

# MIRRO

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The Save Goa rally in Panjim's Azad Maidan in 2006 was a watershed moment. On that day, our people came together in unusual number, in a rare public gathering which represented a cross-section of all levels of society it was as close to an all-Goa family gathering as we have had in many decades. You could feel the rapidly beating heart of a real community assembled there in front of the dais.

Music made its presence felt, as always in our culture. First, there was a brass band playing 'oom-pah, oom-pah' standards that have set our feet tapping for generations. And then came a heart-stopping moment, conducted in near pin drop silence, as the Prince of Siolim, our culture's home-grown troubadour Remo came to the front of the stage. A guitar materialised in his hands, and a full minute of deep, palpable longing settled over the hushed multitude.

Recalling the moment more than a year later, Remo told me, "I came to the stage that day to say what I had to say. But I also could feel what all those people were feeling, and I knew I could give voice to their sentiments. I wanted to put their thoughts into emotion, to convey those feelings and give vent to them through song. We needed to reach that emotional level all together as one, and by the time we had all sung those verses in Konkani, I felt we had achieved it."

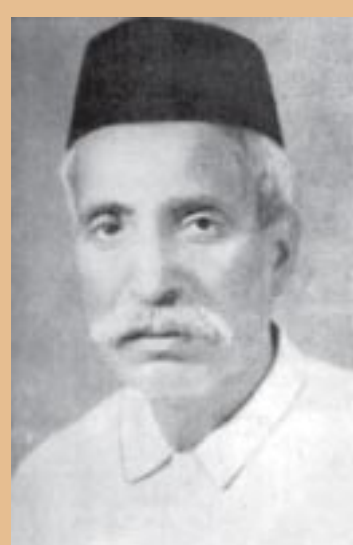
Remo sang just a simple little refrain, but it had a searing lyric "O Montri, as tuji motti...maimche abruchi kori naka mati..." "All around, you could see people frown, and then nod. Yes, this is why we are here. Yes, this is what our gathering is all about.

At that very moment, as the music rang out across our historic Panjim waterfront, it became very clear that change was on its way, that a core of unbeatable strength was making its present felt. The grizzled old motorcycle pilot who stood next to me said in Konkani, "It's finished, that Regional Plan is has been defeated" and whooped for joy. And it was true, it was already evident to me and everyone else that he was right, that brief, purely musical moment had demonstrated an unforeseen solidarity, hidden reserves of strength.

And what was it that exposed the ties that bind the community of Goans of every background? What cuts across every border and boundary, and blends and synthesises every influence, and throbs in every Goan soul? Music, it is music above all.

The contemporary history of Goa winds itself around musical themes, a pattern that unfolds like a symphony

It is true that this was the one area of education in which the colonialist legacy was substantial. They ensured that every village parish had instruments and young parishioners had means to acquire musical education. But that alone cannot explain the whole story, for we also have the truly remarkable contributions made



Khaprumam Parvatkar



Mogubai Kurdikar



Kishori Amonkar

## Noxibbak Roddtam

VIVEK MENEZES tells us how the contribution of Goans has been vital in shaping the cultural expression of modern India, particularly in music, which flows through the blood of every Goan, but also in literature and art...



CARNEIRO JAZZ BAND. JOHN CARNEIRO IS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BACK ROW

trahome of Malar, on Divar Island, many families some well-established now, even wealthy first made their multi-generational nest-eggs from music. It is something to recall with pride as yet another generation of young Goans uses music to get ahead in the world.

The old photograph on this page a rare studio portrait from the early 1900s features twelve Goan men, standing straighter than you might expect for colonial subjects in that era. Right in the centre of the photo, with a severe parting in his brilliant-tined hair, stands one John Carneiro. This son of Donvaddo, Saligao, did well enough from his professional musical career to educate his son as an accountant, and started a new trajectory for his family that led to considerable gains. It is a pattern that has played out countless times. That John Carneiro might have played in front of Englishmen without a place at their table, but less than a century later his namesake lives in the UK as a citizen, and his great-granddaughter got her doctorate from Oxford.

That is the story of Goans in music. It is also the story of my family, because my wife is another of John Carneiro's great-granddaughters, and my youngest son carries his name. But it is also the story of Goans and their outsized contributions to the making of modern India and its contemporary

expression. It's a fascinating truth: Goa's cultural DNA has been crucial to the development of India's independent, cosmopolitan ideas of itself. Look beyond the superficial, and you will immediately find the fingerprints, and lingering drumbeats of visionary Goans from the early and mid-20th century.

About that time when India dramatically found her feet in a shifting, post-colonial world order, Nehru poetically said said, "a moment comes, which

Add up the details the first Indian editor of the national newspaper, Times of India, was a Goan, Frank Moraes; and the first examples of 'chutnified' Indian English were published by another Goan, the poet Joseph Furtado. You have the brash young Goans who started the seminal Progressive Artists Movement in a flash of sheer bravado Francis Newton Souza and his country man Vasudeo Gaitonde kick-started a whole new era for Indian art. Also recall here Anthony D'Mello, the visionary who founded the

BCCI, built the Brabourne Stadium and set modern India cricket on its way.

As for Bollywood, perhaps the sole unifying cultural factor in India, the writer and editor, Nares h Fernandes, has written, "the Hindi film classics that resound across the subcontinent and in Indian homes around the world wouldn't have been made without Goans." He is referring to the unsung 'arrangers', but the ascent of Bollywood was also greatly enriched by the visionary Anthony Gonsalves (whose personal photo album is featured alongside this article). Gonsalves taught an entire generation of iconic Bollywood musicians, and often collaborated with fellow-Goans like Lata Mangeshkar and her sister, Asha Bhonsle. The world of Hindustani music features yet another galaxy of Goan geniuses, like the incomparable Kesarbai Kerkar, and, from the

same gharana, Mogubai Kurdikar along with her daughter, Kishori Amonkar. Lesser known in the master of layashastra is – Khaprumama Parvatkar – just another Goan musician of a class and category by himself.

We could recall enough names and amazing stories to fill many pages just like these. Because, the story of modern India is also, a Goan story of great achievement and essential contributions, which are far out of proportion to our minuscule numbers. For unknown reasons, however, much of this remains an untold, half-remembered story, with these pioneering heroes remembered least of all in their homeland. Goa and India is much poorer for the omission.

(This is an abridged version of an essay that appeared in 'Joyous Sounds', a tribute to the music and musicians of Goa published by the Guitar Guild Goa in 2008)



ANTHONY GONSALVES

by Goan musicians to Hindustani classical music, and to the world-famous popular music of Bollywood. This parallel history implies that there is more at work behind the scenes, gives resonance to the idea that Goans have a unique relationship with music.

We do know that musical training could bestow a ticket out of economically stagnant Goa. Soon after the British occupation of Goa during the Napoleonic War, a steady stream of musicians headed out to form up cantonment and club bands to strike up tunes that made the British happy. The sons of villages all across Goa grabbed their violins and trumpets, and learned to play 'God Save the Queen', and this musical exodus spread swiftly all across the British Empire.

It's no exaggeration to say that the first big step made by many Goan families into prosperity and the middle class came in time to music. From my ances-

comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance." Delve a little bit, and seek the voices which shaped that utterance and you will find Goans, veritable flotillas of Goans. It is a curiously overlooked fact even as there is evidence piled up like a mountain, their astonishingly outsized contributions are erased in the favoured Indian nationalist myths.



REMO



BOLLYWOOD'S GOAN MUSICIANS



WITH LATA MANGESHKAR



WIELDING THE BATON

(Exclusive photographs from Anthony Gonsalves' scrapbook)