



By ALBERTINA ALMEIDA

Five Striking Moments of 2016

2016 has seen many striking moments – moments that demand reflection and change.

Coming as a breath of fresh air is the UN resolution that all measures aimed at changing the demographic composition and status of Palestinian territories occupied by Israel, including construction and expansion of settlements, transfer of Israeli settlers, confiscation of land, demolition of homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians are in violation of international humanitarian law, and Israel's obligation as the occupying power according to the Fourth Geneva Convention, and previous resolutions. No doubt as someone has well expressed, it is "too little, too late". But on the other hand, something is better than nothing and can be the plank on which the ideal can be mounted. It is a reminder that despite the despair that looms over the future of Goa, with the nature of its demographics as well as the state of the people living on its margins, there is scope for hope and that persistence and politics pays, provided it is played with a measure of justice.

Lurking gloom and a possible blow beneath the belt has characterised the Brexit referendum. Goa is surviving substantially on remittances. Brexit and India's Citizenship rules put together threaten this source of survival and security as well. The Brexit referendum in a context where some 20,000 plus Goans are eking their livelihoods by entry into UK with a Portuguese passport, looms large over especially those who had migrated in the last five years. Without voting rights in Goa, which they will always consider home, the situation of these Portuguese Passport holders in UK is like that on the edge of a precipice. The emergence of Trump with his anti-immigrant policies is another threat to global politics of which Goa is bound to face the consequences.

Even the wake up calls for handling crimes against women come when someone from the ranks of India's occupying elite or tourists, faces sexual violence or is murdered. Check it out. Whether it was Scarlett before or Monica this year, one sees the worst of both worlds. A local patriarchal approach almost saying "these women" deserve it for the kind of lives they lead, and a page 3 crowd that bemoans these crimes as if everyone has to set everything else aside and pay attention to these specific crimes against the page 3 crowd. But it would be a

looking ahead situation if we called for accountability of the State in the manner in which crimes against women (whoever they are) are addressed at police stations, including the Women Police Station, and also the State's accountability for lack of due diligence in ensuring a crime free environment. That would mean leveraging the page 3 power for *all* women.

Representations of Goa and of its history have made for challenging moments that are opening up space for dialogue on what constitutes history and the factual aspects of history. The recent controversy at the Serendipity Arts Festival is the most recent of the cases in point. Every articulation of history at the end of the day is an articulation from a particular location and also has a political function. It is impossible to be comprehensive. In the attempt to be comprehensive, one only loses unique strands of fact and thought to the dustbin of history as the popular expression goes. For instance, one may deliberately place emphasis on particular aspects of how certain sections of people experienced political rule in the past, in order to ensure that it does not get obliterated. However, there has to be some rigour in putting together the details, and mere articulations by a Mr. X or Ms. Y or because his Majesty says so, cannot be history. That is fascism, to say the least. The ruling dispensation, in Goa and in India, is but a macrocosm of such approaches – no rigour, Hindutva in outlook, erasing other plausible versions of history, what-I-say-is-right-there can-be-no-other-version type of history.

The spectre of 'Uniform Civil Code', if one may call it that, in the current context, also raised its ugly head again this year. A Supreme Court Judgement, proved to be an opportunity to resurrect a monolithic agenda where there is no contextualisation and sculpting of rights, but an assertion that a particular religion is supreme and everyone else is to be fashioned in that religion's likeness. There has been not any significant statement from Goa's political heavyweight on this point. What happens if a new Uniform Civil Code is enacted for the whole of India? What does that mean for Goa's family laws? One fails to understand what is so mesmerising about a uniform that is so uncomfortable to wear as against a dress or pair of shoes that fits and is comfortable, provided it stands up to certain yardsticks that specially hold up the interests of the people on the margins.

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