

O HERALDO

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Horrendous! Bhivpachi Garaz Asa

One is absolutely shocked and numbed to learn about the horrendous dog attack on a 19-month-old child at Tolle, Durgabhat, Ponda. The news of an innocent child mauled to death by a pack of ferocious stray dogs sends a shiver down one's spine. The child's mother was married in Usgao, and the family was staying at Shahapur, near the Safa Masjid. The precious child was born after seven years of marriage to a Muslim family. The mother had come to her mother's place at Durgabhat on Wednesday, April 16.

On this tragic Friday, at around 7:30 am, the girl's uncle left for work, leaving the main door open. He drove the car out and closed the gate but did not latch it, as it cannot be latched.

Unfortunately, the child strayed out of the gate, crossed the road, and began to play in the open area, beyond which lies a jungle. The house is located at the dead end of the road at Durgabhat. Seven to eight dogs attacked the child, dragged her about 50 metres down the road, and mauled her, mainly attacking her head.

The current procedure involves local civic authorities picking up dogs, vaccinating them, and leaving them at the same spot where they were found. This enables the dogs to establish permanent territories, which they guard ferociously. At the very least, they chase two-wheeler riders and bite them, leading to falls and injuries. This happens across Goa, where colonies of stray dogs are thriving

civic authorities, who allow the uncontrolled growth of stray dogs—dogs that now operate like human gangs, fiercely guarding their territories and attacking humans.

Then there are the so-called animal lovers who feed these packs—sometimes even late at night, at great cost of their time. But is there anyone who thinks about the safety of humans versus these stray dogs? True, there are court orders stating that these dogs cannot be shot. However, the Animal Husbandry Department and the municipal and panchayat authorities must work out a permanent solution to the stray dog menace and the attacks on humans.

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There has to be a permanent solution to this dog menace. Local panchayats, municipalities, the Corporation of the City of Panaji, and the Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services must draw up a plan to create shelters for these dogs, so they cease to be a public threat. Sterilising them solves only half the problem. Vaccinating them against rabies solves only half the problem. Once they are released in the same locality, the threat of dog attacks remains. This is an all-Goa problem—in both cities and villages.

Immediately in Ponda, social workers who condemned the dog attack that led to the death of the child have called on the Ponda Municipal Council to set up a dog shelter near the Goa Milk Dairy at Ponda. The child's death should serve as a stark reminder to the civic authorities about their responsibilities, instead of merely collecting salaries and DA month after month and behaving like typical babus, with no public sensitivity or accountability.

Finally, the Chief Minister, the Minister for Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, and the Director of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services must hold an urgent meeting and draw up a plan to tackle dog attacks on an emergency basis. There must be periodic reviews, and more such deaths of innocents through dog attacks must be prevented.

comment



AMITA KANEKAR

Accidents on Goan roads are largely being caused by bad driving, drunk driving, and insane speeding. But behind this is bad road design, bad car design, and bad—to put it mildly—governance



And the other Goa: all about dust, disappeared trees, highways cutting through homes and shrines, empty apartment towers on rice fields, car parks on turtle nests, monkeys on roofs, big and bigger statues, water shortage, garbage, and more dust.

And now also chain-link fences. The government is considering, so it is announced, the installation of chain-link fencing along the sides of highways and other important roads to prevent 'cattle from encroaching and causing accidents.' The only reason why they are still 'considering' this—though the important road stretches have apparently already been chosen—is because of the

potentially ugly look. Not the ugliness of the action, but the look. All the bougainvillea in the world may not be enough to hide some ugliness.

The real question is: are cattle really causing road accidents? How about teaching drivers how to drive instead? How to respect speed limits, and how to overtake and how not to overtake? But no, that's impossible, right, not when you are encouraging colossal numbers of tourists from Indian cities, where knowing how to drive usually means having the money to bribe the license officials. Yes, you sell Goa as a place where anything goes—alcohol, gambling, trafficking, you name it—and plus you hand the drunks a car the minute they land in Goa, whether they have a license or not, and then you blame cattle for the 'accidents'?

But it's not just the tourists creating havoc on Goan roads. We have our own champions like the Savordekar-Kamat couple who killed three people and injured many more while apparently driving drunk in a very powerful SUV that literally flung scooters into the air. Where were the cattle in that so-called 'accident'?

Accidents on Goan roads are largely being caused by bad driving, drunk driving, and insane speeding. But behind this is bad road design, bad car design, and bad—to put it mildly—governance. The planners employed in the government's Town and Planning Department surely know straight roads cause more accidents than those with curves and turns? Because straightness and clear visibility encourages not just speeding by drivers, but also distraction. Bad car design because cars are being designed for greater speed, greater size, greater luxury, and greater power—for the driver. There are unlimited studies that show that cars that go very fast encourage speeding, while cars that are large and powerful kill many more people on the roads—other people, not their own driver/passengers—than small cars and two-wheelers.

