

30 July 2007



Sahitya Akademi



Goa Konkani Akademi

invite you to

**meet the author**

**Ramesh Veluskar**





With Neelam Srivastava

**K**onkani literature boasts of a rich tradition spanning over many centuries. Several luminaries have enriched its fertile soil with their exemplary writing skills. Ramesh Bhagwant Veluskar has pride of place among them. His critically acclaimed forays into various facets of Konkani literature have yielded a number of masterpieces, revealing the inherent traits of an inquisitive, sensitive and enormously talented wordsmith.

Nature in all its vivacious exuberance takes centre stage in much of Veluskar's writing. This is not surprising, considering that he was born and brought up in the picturesque and pristine environs of a tiny village in a state richly endowed by nature. Palem is a scenic hamlet on the banks of the quietly meandering Siridao River, and boasts of a rich folk tradition, where Konkani folk forms like *Zagor*, *Dhalo*, and *Fugdi* flourish even today. It was in this milieu that Veluskar grew to be a litterateur full of vigour, finesse and originality.

His father is an

accomplished dramatist and a consummate exponent of Hindustani classical music. Veluskar also had the privilege of basking in the glory of another renowned son of the village, the late R V Pandit, an acclaimed Konkani poet and writer, as well as a photographer. All these influences find expression in Veluskar's poetry; its roots dig deep into the soul, yet the fragrance of its concepts and reflections suggests an ethereal origin.

Ramesh Veluskar is a multifaceted personality. This otherwise sentimental poet took up the rather sedate vocation of a teacher, joining St Andrew's School in the village of Goa Velha in 1969. He opted for voluntary retirement in 2002, to devote all of his time to his writing. In between, he served on the Board of Studies for schools in Goa, and on the editorial board that prescribed textbooks for Standards VIIIth to XIIth. He conducted hundreds of literary broadcasts for the Panaji station of All India Radio, and translated a number of plays and other programmes into Konkani. He also wrote a large number of songs for AIR, some of which have been set to music by renowned music directors like Ghodkhindi Venkatesh, Yeshwant Dev and Somnath Chari. Veluskar has also been the editor of a children's magazine, *Bhurgeancho* Rajhauns, and a family magazine, *Bimb*. He has translated a large number of works from other languages into Konkani, and has a great deal of critical writing to his credit.

The sheer sweep of his writings is vast. It encompasses poetry, one-act plays, short plays, translations, children's literature, novels, short stories and reviews. His collections of poetry include *Morpakhan* (Peacock Feathers), *Maati* (Earth), *Angani Nachta Mor Morya* (The Dancing Peacock), *Savulgori* (Dusky Beauty) and *Hiranyagarbha* (The Sun). The varied situations and moods in these collections reveal his intense observations of the subtle interplay between nature's offerings and human urgings, like the transcendental revelations of a man emboldened by all the longings within. Nature in all its glory surrounds the reader of these volumes, tempered with ancient but ageless spiritual wisdom. There is an intrinsic rhythm, a magical ring in the words, which dredge up forgotten but incredibly apt 'folklorisms'. Veluskar also displays a willingness for experimentation that occasionally borders on the extreme. Four more collections of verse are presently under publication: *Dariya* (The Sea), *Ihalokichem ek Penney* (Civilisation Rides a Palanquin), *Kalkachya Jhillmill Kusveant* (In Dusk's Womb) and *Sapeksh* (Common Aspirations).

*Morpakhan* speaks to the reader in a people's idiom common in Goa before it was liberated from Portuguese rule. It puts across his views on the evolution of language in an age of globalisation and an increasing monotony of cultural, social and ideological thinking, in which individuals are compelled to search for their roots. *Maati* and *Hiranyagarbha* take Konkani

poetry to new levels of literary accomplishment. They emphasise that mankind is a product of the Earth, to which it owes all its accomplishments, only to abuse Mother Earth in return. They underline the fact that it is only by embracing Mother Earth that mankind can rise above hate and violence to find its true destiny. Both collections speak a universal language and are easily amenable to translation. Hindi and English translations of these collections have been critically acclaimed.

*Savulgori*, the collection of poetry which won Veluskar the Sahitya Akademi award in 1990, embodies nature with a human form. Casting off the yoke of the past, it revels in the present, weaving together a vision for the future. A thrifty minimalism in words yields an enormous abundance in imagery of nature and civilisation. *Tanarjyoti* is yet another significant compilation of Veluskar's poems. Here the dreamer within him sets out on an avid voyage, plumbing the intrigues and intricacies of human existence.

Veluskar's writings showcase the forgotten and undiscovered wealth of the Konkani language. Often, it is as if they define the positioning of the Konkani



With Dr. C. Narayana Reddy



With family members

character in the contemporary world. His writings contain a number of subaltern phrases, plucked from the forgotten vocabularies of pastoral peoples and from times gone by. Where no appropriate words suffice to properly describe a situation or convey an emotion, he coins his own, enriching the contemporary language and infusing it with a new vigour.

Once Veluskar noticed that there were children in the audience in every village, but he and his fellow Konkani writers had nothing to offer them. That is when he started writing for children, for which he says, he had to go back deep into his own childhood. His anthologies of poems for children include: *Bhook Bhook Bhishu* (Bark, Bark, Bhishu!), *Chandimama* (Uncle Moon), *Fulpakham* (Butterflies), *Chu Chu Chani* (Choo, Choo Squirrel) and *Ghuru Ghuru Varo* (Sound of the Wind).

