

Pernem's Sampada Tari and sons lovingly tend to traditional floriculture nursery

A JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF GOA

In our continuous efforts to put people at the center of our journalism, we bring to you a weekly collection of stories, specially curated from our ground-level reportage which celebrates the joys, and shares the sorrows of people in their grass-roots. These are, at heart, very simple stories, simply told. Interesting initiatives, out-of-the-box thinking, dogged persistence on any issue, and the struggles of people over the years as they try and put their disrupted lives back together are not just news stories.

Each is a document from the wards and vaddos of Goa, a postcard, a letter, a share. This collection is brought to you from O Heraldo's team of reporters who have been given one simple mandate - go out, travel, and speak to people about their lives. From Wards and Vaddos is as much your project as O Heraldo's and we welcome all of you on this journey into the heart of Goa. Pls email editor@herald-go.com or reach us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

BUSINESS IS BLOOMING

A key factor in the success of this nursery is the strong support from Sampada's sons, both of whom are highly educated yet deeply connected to their roots.

Salil, her eldest son, has a full-time job but still finds time to

experiment with plant growth techniques, oversee grafting, and handle maintenance work at the nursery. Sanish, her younger son, is currently pursuing a degree in civil engineering, but he has also learned coconut tree climbing—a traditional skill that is slowly disappearing among Goans. He actively helps in watering and nurturing the plants, ensuring they thrive.



ERWIN FONSECA

PERNEM: Goa's traditional way of life is undergoing significant changes as younger generations, influenced by higher education and more lucrative opportunities, often move away from age-old family professions. However, in Palyem, Pernem, one family stands out—where two highly educated young men are actively supporting their mother in expanding a traditional agricultural nursery into a thriving floriculture nursery.

At the heart of this success is Sampada Tari, a determined woman who has carried forward her family's legacy of growing and selling chilly saplings, osanne (a medicinal plant), coconuts, and coconut oil. What began as a modest local trade has now transformed into a well-established nursery, thanks to her entrepreneurial spirit and the unwavering support of her sons, Salil and Sanish.

Sampada's journey into large-scale floriculture was not part of an elaborate business plan but a natural progression. Hailing from the serene village of Palyem, she had a steady stream of customers, including people from neighbouring villages like



Arambol, who came to buy her farm produce. "I never imagined I would take this tradition to a new level. For years, I simply planted seeds and sold saplings along with our other farm produce. We also had cashew income, which kept things stable. Since we have our own natural resources, farming was never difficult for us," Sampada recalls.

Her turning point came when she collaborated with the Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA), an initiative designed to support farmers. Under this scheme, farmers were reimbursed for the money spent on buying marigold saplings. Encouraged by this support, Sampada began selling marigold saplings on a larger scale, but her ambi-

tions didn't stop there.

"We were happy with our existing work—selling marigold, chilly, and tomato saplings. But one day, our former ATMA director, Mr. Paranjape, casually suggested something that changed everything. He told me to gift a flower pot to every woman attending the Haldi-Kumkum ceremony. It

was such a simple idea, but it sparked something in me." Inspired by this conversation, Sampada took a bold step—she expanded beyond just saplings and began developing a full-fledged floriculture nursery. What started as a small initiative has now flourished into a nursery that supplies flowering plants, ornamental plants, spices, and fruit-bearing plants.

"At first, I wasn't sure how my village folk would react to new plant varieties, but I decided to take a chance. We brought in bulk stock, and to my surprise, it worked wonders! There was no turning back after that."

"For my sons, the plants are like their children. It gives me immense satisfaction to see them involved in this work because I know they will carry forward this legacy," Sampada says.

Sanish, despite his academic background, has no hesitation in



embracing agriculture and floriculture. He believes education should complement tradition, not replace it.

"Education teaches us to live in harmony with nature. Ever since I was a child, I have watched my mother care for these saplings, and she has never regretted it. There is good income in this field, yet most Goans are turning away from it. If non-Goans, with limited knowledge of plant science, can successfully run nurseries in Goa, why should we Goans lag behind?" he

questions. Sampada is vocal about her concern that many Goan families are discouraging their children from pursuing agriculture, which she believes is a harmful mindset.

The demand for her nursery plants has grown tremendously, leading her to source plants from Pune, Kolhapur, and other regions. Some plants are grafted and germinated at home, ensuring high-quality stock. "We often have so many customers that we don't even get time for lunch. People come from far and wide to buy our plants," says Sampada.

