

THE PEACOCK

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५२वो इफ्फी येवचे पयलीं

■ दामोदर मावजो

गोंय ही कलेची खण अशें लेखतात, ताका रजांव आसा. आयजवेर गोंयान आखब्बा संवसाराक खूब कलाकार भेटल्यात. तातूत संगीतकार आसात, चित्रकार आसात, गावपी आसात, साहित्यकार आसात आनी खेळाडेय आसात. गोंयच्या क्षेत्रफलाच्या मानान ते खूब चड. विशेश म्हटल्यार ते संवसारभर शिंफलेले आसात. म्हगेले इश्ट केन्नाय फकाणानी म्हणाटात, 'पयलो मनीस जेन्ना चंदिमाचे पावलो तेन्ना खंय ताका ताचे पयलींच थंय पाविल्लो एक मनीस मेळ्यो- तो गोंयकार आसलो.' विनोदाचो भाग सोडून दियात. पूण एक गजाल खरी- गोंयकारांनी सगल्या मळांचे नामना जोडल्या.

सिनेमाचें मळ उकंतें जालें तें खूब उसरं. तरी गोंयकार थंय बेगीनच पावलो अशें म्हणूक जाय. पुरुंजाचे मुर्तीत अभिव्यक्ती स्वातंत्र्य नासलें. बाकिबाब बोरकार, टी. बी. कुन्य, लक्षणराव सरदेसाय, लिंबिया लोबो अशा लोकांक गोंयां भायर वचून काम करचें पडिल्ले. बंदनां त्रासादिणी आसलीं. तियात्राची संहिता, लग्ना-काजाराच्यो व्हॉव्हिळ्को आनी जायरातीचीं कागदां लेगीत सेन्सॉर करचीं पडतालीं. गोंयांत साधना करपाकूय वाव नासलो. मोगाबाय कुर्डीकार, केसरबाय केरकार, जिंतेंद्र अभिषेकी, ह्या खांप्या गायक कलाकारांनी मुंबय वचून नामना जोडिल्ली. गोंयकार संगीतकारुय मुंबय वचून नशीब आजमायताले. एदुआर्दु जुझे ब्रून द्वे सौऱ्हा हाणे 'उदेन्तेचें साळक' (१८८९) हें पयलें कोंकणी नेमाळें काढलें तें पुण्याक रावन. 'इतालियान भुगो' (१८९२) हो आपणांलो पयलो तियात्र बरोवपी

लुकाजीन रिबेइरेन तो मुंबयंत पालकार हाडिल्लो. फुडें तियात्रान मूळ धरलें आनी आयज तर तियात्र भोव लोकांमोगाळ जाला. पूण चलचित्र निर्मितीच्या मळार आमी खूब उसरां पावले खेरे तरी आजून फावो तितले मुखार पावंक नात ताचें कारण कितें?

दादासहेब फाळकेन १९३० वर्सा 'राजा हरिशचंद्र' हें भारतांतलें पयलेंमोर्नें चलचित्र तयार केलें. आनी १९३१ वर्सा 'आलम आरा' ह्या पयल्या उलोवपी सिनेमान नवें यूग फुल्यालें. मुंबय जे गोंयकार पाविल्ले ताणी हे संदेचो लाव घेतलो. चलचित्रांक संगीताची चड गरज आशिल्यान आमचे व्हायोलीन, साक्साफोन आनी ट्रैपेट वाजोवपी लोकांक आपणांली कला दाखोवपाची जी संद मेळ्यां तितें ताणी भांगर केलें. पूण तेय पयलीं म्हटल्यार १९२५ वर्सा थावन एके गोंयकार अस्तुन द्या मोर्न्या चलचित्रांनी हिरेंनीच्या भुमिका करूंक आरंब केल्लो. ती आसली एर्मेलिंदा कार्देंज (जल्म १९०८) जिणे सिनेपालकार नांव घेतिलें सुधाबाला. एर्मेलिंदा कोंकणी तियात्रानीय नाचताली. पूण कोंकणी सिनेमा तेन्ना नासलो आनी फुडें तो येतलो अशें सपनूय तेन्ना कोणे पठेवंक नासलें. हिन्दी चलचित्रांक जायत्या गोंयकारांनी संगीत दिलें. सेबस्टियन डिसौज्ञा, चीक चॉकलेट, इथरी गोन्साल्वीस, फ्रॅंक फ्लॅर्नान्द सारक्यानीं संगीत दिलें आनी आजून दितात. कोंकणीक गरज पडल्यार योगदान दिवपाची तांची तयारी आसता. फिल्माचीं हेर आंगं, के. वैकुंठ, वामन भोंसले, एन. चंद्र, बी सोडल्यार, कोंकणी मनशांनी आफुडिल्लीं दिश्टी पडनात. त्या मानान जेरी ब्रागांजा जाव फ्रॅंक फेर्नाद हांचें कवतूक करूंक फावो. हिंदी सिनेमांत जोडिल्या अणभवाचेर ताणी कोंकणी सिनेमा काडले. श्याम बेनेगल, गिरेश कर्नाड, अनंत नाग

ह्या कोंकणी मनशांनी कामां केल्यांत. पूण कोंकणीक फाटच. अपेक्षा बाळगुपाची ती गोंयकारांकडेन. काय गोंय स्वतंत्र जाल्या उपरांत्यू ताणीं गोंयां भायर वचून आपणाली कला दाखोवची?

२४ एप्रिल १९५० दिसा पयलें कोंकणी चलचित्र, 'मोगाचो आंवंडो' प्रदर्शीत जाल्लें ताच्या उगडासाक आमी तो दीस 'कोंकणी सिनेमा दीस' म्हूण मनयतात. पूण लोक नवे सिनेमा काडपाक प्रवृत्त जाले नात जाल्यार ताचो फायदो कितें? इफ्फी गोंयां जाता ताचो लाव गोंयकारांक आनी कोंकणीक मेळळूकच जाय. गोंय स्वतंत्र जाल्यार अंदू साठावें वर्स. आयज मेरेन गोंयांत सिनेमा करतल्यां खातीर आदारीक संरचना सरकारी पावंड्यार ना. गोंयां इफ्फीचें संयोजन बरे भाशेन जावचें म्हूण सरकारान इएसजीची स्थापना केली. इफ्फी सौंपतकच उरिल्ले धा-इकरा म्हयने मेकळे मेळळात तेन्ना गोंयच्या सिनेमा खातीर कितें तरी करचे नदेस कायं येवजणी तयार केल्यो. पयली गरज आसली ती फिल्मां खातीर अनुदान दिवपाची. ती चालीक लायली. आयकलां ते भाशेन २०१४ मेरेन जाल्ल्या फिल्मांक अनुदान दिवन जालां. उपरांतच्या खुबशा फिल्मांक दिवपाचें उरलां. अश्यान कोण फुडें सरतलो नवीं फिल्मां काडपाक? जो मेरेन सरकार फुडाकार घेना तो मेरेन जीं कायं फिल्म-इन्स्टिट्युट्स काम करतात तांकां तरी उमेद वाडोवपा खातीर येवजणी जाय. अर्थात अनुदान मेळळा देखून सुवार्था खातीर फुडें सरपी आसात. ते मागीर सवाय भितर फिल्म करून अनुदान बोल्सांत घालतात अश्योय तकारी आसात. तांचेर अंकूश आसचोच. अनुदाना खातीर फिल्म, काय फिल्मा खातीर अनुदान? हाची जाप सोदची.

