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## meet the author

Pundalik Naik





Seen from the cusp of the present century, the name that appears to have dominated Konkani Literature during the last quarter of the 20th century is undoubtedly of Pundalik Naik. The fact is this neither overlooks the presence of other outstanding writers in Konkani of the time, nor denigrates their superlative work. It merely underscores the unique chemistry of Pundalik Naik's oeuvre which generates from his versatile thematic focus, the wide-ranging generic diversity of his works and the veracity of the Konkani ethos that emerges from the marriage of native idiom and resplendent imagery in his work. In recognition of this extraordinary creative genius, Norman Dantas has opined that, "Pundalik Naik is in many ways the epitome of the renaissance Goan - a child of the liberation discovering himself, asserting his long-suppressed identity and willing to take the making of history in his own hands."

As the long-awaited voice of the subaltern, Pundalik Naik's advent on the literary firmament was as formidable as it was phenomenal. He broke into the haloed circuit of mainstream literature almost

like the proverbial bull in a china shop demolishing myths of traditional literary canon and creating paradigms in his own right. Ironically, one of his most popular poems, "Bangar Bail" (The Untamed Bull) is woven around the very image of an unyoked (uncastrated) bull who dares to challenge the establishment, provokes its ire and yet compels admiration. This coarse but apt image vividly sums up the rise and the contribution of Pundalik Naik to the world of Konkani letters.

Born on April 21, 1952 on the sylvan banks of the Mandovi in the picturesque village of Volvoi, in Ponda, Pundalik Naik is the eternal child of spring steadily committed to efflorescence and growth. He grew up in a modest rural household together with his five siblings, often working in the field, tending the farm or herding family cattle until he could go to school at 10. Yet he says uncomplainingly, "I have no regrets about childhood. It gave me a chance to learn from life. Today it is a fundamental experience which enriches my writing." Whether early fiction like *Aadvan*, *Kasai*, *Agnidivya* or recent ones like *Gunaaji*, glimpses from the lived past and stark memories of childhood vivify his copious work.

As such, while scholastic education leading to graduation, employment - first as a language teacher and later as an assistant editor (scripts) at All India Radio, Panaji--have all contributed significantly in the making of this path-breaking author, he himself assigns very high place to the *reading of the book of life*. However,

not a passive reader of life, Pundalik Naik is an activist and an environmentalist to the core. While he prefers a quiet, secluded life, he is never far from the scene of struggle when Goa or Konkani need him. Be it the Language Movement or the threat of hazardous industry, he is in the forefront. His intense involvement with society and a deep commitment to issues of common concern make his writing the expression of the marginalized. Furthermore, it is the reinstatement of the submerged identity of the underdog.

The youngest among the Konkani litterateurs to have won the Sahitya Akademi Award at 32, Pundalik Naik was honoured with the award (1984) for *Chowrang*, a collection of one-act plays singled out among peers for "its realistic treatment, social relevance and satire without cynicism." Such a trend of writing with pronounced thematic preoccupation and palpable social commitment sans malice or didacticism has continued in his long and variegated literary odyssey. Whether it is his bestirring poetry in *Gaa Ami Raakhne* or his celebrated novel *Achhev* or his popular short-story collections *Pishantar*, *Muthai* and *Ardook* or his gripping plays such as *Khann Khann Maati*, *Shabai Shabai Bhaujan Samaj*, *Sureeng*, *Chaitanyak Matth Naa*, *Shri Vichitraachi Zatra*, *Sangod* or his rich repertoire of writings for children such as *Raansundari* or *Manu*, Pundalik Naik's work never rings hollow nor appears distant, although he experiments richly with subject and form



with wife Hena & son Yugank

Often finding his subject matter in run-of-the-mill situations, he vivifies them with a rare touch of insight and vitality by weaving ordinary experiences of the common man into a saga of misery and an epic of surrender. Pundalik Naik is never on the lookout for heroes; his observant eye and natural sensitivity carve them out into unusual protagonists compelling the reader's sympathy and understanding without the loss of respect for their sufferings, if not for their grit. What makes his works outstanding literary artifacts is their unusual thematic depth that blends with superb technical calibre. While handling his subjects with tremendous humane sympathy, this writer never overlooks the seminal significance of authorial impersonality and the detachment of the narrator.

