

## O HERALDO

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## From celebration to catastrophe

This is the first time in living memory that the fabled Lairai zatra at Shirgao in Bicholim taluka was marred by tragedy. In the early hours of Saturday, a stampede claimed six lives and left at least 74 others injured, some of them critically. The elaborate Hindu observance, held annually between April and May, sees thousands of Dhonds (devotees of goddess Lairai) descend upon the small hamlet of Shirgao from far-flung corners of Goa, as well as from neighbouring states such as Maharashtra and Karnataka.

According to the Lairai Devi temple president, this year's zatra drew between 50,000 and 70,000 devotees - but sources who visited the devasthan told O Herald there were no less than 2,00,000 people at the temple.

The temple president said the chaos began when a devotee accidentally touched a light bulb with his beth (a decorative stick), suffered an electric shock, and collapsed onto the crowd around him. The area was already overcrowded, with pushing and shoving as devotees jostled to move closer to the rituals. Attempts by local villagers to restrain the crowd and prevent further pushing proved futile. In moments, the atmosphere turned from one of reverence to terror, with shrieks and cries piercing the night as people were trampled, and others frantically tried to flee the human crush.

While police and other authorities are yet to ascertain the exact cause of the stampede, the tragedy—which has evoked an outpouring of grief and condolences from across the country—is a grim reminder that at events of such magnitude, the government cannot afford to take public safety for granted.

The blame game has begun, with the Goa government transferring North Goa Collector Sneha Gitte, SP Akshat Kaushal, DySP Jivba Dalvi and the Bicholim Police Inspector as well.

North Goa SP Kaushal publicly acknowledged that more than 50,000 people were present at the temple for the zatra and that 400 police personnel were on duty. A simple calculation shows that each officer would have had to manage over 125 people—a ratio that is not just inadequate but practically impossible, as Saturday's events tragically demonstrated.

"We are still trying to determine the exact cause of the incident. However, we have been told that the stampede might have happened due to some people spreading rumours. The biggest challenge for us was to peacefully vacate more than 50,000 people who were inside the temple," Kaushal told the media, while reiterating that this was the first time such an incident had taken place at the zatra. But that this was the "first time" should not be a point of consolation for the administration. On the contrary, the goal should have been to ensure there would never be a first time when human lives are lost so needlessly during a gathering meant to celebrate faith and devotion.

Given the scale of attendance the zatra sees year after year, it is fair to say that both the state administration and police have relied more on luck than preparation in the past. This time, luck ran out. It is now crucial that authorities adapt to changing times and adopt a more proactive, systems-driven approach to crowd management at such large-scale events, particularly when attendance is only increasing every year.

They should have, in fact, been on high alert, especially after the tragic stampede at the Maha Kumbh Mela earlier this year, which claimed at least 30 lives and injured 90 others. Yes, the Kumbh Mela—held at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers in Prayagraj—sees a much larger influx of devotees and has experienced multiple stampedes in the past.

But that a crowd crush occurred as recently as January 29, 2025, should have served as a wake-up call for authorities here to take pre-emptive measures and prepare for every eventuality.

Let this be the first—and the last—time such a horror unfolds in our State. Goa must learn from this tragedy. The lives lost at Shirgao must not become just another footnote in a long list of avoidable disasters. Instead, they must serve as a turning point in how we approach safety, planning, and accountability at mass gatherings in the future.

Without attending expensive summer camps, children made new friends, played traditional games, inculcated social skills of adapting to people of different temperaments, roamed the whole village visiting relatives and friends and thus studied the map of a new place so effortlessly



BY INVITATION

Sushila Savant Mendes

## Come May: Reminiscing the Goan Mudança



Mudanças helped rejuvenate a tired body and mind and provide the much required psychological calmness for the stresses and strains of everyday life

Most Goans have fond memories of their annual family mudança's or vacations in different airy spaces like a beach or a grandmother's house, generally in the months of April and May. Variak bosop, (literally sitting to inhale fresh air) has always been an effective Goan method of beating both heat and stress. My in-laws rented a house in Colva for a month for their honeymoon and this tradition continued every year. A couple of days back our festakar Marius Fernandes curated the Mudançachem or Muddasachem Fest in Valpoi with local community support. Among different activities was the festakara-chi pasoi, a walk through the still untouched lush green areas of Valpoi.

For people of Salcette, the preferred beach was Colva or any beach on this shore which had public transport like Velsao, Cansaulim, Majorda, Betalbatim, Benaulim, Varca, Zalor, Cavellosim and Mobor ending with the Betul beach. In the north, Calangute was the most favoured beach besides Morjim, Arambol, Vagator and Tiracol. Many families who stayed in Panjim would choose a beach near to their ancestral village or landlords who had property and a house near the beach would spend a month there. Mudança on the beach was looked forward to with eager anticipation.