म्हत्वाची बरी गजाल जाल्या ती इएसजीन एक

गरजेची अशी 'डिरेक्टरी ऑफ फिल्म फ्रॅंटर्नी ऑफ गोआ' तयार केल्या. खरे दिसचें ना. फाटल्या साठ-सत्तर वर्सा मर्दीं तयार जाल्लीं खूबशीं चलचित्रां आयज सोदल्यारुय मेळनात. कितलेय मोले फारीक करून सरकारी पावंड्यार तीं मेळोवन आर्काइव करूंक जाय. 'कोंकणी चलचित्रां' हें बाब इंजिदोर दान्तस हांचें २०१५ वर्सा उजवाडायिलें एक पुस्तक सोडल्यार म्हायती दिवपी आनीक पुस्तकां आमचेलागीं नात. धा वर्सा फाटीं बाब दान्तस सांगता ते भाशेन सुमार ४५ कोंकणी चलचित्रां तयार जाल्लीं. हेर कडेन राष्ट्रीय आनी राज्य पावंड्यार फिल्म आर्काइव्स स्थापन केल्ले आसात. आमकांय अशी सरकारी संस्था जाय. तेन्नाच दत्ताराम वाडकरालो दत्तू ठेका वा वामन भोसलेचें संपादकीय कौशल्य आनी के. वैकुंठ हांच्या भायाचित्रण फिशालकायेचा अभ्यास करूंक मेळळतो. तेपासत सिनेमाचें तंत्र शिकपाचीं फावो तीं, म्हटल्यार, पटकथा-लेखन, छायाचित्रण, संपादन, डिबिंग, सब-टायटलिंग, आवाज-उजवाडा येवजण, रिकॉर्डिंग, ह्या विशयां वयलीं पुस्तकां सरकारान असायमेंट दिवन कोंकणींत बरोवन घेवचीं. आयजवेर कोंकणी सिनेमा तयार करतना आमी भायले तंत्रज्ञ हाडल्यात. तेपरस आमच्या तरनाट्यांनी तें तंत्र शिकून घेतलें जाल्यार आमकां भायलांचेर पातयेवचें पडचें ना. गोंयचे लोककलेचें दायज म्हूण आमचें घुमट, तासो, शामेळ आमच्या सिनेमांनी दिसतले तेन्ना घडये तो वापरपाची प्रेरणा गोंयां भायल्या कलाकारांकूय मेळळतो.

फुडलो इफ्फी योमेरेन हे नदेस पावलां उकलिल्लीं मेळळ्यार पुरो.

देव बरें वर्स दिवं.



Photo by Assavri Kulkarni

LEADING THE CHARGE

BY IMPANA KULKARNI

“ My mind works fastest in a crisis, it is what I love doing!” Mrunal Walke, the General Manager of Entertainment Society of Goa, has been managing and juggling tasks since college. An arts graduate, she has jumped across various different jobs before this; from product design and IT, to HR and marketing. Enveloped by people already in a meeting with her and those waiting to meet her, *The Peacock* victoriously managed to pull her into a quick conversation.

“I have been lucky to get good bosses. My boss in Bangalore Kiran Reddy surprised me. He taught me how to work with a team. If anyone on the team even developed a slight fever, we would all drop everything and go visit because ‘Kiran ne bulaya (Kiran called us)’.” With an easy-going attitude Mrunal recollects few more instances of how working under a good leader can teach lasting lessons. “Another CO I worked under, Sharad Heda, would always say, ‘Data speaks! I worked in HR then. The difficult job of terminating employment of the staff would fall on me. He taught me to collect reviews and data on everything and everybody – a 360 degree data accumulation, before arriving at a decision.”

Armed with experience from diverse fields, in 2013, Mrunal got appointed as the Additional Private Secretary to the then Chief Minister of Goa, Manohar Parrikar. Describing her time working for him she said, “Parrikar was very straight forward. For him, it was either a yes, or a no, nothing in-between. With him I didn’t feel pressured to agree all the time. If I couldn’t do it, I could tell it to him upright. It felt good to work like that.”

It was in 2015 that Mrunal

first started work at the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG). “With ESG we had a different vision. We wanted to have an event management company catering to government requirements, and employ staff for a long term so that they could understand, implement and work on the system.” Under her managerial guidance, ESG has conducted many events over the years, gradually improving on its aspects and reach. Elaborating on how multi-faceted events conducted by ESG are, she remarked, “We cannot depend entirely on the government as our work is more dynamic, not purely administrative.”

Mrunal finds it hard to pick an event that she enjoyed the most in the past 5 years. “They are all different! For me, no two events are comparable. Each one whether big or small has its own charm and requires different preparation and planning. Even the short event of unveiling the renovated INOX recently was so exciting. Events are always fun!”

Through all the hectic last minute critical thinking and managing, Mrunal also longs for a break where she can cook up her favourite dish leisurely then prop her legs up and relax. For now though, elaborate dishes don’t matter. “I would be just as happy with a plate of rice and pickle!” We all love the rush that comes with working for the film festival every year, and it’s clear the ESG has the right people to enjoy the annual challenge. This lady leads from the front.



CLOSING FILM: WIFE OF A SPY

BY ROHAN MENEZES

Kiyoishi Kurosawa's *Wife of a Spy* (*Spy no Tsuba* in the original Japanese) - a thrilling period piece about a couple in World War II Japan - is a gritty ending note for the 51st International Film Festival of India.

Acclaimed as intense and moving, it centers on Satoko Fukuhara (Aoi Yu), a filmmaker and his pretty, socially suave wife Yusaku (Issey Takahashi), a westernized liberal silk merchant. In the 1940s, with troops constantly marching through the streets, the couple's love of western clothes and whiskey is frowned upon as anti-national. Satoko's childhood friend, now a military chief of police, constantly reminds her of that.

Yusaku shows contempt for the political developments of the time, especially endless warmongering. He is unafraid of standing against it. But things come to head when, after a business trip to Manchuria with his

nephew, Yusaku comes back with film of Japanese military atrocities, with the intent to smuggle it to America. He also brings along an unknown woman, who is mysteriously found dead soon after.



Taiji arrests the nephew on suspicion of murder, while Yusaku continues his path of becoming a spy against the Japanese Empire. Satoko is initially supportive, even declaring in one scene showcased in the movie trailer: "If you are a spy, I will become the wife of a spy!" But things spiral out of control as Satoko is caught in a web of intrigue, and is forced to decide whether or not to support her husband, who becomes dangerously intent on opposing the government, with a suspicious Taiji hot on his heels.

This film blends movie-in-movie elements (as Satoko continues to make her films throughout all of this) in with the wartime period drama, and adds yet another genre to Kurosawa's belt. The acclaimed Kobe native has previously won recognition for films as diverse as the horror hit *Pulse* 2001 (nominated for Prize of *Un Certain Regard* at the Cannes Film Festival) and the alien sci-fi thriller *Before We Vanish* 2017 (which netted him the Japan Academy Film Prize for Best Director).

However, Kurosawa insisted to *Screedaily* that *Wife of a Spy* (which won him Best Director at the Venice Film Festival in 2019) was not a war movie — and certainly, for almost the entire movie, there are no actual scenes of combat. The war remains in the background as Satoko and Yusaku's drama unfolds.

The director sees connections between all his movies despite radically different themes. He says, "Although all my past films have had a contemporary setting, a recurring theme has been the way our society is structured and how the individual either goes along with or fights against the system. It just so happened that by setting the story in early 1940s Japan, there was that much more of a conflict between the individual and society. How do individuals sustain their freedoms when they're at the mercy of societal systems? How do they pursue

their hopes and dreams? I'm hoping that's the message the international audience can take away from the film."

The film is almost entirely set in Kurosawa's home town of Kobe, a choice by the studio (NHK) not the director himself, who has previously said he is uncomfortable writing about his own townspeople - so much so that he wrote four of the lead characters as being from Yokohama instead.

