

Herald *Goa*



It's not all rainbows and sunshine

Being queer in Goa is an uphill battle. Constantly fighting the crisis of developing a strong sense of identity, confronting discrimination and biases, and enduring feelings of loneliness is an ageing challenge

Elsa Angel Rose

Does Goa have a queer culture of its own or is it all down to the unfamiliar people who visit Goa? How enriching are the lives of queers in Goa? The varied lived realities



GOSPEL SONG 'JESU TUNCH AMCHO RAI' TO BE RELEASED



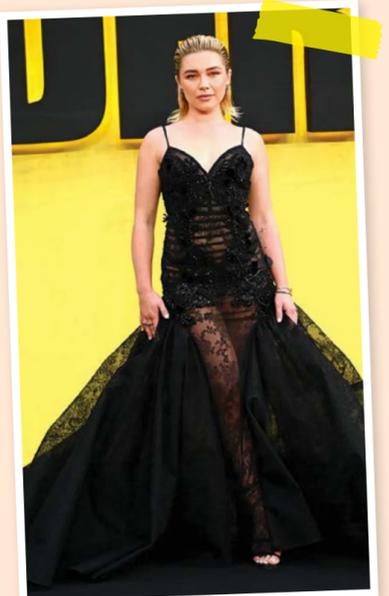
WHEN 'QUESTION MARK' WINS AN AWARD

SWIPE RIGHT

Eva Longoria remembers Pope Francis blessing her marriage



As the world is continuing to mourn Pope Francis, who died on Easter Monday at the age of 88, of the many people remembering the Pope is **Eva Longoria**, who had the honour of meeting him and having him bless her marriage to her husband José 'Pepe' Bastón. "For him to bless two people like Pepe and I, who both were divorced... I was like, 'Oh my gosh. I don't know if we deserve this blessing.' And he's like, 'Absolutely. You absolutely do.' When you met him, you could feel that energy, and you could feel that decency and goodness, and I think the way to honour him is to try to be that," said Eva.



Florence Pugh wore a romantic, Gothic-inspired look courtesy of Etie Saab's fall 2024 couture collection as she joined leading stars of Thunderbolts* at the UK premiere.

Goans speak out on being queer

Goans who identify themselves as part of the LGBTQ+ community, have mixed views regarding the queer culture/community in Goa. People from South Goa do not feel the presence of a strong community; it is nearly non-existent, unlike North Goa, where queer community presence is apparent. "North Goa seems to have a welcoming attitude for queer people. But sad to say, it's mainly because of the outsiders who have settled here," said Zahur, a Goan who identifies as queer. He further added, "My life is quite pleasant, but I would attribute that to adhering to societal norms, not being a stereotypical gay boy, being a flamboyantly feminine gay guy sadly puts one in danger."

Shanoor Shaikh, another Goan queer person gladly said, "I have met many people who are queer and I have had this conversation of them getting support from locals and not causing a negative atmosphere for them. So I suppose they feel safe and free to express their sexual orientation."



Queer and welcome in Goa

For outsiders who are queer, Goa has been inviting. Harry, who has been living in Goa for the past six years, said, "I moved to Goa when I was 16, and I feel confident to express my identity and my gender. Goa has been extremely helpful." She further added that she was terrified when she was staying in her hometown, Punjab. Goa, being exposed to hippie culture, seeing numerous foreigners peacefully living their lives here, seems to be welcoming for people from the LGBTQ+ community. Aadhi, a host for queer events, said happily, "My landlord is a Goan, and he feels that his wife and kids are safe with me as their tenant."

Queer dating scenario

The dating scenario is, unfortunately, as complicated as it can get. Most people use apps like Grindr or Tinder. Hookup culture is the one major hazard. Tinder mostly has tourists who pass through. Grindr mostly has local Goans. It's hard to find genuine LGBTQ+ people in Goa. The dating scenario could have been better if there were safe spaces to meet, like queer friendly clubs, and events

organised. "Being queer is being overly sexualised because of the strong hookup culture," said a person who identifies as queer. Polyamorous relationships are also common among queer people. There are people out there exploring their sexuality and dating, but the community is extremely small and does not offer many options.



