

O HERALDO

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Development at what cost?

The demolition of a centuries-old banyan tree and the adjacent Khapareshwar temple in Porvorim marks yet another chapter in the ongoing conflict between development and heritage preservation. In the eyes of the government, these structures were mere obstacles hindering the construction of a flyover, a project deemed essential for urban expansion. However, for the thousands who revered this ancient tree and temple, their removal represents not just environmental and cultural loss, but also a deep wound to collective sentiment.

The government, armed with a High Court order, proceeded with the clearance, albeit without meaningful dialogue with the local community, environmentalists, or religious leaders. The opposition to this move was predictable and intense. Protesters gathered in large numbers, expressing their anguish over the removal of a sacred site and a tree that had stood as a living monument for generations.

Transplantation, in theory, is an eco-friendly compromise, but its success rate is alarmingly low. Past experiences have shown that large, old trees rarely thrive in new environments after being uprooted. Of the five trees previously relocated in a similar manner, none survived. This grim reality suggests that the banyan tree's relocation might only be a symbolic gesture, rather than a genuine attempt at conservation

Yet, despite their resistance, the administration, backed by heavy police deployment, executed its plan with brute force. The question that lingers is—was this conflict inevitable? The issue of the banyan tree and the temple was not an unforeseen roadblock that suddenly emerged. For months, activists and environmentalists had been voicing their concerns, staging peaceful demonstrations, and even appealing to Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari to reconsider the project's impact on the tree. Their efforts, however, proved futile as the High Court directed the authorities to relocate the tree under expert supervision. This directive, while legally sound, raises doubts about the practicality of transplanting such an old tree and ensuring its survival.

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Equally troubling is the handling of the Khapareshwar temple. Unlike the banyan tree, the temple's removal was not sanctioned by judicial order but was carried out in what appears to be administrative high-handedness. The government neither consulted the locals nor provided a clear plan for the temple's reconstruction. Such disregard for religious sentiment was bound to fuel public outrage, leading to the prolonged standoff that unfolded over the weekend. It was not merely about relocating an idol; it was about eroding the trust of a community that saw its place of worship being dismantled without prior consent or clarity on its future.

While development is crucial, the manner in which it is pursued matters immensely. No society can expect to progress while entirely preserving its natural and cultural heritage. Some compromises are inevitable. However, the key lies in minimizing damage and ensuring that those affected are taken into confidence. In this case, the government failed on both fronts—by neither safeguarding the banyan tree effectively nor handling the temple's removal with the sensitivity it deserved.

It is ironic that whenever a Union minister visits Goa for inaugurations or foundation-laying ceremonies, they emphasize the importance of environmental conservation. Yet, on the ground, these words appear to be little more than lip service, with little genuine commitment to sustainable development. The Porvorim incident starkly reveals this hypocrisy, where a tree that provided oxygen for generations was sacrificed in the name of progress, with no guarantees of its survival.

The opposition parties have wasted no time in politicizing this issue, accusing the ruling government of betraying the very community it claims to protect. While their criticism may have a political motive, it does raise valid concerns about the government's handling of sensitive issues. Public faith in governance erodes when decisions are imposed rather than discussed, when heritage is discarded rather than preserved, and when promises of environmental responsibility remain unfulfilled.

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Humanity's relationship with nature is at a tipping point. It's time to choose a smarter path. Investing in healthy ecosystems is vital to providing clean air and water, regulating our climate, and supporting livelihoods.

comment



VICTOR FERRAO

Dissensus at a time of criminalisation of dissent

After what appeared to be a time of harassment, we saw the arrest of some activists in Goa forcing us to raise the question: Is the space for dissent shrinking in Goa? Dissent is unwelcome in most circles. Often law is weaponised to silence dissent. Policing dissent seems to have become the order of the day. Dissent appears to be criminalised. It seems that the government is using strategic incapacitation of the people to bulldoze its anti-Goa agenda. The space for civil society appears to be closing quickly in our society. Will Goa survive without dissent? Will the killing of dissent end up killing Goa? Perhaps, it is time that we ask these discomfiting questions.

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It appears that criminalisation of dissent is not producing a chilling effect and hence the powers that be are trying to divert the teeming tempers over the failures of the government by creating enemies from within. Will that mean that Goans will let Goa go to dogs? Unfortunately, we are ruled through division today. Will that also mean Goans will become blind and submissive to these divisive powers? In order to address the condition that afflicts us Goans,



we have the challenge to embrace the ethics of dissensus. We need to embrace politics as a form of dissensus.

Dissensus seems to be deeply embedded in Goan culture. Goans have been called 'crabs'. While this description is offensive and has painted Goans in bad light, maybe for a moment, we have to critically recon-

sider this Goan response and bracket the negative semantics of the label. I do not celebrate what we perceive as a response driven by a deep sense of insecurity, self-preservation, and jealousy. But within this dark side, we have shades of resources that we can rely to counter the condition that is afflicting us today.

Maybe we can find a politics of aesthetics that is born out of a redistribution of the sensible.

