

Herald-Mirror dated 19th September 2010

Konknni Cholchitram

Konknni on Celluloid

By John Carlos Aguiar

Konknni Cholchitram, the latest offering by Pune-based author Isidore Dantas, is an updated version of an encyclopedia on Konknni films. Konknni films have come of age. The first Konknni film, *Mogacho Anvddo*, celebrates its diamond jubilee this year. This book is a fitting tribute to late Al Jerry Braganza, renowned as the father of Konknni films. The author, however, dedicates the book to late Frank Fernand, the Bollywood music wizard who produced the two evergreen films, *Amchem Noxib* and *Nirmonn*.

Dantas in the prologue talks of his travails in collating information. No producer of old Konknni films has a master copy of their work nor does Doordarshan-Mumbai, which telecast many old films, possess any copy. Surprisingly, even AIR-Mumbai and Panjim do not have old Konknni film records. National Film Archives-Pune has almost no record of Konknni films as compared to films in other languages.

It was an uphill task for Dantas to gather the widely scattered information. He laments that he received no cooperation from any government agency, or from those having some material. He had to rely on the support from Konknni lovers spread all over the world so much that obtained the copy of one film from abroad! Such research-based work merited support of state government bodies as this film heritage deserves to be preserved for posterity. But then, how many in Goa thinks on such lines?

On completion of research and penning the text, the manuscript lay with several publishers. But, they would not promise promoting the book because of the high printing costs involved. Then a guardian angel arrived, in the form of his friend George Pinto of Goa Sudharop-USA. It is, thanks to him, that Dantas' painstaking work saw the light of the day.

Rather appropriately, even if oddly, a Goa-centric book was first released in America and not in India. This happened at the 10th anniversary celebrations of Goa Sudharop in California on 04 Apr 2010. The Goa release is slated for coming Tuesday, 21 September, at Hotel Mandovi, Panjim.

Konknni Cholchitram (Konkani for 'moving images') chronicles all relevant details of all the Konknni films released down the decades, irrespective of the dialects and scripts of the Konknni language. Dozens of film songs lyrics are presented with accompanying music notes. The book is written in Romi Konknni, as the software for the music notation is compatible with the script.

A fascinating feature of the book is that it not only covers all the Konkani films so far produced, but covers them with their story-lines (at times deciphered from Kannada and Devanagri scripts), song lyrics and notes, film posters of the relevant time, screen shots – in short, the essence of each film. A strenuous task viewed from even just one aspect: each song had to be repeatedly replayed using play-pause-play in order to note down its correct lyrics. And then convert the tunes into readable music notes. It is sad that few musicians today know to write music and Dantas had to task this work from musicians spread across Mumbai, Pune and Goa.

The book includes photographs of producers, directors, music directors, singers, cinematographers and, of course, actors. In some cases, the author traces the story behind the story ... the circumstances that influenced the producers to produce the movie.

Dantas tells the story lines of the movies in his trademark style. For a connoisseur of Konknni prose, these are a treat to read. Minute details like the final production cost of the film and the financial support received by the producer have been accredited in this path-breaking tome.

The author does not forget the contribution of Bollywood actors and singers like Pariksit Sahani, Tom Alter, AK Hangal, Benjamin Gilani, Shankar Mahadevan, Shan, Sonu Nigam, et al, to the minuscule Konkani film world, by either starring or rendering songs in them. And also the reverse...

The epilogue focuses on the Konkani community's contribution to Bollywood! The author, with an obvious feeling of pride, has carefully captured top-notch Bollywood personalities who hail from the Konkani community. There are names like Shyam Benegal, Girish Karnad, Guru Dutt, Deepika Padukone, Genelia D'Souza, Illeana D'Cruz, Sebastian, Anthony Gonsalves, Dominic Dias, K Vaikunth, Chandrakant Kakodkar... who made their mark in Bollywood.

The book is replete with interesting snippets, too! For instance, on Kamala Gokhale (nee Kamat) who was the first ever woman to don the female attire in Hindi movies, Durga Khote (nee Lad) who, in a film magazine interview, candidly confessed that Konkani was the only language she knew before she entered the Hindi and Marathi film world. Several snippets of this genre find a place in the book.

The tome on the world of Konkani on celluloid comes wrapped in a formidable presentation: it covers all the 31 Konknni films hitherto produced, in all their varied aspects, packed in 282 A4-sized pages, hard bound. Packed within are 107 film songs (85 of them with music notations) and 269 photos, all priced at Rs 650. This true treasure trove is a must-read for all Konkani film lovers and musicians. It deserves a place of honour on the bookshelf of every Konknni enthusiast. I have no doubt it will also become a collectors item!

(*Konknni Cholchitram* by Isidore Dantas, published 2010 by Dantas Publications, 4 Priya Society, 5/2/3 Tadiwala Road, Pune 411 001, ISBN: 978-81-910361-0-7. Website: <http://www.konkanifilmbook.com>)