Goans also believe that sea baths have medicinal and therapeutic effects against rheumatism and arthritis because of the salt content in the water and would also help in building immunity against common sickness which came during the monsoons that followed the hot season in Goa. Today the cool breeze and the cool baths are replaced by curated summer camps inside rooms. Teaching continues even during the vacations but this time of songs, dances, painting, even oratory-structured learning so to say. Children may prefer the beach, go exploring for kanddams and charams, like we did on the Baradi hills, or in search of cashews, tamarind, guavas, jambolons, just leaving us free to enjoy our own spaces and do whatever we fancied, climbing trees and mountains, playing games, gorging on mangoes and jackfruits, enjoying the simple pleasures of childhood while on vacations.

Baths and walks on a Goan beach is being in the lap of nature and a much more aesthetically pleasing activity to keep healthy. Beaches in Europe have icy cold water almost throughout the year and many months without the sun. A rare sunny day becomes an occasion for an outdoor picnic day in the UK. Educational pedagogy always encourages learning to be made fun and exciting. The rising suicides during examinations in Goa is a call that our system does not provide healthy alternatives to students who cannot cope. Students should be given the freedom to choose what they love as each child is wired differently and parents along with society need to respect their choices. A mudança with long walks on the beach can go a long way to narrow differences.

Goan children across communities have fond memories of going for a three day picnic on the beach. We went by the tarcar's (boatman's) canoe from Khutbon to Mobor beach with a simple home cooked meal of rice, attoiloli koddi (a thicker version of curry) so that it would not spill during the journey, salted mangoes, capped with juicy mangoes or jackfruits. Tea time would be of light black tea with some bulinas (kind of cookies), or attol (a thickened sweet—again for convenience of carrying). Above all was the enjoyment of the three sea baths per day and the joy of neighbours being together. Women bargained to purchase dry fish wholesale and then divided among the families. Sharing and caring by the elders nurtured a community spirit. It's strange that I do not recall any uncles accompanying this group, perhaps the men were busy working

abroad or on the ship (common in most villages of Goa).

My husband's grandmother's family have a house especially built for a mudança in Betul. Relatives and cousins would book this house much in advance. It is built on a hillock facing the river and has a lovely view of a hill in the backyard and water in front. He has fond reminiscences of exploring that area with his grandmother. Today vacation holidays are in Thailand, Ceylon or countries of Europe for those who can afford. The traditional mudança of yesteryears has moved on with the times! The tradition of enjoying and having a lived in experience of Goan culture and Goan-ness has almost disappeared. Every place of travel however is a learning experience in itself. Betul was also a place for the annual summer retreat of the clergy.

The availability of fresh fish in the vicinity was the cherry on the cake. Seeing a ramponn (fishing net) being pulled on a beach with the live fish struggling in the net is an experience by itself. On the first day of the mudança, small manddoios and shell fish would be collected from the shore and this would be used to make a tasty pulão or arroz on the next day. Each child vied with the other to see who collected the most. Bending and collecting with your legs wet in the water was a healthy exercise. During these vacations the kids would also hire cycles and enjoy their drives on the village roads of Goa with the coconut palms swaying along the roads, providing shade from the summer heat with the cool sea breeze cushioning the face.

Many Goan children have fond memories of spending their entire vacation

pampered by their mama-mai's (maternal grandmothers) who fattened pigs and kept chickens ready to make the sorpotel, sausages and shakuti. Breakfast was of Koilolos or chapatis with mangada (mango jam). Pez, or the Goa rice gruel with pickles and chutneys, one of the most healthy mid-day snacks, which kept a physically active child's belly satiated till lunch time, diminishing the urge of consuming artificially coloured aerated soft drinks or biscuits and chocolates. The grandmother would prepare homemade snacks for the brood of grand-kids for tea with locally available ingredients like the enriched in iron Goan palm jagger, making the healthy chun with grated coconut and boiled pulses and even boiled ghontas (a variety of mangoes) freely available on the neighbour's mango tree. Ghoddchem, tizan, or even the humble dry water melon seeds or boiled jackfruit seeds were munching delights.

Meeting up with cousins, eating together the nutritious Goan cuisine around the family table, are simple but memorable experiences that the new generations of Goans unfortunately will rarely experience. My own children have never had this opportunity. Today grandparents are visited by cars for just one or two hours. Without attending expensive summer camps, children made new friends, played traditional games, inculcated social skills of adapting to people of different temperaments, roamed the whole village visiting relatives and friends and thus studied the map of a new place so effortlessly. One would grudgingly return home, the day before school started.

Mudanças helped rejuvenate a tired body and mind and provide the much required psychological calmness for the stresses and strains of everyday life. It is a part of our Goan ethos and lifestyle down the ages and surprisingly Goan tourism has never marketed and maybe cannot market mudanças as the concept is intrinsically Goan. The spirit and adventure of a mudança has a big slice of Goan culture wrapped in its very being.

(Dr. Sushila Savant Mendes is a Professor and Author of History and an Independent Researcher.)

