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Goa's taxi crisis: A failure that keeps repeating

In a State that welcomes over eight million tourists a year, it is nothing short of astonishing that Goa still grapples with a basic issue like transport. Year after year, government after government has promised reform; but the reality on the ground remains unchanged. App-based taxi services, a norm across the rest of India, continue to spark protests and confusion in Goa. At the heart of the issue is the State's chronic failure to deliver a solution that is both modern and fair.

There is no doubt that Goa needs an efficient, transparent, app-based taxi system. Tourists expect it. Locals deserve it. And the economy depends on it. Yet successive governments have dodged, diluted, or delayed action under pressure from vested interests and vote-bank politics. The result? A fragmented, unreliable, and often overpriced taxi ecosystem that hurts both visitors and locals.

The latest attempt of the State's transport aggregator policy claims to strike a balance: encouraging technology while safeguarding the interests of local taxi drivers. But once again, the implementation has been met with resistance, confusion, and controversy. Why? Because trust has eroded. And because no government has successfully built consensus or enforced a sustainable model in over a decade.

Local taxi drivers have reason to fear. Many took loans to buy vehicles. Many are sole breadwinners. Their concern that large app-based aggregators like Ola and Uber could take over the market is understandable. Their questions about unfair competition, poor mobile networks, and outdated fare structures are valid. But what they fear even more is the erosion of control. Losing their say in a system they have long operated.

However, protecting traditional business practices should not come at the cost of progress. Today, Goa's taxi services are among the most expensive in India. There is little fare transparency, no consistent grievance redressal, and tourists frequently complain of exploitation. Viral videos of altercations between drivers, or tourists missing flights due to disputes, have painted a damaging picture. Such incidents not only dent Goa's image, but also threaten its core tourism industry.

It didn't have to be this way. Back in 2018, the government introduced GoaMiles, its first attempt at an app-based taxi platform. While the initiative saw some success with over 1,500 taxis onboard and Rs 8 crore in revenue it failed to scale. Resistance from within the industry, lack of aggressive promotion, and political infighting weakened its impact.

Fast forward to 2024, and the same problems persist. There are still over 30,000 registered taxis in Goa, yet only a tiny fraction are app-enabled. Meanwhile, the government continues to lose crores in tax revenue, while tourists continue to get overcharged. And once again, drivers are being asked to submit objections and suggestions, while politicians posture for or against reforms based on their constituencies.

This cycle of indecision must end. Goa cannot afford to be the only tourist state in India without a functional, app-based taxi infrastructure. Nor can it afford to abandon its local workforce in the name of modernisation. A middle path is not just possible, it is necessary.

The government must enforce strict safeguards to ensure that only locally licensed vehicles are allowed on these aggregator platforms. It must cap the entry of out-of-State operators, prevent backdoor monopolies, and offer tax breaks and training to help Goan drivers transition into the digital era. App companies should be mandated to pay drivers within 72 hours, with penalties for delay. At the same time, local drivers must step up to modernise, embrace digital meters, allow fare transparency, and improve customer service.

The taxi lobby is not wrong to demand protection. But it is wrong to resist all change. In today's world, convenience, fairness, and efficiency are non-negotiable. Tourists will not accept being overcharged, and locals will not continue to suffer from an outdated system.

Let's be clear: the real failure here is political. For more than a decade, governments have failed to bring clarity, enforce fairness, or build consensus. The current administration has another opportunity to set this right. But time is running out.

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Today's world needs the marital covenant in order to know and welcome God's love, and to overcome the forces that break down relationships and societies, through its unifying and reconciling power

comment



VICTOR FERRAO

The Supari Andolan: A movement to protect Kala Academy

In the heart of Goa, the Kala Academy stands as a cultural beacon, a testament to artistic expression and heritage. Designed by the renowned architect Charles Correa, this institution has long been a cradle for creativity, nurturing artists, musicians, and performers. However, recent controversies surrounding its mismanagement, structural decay, and alleged commercialisation have sparked a unique movement—the Supari Andolan.

