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Saving Private Nerlon

By Adv Jos Peter D'Souza

The guillotine has fallen. PSI Nerlon is the first Goan head to roll. Who pulled the lever? A non-Goan IGP, even without consulting our Goan Chief Minister, or so I am told. There is yet another Goan head (of Forensics) on the block.

One thing is clear. We, who call ourselves Goans, have allowed ourselves to be led by the nose; first by a British lady and her Delhi advisor, who used the British media by raising the bogey of a 'Goan' drug *mafia*. These non-Goans managed to get a second autopsy, which by sleight of hand made the first look false. And so a crime came to be registered. Three Goans were arrested.

Then, it was the Delhi media who used our Goan sands to broadcast insults to Goan hospitality. Some ladies glorified the foreigner's so-called fight for justice; but none questioned her credentials (though their British counterparts did). Enter a British 'witness' with the dubious nickname *Masala*. He confabulated with the lady and her lawyer before his statement was released to the press. And then those two women – a disgrace to the National Women's Commission – who got away only because they were Delhiwallas, and our 'Goa Women's Commission' remained a dumb spectator.

The non-Goans had their way, even to the extent of ordering a CBI enquiry into what was otherwise just another death, with some *masala* in it. Once more our Goan government succumbed even before suffocating. But the unkindest cut of all is the dismissal of PSI Nerlon Albuquerque. Should we take this too without a whimper? I think not. Enough is enough.

As officer-in-charge of the police station, he was responsible for the investigation. He cannot wriggle out of this; the buck stops with him. What was wrong with the early investigation? I can point to two aspects.

Despite the young girl being found half naked, no effective search was made for her clothes. The entire beach ought to have been combed. This was not done. Instead, as is usual with cops, the immediate reaction was to pick up the 'boyfriend'. The poor fellow was endlessly interrogated (the usual third degree methods) and his passport illegally taken away. Barking up the wrong tree was the second major blunder. But to give the devil his due, the cops could not have done very much more at that stage given the post mortem report.

In fact, my office had spoken over the phone to PSI Nerlon when Mike Mannion aka *Masala* had visited us. We were informed that it was registered as an Unnatural Death, and from the autopsy report there was no indication either of 'rape' or 'homicide'. But, he said, they were still investigating. This was on 23 February, five days after the incident. I maintain that he was perfectly correct. There was no 'rape', and there definitely was no 'murder'. But of that, a little later.

Now we know that the girl was sexually active, and a regular with drugs (unless we still wish to bury our heads in the sand). On the fateful night, she had been partying with her friend Ruby till at least 1.30 am, was drunk and stoned (remember the morphine). She entered Lui's shack at around 3.30 am. Here let us pause and fast forward to three weeks ahead after Mike *Masala* joined the duo in the legal advisor's home.

Let us assume the legal advisor got *Masala* to 'spill the beans'. So, at least from that moment on, the mother is in the know of everything that transpired at Lui's shack, having got it straight from the horse's mouth. Doubtless she knows that when her daughter entered the shack, she was drunk; she also knows who, if anyone, administered her drugs there; the person with whom she left the shack, and the aftermath. But, among those present, only the Goans have been arrested. All the non-Goans are off the hook. And the 'boyfriend', a Goan, has lost a job in Finland.

Even if we accept that Mike *Masala* has not added any *mirchi* to his story, he has in no way directly implicated Placido Lobo aka Xannaboy. But he has brought in another non-Goan, who the girl knew, and who in fact escorted her out of the shack. The action then seen by *Masala* was in the light of this non-Goan's motorcycle headlight