"We offer plants at very affordable rates because we want people to

Parents tell their children not to engage in farming, calling it 'low-status work,' but they don't realise its importance. Ever since we started this nursery, we have found it to be rewarding—not just financially but also emotionally. We must safeguard and promote our traditions. It is our duty to Goa. No work is below anyone's dignity. If we don't respect our own roots, who will?"

-Sampada Tari

buy and help keep the surroundings clean and green," she explains. Sampada's impact extends beyond her own household. She has inspired neighbours and even local children to take an interest in agriculture.

"When I put different seeds to germinate, the neighbourhood children join me. This small activity helps them develop a love for plants. It's important to involve the next generation, or else these traditions will disappear."

She believes that Goa's rich cultural history and tourism industry will always keep the demand for flowers alive, making floriculture a profitable and sustainable profession.

"We live in a State where flowers are needed daily—for tourism, temples, festivals, and celebrations. Any Goan getting into this business is helping society in a big way."

Sampada's story is proof of the power of perseverance, family support, and the potential of traditional occupations to evolve into successful enterprises. As she continues to expand her nursery, she hopes that more Goan youth will embrace agriculture instead of abandoning it.

Gritty Angela Vaz grinds through time at her 100-year-old flour mill

Despite changing times and dwindling demand, she continues grinding wheat and paddy, ensuring that an integral part of Goa's heritage is not lost

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CARONA: At 75, Angela Lourdes Vaz spends each day upholding a family legacy spanning over a century—operating a traditional flour and husking mill in her village.

The mill's history dates back over 100 years when it was first run by her in-laws. Later, her husband took over, and together, they sustained the business for over three decades. "I can proudly say that for over a century, we have kept this Goan tradition alive despite all odds," she said.

In the past, the services of the mill were in high demand, as local farmers brought their freshly harvested paddy for de-husking and rice and wheat, for grinding. Homemade food was the norm, and people relied on traditional flour mills. "That's why we remained fit and healthy," Vaz reflected.

However, with modern conveniences, consumer habits have shifted. "Everything is available readymade now—wheat flour, rice, and other packaged items.

People no longer want to take the trouble of grinding their own grains, and farming itself is on



Many admire my work and say it is worthy of praise. It isn't too tough a job because I have workers to help me. A compliment is like sunshine—it fills the heart with happiness. I feel proud when people say my grinding is fine and they return to my mill -Angela Lourdes Vaz

the decline," she lamented.

Excessive rainfall this year further impacted the trade, damaging crops and reducing the number of customers who would normally bring their paddy for processing.

Angela recalls the early days when the mill ran on a rare diesel-powered grinder. "It had to be lit, and smoke would rise into the air—people knew the mill was running just by seeing the smoke," she said. Today, electric motors have replaced the old system, making the grinding process faster. However, dependency on electricity has also made the work unpredictable. "Back then, we didn't rely on power; but now, if there's no electricity, there's no grinding, especially during the monsoon," she explained.

For Angela, the flour mill is more than just a livelihood—it is a passion. "Many admire my work and say it is

worthy of praise. It isn't a tough job because I have workers to help me. I manage it as best as I can," she said.

Her family, like many others in their time, prioritised work over education. "I studied up to Std X, but our main focus was to earn a living. Those days, many people worked in the fields, and there was a heavy rush for grinding. Now, business has slowed down, but I still grind on," she said.

"No matter whether I make a profit or not, I will do this work as long as my health permits."

Angela believes that today's generation is moving away from traditional businesses in pursuit of high-income jobs and modern comforts. "Children don't want to continue these traditional businesses. They want high standards of living, and they don't want to struggle like we did," she said.

She recalls the past when grinding fees ranged from 25 paise to one rupee—an amount sufficient for daily needs. "Now, everything is expensive. Earlier, if you took Rs 10 to the market, you could buy everything for your house. Today, even thousands are not enough," she said.

Angela also points to the government's role in preserving traditional occupations. "The government should support farmers by providing free machinery, tankers, and fertilizers. Many fields remain uncultivated because people need some help. If the government encourages people to save traditions, they will have faith in it," she stated.

Even as flour mills disappear, Angela remains hopeful that her trade will not be forgotten. "I still grind wheat and make chapatis at home. We make jaggery chapatis and other traditional items from our own flour," she said.

