

O HERALDO

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Education Dept should help students discover aptitudes

Just a few days ago, girl students made headlines yet again after outperforming boys in the Class XII final exams of the Goa Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education (GBSHSE). The state board also recorded a commendable pass percentage of 90.64% for the 2024-25 academic year, which marked a 5% increase from the previous year's results. In this year's examinations, girls achieved a 92.42% pass percentage, while boys secured 88.69%.

While these results are undoubtedly encouraging for students, parents, and the Goa Board, it is crucial that the celebrations do not end with the headlines. Rather than focusing on gender-based performance comparisons, the real emphasis should be on whether students—both girls and boys—have a clear sense of their career goals and the educational pathways required to achieve them. High exam scores are commendable, but they are only a stepping stone to a much larger goal: securing fulfilling and meaningful careers.

As is the case every year, the announcement of board exam results triggers a flurry of activity. Students and parents scramble to apply for college admissions, while many students prepare for entrance tests required for specialised degree courses. However, amid this rush, an important question arises: Are our students making informed choices about their education and future careers? Do they truly understand how the courses they choose will shape their professional lives? Or are they simply following the crowd, opting for certain courses because their peers are doing the same?

This is where aptitude tests and career counselling must play a larger role in guiding students towards making the right decisions. Currently, career choices for many students are influenced by societal expectations, parental pressure, or misconceptions about job prospects rather than their own interests and abilities. Introducing aptitude tests at a crucial stage in a student's academic journey could help bridge this gap.

Ideally, aptitude tests should be conducted at the Class X level, before students choose their academic streams for higher secondary school. Additionally, a second test could be offered in Class XII, just before they transition from school to college. These tests, based on a wide range of subjects—including mathematics, language, logic, and spatial reasoning—provide a clear and objective assessment of a student's natural abilities. More importantly, they help identify individual strengths and weaknesses, offering students a clearer understanding of careers best suited to their skills and interests.

By aligning their education with their strengths, students will not only excel academically but also develop critical skills in problem-solving, analytical reasoning, and decision-making. This structured approach would significantly reduce instances of students feeling lost or forced into careers they have no passion for. It would also ensure that they receive adequate training in areas where they need improvement, giving them a stronger foundation for their professional lives.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has already introduced significant reforms in the Indian education system, aimed at revamping outdated structures and equipping students with skills relevant to the modern world. However, no amount of policy changes will be truly effective unless students receive proper guidance in selecting courses that align with their future career aspirations. Without such guidance, many students risk becoming "square pegs in round holes"—pursuing professions they have no interest in or, in worse cases, struggling to find employment altogether.

It is disheartening to see talented young individuals spending years preparing for government job exams, queuing for hours in the scorching heat, and pinning all their hopes on securing positions that may not even align with their skills or aspirations. If students are not provided with structured guidance, then celebrating exam results will be nothing more than an empty exercise.

The government and education authorities must take concrete steps to ensure that students receive the necessary guidance before making crucial career decisions. Aptitude tests should be made mandatory for Class X students across all schools, with a follow-up test at the Class XII level. Additionally, schools should invest in career counselling programmes, where trained professionals can help students interpret their test results, explore career options, and make informed decisions about their future.

This initiative could be further strengthened through collaborations between educational institutions and industry experts, providing students with real-world insights into various professions. Schools and colleges could organise career fairs, mentorship programmes, and interactive sessions with professionals from different fields, allowing students to gain a practical understanding of potential career paths.

A well-structured aptitude assessment and career guidance system would have long-term benefits for both students and society. When young individuals are empowered to pursue careers that match their abilities and interests, they are more likely to excel, innovate, and contribute positively to their respective fields.

If implemented effectively, these measures would help transform the education system into one that not only celebrates academic achievements but also ensures that students are equipped with the right tools to build meaningful and rewarding careers.

comment



LUIS DIAS

"Caste is everywhere, yet invisible", Wilkerson says toward the end of the film. "No one avoids exposure to its message. And the message is simple: One kind of person is more deserving of freedom than another kind."



Last year, I wrote a column in this paper ("The Origin of our Discontents", 27 May 2023) about a groundbreaking book: 'Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents' (2020) by Isabel Wilkerson. In it, she describes racism in the United States as an aspect of a caste system – a society-wide system of social stratification characterised by notions such as hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, and purity. She does this by comparing aspects of the experience of American people of colour to the caste systems of India and Nazi Germany.

