low income and poor governance. In short, whether in Punjab, Goa or any other State, the reasons are, that our young don't see a future in their own country but believe that "the streets abroad are paved with gold". Many sell farms or take loans. Not surprisingly, data from the US immigration courts in 2024 reveals that the majority of Indian migrants were male, aged 18-34.

Deportations have taken place in the past. These deportations per year averaged, 750 under Obama, 1,550 under Trump's first term, and 900 under Biden. The Pew Research Centre and the Center for Migration Studies of New York estimates that, as of 2022, there were 725,000 undocumented Indian immigrants in the US - the third-largest group, outnumbered only by nationals of Mexico and El Salvador.

An interesting observation is that illegal immigration and deportation is more in northern India like Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh and less in the south. In Punjab, illegal immigration is made popular in songs which sing about the 'dunkie route' - a slang term for the long, arduous journey, illegal Indian migrants take to countries like Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the US. In the States of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, there is large scale emigration most of which is legal. They make better choices within a well planned and legal approach. What could be the reasons for this? - better educational levels, making better career choices or positive government intervention? Many European countries like Germany need skilled workers with

the required qualification. So if our government organises such training programmes along with the language skills required for that country it would be of mutual benefit-let's wait for the election results!

The wage gap between the origin and the destination country is an important factor for international migration. The absolute gains in income after emigration are higher for high skilled workers. Even the income of low skilled Indians who migrate to the USA increases by 493%, in comparison to Indians who emigrate to the UAE of the same category of workers, increases to 298%. Most of the spending takes place in the origin country through remittances, in fact the same study shows that 85% of the Indian immigrants earnings in the UAE are spent in India.

The economic gains in income are highest when migrants move from low to high income countries as per the WBR. A person who works in India would need to work for 24 years to match the gains made by an Indian who migrated to a high income country while another working in Bangladesh or Ghana would need 43 years.

The number of migrants who return to their country of origin is different as per the place of destination. All migrants have to leave Gulf Cooperation Council countries. The return of Asian migrants in the US is about 20%. Temporary migrants who come back on their own are much better off than when they left, however those who are forced to return face poorer socio-economic outcomes.

Globalization and urbanization always lead to migration. A government can control emigration only when it can provide food, clothing shelter and off-course employment to its people. When home conditions are bad, locals with aspirations to improve their standard of living will be definitely exploited. The government of the day should rise up in dealing with fly by night operators who try to make a booty from the carcass of the misery.

(The writer is a Professor in History, Author and an Independent Researcher)

## Beyond Rituals and Riches: Can Religion Still Be a Force for Good?

**R**eligions have long been regarded as the moral compass of society, guiding human behavior, shaping cultures and offering comfort in times of despair. They have inspired great acts of kindness, built communities and provided hope to millions. But in today's world, as faith institutions accumulate immense wealth, political influence, and social power, human suffering continues to grow. Wars rage on, poverty deepens, inequalities widen and systemic injustices remain unchallenged.

If religion is meant to be a beacon of light, why do so many people still find themselves in darkness? If religious leaders are entrusted with moral guidance, why do their voices often fall silent on issues of corruption, oppression, and exploitation? If faith is supposed to transform lives, why does it sometimes seem more concerned with maintaining institutions than addressing the real struggles of its followers?

This is not just a philosophical debate—it is a moral crisis that requires deep reflection. It is a question that religious leaders and followers alike must confront: Has religion lost its essence? Has it become more of a business than a force for justice?

Once upon a time, spiritual leader-

PETER BORGES

ship was about more than maintaining places of worship and overseeing rituals. It was about guiding people towards justice, advocating for the oppressed, and standing up against systems that perpetuate suffering. But today, many religious leaders operate more like corporate managers—running large institutions, handling vast donations, and building their influence rather than focusing on the moral and social transformation of society.

Are religious leaders truly leading their followers, or are they merely managing religious organisations? Are they walking among the poor, listening to their struggles and fighting for their rights or are they confined within luxurious institutions, disconnected from the realities of the people they claim to serve?

It is undeniable that religious institutions engage in acts of charity—feeding the hungry, providing shelter and running hospitals. But is charity enough? Shouldn't religion also challenge the root causes of poverty and suffering? Instead of merely offering food, shouldn't faith leaders demand fair wages for workers? Instead of providing temporary relief to the homeless, shouldn't they question the structures

**UPFRONT**  
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that allow homelessness to persist?

Too often, religious leaders preach about patience in suffering rather than justice in action. They tell people to pray harder instead of pushing for policy changes that could improve lives. They justify social hierarchies rather than dismantling them. But is this what faith is supposed to do—pacify people into acceptance rather than empower them to fight for their dignity?

Faith is deeply personal, but it also comes with responsibility. Many religious followers dedicate their lives to devotion, prayer and rituals. They donate generously to religious institutions, attend ceremonies and participate in festivals. But do they ever stop to ask: What impact does my faith have on the world around me?

Are religious followers supporting institutions that truly serve society, or are they merely upholding structures that preserve power and wealth for a few?

It is easy to follow traditions, to believe that faith alone is enough. But faith without action is empty. What is the point of building grand places of worship if there are struggling families living in slums right next to them? What is the point of fasting and praying for the well-being of others if we turn a blind eye to injustice happening right in front of us?

Many are taught that suffering is a test from God, that endurance brings spiritual rewards. But should faith not inspire demand change? Should it not inspire people to question inequality, to stand against oppression, to advocate for the rights of the marginalized?

Religious institutions often highlight their acts of charity as proof of their positive impact on society. They run food drives, build hospitals, and provide relief during disasters. But is this enough? Or is it just a way to appear compassionate while avoiding

deeper, systemic issues?

Charity is a temporary solution—it feeds the hungry for a day, shelters the homeless for a night, and treats the sick for a moment. But it does not prevent hunger, homelessness, or illness in the first place. If religious institutions truly wanted to make a difference, wouldn't they focus on systemic change rather than just temporary relief?

Faith leaders and institutions have vast resources at their disposal. If they truly prioritised social justice, they could use these resources to challenge corruption, advocate for labour rights, push for gender equality and demand better social policies.

Why do so few religious institutions take bold stances against oppression? Why do they not use their influence to hold governments accountable, to demand fair wages, to speak out against discrimination? Is it because they fear losing their privileged status?

**What needs to change?**

- Religious leaders must step outside their institutions and engage with real-world struggles. Religious leaders must be on the frontlines, advocating for the oppressed, standing up against discrimination, and using their influence to challenge injustices.

- Charity is not enough; systemic change is needed. Religious wealth and influence should not be spent on

extravagant places of worship while millions suffer.

- Faith should empower, not suppress. Religious teachings should inspire critical thinking, courage, and action. They should not be used to justify social hierarchies, silence dissent, or discourage activism.

- Followers must demand accountability. If religious institutions are failing to address real-world problems, then followers have a duty to question their role.

**A final question for all of us**

Religion has the potential to be a force for good, but only if it truly serves humanity rather than itself. If faith is meant to bring light into darkness, why do so many remain in shadows?

The answer lies not just with religious leaders, but with followers as well. It lies in our willingness to reflect, to question, and to act. Religion should not be a business—it should be a movement for justice, dignity, and equality.

So, the final question remains: Are we ready to make it so?

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