However, the scenery of Kobe is explored throughout the film. Kurosawa explained to *Screedaily* that low budgets limited him to locations in contemporary Kobe, thus yielding some real gems. The couple's house is an actual western-style home from the same era in which the film is set, for example. Combined with NHK's futuristic new ultra-high definition 8k cameras, the film ended up as a historical period piece with extremely well-defined images. According to Kurosawa, after much editing to remove some of "that realness and make it more of a period piece...it yielded good results as it's almost like you're watching a moving piece of art or a painting."

While no doubt an excellent testament to Kurosawa's versatility and abilities, as the reception in Venice attests, it must be noted that the film revisits a controversial part of Japanese history. The Japanese atrocities in Manchuria, including human experimentation and use of chemical weapons, have been a sensitive subject for decades. Kurosawa admitted to *Screedaily* that while he hoped the film would generate controversy, he did not expect it, saying "there doesn't seem to be a lot of sentiment to revisit the past in Japan – so I'm presuming there's not going to be much discussion about it."

In fact, *The Japan Times* praised his for laying "bare wartime atrocities" and described the "gripping" film as "more than a penetrating study of one woman's troubled psyche; it's also an unflinching gaze at the horror of a world gone mad. In other words, classic Kurosawa."

PEACOCK PICKS



The Man Who Sold His Skin 2020

Director : Kaouther Ben Hania
104 min. Arabic, English, French
12:00pm, Inox Screen 3

Volver (2006)
121 min. Spanish
Director : Pedro Almodóvar
12:00pm, Kala Academy



The Forgotten (2019)
104 min. Ukrainian
Director : Daria Onyshchenko
10:00am, Maquinez 1



Valley Of The Gods (2020)
127 min. English
Director : Lech Majewski
9:15am, Inox Screen 1



WHISPERS AND BARKS

BY SUYASH KAMAT

India's sole representative at Cannes Film Festival in 2020 was a 21-minute short. *CatDog* (2019) was made by the students of Film & Television Institute of India. Despite repeated clashes with the administration, the students of FTII have time and again proven their artistic mettle at the highest level. Winner of the top prize in the Cinéfondation section at Cannes, their new film is about the dreamy and innocent world of two siblings, whose curious and inquisitive mischief unfurl simmering undercurrents. *The Peacock* caught up with these young filmmakers after their screening in the IFFI Indian Panorama.

"I was looking at a civilizational idea of what it means to not be bound by societal relationships and family," said Ashmita Guha Neogi, who wrote and directed the film. Probing into society's rigid framework towards sex, her film explores themes most shy away from as a matter of discussion, let alone make it the subject matter of movies. She said, "There is always a conflict between the natural and the societal. Centrally, that is where the film came from. I felt that the period of puberty is far more potent and volatile to explore the idea of incest, as opposed to doing it as adults. These are experiences a lot of us have had, and probably have suppressed."

Starring Rachna Godbole and Prem Dharmadhikari as the young siblings, *CatDog* manages to draw out startling performances from these kids. Their subtle, measured approaches and intimate chemistry are accentuated mostly by just gestures, which makes one wonder about their process, especially given their age. Ashmita said, "I was lucky with Rachna who is 19 years old; much older than she is in the film. Being a psychology student she was inherently excited about this. So I was able to have these conversations with her."

For Dharmadhikari however, who is much younger, the team's approach had to be more action oriented, often devising games to arrive at the desired emotions. More often than not, the form of a film, aside from the pre-meditated idea, evolves from finding innovative solutions to problems that arise while shooting. As David Fincher puts it, "You don't know what directing is until the sun is setting, you've got to get five shots, and you're only going to get two."

For cinematographer Prateek Pamecha, sound designer Kushal Nerurkar, and Production Designer



Neeraj Singh, the challenge was to visually and aurally interpret these philosophical inquiries into tangible imagery which can evoke similar moods and curiosities within an audience.

They achieved this through subtle and textured tones which manage to paint a nostalgic atmosphere of a time gone by, while still retaining the immediacy of the violence on display.

For a film whose sense of space, milieu and time is vague and undefined, the imagined space must then be able to work within its own contexts of creation. Ashmita said, "We had to find a space that had character but not specificity." For this, the team referenced photographs of spaces from Kerala to the Konkan, and also referenced Ashmita's own sketches which mostly had spaces with high ceilings. "We had to go house hunting

from door to door through every space that remotely met our expectations because we weren't allowed to shoot beyond 200km radius of campus"

explained Prateek.

For Kushal, the film was mostly created in post-production, in finding the right kind of tonality. Much like the suspension of realism in the images, sound takes similar liberties, often becoming a political undertone for the skewed gender realities of the two siblings. Most of the aural drama happens off screen, constantly conflicting or complimenting the visual drama. "We had a lot of dogs barking off-screen. So we'd go out and keep recording their barks, at times carrying food to make them bark, to get the sound we were looking for" said Kushal. This reminded me of how Robert Bresson once made his sound

recordist record the sound of the exact bus he heard on a particular day outside his room for a scene, which turned out to be a substitute bus running that day instead of the regular. Drama indeed exists in the details.

Despite most festivals going virtual this year, *CatDog* had a few physical screenings at Cannes. One memory remains as a glowing testament to the beauty of shared viewing. Ashmita recollects, "There was an old French lady who walked up to us. She held up a screening schedule and asked which film was ours. When we pointed out, she recoiled. She said she had tears in her eyes, butterflies in her stomach and her heart had stopped pumping. That was really special. Going to a different country and still finding a connection, really shook me. It was extremely special."

IMMACULATE HEART OF OUR CITY



BY KARISHMA D'MELLO

Two stairways converge, connecting tourists and locals to the threshold of a white church upon a hill. This is the Our Lady of Immaculate Conception Church (*Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Imaculada Conceição*). What was once just a quaint, white chapel, serving as a colonial port landing for sailors, grew into this magnificent white structure synonymous with the city and the spirit of Panjim.

Neither faith nor culture determines your connection with this church. This is evident throughout the year, but particularly on the 8th of December, when the church lights illuminate the square below, and Goans celebrate the “Panjim Feast” (the Feast of Our Lady of Immaculate Conception).

The church has overseen selfies, cinema, celebrations, and even protest. The latter, most recently on 19th December 2020, a day that marks the 59th year of Goa’s liberation from colonial rule, when protestors, mostly made up of youth banded together in solidarity to draw attention to the ecologically destructive infrastructural projects in Mollem.



It only makes sense that when the city lights up for the International Film Festival of India, the church illuminates too, courtesy the Entertainment Society of Goa. That film connection also live on in movies like *Josh* (2000), *Mujhse Shaadi Karogi* (2004), and *Aashiqui 2* (2013), among others, that give you a familial glance at the Panjim Church Square. There’s not much you miss when you’ve been nestled upon a hill for over four hundred years.

Two stairways converge, connecting cultures, causes, and the city.



THE CINEPHILE'S ANNUS HORRIBILIS

BY SACHIN CHATTE

If there is one song that won't be sung for 2020, it will be the Ervin Drake number made famous by Frank Sinatra in 1966, 'It Was a Very Good Year'. For some, it may not have been such a bad year (thus making it a very good year), while for many, it has been the most dreadful time of their life.

Cinema was affected as much as anything else and while the OTT platforms have made hay (the stock price of Netflix has almost doubled since March 2020), personally, watching films in theatres is what I missed most during the pandemic. Little did I realize that Friday afternoon of 13 March 2020, at Galaxy Cinema in Rajkot (where I happened to be commentating for All India Radio, for the Ranji Trophy finals between Saurashtra and Bengal), that it would be the last outing at the theatres, for a long long time. The last two days of the cricket match were played without allowing any spectators in the stadium and the term Corona had just made a sly entry into our lives. Our annual Films Critics Guild awards to be held on 15 March also got canceled when the event was deferred to be shown online and while recording it, for the first time, I saw a room full of people wearing masks.