By invoking Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction, we can unpack the layers of meaning behind Supari Andolan and its critique of systemic issues, including the phenomenon of "supari journalism" as highlighted by veteran journalist Rajdeep Sardesai

This grassroots campaign, conceptualised by Francis Coelho and him along with Harshada Kerkar and Cecille Rodrigues launched to safeguard the Kala Academy, redefines the term supari—a word traditionally associated with sinister connotations—into a symbol of resistance and cultural preservation. By invoking Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction, we can unpack the layers of meaning behind Supari Andolan and its critique of systemic issues, including the phenomenon of "supari journalism" as highlighted by veteran journalist Rajdeep Sardesai.

The Kala Academy Crisis: A Cultural Institution under Threat

The Kala Academy, established in 1970, has been a cornerstone of Goan identity, hosting events that celebrate the region's rich cultural heritage. In recent years, concerns over its deteriorating infrastructure, mismanaged renovations have alarmed artists, activists, and citizens. Reports of shoddy repair work, such as the collapse of a portion of the auditorium roof in 2023, fuelled public outrage.



Critics argue that the government's neglect threatens to erode the academy's legacy, prompting the birth of the Supari Andolan—a movement to protect this cultural gem. The term supari originates from the betel nut, but in Indian colloquialism, it carries a darker meaning: a contract or payment for an assassination or illicit act. In Goa we have a term Topi—Topi ghalunk means to cheat. An innocent word like Topi does have a sinister meaning. Topi has not yet been deconstructed the way Supari is done.

The Supari Andolan cleverly subverts this term, transforming it into a rallying cry for collective action to "kill" the forces of negligence and corruption that endanger the Kala Academy. This

linguistic shift invites us for a deeper analysis through Derrida's deconstruction, a philosophical approach that challenges binary oppositions and uncovers hidden meanings in language and culture.

Deconstructing Supari: From Assassination to Activism

Jacques Derrida's deconstruction is a method of critical analysis that questions fixed meanings and reveals the instability of language. It dismantles binary oppositions—such as good/evil or literal/metaphorical, or male/female—to expose how meanings are constructed and contested. In the context of the Supari Andolan, the term supari was subjected to deconstruction.

Traditionally, "giving supari" implies paying for a violent act, often murder, rooted in underworld slang. The Supari Andolan flips this meaning, using supari metaphorically to signify the "killing" of apathy, corruption, cultural erosion and erasure. This subversion destabilises the word's conventional associations, turning a symbol of destruction into one of creation and resistance.

Derrida's concept of différance—the interplay of differing and deferring (delayed) meanings—is evident here. The Supari Andolan does not fully erase the term's criminal undertones but incorporates them to highlight the urgency of its mission. By invoking supari, the movement suggests that the threats to Kala Academy are akin to a cultural assassination, requiring an equally bold response. This linguistic play empowers activists to reclaim agency, using irony to critique systemic failures while galvanising public support.

Supari Journalism: Rajdeep Sardesai's Critique of Paid News

The Supari Andolan also draws parallels to broader societal critiques, notably the concept of "supari journalism," a term popularised by journalist Rajdeep Sardesai. In a 2024 interview with The Wire, Sardesai expressed disillusionment with the state of Indian media, lamenting that a "large part of media is completely compromised on journalism's core values". He coined "supari journalism" to describe paid news, where media outlets or journalists accept financial incentives to push narratives, effectively acting as hired guns.

This practice, Sardesai argues, undermines journalistic integrity, replacing truth with propaganda. The term "supari journalism" mirrors the Supari Andolan in its use of supari as a metaphor for betrayal. Just as the andolan accuses authorities of destroying the primary interest of the Kala Academy, Sardesai critiques media houses for "selling" their credibility for profit.

Both contexts deconstruct supari to expose systemic corruption—whether in cultural preservation or journalism or the protection of Kala Academy. The Supari Andolan, thus, aligns with Sardesai's call for integrity, positioning itself as a movement that rejects corruption in favour of authenticity.

The Mission of Supari Andolan: A Cultural Counter-Narrative

The Supari Andolan is more than a protest; it is a mission to reclaim and redefine cultural spaces. By adopting the provocative term supari, the movement captures public attention, using humour and irony to highlight the gravity of the Kala Academy's plight. Its objectives include demanding transparent restoration efforts, ensuring public access to the academy, and preserving its role as a non-commercial hub for the arts.

