

# Herald Café



GOAN COLLEGE STUDENTS  
PACKING PLANNERS,  
PERSONALITY & PERSPECTIVE



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MARATHI'S COMEDY  
PHENOMENON

## FROM STATEHOOD TO NOW: Goa through the eyes of two generations

SAHIL NAYAK

Every year on May 30, **Goa celebrates Statehood Day**, to mark the occasion of it becoming India's 25th state in 1987. Café explores the evolving face of Goa through two parallel narratives, one from four Gen Z students, and the other from their grandparents, who witnessed the birth of statehood and the early hopes it carried

Ojal Gaitonde

**O**n May 30, 1987, Goa transitioned from a Union Territory to India's 25th state. It was a turning point—marking political autonomy, stronger administrative control, and hopes of development rooted in Goan identity. Four grandparents who witnessed the momentous shift first-hand, and four Gen Z students, who inherited the post-statehood Goa speak about their memories and perspectives to reveal a State constantly balancing between preserving its identity and embracing modernity.



### ANJANI CHODANKAR AND MANSHITA JALMI



**Anjani Chodankar, (77), Aldona**

"Back then, the Portuguese would roam around, and we lived in fear. They denied

us basic rights and took all our farm produce. After Liberation, it was tense but statehood brought safety and freedom. Life was healthier and simpler before with no chemicals, tastier food, and more greenery. Now everything's changing, even mackerel doesn't taste like fish anymore. I miss the real Goa."

### Manshita Jalmi (19), Aldona



"I've only heard stories about Portuguese rule and the merger debate. It feels like ancient history. Today, there's too much construction, and traditions like Fugdi during Ganesh visarjan are slowly fading.

We hardly know about Goa's journey from colonisation to statehood which we should. We've inherited a Goa that's changed a lot. Our generation is losing touch with Goa's roots. I wish we could reconnect with that culture and nature that my grandmother experienced before it disappears completely."

### SATWASHILA AMBEKAR AND SIDDHATA AMBEKAR

#### Satwashila Ambekar (67), Pernem

"I was born in 1958, life was very hard in those days. There were no buses, and school was a struggle. As children, we rarely had anything to look forward to. My father's earnings would mostly be spent on food. Before statehood, basic things were missing. Later we got electricity, water, and better education. Marriages used to be tough due to money, but now settling down is easier. I've seen a lot of change, and I'm glad the youth don't struggle like we did."



#### Siddhata Ambekar (15), Bhirone, Khareband, Pernem

"I know Goa was ruled by the Portuguese, and life was unfair back then. There was no equality, and people were very poor but hardworking. After statehood, people started forgetting our traditions and culture and even valuing other languages more than our own. Goa has also become dirtier compared to earlier. Our education system mostly teaches about the Mughals and Portuguese, but not about our own people or statehood. We're missing an important part of our history, and I wish we could learn more from our elders about Goa."



### MUKUND NAYAK AND DAKSH PAI ANGLE

#### Mukund Nayak (78), Rivona

"I remember Rivona when it was still known as Rishivan, a name Portuguese couldn't pronounce. In my childhood, Rivona had no roads or electricity, just farms, forests, and community. We were happy even without comforts, studying by candlelight and eating what we grew. Tourism brought jobs and better roads, but unlike coastal areas, our village is still peaceful. Goa still has its susegad charm, and we don't want fast, greedy development. We want growth at our pace. Goa has preserved some balance, but we must be careful not to lose it."



#### Daksh D Pai Angle (13), Chinchinim



"There's a lot more development now—flyovers, resorts, buildings. It's changing how we live. People are moving out of Goa for work and studies. Greenery is vanishing. Summers are hotter, monsoons are unpredictable, and farming is affected due to weather changes. Tourism helps but also causes pollution and high property rates. Locals may not be able to afford to stay here. I want Goa to have both development and nature—modern schools and roads, but also forests, beaches, and traditional homes."

### RAMCHANDRA SHETKAR AND AKSHARA SADASHIV SHETKAR

#### Ramchandra Shetkar, (75), Pernem

"Earlier, even Porvorim had nothing. Now there are roads, colleges, and offices. Before, kids worked after Class 7 or 8. Today, they study and aim for careers. I tell young people to spend wisely on health, learning, and sports. Stay focused and walk the right path. Life has become easier, and I hope the new generation continues to build wisely on what we've worked hard to achieve."



#### Akshara Shetkar (13), Pernem

"I've seen Goa change a lot, there are more buildings, traffic, and modern places coming up. It's exciting to see new developments, but also a little sad because we're losing some of our traditions and the greenery we once had. I really hope Goa finds a balance between development and nature. I'd like to see more clean surroundings, trees, and efforts to protect our culture. I want the future of Goa to be one where we grow, but still remember our roots and what makes us Goan."