For our weekly Cinephile Film Club screenings of ESG at Maquinez Palace, we had invited Geetha J, the director of the Malayalam film *Run Kalyani* (2019) to present her film. Even her tickets were booked for the third week of March, but just when we were wondering if we should err on the side of caution, the situation changed so rapidly, that we were left with no choice.

While it is assumed that all film lovers were binging on films during the lockdown, that is not necessarily true – not in the case of yours truly at least.



One can binge on a web series; films have to be savored by a proper viewing.

While there was a fair bit of content that came out on OTT platforms, only few were impressive. MUBI (which curates excellent world and Indian

cinema) and revisiting old films are really what saved the day. Ultimately, a classic is called so, because it has stood the test of time and continues to do so. An Ozu or Kurosawa, and the other giants of world cinema, will always continue to inspire filmmakers, as long as cinema exists.

Not so long ago, I asked Girish Kasaravalli, the living legend of Indian cinema, about what he has been watching or anything new that has caught his attention. With a slight disappointment on his face, he said there wasn't anything in particular. "I do watch new films now and then but at the end of the day, I go back to Ozu. That comforts me most; I keep discovering great value in his films", said the veteran director referring to the Japanese master whose profoundness lies in the simplicity of his films. For the uninitiated, Kasaravalli himself is a Gold medallist from the Film and Television Institute of India, with numerous accolades to his credit and 14 National awards, including one for his debut feature *Ghatashraddha* (1977).

One of my discoveries during lockdown was the films and books

of David Mamet – a screenwriter, director, author, playwright, and Pulitzer Prize winner. Among other films, he wrote *The Untouchables* (1987) for Brian de Palma and *Wag the Dog* (1997) for Barry Levinson. He also directed films like *Heist* (2001), *House of Games* (1987), *Homicide* (1991), and *The Spanish Prisoner* (1997). Equally enjoyable are his books on films – 'On Directing Film' and 'Bambi vs Godzilla', which was about the business of cinema.

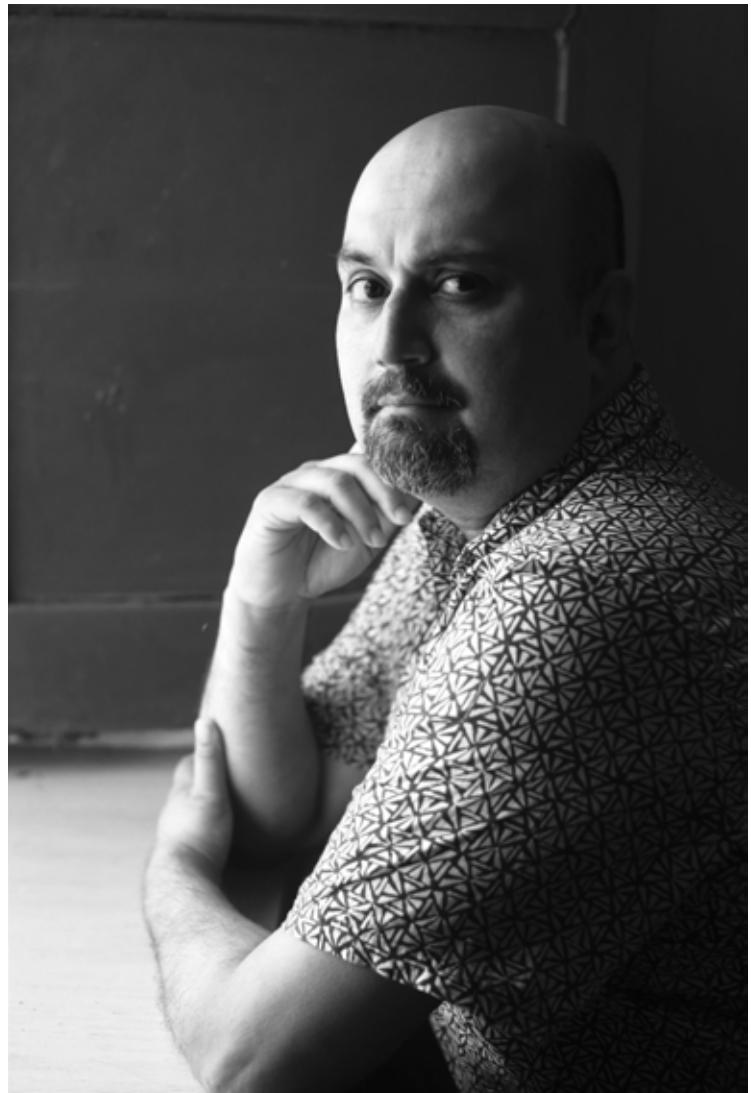
Even though theatres around the country opened in October, the response has been lukewarm. Christopher Nolan's *Tenet* (2020) too couldn't really draw audiences back to the theatre; although given that there were very few people, I felt as safe as one could possibly feel during these times.

While IFFI didn't have big numbers this time in terms of audience participation, there was enough evidence of people ready to move back to normal, with a sense of caution. With the 52nd edition of the festival coming up at the end of this year, here's hoping for good films in November and, till then.











CROSS PURPOSES

BY DR. LUIS DIAS

When I first came across the English translation for the Croatian film *Glas* (The Voice, 2019) written and directed by Ognjen Sviličić, I assumed it would be about the singing voice and music. That is what led me to investigate it further, and I'm glad I did. Because it delves into a very topical issue not just here but around the world: that of respect for one another's feelings, especially those concerning religion, the freedom to practice it (or not), and the dangers of religious and political indoctrination at all levels, from one's school years onward.

Goran (Franko Jakovčević), a teenager from Split, Croatia, and a bit of a juvenile delinquent, is sent by his mother, a single parent, into a very conservative Catholic boarding school, "to straighten him out" and also as she is about to start work aboard a cruise ship. It isn't long before Goran begins to feel the pressure to conform to a rigid routine, enforced by soft-spoken yet authoritarian 30-something headmistress Danijela (Bosnian-born actress Belma Salkunić).

Trouble brews almost as soon as Goran begins life at the school when he does not recite the Lord's Prayer along with the others at the boarding-school cafeteria. After headmistress Danijela reads an apostolic letter referring to "the invasion of Europe from the east" (a clear reference to how Syrian and other refugees are demonised in Europe), Goran tells a sympathetic fellow student how morally wrong such sentiments are.

Later, cast as Joseph in the school Nativity play, he refuses to deliver his lines on the pretext that the whole story is "illogical" and "stupid." The more Goran stubbornly refuses to budge, the more difficult things become for him at school. Sviličić uses Goran's predicament as a metaphor for the dangers of overly-literal interpretation of religious doctrine to the point that it can erode the principles of love, compassion, inclusion, understanding, empathy, and forgiveness that it is meant to inculcate.

It also exposes the flip side, the hypocrisy of some of Goran's peers, who like him do not truly believe but play along. By conforming and not challenging the system, they save themselves the sort of harassment Goran has to endure. Indeed, the vice-principal Sonja (Karla Brbic) tries to talk Goran into doing precisely that: falling in line to make his life easier.

It is from a sense of guilt over their own hypocrisy (and possibly to deflect attention from their own lapses) that these peers actively participate in Goran's persecution. Is it out of true belief, or is it to satisfy their own egos, or because his defiant attitude provokes them to challenge him?