Activists have organised rallies, social media campaigns, and public discussions, urging citizens to "take back" the Kala Academy from bureaucratic neglect and greed. Through a Derridean lens, the Supari Andolan challenges the binary of power versus powerlessness. It rejects the notion that citizens are helpless against institutional failures, instead asserts collective agency.

The movement deconstructs the narrative that cultural institutions must bow to economic pressures, proposing instead that they can be spaces of resistance and renewal. By redefining supari, the andolan transforms a term of violence into one of empowerment, aligning with Derrida's idea that meaning is never fixed but is constantly renegotiated.

The Supari Andolan is a testament to the power of language and collective action in defending cultural heritage. By deconstructing the term supari, the movement turns a symbol of destruction into a call for preservation, echoing Jacques Derrida's insights into the fluidity and politics of meaning. Its critique of systemic neglect parallels Rajdeep Sardesai's condemnation of "supari journalism," highlighting a shared struggle against commodification and corruption.

In redefining supari, the andolan not only protects the Kala Academy but also offers a model for activism that is bold, creative, and unapologetic. As Goa's artists and citizens rally to save their cultural legacy, the Supari Andolan stands as a reminder that even the darkest terms can be reimagined to light the way forward. Indeed the supari andolan has re-written the script of designing slogans for activism.

(Fr Victor Ferrao is an independent researcher attached to St Francis Xavier Church, Borim, Ponda.)

Consumers need to be alert

Has anyone noticed the subtle way the Electricity Department is fleecing the public? Billing has to be done on a monthly basis and as per slabs. From 0-100 units the rate is Rs 1.90 per unit, 101-200 units the rate is Rs 2.80 per unit. Above 400 units the rate is Rs 5.80 per unit.

A delay in billing would result in the consumer coming under the higher slab. For example if billing is done after 35 days and the units consumed is 450 then 50 units assuming they were consumed in the last 5 days would come under the maximum slab 50x 5.80=290. If billing was done on time i.e. after 30 days these 50 units would be 50x1.90=95. So the consumer is paying 290-95= 195 extra due to a delay in billing.

Consumers need to be alert!
D C Dias, Taleigao

App-based services for bike taxis unwarranted

Hundreds of taxi operators and drivers on Monday reportedly thronged the office of the Department of Transport, Panjim and

submitted their objections to the draft Goa Transport Aggregator Guidelines, 2025 which has the potential to change the State's tourism transport landscape if implemented besides affecting the livelihood of taxi operators.

There is the question of poor mobile network, lack of access to smartphones and limited digital literacy among a segment of the taxi operators. As if this is not enough, while unveiling the draft policy the transport department has also reportedly proposed that the motorcycle taxi service should also be app-based.

Motorcycle taxi service is unique to Goa and has been giving yeoman service to the citizens. These motorcycle pilots are available even at odd hours when there is no other transport service available. This is useful for stranded passengers, especially women who can be assured of reaching their homes safely. These motorcycle pilots should be allowed to conduct their business freely as they have been giving hassle-free service to the passengers.

These motorcycle pilots have never troubled the locals or the tourists. The introduction of the rent-a-bike business has hit the motorcycle taxi business very badly as their daily trips have been reduced to a great extent.

It is learnt that these motorcycle pilots have been largely ignored by the government which has reportedly stopped schemes for the welfare of the motorcycle pilots.

It seems that the app-based service for motorcycle taxi service is unwarranted.

Adelmo Fernandes, Vasco

Goa tops in 'cybercrime reporting'

There's a flip side to everything. Similarly with the growth of technology, cyber crimes too have become a dreadful part of our life. Moreover, it has caused severe damage to the social glue of our civilised society.

On the other hand, it's quite appreciative that the government has launched several ini-

tiatives to combat crime. Sadly, with greed being the prime factor working behind it, several individuals fall prey to innovative cyber crime tactics. As a result, online frauds such as AI generated fake contents/OTP frauds/payment frauds, etc, are increasing leaps and bounds with the passing of each day.