And bad governance because... where does one start? Poor public transport. No protection for pedestrians or cyclists. No restrictions on four-wheeler or six-wheeler usage, even if there is only one person in a vehicle meant for

four or six or eight. Monster vehicles are being allowed to monopolise road space, while hand-carts were banned in Panjim by Manohar Parrikar, because the latter were supposedly causing traffic jams. It didn't matter that hand-carts are non-polluting vehicles used by poor people for their jobs and basic sustenance, while big cars are the opposite. It still doesn't matter, even though the cars are so much bigger, such that pedestrians, even those carrying loads on their heads now, can hardly be seen by the driver (who's naturally also on his/her phone).

And have cattle appeared for the first time on Goan roads? When we were kids, we used to see herds of buffalo and other cattle on a daily basis on Panjim's roads. The open field in front of my building was a favourite grazing and wallowing spot, half of it being a natural lake, for the benefit of buffaloes, lotuses, fish, and a host of local and migrant birds.

Now, however, land is only for profit-making, so where are cattle supposed to graze? All across Goa, the plateau were the traditional grazing grounds, now they are covered in towering buildings, surrounded by car parks and other gated amenities. Even the field in front of my house has become, not towers—thanks to a court case won by locals—but a public garden, where cattle are banned.

So where are they to go, but the edges of roads? Even this was not a problem earlier. Earlier one saw not just cattle on the roads, but children playing, people drying paddy and other produce, and a host of other activities. Those roads were not ideal, by any means, but they were used by many.

Now, though, they have become exclusive. Thus, the government is also planning a 'cattle underpass' at Agasaim. Just another construction project, in other words, which is what our ministers love; who cares whether or not the cattle actually use it.

And the chain-link fencing would naturally be considered a great idea too by them, to keep not just cattle but anybody who isn't important enough for those important roads. Sorry pedestrians, you don't belong to this Goa.

(Amita Kanekar is an architectural historian and novelist)

people'sedit

RESURRECTING THE GOD WITHIN

FELICIO FERNANDES

Almost all spiritual traditions, like Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Buddhism and others, believe in the presence of a divine spark or a Supreme Immortal Presence within each individual. This idea of "God within", the Atman, suggests that the source of true peace, love, and purpose resides within, in an "inner kingdom" and not in external circumstances.

Jesus says, "Indeed, the kingdom of God is within you", (Luke 17:20–21). He is implying an internal spiritual reality and the idea that God reigns in each of us. Being aware of the kingdom of God within you is a tremendous realisation rather than a literal search for a deity. It means recognising the inherent divinity within oneself.

Resurrecting this divine presence in each one of us requires a spiritual awakening by cultivating an awareness of this inner divine presence, and living a life aligned with divine principles. This means rediscovering the divinity within oneself.

However, this is not enough as Jesus again reiterates that, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter" (Matthew 7:21). It means that the experience of this 'Inner Kingdom' has to manifest in our day to day living, in our relationships with our neighbours, in our acts of kindness and our compassion and understanding towards others.

Connecting with the "kingdom within" means resonating with love for our environment. This calls for a deeper understanding of one's connection to the universe. God commissions us to rule over the creation in a way that sustains, protects, and enhances His works. Conserving and respecting our natural resources can enhance our inner connection with God by fostering a sense of awe, wonder, and appreciation for His creation.

In the Christian context, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to the belief and core of the faith. It signifies His victory over death. In the context of our daily lives, it would mean a rebirth or transformation, signifying a move to a deep and personal connection embracing one's true self.

We are often disconnected from God, from ourselves, and from each other. The fallout of this is the innumerable wars that we witness, the mindless, colossal destruction of our God given environment (Earth, Forests, Sea and Sky), the social injustices, hunger, diseases, deceitful living, cronyism, marginalization of certain sections of humanity and the list can go on endlessly.

To conclude, to resurrect the "the kingdom of God within you" would mean to realise the "indwelling presence" of this Living God and accept that I am an embodied spirit (and not just a material body) with vast capacities to do good for my neighbour and for the world in which I live. It would imply the recognition and acceptance of the interconnectedness that we humans share as brothers and sisters under His Fatherhood and that God is the creator and master of this gratuitously given universe which I must respect and sustain.

When you rest in the awareness of this "Inner Presence and resonate with its external manifestation", you are resurrected.

Reflecting on departure of Missionaries of Charity

It has come as shocking news to many who have long recognised and appreciated the selfless work of the Missionaries of Charity in Panaji, carried out from their humble premises belonging to the Trustees of Assistance de Goa.

Whatever the reason may be for their departure, the remark made by Sr Rosaria, the Superior of the Missionaries of Charity – "Panjim is now rich and it appears that we are not required" – deserves serious reflection. Why did she feel compelled to make such a statement?