Constant obstacles faced

Innumerable difficulties are encountered by queer people on a day-to-day basis. Internalized Homophobia is a huge one among those. Zahur said, "You grow up hating yourselves, there's no sense of pride." There is a lot of discrimination within the gay community itself. The stereotypes are real and cause difficulties. Being judged throughout one's life for not behaving in a certain way is immensely saddening. "At times, gay people are misunderstood in terms of sex workers. This can be seen prominently on the Baga beach side of North Goa," said Shanoor Shaikh. Homophobia exists everywhere, "I am very used to getting kicked out of my rental homes for being gay," said Aadhi.

"In Goa, I met so many amazing queer people who are doing so many wonderful things, and all of these are fun and exciting. I have not faced any problems regarding homophobia or anything of that sort," said Jaison Arland, a queer person from Mumbai, who is a frequent visitor of Goa. Queer culture in Goa is a constant work in progress and hopefully soon everyone will coexist happily in a very inclusive, nurturing and compassionate space.



LGBTQ+ communities and events

Queer people in Goa are mostly people from big cities who got lost in the crowds and reached Goa to rediscover themselves. Every month, events are organised. Most events have a considerable amount of participation. These events bring together entrepreneurs, artists, poets, deejays, performing live, and fun games. Communities are offering employment and acting as a source of money for people. The comparatively smaller size of communities in Goa offers people more inclusivity and feelings of

belongingness, which they did not experience in big cities. Aadhi, said, "The queer community in Goa appears tiny compared to the ones in big cities, however the community is growing at a fast pace." Gaurav, founder of Barefoot Goa, where queer events are conducted, said, "It's not about building a community for me; we are just trying to include everyone and live organically. Have a good time with people around me, regardless of who they are, where they come from."



A celebration of Goan culture, tradition and unsung heroes

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As part of its silver jubilee celebrations, the Goa Heritage Action Group (GHAG) marked World Heritage Day and World Earth Day with a special event held on Tuesday evening at Garcia de Orta, Panjim. The gathering was a celebration of Goa's rich culture, traditional crafts, vibrant arts, and music.

The evening was observed in a subdued manner out of respect for the passing of the Pope and the days of mourning declared by the State.

The venue featured 12 vibrant stalls showcasing traditional Goan crafts, with artisans from villages across the state presenting their handmade offerings—ranging from brooms and pots to other unique local items. The event also included

painters, artists, and a variety of Goan food. Jose Henriques, a potter, shared,



"I've been doing this for a while, but it's also about my love for Goa. I hope people appreciate what I have to offer."

Fashion designer Herald Andrade from Velim, known for his affordable clothing, shared that he chose not to showcase his label at the event. "I wanted to reach the masses and raise awareness," he explained. Although he also works in the Hindi film industry, Andrade expressed a strong preference for his life in Goa.

Raymond Pereira, an artist and professor at Nirmala Institute, showcased his upcycled creations, turning earthen pots and bottles into beautiful indoor décor using the art of decoupage. "They only need to be watered once a week—that's it," he added, highlighting the simplicity of his eco-friendly creations.

Alinto Coelho, Chairman of the Goa Heritage Action Group (GHAG), informed that GHAG was the first independent NGO in Goa, established in 200. As a founding member, he has been deeply involved in heritage preservation, which has often included legal battles to protect temples, churches, and chapels at risk.

He emphasized the inclusive and secular nature of the group, welcoming diverse perspectives. However, Alinto admitted to the increasing challenges. "It's getting tough. The government lacks sensitivity toward the environment. All kinds of tampering are being done—we're wary of it. We are not anti-establishment, but we believe development should be sensible, not destructive."

Chief Guest Tomazinho Cardozo congratulated GHAG on completing 25 years. Four prominent Goans were felicitated for their contributions to culture, music, and literature: Sonia Shirsat, Marius Fernandes, Susmita Gawas, and Dr Jayanti Naik. A highlight of the event was the launch of historian Prajal Sakhardande's third book, 'History of Women's Contribution to Goa's Freedom Struggle'. The book was released by Prof. Sushila Sawant Mendes, who praised it for adding substantial value to existing literature. She noted the significant mention of Christian women's roles in the freedom movement, despite facing resistance from both family and the Church. She emphasized the immense sacrifices these women made—many remained single, were imprisoned, or lived underground for the cause.

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