His gripping play, *Apowne Aailan Saiba Navchpaku* (An Invitation to Dance), is a scathing rebuke for the proponents of astrology. His novel, *Parvanava* (The New Age) followed *Moni Vyatha* (Silent Suffering), a novella. He has written numerous short stories, short plays for children, and extensively reviewed the work

of contemporary poets. He has toured the country, participating in various literary meets and assemblies, in Kerala, Karnataka, Mumbai, Gujarat, Allahabad, Kolkata, Delhi and Orissa.

Winner of the acclaimed 'Kaviraj' award of the Konkani Bhasha Mandal, Ramesh Veluskar has won awards for his works like *Morpakham*, *Maati and Bhook Bhook Bhishu*. Goa's Kala Academy has also honoured him with two awards for *Bhook Bhook Bhishu* and *Moni Vyatha*. He is also a recipient of the B B Borkar Award from the Goa Hindu Association, Mumbai, in 1997. In recognition of his services to the Hindi language, he was honoured with the 'Rashtriya Hindi Seva Sahastrabdi Samman' at the Sahastra Vishwa Hindi Sammelan, 2000.

Humble to a fault, Veluskar credits much of his literary finesse to his experiences in Shantiniketan, the university set up by Rabindranath Tagore, where he spent some months in 1981, after two months of learning Bengali at the Purbanchal Bhasha Kendra at Bhubaneshwar. This stint at the cradle of India's renaissance culture, he says, brought about dramatic changes in his thinking.

Veluskar's wide-ranging explorations into the literary world have expanded his horizons. Freed from the tyranny of a job, Veluskar has started writing in Bengali and Hindi, apart from Konkani and English. An anthology of his Hindi verse called *Samudra Mudrika* (Stamp of the Sea) is due for publication shortly.

Associated with several literary organisations for long, Veluskar was elected chairperson of the Konkani Bhasha Mandal and an associate member of the Goa Konkani Academy (1991), and has also served on the advisory board of the National Book Trust, India.

Ramesh Bhagwant Veluskar is undoubtedly one among those Konkani litterateurs whose indelible imprint on the

various facets of the language will continue to enthrall generations of readers. His literary work, especially his poetry, can at once dazzle, mesmerise and enlighten the reader, imbuing him with a delicate sense of déjà vu, as he takes a joyride through a literary wonderland of authentic, original and earthly writings grounded firmly in the folk heritage of the Konkani.

## A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Poetry

MORPAKHAM Sobit Sahitya	1979
MATI Konkan Times Publication	1983
AANGANINACHTA MOR MORYA Rajhans Vitaran	1988
SAVULGORI Apurbai Prakashan	1989
HIRANYAGARBHA Rajhans Vitaran	1993
TANARJYOTI Agasthi Prakashan	1999

### Novels

MONI VYATHA Jaag Prakashan	1974
PARVANAVA Bimb Prakashan	2005

### Translation

ANDHA YUG Asmitai Prakashan	1998
--------------------------------	------

### Children's Poetry

BHUK BHUK BHISHU Rajhans Vitaran.	1980
CHANIMAMA Rajhans Vitaran	1983
FULPAKULEM Sanjivani Prakashan	1985
CHU CHU Lokved Abhyas Vedi	2005
GHURU GHURU VARO Lokved Abhyas vedi	2005

### Children-Drama

KUNNE KUSKUR Goa Konkani Akademi	2007
-------------------------------------	------



With U. R. Anantha Murthy &  
K. Satchidanandan

## A CHRONOLOGY

- 1947 Born in Palem, 10-11-1947
- 1968 S.S.C.E.
- 1969 Kaviraj Puraskar , Konkani Bhasha Mandal
- 1970 Took up post as a teacher in St. Andrews High School.
- 1974 *Moni Vyatha* Published.
- 1976 Kala Academi Puraskar for *Moni Vyatha*
- 1979 Attended First Poetry workshop of Sahitya Akademi in Mumbai
- 1980 *Bhuk Bhuk Bhishu* published.
- 1981-82 Went to Bhuwaneshwar to study Bengali.
- 1982 Married to Mithilesh Srivasthava
- 1983 Kala Academi Puraskar to *Bhuk Bhuk Bhishu*
- 1983 *Mati* Published.
- 1983 *Channimama* Published.
- 1985 *Fulpaakulem* Published.
- 1988 *Aangani Nachta Mor Morya* Published.
- 1989 *Savulgori* published.
- 1990 *Savulgori*, a poetry book won Sahitya Akademi award
- 1991 Member, Goa Kala Academi, Goa.
- 1991 President, Konkani Bhasha Mandal
- 1992 Member, Goa Konkani Akademi
- 1997 Member, Advisory committee National Book Trust, India
- 2000 Honoured with the 'Rashtriya Hindi Seva Sahastrabdi Samman' at the Sahastra Vishwa Hindi Sammelan
- 2002 Opted voluntary retirement
- 2003 Attended AIR's All Indian Languages Poetry Meet
- 2005 Lokved Abhyas Vedi Trust
- 2006 An exhibition "Torture of Tree" Poetry and painting. Paintings by Harshada Kerkar



Receiving Sahitya Akademi Award 1990  
from its President B. K. Bhattacharya



Rec Award in Hindi Sammelan from  
Union Minister Bachhi Singh Rawat