No matter how affluent a locality becomes, the presence of such charitable organisations serves a vital purpose – they stand as a visible reminder to the wealthy that there are still many among us in need, begging for shelter and food. Has Panjim truly succeeded in removing all street beggars from the city? The answer appears to be no.

Many migrants who come to the city in search of work often find themselves with no means of survival, forced to beg. Some families, unable to cope, even abandon their children. There are also young, unwed mothers who, fearing social judgement, are driven to give up their infants.

St Teresa began her mission in India with the very aim of caring for such vulnerable individuals, and I fear that if the public and Church authorities do not rally in support of these homes, many will be dismantled. One cannot count on the government of the

Right decision to leave Panjim

The rich don't care for the poor but God cares and His presence is seen in the suffering of the poor, the destitute, the marginalized, the neglected and the forsaken.

So was it with Missionaries of Charity in Panjim for 49 years from 1976. Now the Sisters of Mother Teresa will leave, perhaps, for the reason that Panjim is rich and such service to the needed is out of question.

But the reason could be otherwise, having received orders from Kolkata headquarters. Though rich, Panjim is poor in the divine works for the people, haphazard functioning and dangerous in disturbing time. The threats to the missionaries too is increasing elsewhere in the country. In view of this and in the safety of inmates the missionaries take care of, the Sisters of Mother Teresa has made the right decision for immediate shift. But the works of the said missionaries will continue in places where they will find a

letterstotheeditor

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day to intervene – if anything, the vacated land may simply become another site for development.

Let us not forget the Missionaries of Charity's profound impact, and let us not allow their absence to become a silent acceptance of a system that neglects the most helpless among us.

Gregory E D'Souza, Siolim

warm welcome for their services. As for Smart Ponje, the quit of the Missionaries of Charity will be a blot on the reputation of the city, if one can say, depicting the bleak future to come.

Ayres Sequeira, Salvador do Mundo

Lighting glitch shows KA in poor light

It is shocking to note that even after a Rs 50 crore renovation, the Kala Academy, Goa's premier cultural venue is reportedly facing basic operational failures. The recent light malfunction during a Marathi play exposed the technical flaws which the government says was not due to human error. It must best be said that technical glitches are a fall-out of human errors and there should be accountability for the flaws. Such operational failures can take place only due to negligence. The stage lights reportedly began to flicker while the Marathi play was being staged forcing a 10-minute halt. The lighting glitches depicts Goa's premiere cultural center in poor light, quite literally, especially when there is performance by artistes from other states. In the past too, Kala Academy has been in the thick of controversy for various reasons right from leakage during the rainy season to a collapsing roof. The latest controversy puts in question the lighting system

in the cultural venue which is visited by hundreds of people. The technical snag in the electrical system could (God forbid) lead to a short circuit which could ultimately end up in a fire incident. A fire incident could have a devastating effect on the structural stability of the building and should be prevented at all cost. If need be the entire electrical system should be revamped if it has not been done thus far.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Death sentence for Dharavi residents

A video has emerged on social media which shows the hardships endured by those living near the Deonar dumping ground in Mumbai. Life is a daily assault on the senses and the body, swarms of mosquitoes breed unchecked, the air is thick with the stench of decay; children cough through the night, elders struggle to breathe. Skin infections, respiratory diseases, and bacterial illnesses are a part of everyday existence of these unfortunate souls.

The Maharashtra government has earmarked 124 acres within the active landfill site to relocate residents from Dharavi which has been handed over on a platter to Adani for redevelopment, the industrialist shall easily mint upwards of Rs.50,000

crores from this project.

The Deonar landfill contains over 20 lakh tonnes of legacy waste and emits 6000 kilograms of methane every hour, it is the most toxic environment in Mumbai. To knowingly send thousands of families to a slow, suffocating death is not redevelopment; it is akin to Jews being sent into gas chambers during the Nazi era. Would the Maharashtra CM send his own children to live here even for a night? Redevelopment is supposed to improve people's quality of life but this plan crushes them under the weight of toxic waste. The people of Dharavi deserve dignity, not disease; they are not garbage to be dumped along with Mumbai's waste. The conscience of a government is tested not by what it builds, but by who it sacrifices.

Rekha Sarin Trehan, Benaulim

Demolition of Lala-ki-basti

The demolition of Lala-ki-basti in Tivim has made headlines and many people have come on camera to thank the High Court and the different Government agencies like the Goa Police, PWD, Electricity etc. But the people behind the struggle have remained in the background and they should be given credit. The Tivim Citizens Forum led by Jacinto Pereira have spent their own time and money to fight this fifteen years old battle to free the Comunidade land and we the Tivim Gauncars are grateful and we thank all of them from the bottom of our hearts.

Matias Lobo, Tivim