The book has inspired a 2023 biographical drama film 'Origin' written and directed by Ava DuVernay and available on Netflix. It is based on Wilkerson's personal life and her travels through the US, Germany and India while researching the book.

'Origin' demonstrates how Wilkerson (played by Anjanue Ellis-Taylor) found similarities, "connective tissue" between India's centuries-old oppressive caste system, the United States' bloody history of slavery, the Jim Crow segregation laws after official abolition of slavery and its modern-day avatar of police brutality; and the purity laws in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust.

Wilkerson refers to the seminal 1941 book 'Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class' by Allison Davis and others.

She writes, "It is the fixed nature of caste that distinguishes it from class, a term to which it is often compared. Class is an altogether separate measure of one's standing in a society, marked by level of education, income, and occupation, as well as the attendant characteristics, such as accent, taste, and manners that flow from socioeconomic status. These can be acquired through hard work and ingenuity or lost through poor decisions or calamity. If you act your way out of it, then it is class, not caste.

Through the years, wealth and class may have insulated some people born in the subordinate caste in America, but not protected them from humiliating attempts to put them in their place or to remind them of their caste position."

Wilkerson reveals how the US Jim Crow laws were the legal prototype for the Nazis' 1935 Nuremberg 'Blood' or 'Purity' laws.

Wilkerson was invited to speak at an international conference on caste at the University of Massachusetts Amherst following her research trip to Delhi. There, "faced with translating the Jim Crow caste system for an audience focused on India," she began to draft the earliest outlines of what she would call the Eight Pillars of Caste: 1. Divine will: the belief that social stratification is beyond human control, either divinely ordained or a natural law; 2. Heritability: the belief that social status is acquired at birth and immutable, as codified; 3. Endogamy: the discouragement or prohibition of sex and marriage between castes; 4. Purity and pollution: the belief that the dominant caste is "pure" and must be protected against pollution by the inferior castes, as shown in the segregation of facilities for bathing, eating, education, etc; 5. Occupational hierarchy: the reservation of the more desirable occupations for the superior castes; 6. Dehumanisation and stigma: the denial of individuality and human dignity of lower-caste individuals; 7. Terror and cruelty: as means of enforcement of the caste system and control of lower-caste people; 8. Inherent superiority and inferiority of castes: the belief that people of one caste are inherently superior to those of other castes, expressed e.g. in restrictions on clothing or displays of status by lower-caste people.

Hitler especially marvelled, she writes, at the American "knack for maintaining an air of robust innocence in the wake of mass deaths." That line in quotes captures the current attitude of the state of Israel and much of the wider world towards the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and the occupied West Bank. Wilkerson's eight Pillars of Caste also hold true in the treatment of Palestinians.

Researcher, human-rights and social activist, lawyer and author Dr Suraj Yengde is quoted

by Wilkerson in her book and is featured as himself in 'Origin'. He explains to her that the maintenance of caste in India happens through "the unending violence in the form of rape, mutilation and murder. In India, a Dalit is attacked every 15 minutes. Every day, ten Dalit women are raped. And these are only the reported cases."

'Origin' also discusses the institutional murder of Rohith Vemula. The dramatisation of formative moments in Dr Ambedkar's life was quite moving. His observations of the similarities between the plight of the African-Americans when he visited Harlem and that of India's Dalits, also noted by Martin Luther King Jr many decades later on his trip to India underscore the "connective tissue" Wilkerson alludes to. The dehumanizing horrors of manual scavenging in India are shown in graphic detail.

Of the flawed conflation of race with caste, Wilkerson writes: "Caste and race are neither synonymous nor mutually exclusive. They can and do co-exist in the same culture and serve to reinforce each other. Race, in the United States, is the visible agent of the unseen force of caste. Caste is the bones, race the skin. Race is what we can see, the physical traits that have been given arbitrary meaning and become shorthand for who a person is. Caste is the powerful infrastructure that holds each group in its place."

"The tyranny of caste is that we are judged by the very things we cannot change: a chemical in the epidermis, the shape of one's facial features, the signposts on our bodies of gender and ancestry – superficial differences that have nothing to do with who we are inside."