It got me thinking more deeply on the issue of faith and belief, or the lack of it. I should state here that I am Roman Catholic by birth, but as I was raised by an atheist father who didn't go to church, I am literally a child of both, belief and 'unbelief'. I find that when I am going through a rough patch myself, I react with either of two extremes: my faith either gets stronger (hotter) as I pray for a way out, or I take a complete time-out (cool off) from the whole God business. And then over time I gradually dial

back to my 'normal' level of faith, which I call the Goldilocks level, neither too hot nor too cold.

It is refreshing that the Catholic Church currently has a pope (Pope Francis) who publicly admitted in 2016 that he too has had doubts about faith. He went on to say that doubts can be "a sign that we want to know God better and more deeply." Well then, my life has had more signs than a railway junction!

Francis also said, "We do not need to be afraid of questions and doubts because they are the beginning of a path of knowledge and going deeper; one who does not ask questions cannot progress either in knowledge or in faith."

Although Sviličić uses the prism of religious dogma to explore the phenomenon of forced conformity, it could be extrapolated to other forms of organized social persecution, which is what makes this film so timely in an era where fundamentalism and intolerance are rife. The insistence on a monolithic idea of what it means to belong, and the labeling and harassment of those who do not subscribe to that rigid strait-jacketed idea, is a very good example of this.

The Voice has no musical score, which brings the human interactions and dialogues into even sharper relief and gives one a stronger sense of being a fly on the wall, watching and listening, and hopefully learning as well.

Dr. Luis Dias is a physician, musician, writer and founder of music education charity Child's Play India Foundation www.childsplayindia.org. He blogs at www.luisdias.wordpress.com.



TREES ARE OUR ANCHORS

BY DR RACHANA PATNI

If there is a single piece of research that I feel has contributed to the wellbeing of the world, it is a study on the comparative measurement of wellbeing and quality of life in several countries, which I read over a decade ago. I will always remember reading that the quality of life of an individual or a family improves significantly "if they can see even a single tree from their house".

As an academic in the UK, there was a phase of my life when I used to read over 70 journal articles a week. I was doing this mainly to familiarise myself with the rituals of writing for journals and academic audiences. There is a craft to every form, and there are conventions in writing for academic journals that I had figured out quite well. One main ploy is referencing. Referring to another published work is used to garner authority. Whatever ludicrous claims I wished to make, provided someone else had made similar claims in the academic printed world before me, I would be able to refer to that heritage and get my claims printed.

Being in the citation and the reference list of journal articles and books is important for academics. So there are good systems in place whereby junior scholars refer to their supervisors, thereby creating a respectable number of citations and referencing history for their professors. I had to learn this, and became quite dependent on it. It became so bad that unless I could refer to someone else in my usual interactions, I felt that I wasn't being enough of an intellectual.

Later on, I experienced a major detox from my identity as an intellectual. It was pretty severe, even though it seems funny to me now. I could no longer read, much less write. I could not remember the names of heavyweights who could open doors for me if I simply referenced them. I realise that this was part of a personal transformation I was going through. It made me connect more to my own experience of life, rather than through the mediation offered by research studies.

As I sit in Goa today, the sight of trees from my home always reminds me of that bit of research about trees and wellbeing. And when I relate this to films, what stands out is Hayao Miyazaki's *My Neighbour Totoro* (1988). The camphor tree in that film has become that tree for me that makes people experience

wellbeing. It is a film that is very tender although there are elements of great anxiety; there is an overworked father, a mother dealing with illness in a hospital and yet this film demonstrates to me the metaphor of 'the lap of nature'.

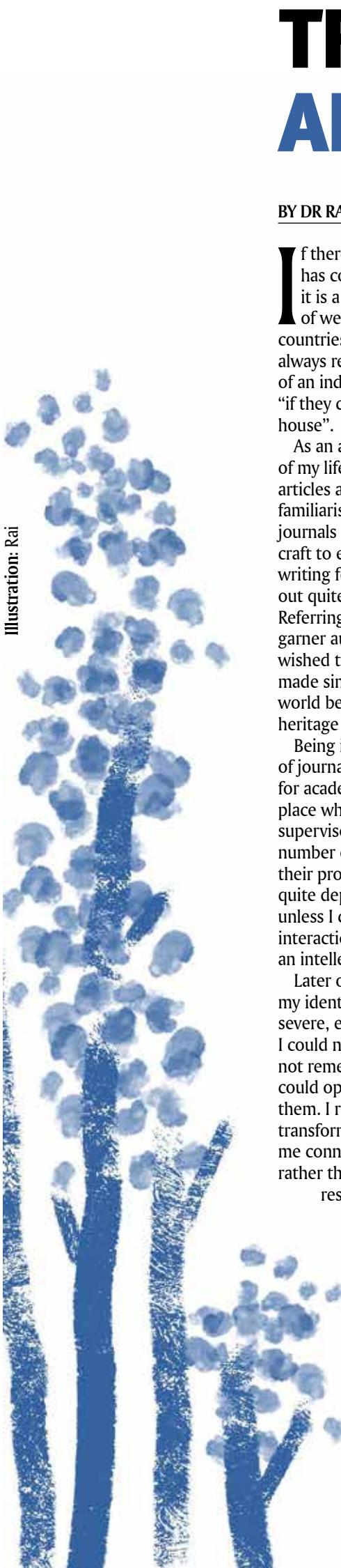
In my work, I draw upon the connection that each one of us has with our Earth, in feeling resourced and experiencing wellbeing. The lap of nature provides a source of grounding and also a sense of being whole. This has been recognised in Japan with the acceptance of the idea of 'shinrin-yoku' or forest baths. It is not about being active outdoors. Rather, it is about the passive-active way of engaging all our senses while being surrounded by nature. This is a practice that can inform our neural pathways into feeling better resourced, connected, and calm.

There are further claims in the research that an additional 10 trees in public areas can increase the value of the property in most countries. The original mention of this research seemed to suggest that being able to see a tree could challenge the benefits of economic class on wellbeing. This is significant because it also alludes to my other belief that we are all connected in our wellbeing.

The Peacock has offered me a wonderful opportunity, two years in a row, to reach out to readers who may apply the experiential ideas I share in my writing. I realise how much my writing has changed from the academic style I was committed to before. I write straight from my heart now, reaching out to others with a loving acceptance that my writing may be imperfect but it is good enough for it to be engaged with. The heightened anxiety of being right and honourable in the academic world has left me and I am so grateful for that departure.

This is another departure as it is the final column this year, and what nature teaches us is that what matters changes form and continues to exist for us. I hope to have stirred some of you to being proactive in taking care of your emotional world, and I encourage each one of you to find a tree you can see from your house and thank it today. I will do this with the beautiful trees just outside the festival venue, the most beautiful tree-canopied street in Panjim, or perhaps anywhere in the world.

Dr. Rachana Patni is a Panjim-based leadership consultant who works globally. She is the founder of The Centre of ME and writes on emotional wellbeing and mental health.



ANSWERING THE PEACOCK'S CALL



Illustration: Chloe Cordeiro

BY CHLOE CORDEIRO

Having gotten the call a few days ago, allowing me the opportunity to intern for the International Film Festival of India's official daily newspaper *The Peacock*, an all-consuming sense of responsibility and purpose seemed to have filled my being; and this last week has been a rush of exciting new things to look forward to.

I realise how hyperbolic that sounds; and it is deliberately so. My eagerness stemmed from the understanding that I simply was not doing everything I could to really get the best out of my days sitting at home, in the oddly chaotic time which ensued from a certain global pandemic that had its debut last year. I wanted to instead be consumed by something that truly drove me.

It could have been the ability to actually get out of my house and head to work every morning to the Maquinez Palace in Panjim – with determination evident in my tight-knuckled grip on my

bright red Vespa, making sure I get to work in one piece as I breezed through the streets of my home city - that gave me the feeling of new life.

