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Konknni Cholchitram: Unreeling Konkani Movie-making

Isidore Dantas' well admired Konkani film-book "Konknni Cholchitram", published by US-based Goan NGO Goa Sudharop, was released by Ibonio D'Souza, at Hotel Mandovi in Panjim on September 21. D'Souza lauded the Pune-based writer and described "Konknni Cholchitram" as a comprehensive, well-researched and deeply nostalgic journey in the history of Konkani cinema and a prized possession depicting the Goan past.

Ibonio D'Souza also said. "It is equally important and of paramount need for both the people and the government to encourage and support the Konkani film industry; the government should be liberal enough with the financial facility and the required infrastructure, and so also we, the people, need to love and support our thriving film industry not only to provide the much needed employment to Goans but, more importantly, to preserve Goa's unique tradition, lifestyle and identity.

As of today, 31 Konkani celluloid films have been produced and the remarkable 276-page hardbound documentation of Goa's fascinating film history, in large format, priced at Rs. 650, brings alive amply the directors, producers, actors, singers, music, lyrics, plots and background of each film.

"When anything is done in the film sphere, it is noteworthy, and when it happens in Konkani it is much more than that for us ", film director Dharmanand Vernekar, whom Dantas consulted frequently regarding the Konkani film personalities, said during the launch. Vernekar added, "The documentation of Konkani film is of utmost importance for us, because there are several relevant aspects of Konkani film making which had gone unnoticed until Isidore *bab* accomplished the vital task."

Vide the noteworthy book, author Dantas unfurls precious nuggets of information hitherto unknown; undoubtedly, he spared no pains whatsoever to gather the invaluable data from umpteen sources, including the National Film Archives of India headquartered in Pune.

Tomazinho Cardozo, president of the Tiatr Academy of Goa, said, "Today is a day of rejoicing because another important Konkani book, containing authentic information of Konkani films has been added to our literature." The book evidently adds to the rich pool of Goan music, language, culture and literature. Dantas, a former banker, deals in fine detail with Konkani films from the Hindu, Mangalorean and Christian settings. His book features the original music scores and lyrics of several songs of almost every Konkani movie produced so far since "Mogacho Anvddo" by Al Jerry Braganza to the latest "Mogachi Zhor" by Sucorina D'Costa and Bonifacio Dias besides Konkani memorable classics "Amchem Noxib" and "Nirmonn".

Even the producers and directors had no idea as to where the prints of the Konkani films produced by them could be found. Dantas even approached the Films Division for the prints of the old films, which were telecast on the Doordarshan, but he was informed that since no one had bothered to inquire

about the Konkani films until he initiated the search, they do not know anything about the fate of the films. The enquiries at Air studios in Mumbai and Panjim regarding the tracks of the old film songs too fetched no positive results. In fact, Dantas received a packet containing some footage (unchecked) of “Mogacho Anvddo” from a nephew of Al Jerry Braganza at the launch of the book at Hotel Mandovi.

It was no cakewalk to transliterate the lyrics of the Mangalorean songs from Kannada and others from Devanagari into the Roman script. The notation of 85 of the songs finds inclusion in the treasurable volume, which notes that Goans have produced 15 movies, Mangaloreans 10 among the overall 31 discussed. One is delighted to read about the outstanding characteristics of each of these films.

The Goan Diaspora is all the more grateful to Isidore Dantas for rendering the narrative in Roman script Konkani and the visual depiction of the 269 rare photographs of Konkani stage and film stars from the sixties right up to today. The unique volume also carries a much needed glossary for the benefit of readers who are not conversant with Konkani.

“Konknni Cholchitram” takes off with the pioneering effort of Al Jerry Braganza who ventured in Konkani movie-making with “Mogacho Anvddo” in 1950. It includes the list of Goa’s peerless music maestros who rendered music for several Hindi movies almost from its ‘silent’ era. It also takes into its stride Goans who have acted in films in other languages as well as non-Goan actors who have graced Konkani movies and noted singers who rendered exceptional Konkani songs.

In all his strenuous efforts, Dantas finds himself fortunate to come across George Pinto of Goa Sudharop, to whom he is indebted for taking upon himself the arduous task of publishing the memorable volume. Other publishers when approached, including the Goa government institutions had refused to sponsor the publication owing to the heavy outlay involved.

“Konknni Cholchitram” book was first released in California on April 4 this year to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Goan Diaspora, non-profit organization Goa Sudharop, which works for the betterment of Goans world wide.

Joel D’Souza