## Multiple intelligences key to smarter educational choices

In today's fast-paced world, the education sector has experienced significant growth in the number of courses available, often leaving students overwhelmed by the sheer variety. Many of these courses are presented to students without a clear understanding of their core strengths. While these courses are designed to align with industry demands, it is essential to ensure that students are assessed holistically, keeping their interests in mind. For instance, a bright but uninterested student may perform well in entrance exams, yet their true passions might remain unnoticed. Even the competitive exams promoted by colleges and institutions fail to effectively measure an individual's strengths, interests, or aspirations. This is where MII steps in, bridging the gap between students' interests and the courses offered, empowering them to make informed decisions about their future pathways.

Institutions should utilise their resources and expertise to profile students based on their interests, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of their multiple intelligences. This approach enables institutions to unlock each student's potential and steer them toward a more rewarding academic and professional journey. When addressing multiple intelligences, it

VENAN BONAVENTURE DIAS

is crucial to move beyond assessing and nurturing individuals especially children, young people, and those embarking on their careers, through a narrow and subjective definition of intelligence. Instead, we must celebrate and advocate for the wide array of abilities that are valuable in life and within organisations. By doing so, we can recognise each person for their unique qualities and promise, while offering the support needed to help them grow and achieve their goals.

This evolved perspective on intelligence becomes a game-changer for human resource professionals, managers, training teams, and consultants, empowering them to boost organisational productivity, elevate service standards, enhance profitability, and improve employee satisfaction. Simultaneously, it equips educational institutions to support students in uncovering their true potential without prejudice, directing their intelligence in a balanced and impactful manner. Through MII, this transformative approach breathes new life into both the industry and the education sector.

The concept of multiple intelligences highlights the diverse ways in which individuals perceive and interact with the world,

**UPFRONT**  
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emphasising that intelligence is not one-dimensional. Among these, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences play a pivotal role in shaping our emotional quotient (EQ). These intelligences contribute to understanding ourselves and others, helping us determine whether we lean towards introversion or extroversion—traits that can both serve as personal strengths in different contexts.

Meanwhile, the remaining types primarily influence our intelligence quotient (IQ) and showcase the broad spectrum of human capabilities. Here's an expanded look at these intelligences:

• **Linguistic intelligence:** This involves the innate ability to express oneself effectively through language, whether spoken or written. Individuals with strong linguistic intelligence excel at interpreting ideas, retaining information, explaining concepts, and identifying the connection between communication and meaning like writers.

• **Logical-Mathematical intelligence:** Known for scientific reasoning and problem-solving abilities, this intelligence enables individuals to identify patterns, analyse complex situations, deduce solutions, understand cause-and-effect relationships, and arrive at logical conclusions. Those with high logical-mathematical intelligence tend to thrive in fields like engineering.

• **Musical intelligence:** People with this intelligence have a heightened sensitivity to sound, tone, pitch, and rhythm. They possess the ability to create, interpret, and respond to auditory patterns and often excel in music composition, performance, or sound design.

• **Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence:** This intelligence reflects proficiency in physical movement, coordination, agility, and control over fine motor skills. Those who excel in bodily-kinesthetic intelligence often thrive in activities requiring precision and physicality, such as athletics.

• **Spatial-Visual intelligence:**

Individuals with this intelligence have a remarkable ability to visualize objects, interpret spatial relationships, and create mental images.

• **Interpersonal intelligence:** This form of intelligence revolves around understanding and connecting with others. It involves empathy, interpreting emotions, effective communication, and fostering relationships. Individuals with strong interpersonal intelligence often succeed as leaders and counsellors.

• **Intrapersonal intelligence:** Deep self-awareness is the hallmark of intrapersonal intelligence. It encompasses an individual's ability to recognise and regulate their own emotions, thoughts, and behaviour, fostering personal growth and adaptability.

Together, these intelligences illustrate the multifaceted nature of human potential.

Below are studies that have explored the global application of MII in educational decision-making:

1. **Israeli case study:** Research conducted with seventh-grade students in Israel investigated the correlation between dominant intelligences, as outlined by Gardner's theory, and academic performance. The findings revealed that students with multiple dominant intelligences achieved higher academically, underscoring

the significance of recognizing diverse forms of intelligence within education systems.

2. **Indian review article:** A study conducted in India analysed the impact of the multiple intelligence framework within school curricula. It highlighted the limitations of traditional teaching methods in accommodating individual learning styles and demonstrated how integrating MII could enhance both academic achievement and student engagement.

3. **NEP 2020 application in India:** Another study in India explored the applicability of Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory in alignment with the NEP 2020. The study stressed the importance of child-centered teaching methodologies and advocated for incorporating MII serves as an effective approach to addressing students' unique needs and fostering their comprehensive development.

These studies illustrate how MII can be a valuable tool in customising education to individual strengths and equipping students to make well-informed choices regarding their academic and career trajectories.

(Venan Bonaventure Dias is an Educational and social entrepreneur vocal on issues related to governance, poverty, education, healthcare, and environmental conservation.)