Or perhaps it was how weaving through traffic seemed to simultaneously unravel the mummified cobwebs in my mind, that seemed to create a complex fabric of its own – a tapestry of images: my adventures chatting with visitors at the festival in the most journalistic poise I could muster, rushing a pen across a drawing tablet in the hopes of creating striking illustrations in record time, and strategising our team's Twitter account.

Regardless, my small role in the putting together this beautiful newspaper was one I thoroughly enjoyed, and one I'll run back to every chance I get. Working on multiple illustrations with simple guidelines and regular deadlines was more fun than it was 'work', I must admit. It would even be considered bragging, considering that Team Peacock happened to be made up of just about the loveliest, talented set of people you'll find around – each member of the team bringing something completely new to the table.

When the team says they're more like a family, one feels it instantaneously – it's definitely the positive atmosphere that is ever-present in the office, complete with pleasantries exchanged with the most warmth you will ever hear in a voice – that of our managing editor; and the familiarity of each of the members, built up over years of working together on beautiful newspaper editions every year during our Film Festival.

It's the quick-paced staff around the building who are ever-ready to help out in the IT lab, and a couple of team members in the office who offer to make you a coffee while they're getting themselves one that made an alien environment a familiar, comfortable space for a newcomer. Daily laughter was brought to the office by a friendly feud started by a broken chair that was initially shoved in the corner, only to circle back for more rejection as two friends battled for the cushiony seating of the only (functional) swivel-chair in the office. A feud that took place in the form of paper notes being placed delicately on the seat of the rejected chair every single

time it made its rounds.

The festival this year was a melange of interesting experiences. The office, however, remained a safe, quiet space, undisturbed by the activities of the rest of the event – it was a home to creative talents, attentively sitting at each of their self-assigned cubicles. The air was tense, yet relaxed. Busy, engrossed minds lurked behind quiet facades, the deep focus on their tasks at hand almost tangible. It was easy to understand why everyone came into work with a smile on their face and a spring in their step – knowing every day would be a long day, and every day would bring a new adventure.

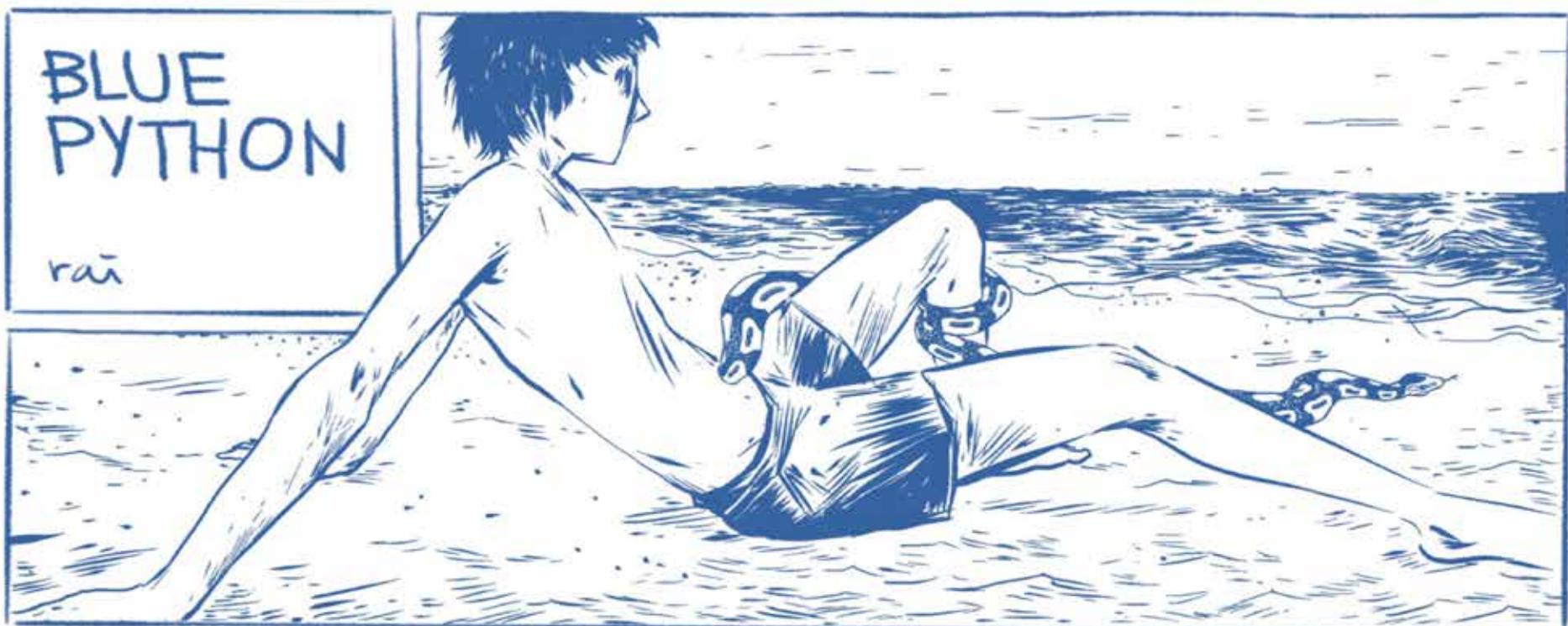
Working with pros in each of their fields, though initially intimidating, was an exciting experience I was humbled to have had. The past week has been an unreal bustling time, and the values and lessons I've acquired will be sticking with me indefinitely. I seem to have found my calling and a larger sense of purpose, in this short span of time, and my mind has been left flowing with ideas and exploding with vibrancy.