Pundalik Naik began writing very early but received scant encouragement from his agrarian milieu. He wrote in Marathi too but realized it was never a fully gratifying experience. Coming in contact with the late Laxmanrao Sardesai, an eminent short-story writer in both Marathi and Konkani, was a turning point in the literary career of Pundalik Naik. He received the much needed encouragement and direction from the great writer



Receiving Goa State Award for best Screenplay from Sunil Dutt

and critic. He could get close association with other stalwarts too.

A versatile artist handling multiple genres, Pundalik Naik's vivid imagination and eloquent pen prefer the powerful medium of the theatre dexterously presenting contemporary issues with compelling forms and powerful motifs from folklore as in *Premjagor*. He has more than twenty-five plays to his credit. His contributions to children's theatre and translation are also significant. Besides the stage, radio, television and cinema have also fascinated him. Having broadcast more than fifty radio plays, he has published an anthology of them, *Aakashmanch*. In 1980, his *Mornkotto* was adjudged the best entry in All India Radio Play Contest. The Marathi telefilm *Vadhachakr* and Konkani films *Dekhani Durai* and *Deest Daulat* have been written by him. With some of his stories locally televised, his *Parikrama* has been televised in the National Network. He has written songs for the film *Sangati*.

In 1985, he was pitchforked into the leadership of the popular movement launched to get

Konkani included in the VIII<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Constitution and to strive for Statehood for Goa with Konkani as its sole official language.

Winner of seven Konkani Bhasha Mandal Awards, Kala Academy Award, and Goa State Film Festival Society's Best Screenplay Award for *Sangati*, S. G. Amonkar Lifetime Award, P. D. Kudchadkar Memorial Award, he has also been internationally honoured with Paters Australian Award for his play *Shri Vichitrachi Zatra*, by the Australian Academy of Broadcast and Science in 1988. He has 32 published works to his credit, and has also edited 3 books. Much of his work is prescribed for various academic courses at various levels including Goa University and S.N.D.T. University. Books and articles on his writing have also been published. The English translation of his novel *Achchev*, has been published by Oxford University Press in 2002 with the title, *Upheaval*.

Pundalik Naik's creative genius can be captured in a nutshell: spontaneous, simple but stunning. It is the result of a distinct bonding between the familiar and the symbolic. Yet his authorial intent seems to be deceptively plain and self-indulgent to an uninitiated reader.



With Dr. Surendra Gambhir & Dr. Herold F. Skifman at Philadelphia city

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## A CHRONOLOGY

- 1952 Born Volvoi-Goa  
1972 Teacher (upto 1978)  
1974 First book published  
1975 Kala Academy State Award  
1977 First Play on stage  
Married with Hema  
1979 Joined Akashwani (upto 1984)  
1980 All India Akashwani Radioplay Award  
1983 Editor of *Rutu* Poetry Magazine  
1984 Sahitya Akademi Award for *Chowrang*  
1985 Convenor of Konkani Porjecho Avaz, an organisation for the struggle of Konkani official language, statehood for Goa and inclusion of Konkani in VIIIth schedule of the Indian Constitution  
1986 Akashwani Award for *Shri Vichitrachi Zatra*  
1988 Pater's Australian Award of Australian Academy of Broadcasting Arts & Science  
1990 Birth of son Yugank  
1992 Member West Zone Cultural Centre, Udaipur  
1993 Marathi film telecast on Doordarshan  
Member of Sangeet Natak Akademi  
1995 Active participation in Anti-Nylone 6, 6 movement in Goa  
1997 Best Screenplay Award in Goa State First Film Festival  
Member, National Book Trust, India  
1999 President, All India Konkani Parishad, Belgaum  
2001 Visit to Dubai  
2002 Writer in Residence Spring 2002, University of Pennsylvania, USA  
O U P published novel *The Upheaval*  
Fellowship by Dept. of Tourism & Culture, Govt. of India  
President of Goa Konkani Akademi by Govt. of Goa  
2005 President of Goa Konkani Akademi by Govt. of Goa



With Damodar Mauzo, Chandrakant Keni, Ramesh Veluskar & Ravindra Kelekar