She also rears local hens that lay eggs, which she sells to sustain her household. "If our parents made a living this way, why can't this generation do the same?" she asked.

For her, the greatest reward is appreciation from the community. "A compliment is like sunshine—it fills the heart with happiness. I feel proud when people say my grinding is fine and they return to my mill," she said with a smile.

Citizen-led movement tackles Mormugao's stray animal crisis



People need to realise that abandoning, killing or relocating animals is illegal and unacceptable. Sterilization, vaccination and systematic feeding is the only way forward -Vrinda Agarwal, Jairamnagar

We need more participation and cooperation from citizens. There aren't enough opportunities for training of volunteer welfare workers. Training in first aid and basic treatment of bruises and wounds would enable treatment onsite and in turn reduce the burden on NGOs -Reshma Jose, Trailblazer, Baina

The need of the hour is cooperation between government bodies with the animal husbandry department to ensure proactive vaccination and sterilization of stray animals. Rules for mandatory registration and sterilization of pets are also necessary. Punishment for abandoning adult animals as well as infant animals at fish, meat markets and garbage dumps should be implemented strictly -Sohail Sayed, Trailblazer, Desterro Wado

TANIA DEVAIAH

VASCO: In Mormugao, where the streets are teeming with stray animals left to fend for themselves, a quiet revolution is taking shape. With the government's Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme stalled due to resource shortages, a determined group of volunteers has stepped in to bridge the gap. It all began with a single distress call in January 2024, when local art educator Vrinda Agarwal, a long-time caregiver for stray animals, realised the escalating crisis needed collective action - she could not single-handedly accomplish all she dreamt of. She reached out to fellow animal lovers in Vasco and surrounding areas, rallying them around a common cause. What began as a small effort soon transformed into a structured movement, bound by the conviction that every living being deserves dignity and care.

Trailblazers is now a citizen-led initiative that has grown into a network of 50 dedicated individuals striving to care for and rehabilitate community animals, driven by compassion and urgency. The group is very different from registered NGOs - it is an eclectic mix of professionals, homemakers, students, and retirees—each playing a vital role, with no other agenda - except to alleviate the suffering of their community animals.

While the members rarely meet and do not even have a group photo together, the group still functions efficiently as every single person involved is reliable, dedicated and quick to respond. Some volunteers dedicate their days to feeding, vaccinating, and

A TYPICAL DAY FOR TRAILBLAZERS:

- ▶ Identifying new cases and monitoring existing ones
- ▶ Coordinating with veterinary clinics and shelters for treatment, X-rays, and surgeries
- ▶ Planning sterilisation drives in collaboration with NGOs and government bodies
- ▶ Raising funds for medical care, transport, and crucial infrastructure such as trap cages and nets

sterilising stray animals, while others manage rescues, provide foster care, or coordinate medical treatment. Financial contributions from members sustain the initiative, ensuring a steady flow of resources.

Given Mormugao's limited veterinary facilities, the group partners with People for Animals (PFA) Vasco, the only rescue and sterilisation centre in the taluka. They also source discounted medicines from Bangalore, a lifeline for treating severe skin infections and other medical conditions in stray animals.

Despite their tireless efforts, the volunteers face daunting challenges. A significant roadblock is the widespread lack of awareness about animal welfare laws. Since its inception, Trailblazers has sterilised 120 dogs and numerous cats, including through a mass sterilisation drive in part-



nership with PAWS Panjim. They have rescued and rehomed 35 dogs and 30 cats, many of whom were elderly, disabled, or abandoned pedigree breeds.

The financial burden of this work is significant. Over the past 14 months, the group has spent more than Rs 4.7 lakh on medical treatments, transport, and shelter expenses. To maintain transparency, donations are made directly to vendors, including veterinary clinics, medical suppliers, and transport services. Additionally, members contribute in-kind support, such as offering vehicles for transport, providing space for recovering animals, or sponsoring food expenses.

Looking ahead, the group hopes to acquire an animal ambulance and establish a dedicated recovery space for injured strays. "The future of stray animal welfare depends on collective responsibility. If we don't step up, who will?" said Vrinda Agarwal.

Trailblazers are urging more citizens to get involved. "Help can come in many forms—volunteering time, fostering animals, donating resources, or simply spreading awareness," said Agarwal. For those looking to make a difference, Trailblazers welcomes community members, feeders, and animal lovers in Mormugao to connect with them and work towards a more humane and sustainable approach to managing the stray animal population.