*“Something smells foul around here.”
“Oh, positively fishy.”*

BLUE PYTHON

rain

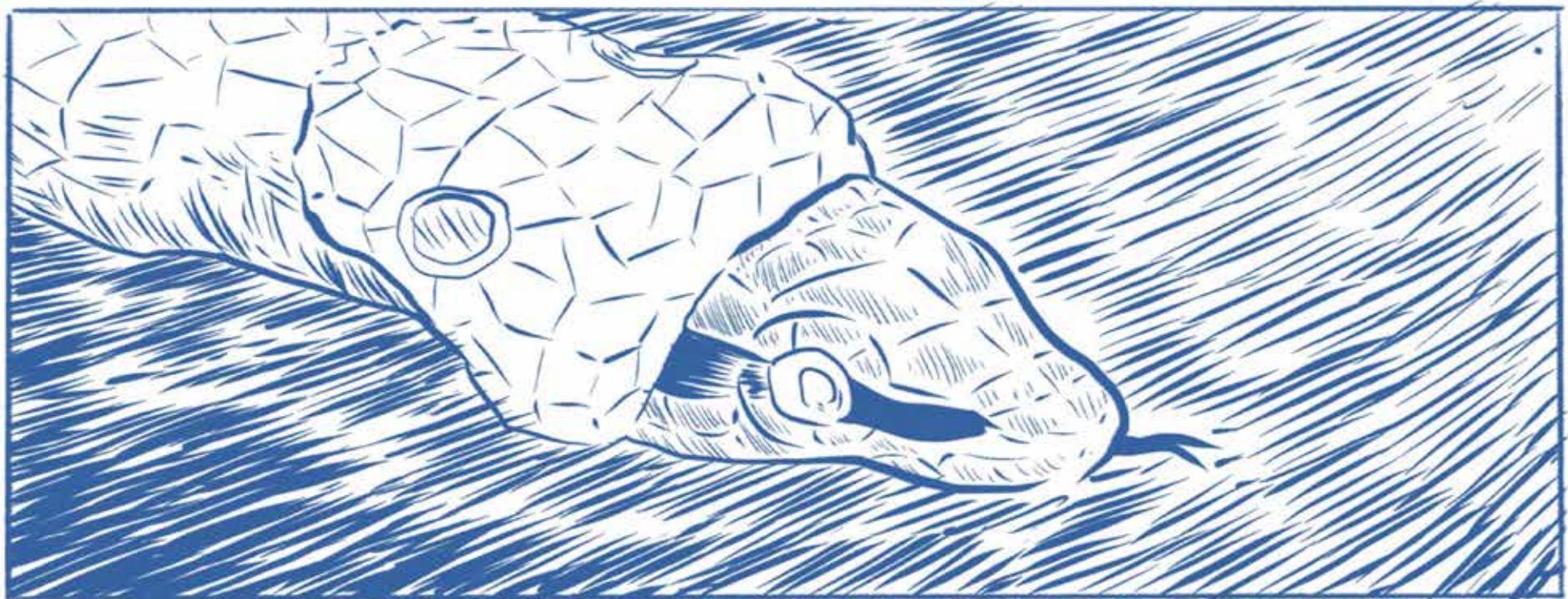


THE DAY THE
PYTHON GREW
OUT OF ME,
I LOOKED FOR IT
EVERYWHERE.



IN THE PUB,
THE FIELDS,
THROUGH THE
BREATHING ROOTS IN
SALVADOR DE MUNDO
AND THE MANOS.





IN MY
MAPUSA BAZAAR
By RAVIRAJ C. NAIR

IT WAS FEAST DAY IN MAPUSA.

I HEARD THAT THEY WERE SUPPOSED
TO SCREEN KONKANI FILM
'SUKHACHEM SOPON' (1967) IN MAPUSA
AS A STEP TO PROMOTE KONKANI CINEMA.

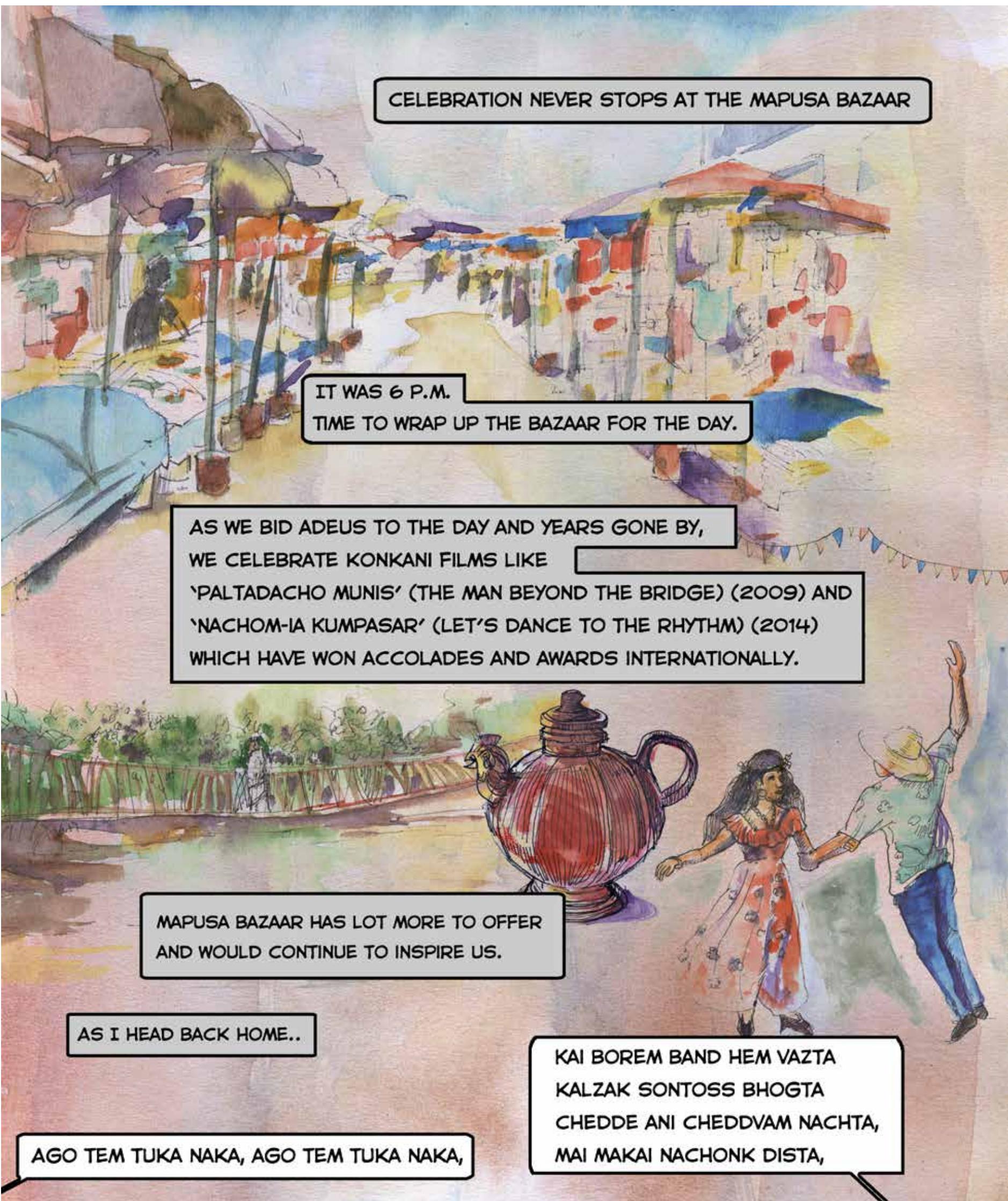


IT WAS JERRY BRAGANZA WHO FIRST HAD THE
COURAGE TO MAKE A KONKANI FILM WHEN
OTHERS COULDN'T EVEN HAVE DREAMT OF IT.



AFTER PULLING OFF A GREAT HIT FILM LIKE 'MOGACHO AUNDDO',
SOON AFTER GOA'S LIBERATION JERRY BRAGANZA STARTED HIS
OWN PRODUCTION COMPANY 'HELEN PRODUCTIONS'
AND PRODUCED ANOTHER KONKANI FILM
'SUKHACHEM SOPON' (DREAM OF HAPPINESS) IN 1967.

HURDLES CANNOT STOP ONE FROM CELEBRATING AND DREAMING BIG.



CELEBRATION NEVER STOPS AT THE MAPUSA BAZAAR

IT WAS 6 P.M.
TIME TO WRAP UP THE BAZAAR FOR THE DAY.