"Caste is everywhere, yet invisible", Wilkerson says toward the end of the film. "No one avoids exposure to its message. And the message is simple: One kind of person is more deserving of freedom than another kind."

Caste is still everywhere yet invisible in India. And on the global stage, nowhere is the message of "one kind of person being more deserving of freedom than another kind" more blatant and grotesque than in Gaza today.

(Dr Luis Dias is a physician, musician, writer and founder of Child's Play India Foundation. He blogs at luisdias.wordpress.com)

Everywhere, yet invisible

people's edit

RESTLESSNESS PULLS MAN TO GOD

EUSEBIO GOMES

George Herbert, an English poet and priest of the Church of England has written a thought-provoking poem titled, 'The Pulley' which I studied in Class X from the English text-book. In this poem, the conceit revolves around the pulley. He uses it to depict humanity's restless nature and the reason why human beings are incapable of being satisfied. The poet in his beautiful poetical language tells that God has given us all blessings such as strength, beauty, wisdom, honour, and pleasure but withheld from human being the gift of rest.

According to the poet, if this jewel also was bestowed by God on his creature, he would have adored his gifts instead of Him. Hence if not the goodness of gifts, at least the weariness of life may lead him to God, the Creator. When considering this conceit, we need to think about the way that a pulley creates force and leverage. God kept 'rest' to himself in order to always be able to pull mankind back to him. Just like a pulley pulls up water from a well with a rope, the restlessness of man winches him up to God's embrace.

Today in the hustle and bustle of life, the humankind is continuously running from place to place seeking out satisfaction. The human beings are in the pursuit of happiness through the various channels such as man-made things, luxurious and exorbitant items, extravagant life-style, use of costly ornaments and cosmetics to beauty their bodies, relishing sumptuous food, living in extortionate bungalows, accumulating wealth and riches. Do these external things give man the happiness which he seeks? In fact these worldly things are the items of momentary pleasure or transitory satisfaction. The real happiness we can achieve in the divine presence of God, our Father; in his loving embrace and in our selfless and charitable service to the poor, the needy, the people living in miserable conditions; in the philanthropic acts for the welfare of the society. Jesus Christ said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

In this world of tumult and callousness that brings poignancy, we need to connect with God, the source of peace, joy and tranquility. Man with his reasoning power and logical mind has no answer to the incongruities and the mysterious problems of the humankind. The scientists thought that they could answer the human problems but they were flummoxed by the complexities and intricacies of life's problems. Only God has answers to all our problems. Therefore we need to carry our problems to God and enter into deep relationship with him. We are exhausted and live a worrisome life. Restlessness makes us to run to God, no matter to what creed or religion we belong. The famous American singer Elvis Presley in his song 'Crying in the Chapel', tells that we will never find a way on earth to gain peace of mind and therefore we must carry our troubles to the chapel. He calls us to get down on our knees and pray. If we do that he says, our burdens will be lighter and we will surely find the way. St Augustine says: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

Heavy machinery cannot be used at historical sites

A shroud of mystery hangs over the artefacts that were allegedly carted off from the controversial excavation site at Old Goa. But instead of tracking them, the police have reportedly now started investigating a complaint of the Department of Tourism against the activists who have been relentlessly protesting against the 'unauthorised activity' at the site.

The questions that arise is whether the Portuguese era cannon balls found at the site are not artefacts of historical importance? It is pertinent to note that only after the activists reportedly highlighted that the excavation had thrown up old cannon balls at the site, the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) stepped in and work was stopped.

Cannons were a characteristic feature of the forts built by the Portuguese in Goa and were used as ammunition to fire at ships in the sea with devastating effect. Old Goa served as the administrative centre of Portuguese India for over two centuries and there could be several artefacts buried in the ground.

Such sensitive areas cannot be excavated using bulldozers and heavy machinery. Archaeological excavations provide invaluable information about human history, culture and the evolution of societies. Soil is carefully removed in layers, artifacts and features are documented and collected. After excavation, artifacts and data are analysed to reconstruct the past. It may be recalled that hundreds of protesters had staged a protest in Old Goa recently objecting to the large-scale felling of trees and excavation work at the site using

heavy machinery which is recognized by UNESCO as a world heritage site.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Why no master plan for Old Goa?