The distribution of the sensible is the order of things that one finds and becomes familiar and has one's life and being within it. When this normalised and naturalised order of things is disrupted and as a result a Goan is rattled. This displaced order of things is a form of politics. It breaks the normal world of Goans disturbing the field of perception and the sense of belonging as Goans. Goans, then, seem to feel themselves or others as being dislocated from their assigned places, institutionalised hierarchies and freedom of being, speaking and expressing in Goa. This natural tendency to react to the changed order or reordering of (power) relations brought about by an individual or group can indeed become an important resource to develop a politics of dissensus at a time when dissent appears to be criminalised in our society.

Jacques Rancier, a French thinker, has developed a politics of dissensus. Rancier teaches that politics has an essential aesthetic dimension and aesthetics has a natural political dimension. Goans who are naturally responsive to the logic of disruption induced by a changed field of perception and what individual Goan counts as social order can redirect these instincts and develop a politics of dissensus. But to come to this logic of dissensus, we Goans may have to critically consider the logic of consensus that we hold dear to our hearts.

The reactive response to the logic of disruption that Goans display is actually a logic of consensus. It is desirous of the lost stable order. But paradoxically, we can find a resource within this disruptive response to develop politics of dissensus to save Goa and Goan-ness. The logic of consensus is reinforcing the idea of what is imagined as proper. It implies the distribution of the proper and the improper within a society.

When what is imagined and

deemed as improper explodes into the society, it transforms the field of perception of the sensible and displaces the ways of belonging for the humans within such a society. 'Everyone and everything' is thought to have a proper place and proper function within the field of life in a society. When we live and function in alliance with that order, everything is thought to be in place and society remains peaceful. This is the logic of consensus that works to maintain this politics of status quo in any society.

Logic of dissensus consists in the demonstration of impropriety leading to the disruption of the way of being and belonging to a society. While the logic of consensus policies maintains the solidity of the order of things, the logic of dissensus disrupts that order of things and opens possibilities for the establishment of a regime of things.

Politics as dissensus always questions the boundaries of what is considered proper and what is considered improper in a particular society. Thus, Goan natural responsive attitude driven by the self-preservation logic of consensus can be groomed to be politics of dissensus in its resplendent brilliance.

The activists, social workers, some political leaders and ordinary people in Goa do exhibit dissensus for the sake of Goa. Dissensus for the sake of Goa inclines towards the self-preservation logic of consensus. Hence, the politics of dissensus that can develop in Goa has the power to save Goa and Goan-ness.

The logic of dissensus is triggered by the logic of conservation of Goa. Hence, the politics of dissensus returns to the logic of consensus where all Goans are challenged to bury their disagreements and differences and work to protect Goa and Goan-ness. It is this Goan consensus for Goa and Goan-ness that will drive Goa's politics of dissensus with everything and everyone who is anti-Goa and anti-Goan-ness. It is only in the embracing of Goan consensus and rising beyond our disagreement that will enable us to agree to disagree with everything that is destroying Goa and Goan-ness and bring Goa, Goans and Goan-ness to a port of safety and flourishing.

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

people's edit

LENT: A SEASON OF REPENTANCE AND RENEWAL

ALVARINHO J. LUIS

Lent is one of the five seasons in the Catholic liturgical calendar, along with Advent, Christmas, Easter and Ordinary Time. It precedes Easter and is a solemn period of prayer, fasting, and charity, providing an opportunity for repentance and spiritual renewal through the sacrament of reconciliation in preparation for Christ's Resurrection.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, recalling Jesus' 40 days of fasting in the desert before His Passion. It falls six-and-a-half weeks before Easter and has been observed since the 11th century. However, the tradition of ashes dates back to the Hebrew custom of wearing sackcloth and dusting oneself with ashes as a sign of penance. This practice evolved into today's Ash Wednesday observance, symbolizing repentance and renewal.

While the Bible does not mention Ash Wednesday, the Old Testament references similar acts of penance, such as Job 16:15—"I have sewn sackcloth over my skin, thrown my forehead in the dust." The New Testament also acknowledges the practice, as in Luke 10:13, where Jesus speaks of repentance in sackcloth and ashes.

Ashe serve as a reminder of human mortality, as stated in Genesis 3:19—"For dust you are and to dust you shall return." Early Christians practiced public penance with ashes and sackcloth, though this custom diminished over time. Receiving ashes as a cross signifies a commitment to Lent as a season of prayer and penitence. It acknowledges human brokenness, the need for redemption, and the call to carry our crosses as followers of Christ.

The Catholic Church requires fasting for members aged 18 to 59 on two obligatory days: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting, a sign of repentance, allows for one full meal and two smaller meals, with exemptions for those with special physical needs.

Ash Wednesday is a time to renew one's commitment to prayer, including the Rosary and Lectio Divina, a meditative reading of Scripture that helps us discern God's message. Along with fasting and attending Mass, almsgiving is a meaningful way to observe the day. By helping those in need, Christians embody Jesus' teachings and practice charity, a central theme of Lent.