### SWIPE RIGHT



#### Sabrina Carpenter could star in 'Mamma Mia 3'

**C**ould **Sabrina Carpenter** be heading to Kalokairi? According to 'Mamma Mia' franchise producer Judy Craymer, the answer might just be "yes." She recently confirmed that 'Mamma Mia 3' is officially in development, and Sabrina Carpenter is being considered for a role in the long-awaited sequel. While production hasn't started yet, Judy revealed that a script is ready and the creative team is eager to reunite the original cast including Meryl Streep, whose character met a tearful end in the second film. "We know what we want to do with the movie, and it will happen," she said. As for Sabrina, the rising pop star and actress seems like a natural fit. With her powerhouse vocals and stage presence, she could bring fresh energy to the beloved musical franchise. While nothing is confirmed yet, fans are already dreaming of her belting out ABBA hits under the Grecian sun.



#### NBA YoungBoy pardoned by Donald Trump in surprise move

**R**apper **NBA YoungBoy** is officially a free man. The Louisiana artist, whose real name is Kentrell Gaulden, was granted a presidential pardon by Donald Trump this week, wiping away a nearly two-year prison sentence tied to gun-related charges. YoungBoy was one of several high-profile individuals included in Trump's latest round of pardons, alongside a former New York congressman, a labour union leader, and a reality TV couple. "I want to thank President Trump for granting me a pardon and giving me the opportunity to keep building, as a man, as a father, and as an artist," Gaulden shared online. Known for his prolific music output and massive fanbase, NBA YoungBoy has faced several legal challenges throughout his career, but this marks a major turning point.



Sarah Jessica Parker, Kristin Davis, Cynthia Nixon, Nicole Ari Parker, and Sarita Choudhury served ultimate glam with a stunning Eiffel Tower photoshoot before heading to Le Lido for the European premiere of 'And Just Like That' Season 3

## From flames to fame: Neha Baig's inspirational journey

Despite suffering 60 per cent burns, Neha Baig overcame her fears, displayed unwavering confidence, and was honoured with the title of Goa's Most Inspirational Woman. Café explores her courageous journey

Elsa Angel Rose

**A**fashion model, influencer, and computer engineer, Ponda-based Neha Baig is far more than the labels she carries. At 35, she is a burn survivor who was recently crowned Goa's Most Inspirational Woman. Previously, she was the first runner-up in the Indian Fashion Icon Award, held as part of International Women's Day celebrations, and was also honoured with the Social Warrior Award for her resilience.

### Enduring the burn

At the tender age of 16, Neha's life was turned upside down by an accident involving an LPG cylinder and a short circuit in 2007. The incident took place at a madrasa in Ratnagiri, where she was studying at the time. The blast, caused by a leak in the LPG cylinder, left 60 per cent of her body severely burned—from head to waist, including both arms. The months that followed were nothing short of a nightmare, with numerous surgeries required to save her life. "At times, when glucose had to be administered, finding veins in my burned



skin became a daily misery," Neha recalled. Her entire neck and the skin on her hands had to be grafted. For nearly eight months, she remained unconscious in the ICU. After a year of prolonged treatment, she finally returned home—only to face the daunting reality of what lay ahead.

### A Journey of Strength and Courage

Neha resolved not to remain idle in self-pity and despair. In 2010, she pursued a diploma, followed by a bachelor's degree in Computer Engineering. She began earning her own income and achieved financial independence. In 2019, she was offered the opportunity to model at an event for people with physical challenges. "Initially, I had no idea about modelling, but I received a lot of support, and gradually, more agencies began reaching out to me," said Neha. Today, she is a successful model who champions body positivity. She is also establishing herself as a social media influencer, actively collaborating with various brands. Neha continues to balance her passion with her profession, working as a senior software quality analyst at an IT solutions firm.

### A Shift in Society's Perception

Like any teenager, Neha once had a close-knit group of friends. However, becoming a burn survivor dramatically changed how people viewed and interacted with her—often in painful and unexpected ways.

### Rising Through Adversity

Gathering the courage and motivation to move forward was no easy feat. "There were countless nights I cried. In the beginning, I covered my entire body and face because I was ashamed. I felt people would be frightened by how I looked and wouldn't want to talk to me," Neha admitted. Her strength came from her family and a handful of loyal friends who stood by her,



reminding her she was deeply loved. Kind strangers also played a significant role in helping her heal and rebuild her confidence. "Friends used to visit and encourage me to go out with them. I started going to beauty parlours for grooming, where beauticians offered kind words and encouragement. My physiotherapist at the time gave me immense strength. I never felt discriminated against at college or work, which helped boost my confidence," she added. Neha's message to young girls is simple but powerful: accept yourself.