Moreover, with several crimes which are kept hidden due to social stigma or fear attached to it, the crime wave gets escalated. Subsequently, it's another feather in the cap that Goa tops in 'cyber-crime reporting' that has helped the concerned authorities to take a strong stance against crime.

Evidently, 150 Cyber Yoddhas (Warriors) have been trained from different aspects of life, and gaining momentum; which is as a matter of fact a public police partnership programme. Furthermore, these warriors create a type of awareness amongst the community circles and educate/empower the common men pertaining to cybercrime. Nearly one lakh of individuals are almost cov-

people's edit

COMMUNITY ANIMALS NEED US THIS MONSOON

SUKRITI KAUL

As the monsoon sets in, bringing with it heavy rains, grey skies, and a break from the heat, many of us welcome the season with open arms. We romanticise the monsoon with long walks under umbrellas, sipping hot chocolate or steaming cups of chai, munching on pakoras and bhajias under the safety of a roof. For us, it's a season of comfort, nostalgia, and coziness.

But for those who live under the open sky — our community animals — the monsoon is anything but romantic. Street dogs, cats, and other strays that are part of our neighbourhoods suffer the most during this season. While we stay dry in our homes, they struggle to find even a small patch of shelter. We see them often — curled under four-wheelers, shivering near shop sheds, or crouched in corners of construction sites. These animals, who live among us year-round, become nearly invisible in the rain — unless we're looking.

Rain is not just uncomfortable for animals without shelter — it's dangerous. Prolonged exposure to water and cold leads to respiratory infections, skin diseases, and in many cases, even death, especially for young puppies and kittens. Already battling hunger, injuries, and neglect, these animals face their toughest test during the monsoon.

To make matters worse, the rains disrupt their regular food sources. Garbage bins are waterlogged, leftovers are soaked, and some people who usually feed them may be unable to step out during storms. Many animals go hungry for days. It's heartbreaking to see a dog sit under a leaking shed, drenched, cold, and starving — waiting for food that may not come.

Additionally, the roads become clogged and flooded, creating a dangerous environment for everyone. For animals, it's especially deadly. They risk getting hit by vehicles as they dart across slippery roads, trying to find shelter or food. Reduced visibility and pothole-filled streets lead to countless accidents, often fatal for these animals who cannot ask for help the way we do — yet still feel fear, pain, and hunger just the same.

This monsoon, a humble request to homeowners, shopkeepers, societies, and businesses: please open your gates and spaces to these animals. Let them enter your premises, rest under your shop shed, or sleep in your parking area. It may feel like a small gesture, but for them, it's the difference between being drenched and being safe.

Some may worry about cleanliness — and yes, there may be a little mess. But think about it: a few minutes spent cleaning up is nothing compared to the suffering they endure out in the rain. These animals don't want to be a burden; they're just trying to survive. Your act of kindness could mean the world to them.

We call them community animals because they belong to all of us. They live on our streets, in our colonies, and around our shops. Many of us know them by face, some even by name. We feed them leftovers, pat their heads, and smile when we see them wag their tails. They're not outsiders — they're part of our everyday life.

Just like any other member of a community, they deserve empathy, dignity, and protection — especially now, when their survival is being tested daily.

ered by this campaign. In addition to this, a National Cyber Crime Toll-Free number -1930 is in existence, 24x7 for effective crime management or swift justice.

Eventually, viral campaigns such as 'Cyber Surakshit Goam' have played a pivotal role in crime reduction strategies and achieving efficient law enforcement.

Joseph Savio Desouza, Rajasthan

From trash to treasure

Sweden has learnt to turn trash into treasure. With less than 1% of its waste ending up in landfills, the country incinerates about 50% of its household waste to produce electricity and heat—powering over a million homes and cutting reliance on fossil fuels.

But here's the twist, Sweden recycles so efficiently that it imports 1.3 million tonnes of waste annually as fuel for its power plants from countries like the UK, Norway, and Ireland, which pay Sweden to take it off their hands. A true example of a circular economy, Sweden shows how waste can be a valuable resource, not a problem and we need to learn from the Scandinavians.

Misha, Varca