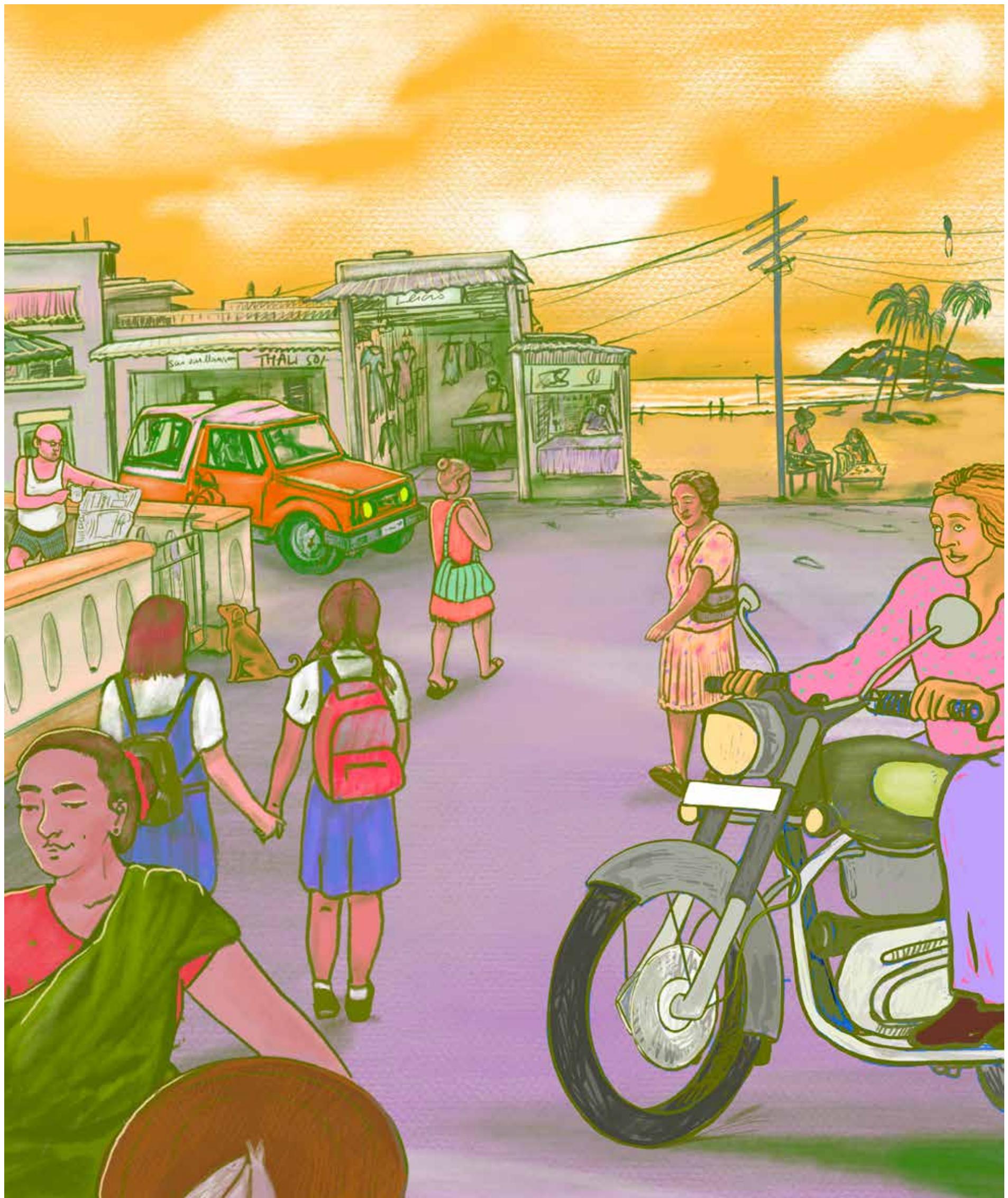
AS WE BID ADEUS TO THE DAY AND YEARS GONE BY,
WE CELEBRATE KONKANI FILMS LIKE
'PALTADACHO MUNIS' (THE MAN BEYOND THE BRIDGE) (2009) AND
'NACHOM-IA KUMPASAR' (LET'S DANCE TO THE RHYTHM) (2014)
WHICH HAVE WON ACCOLADES AND AWARDS INTERNATIONALLY.

MAPUSA BAZAAR HAS LOT MORE TO OFFER
AND WOULD CONTINUE TO INSPIRE US.

AS I HEAD BACK HOME..

AGO TEM TUKA NAKA, AGO TEM TUKA NAKA,

KAI BOREM BAND HEM VAZTA
KALZAK SONTOSS BHOGTA
CHEDDE ANI CHEDDVAM NACHTA,
MAI MAKAI NACHONK DISTA,



DEU BOREM KORUM

BY VIVEK MENEZES

The Peacock squawks for the very last time at the 51st edition of the International Film Festival of India, and you will see the results only on-screen. For the first year in the history of this oldest film festival in Asia, every bit of written material has gone digital. It has posed a challenge for everyone, not least your favourite festival daily. We are used to producing gorgeous 'hard copies' to become instant collector's items, not just pixels to be peered at on your phone or PC.

But this was the best possible outcome given the unique circumstances of our collective pandemic predicament. Team Peacock maintained all the necessary protocols: masks, distancing, work-

from-home, and we know that our efforts have been appreciated because of an overwhelming response from our readers. Thank you, cinema fans, first and above all. You make every effort worthwhile.

The Peacock ran with uncommon smoothness this year, buoyed by the grace of our managing editor Impana Kulkarni (she's a dancer, so perhaps it comes naturally to her). Paired alongside the veteran, nimble-fingered brilliance of our layout wizard Amol Kamat, and the sheer visual genius of lead photographer Assavri Kulkarni, this trio of stalwarts made working together both fun and rewarding. Thank you, guys!

This year's format made visuals much more important than any previous edition, and our team delivered to an extraordinary degree. The deeply

meaningful cover paintings by Shilpa Mayenkar Naik, the consistently thought-provoking back pages by Praveen Naik, our first-ever comic by Raviraj Naik, and the cheeky, charming Peanut Gallery by Nadia de Souza, combined with stellar article illustrations by Rai, Pakhi Sen, and Chloe Cordeiro all raised the bar considerably for future editions. Big hand to each and all of you!

Many thanks to Sachin Chatte and Suyash Kamat, our cinephilic core. And also to the distinguished daily columnists, beloved Konkani writer Damodar 'Bhai' Mauzo and Drs Rachana Patni and Luis Dias, as well as the rest of our writing cohort: Karishma D'mello, Christal Ferrao, Kavita Masthoff and Rohan Menezes. All of you, backed up by the versatile photo and technical support of Siddhartha Lall and Michael Praveen,

have done this occasion and opportunity proud. Viva!

Why this festival at this time? Many were skeptical, and some outright critical. Other events of this type have been cancelled. But just two days in, and the logic made itself clear. Many people really needed this, starting with the symbiotically twinned communities of film-makers and movie fans. Every single one of us has had an extremely gruelling several months of dread and disappointment due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and we needed hope.

IFFI 2021 gave us that, gone off as well as possible, and been a most welcome break. Thank you most of all to Amit Satija, Subhash Phal Dessai, Mrunal Walke, Arantxa Afonso and everyone else at the Entertainment Society of Goa. Kudos for a job well done.

Peacock Prattle

BY CHRISTAL FERRAO

Omkar:

This year the International Film Festival of India was a distinctive and hybrid one, Instead of November 2020, the organizers wanted me to dance in January 2021. At first I was nervous, but began to perform in style, As I saw guests walk on the illuminated red carpeted isle, Cine enthusiasts watched the silver screen happily after a really long quarantine run.

Oscar:

I learnt to use technology well and this was the best chance, To stay online and entertain the homebound with a graceful zoom dance, You could be home, or anywhere overseas, View films, masterclasses and conversations by pros with expertise, Learn, understand, and write about the technique and parlance.

Omkar:

Young filmmakers visited the festival and were grateful for the selection, They documented history, gender desires, and social change in action, Musicians performed Goan beats and rhyme, the city was illuminated after a long time, Delegates satisfied their taste buds for cuisine with a dash of lime, As first time participants understood art, setting and fiction.

Oscar:

Virtual viewing is a good alternative to connect people from distant lands, You click photos, walk through terrains and virtually see the sea near the sand, But I hope we can get back to the good old rush of first day first show, So that people can make more films for society to love, learn, and grow And film festivals like IFFI can promote and celebrate our moviemaking brand.



Illustration: Chloe Cordeiro



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Illustration: Praveen Naik, Nadia De Souza, Raviraj Naik, Pakhi Sen, Rai | Lead Photographer: Assavri Kulkarni | Photo team: Siddhartha Lall, Michael Praveen