It appears from the front page news report "Old Goa project : No NOC given, says Church" ("O Herald", March 27, 2025) that certain elements of the PRASAD scheme were considered acceptable to the Church (even without preparing the Master Plan for the Old Goa world heritage site?).

Was this acceptance of certain elements of the project conveyed to the authorities by the one member old Goa Church committee in the year 2022?

Largely-attended meetings were regularly held at Old Goa during the last three years to protest against the illegal bungalow, other unauthorised projects and to highlight the urgent need to prepare the Master Plan for the Old Goa world heritage site.

There are no reports indicating that the one member old Goa Church committee briefed the concerned citizens on the PRASAD Scheme during any of these protest meetings.

Why are the unsustainable project plans near the Old Goa world heritage site kept hidden?

Wesley Edward Pereira, Raia

Eurico Santana da Silva was a formidable Judge

In the demise of our retired High Court Judge Eurico Santana da Silva, we have lost a great and

distinguished personality who above all was very humane and humble. A great Goan has now moved on to what one would say today is a better world.

Being a principled and proficient Judge is no easy task. As Martin Luther King famously said, "There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe nor politic nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right". Our books of history will record that Justice Eurico da Silva gave his best not only during his over 38 years of Judicial Service but also at the various quasi-judicial bodies that he ably headed after his retirement as a High Court Judge.

The very eminent, calm and composed jurist should be a benchmark with every Judge aspiring to attain his level of performance, integrity and competence. Let us hope and be optimistic that the Judiciary remains as a pillar of hope to always ensure that Good Governance and the Rule of Law prevails.

Indeed, the very illustrious Eurico da Silva was a beacon, a rare fusion of knowledge and wisdom in the field of Law and Jurisprudence. May his Departed Soul Rest in Eternal Peace.

Aires Rodrigues, Ribandar

Tourists need clean and decent toilets

It is an indisputable fact that tourists and people visiting Old Goa heritage sites need clean and decent toilets among other facilities.

During my tenure of over 10 years as guide/interpreter, tak-

ing care of various international groups arriving Old Goa there were times when they wanted to visit the washroom and unfortunately the facilities available at site were very poorly maintained. Passengers often had to wait till suitable alternate arrangements were made elsewhere.

I have visited pilgrimage places in Portugal and Brazil where facilities provided for pilgrims are almost in line with what our Minister for Tourism Rohan Khaunte has explained on the floor of the house during the ongoing Assembly and what exactly the Govt intends to carry out.

A waiting room, clean toilets, exclusive area for nursing mothers, restaurant serving quality food at affordable rates, a health centre with wheel chair provision, souvenir shop, a multi lingual facilitation centre, especially those new to the place, etc. These are surely the need of the hour. I am aware that there have been a lot of accusations, misunderstandings and controversies about the birth of this ambitious project. If the concerned authorities have according to some people, failed in some way or the other to obtain necessary permissions, etc, in my humble opinion, let us resolve these problems by dialogue.

Let us appreciate the excellent work this government did for the last Exposition. Let us cooperate with the government to provide a world class pilgrimage centre. Let us keep aside our differences and unite as one big family irrespective of our religions, caste, creed and say with great pride in one loud voice that the gov-

ernment of the day has given Goa and particularly the Christian community, a much awaited world class facility for the people visiting Old Goa.

Ruben de Oliveira Fernandes, Alto Betim

Amnesty scheme is a welcome sign

The State budget presented by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant is out for all to see and while those in the ruling will say that it is a people-oriented budget, the Opposition will shout that it is an

election centric budget aimed at garnering votes for the next elections in 2027. Whatever it may be, the introduction of the amnesty scheme for registration of transfer of immovable property without paying additional penalty is indeed a welcome sign that will not only increase revenue for the state but will benefit thousands of people who have purchased flats/shops and other immovable property by executing conveyance agreements/deeds on a minimum value stamp paper.

Now under the amnesty scheme, they can get away by not paying any penalty and have their conveyance instruments duly stamped and endorsed by the government and thus regularised.

What amount of deficit stamp duty is payable or if there is reduction or remission in stamp duty and or a waiver in penalty to be charged on whole stamp duty to be paid or payable and will the government permit the subsequent registering of such old conveyance documents after availing the amnesty scheme is the question that the government will have to address to make the scheme successful.

Juino De Souza, Porvorim