Almsgiving has a threefold purpose: it deepens our love for others, fosters detachment, and promotes social justice. Jesus emphasized this in His teaching about the scribes and Pharisees: "But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you." Almsgiving extends beyond financial donations; it includes volunteering time, sharing skills and advocating for social justice, making a tangible impact on those in need.

This Lent, as pilgrims of hope in this jubilee year, a pilgrimage offers a way to encounter God. Let this season be a journey from darkness to light, from thirst to living water, and the cross to the Resurrection.

Online registration in govt hospitals

The Goa Medical College and Hospital, Bambolim, has reportedly introduced a dedicated queue exclusively for senior citizens mainly to ease the challenges faced by them during the registration process.

Additionally it is learnt that a separate counter has also been set up to give preference to senior citizens holding a priority card for Out Patient Department (OPD).

A public relations officer (PRO) will reportedly be present to guide the senior citizens to their respective OPDs for check-ups and necessary investigations.

These facilities need to be provided not only at the GMC, but should be made available for government hospitals across the State since senior citizens also visit other government hospitals. As per statistics elderly citizens now constitute half of the hospital inpatient population.

Catering for the needs of this group requires care and improving the inpatient environment in the hospitals. Elderly persons may have multiple health issues, could be malnourished and have impairments. These older adults are at great risk of suffering hospital-associated discomforts. Be that as it may, at a time when Information Technology (IT) is being used vastly in numerous aspects of the healthcare delivery system, why not introduce a system wherein senior citizens

can make online registration at government hospitals from the comfort of their homes instead of having them wait in line, even if it is a dedicated queue. Senior citizens can upload their Senior Citizen card while taking an appointment online in a government hospital.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Humid weather in Goa

Although summer is just round the corner, Goa has already experienced extremely hot and sometimes very humid weather with the mercury having reached 37.6 degree Celsius on February 16.

Thereafter by and large the maximum temperatures have been around 35 to 36 degree Celsius bordering on a heat wave like condition causing distress to the people.

It is known that on January 3 every year the Earth is closest to the sun and since the orbit of the earth around the sun is elliptical due to closeness to the sun it explains why the temperature is high.

Another significant explanation for the high temperatures is the fact that emission of Greenhouse gases by the about 15 lakh four-wheelers on the roads is also leading to the rise in temperature.

It is known that one litre of petrol emits 2.3 kg of carbon di-

letterstotheeditor

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oxide and at the least if we consider that only 10 percent of the vehicles are in operation every time then minimum 3.45 lakh kg of carbon dioxide which traps the heat of the sun is causing to a great extent the rise in temperatures, also at least emission of the 14 lakh two-wheelers in Goa are contributing to the rise in mercury levels.

Being a coastal State, Goa due to the high temperatures, excess evaporation is leading to the increase in humidity.
Stephen Dias, Dona Paula

Stalwart of domestic cricket

The passing away of the legendary left-arm spinner Padmakar Shivalkar is a huge loss to the cricketing fraternity, and particularly to Mumbai cricket.

If ever there was a highly enduring performer to wear the lion-crested Mumbai cap, it was Shivalkar.

'Paddy', as he was fondly known to fellow cricketers, represented Mumbai in Ranji Trophy for over two decades, establishing himself as a dominant force in domestic cricket.

Despite his outstanding performances, sadly Shivalkar could never make it to the Indian Test team, as his career coincided with that of the legendary Bishan Singh Bedi.

In recognition of his achievements, Shivalkar was honoured with the C K Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016.

Shivalkar's legacy as domestic cricket stalwart remains strong and his impact on Mumbai's cricketing dominance will be remembered for generations.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, Chennai

Brody, brutalist and brutalism

Adrien Brody just won the best actor Oscar for 'The Brutalist', a historical drama about an architect, who survives the Holocaust, only to face anti-Semitism, drug addiction and violence in the US.

The world is also awash with a wave of brutalism; look around and see how the world is slowly being usurped by rabid right wing forces. India, US, Hungary and Turkey are only some of the examples.

In his acceptance speech, Brody mentioned that his character in the film represents the lingering traumas of conflict, repercussions of war, systemic oppression, racism and that of those whose thoughts and actions are at variance with the prevailing neo-fascist ideology.

For a healthier, happier and more inclusive world we should learn from the past. More than

moral lessons, it is a reminder to not let hate and bigotry go unchecked.

Hope Modi, Trump and others of their ilk are listening.

Vinay Dwivedi, Benaulim

Idli sambar storm

The people of Goa have to come out on the streets to fight for their basic rights like to get right of access to their houses that were never heard of in the past.

There are many other issues which are topmost in our minds and the least of which is whether to choose from idli sambar or steaks. With less number of foreign tourists coming to Goa because of dirty beaches and ill-treatment by the shack employees they may have to sell mirchi and boje very soon!

Matias Lobo, Tivim

Cruel deportation

The United States of America has the right to deport illegal migrants from any country, including India. However, the recent deportation of Indians, involving handcuffs and military planes without food or water, was handled in an inappropriate and inhumane manner.

The US should have taken a more compassionate approach and learned from India's more respectful treatment of migrants. Deporting people in such a cruel way was wrong and does not reflect a humane approach to immigration control.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai