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# Unbreakable bond: Farmer Krishna Kerkar's dedication to his crops and cows

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**ALDONA:** Krishna Kerkar, a resident of Aldona, has spent the last 45 years of his life farming and rearing cows—a tradition that runs deep in his family for over a century. "My father was in this line for more than 60 years, and I have continued it," he says with quiet pride.

In earlier days, their family owned many bulls, but that number has dwindled over the years. The biggest challenge, Krishna says, is the rising cost of fodder. "It has become difficult to afford, with prices rising from Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,800. For people like us, it's beyond reach."

After completing his SSC, Krishna joined ITI in Karaswada, Mapusa, in hopes of finding a better job and building a more secure career. He worked elsewhere for three years and even got called for a government job interview, but nothing



worked out. "I tried political influence from every possible person but no one helped me," he recalls. Disheartened, he eventually gave up on that path and turned fully to fieldwork to support his family. "I've been doing it since childhood, and now my entire family supports me—my wife and children work alongside me in the field."

Though he manages to run his household, Krishna admits that saving money is impossible. His day starts at 6am—he collects cow dung with his wife's help, feeds

the cows, and milks them. At 9am, he takes them out for grazing and brings them back by 12 noon. In the afternoon, they are milked again at 3:30pm and taken out for a second round of grazing at 5pm.

"Even if there's a function or wedding to attend, I make sure to return before 4pm to take the cows for grazing. I follow this routine strictly because I care deeply for them. They are like family to me. When I call them from the field, they understand and walk back home

on their own."

Despite the routine and dedication, Krishna acknowledges that the work takes a toll. A fall in recent years left him with persistent back pain, making it difficult to lift heavy objects or bend for long. His daughters now help him with cleaning work, but even with their assistance, continuing this work is becoming harder.

"In today's times, there is very little profit in rearing cows. The work is tough and full of challenges—you have to be present at all times, give them food, bathe them, take them grazing, and milk them. It requires true dedication and affection."

Krishna spends close to Rs 20,000 every month on fodder from Sattari, and sometimes, the machine-cut fodder spoils in the rain, he says.



Krishna is saddened by the fact that the younger generation has little interest in this kind of work.

"They prefer office jobs, especially since they've had access to higher education. They've seen us working hard in the sun and rain, and they don't want that life. And the truth is—no matter how hard you work in the fields, there's nothing left to save at the end of the day. That makes it even harder to convince anyone to continue this work."

Still, he believes fieldwork keeps a person healthy. "Earlier, when we didn't have pumps, we used ropes to draw water from wells—it was hard work but good for the heart and overall health."

Despite the challenges, Krishna says he is truly content. "These cows are not just animals to me—they are like family. My life now revolves around them. It amazes me how deeply they understand and respond to me. Not a single day goes by without seeing them—and honestly, they are the ones who make my day complete."

Krishna hopes that more people will see the value in traditional farming and cow rearing before it disappears altogether.

## A JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF GOA

In our continuous efforts to put people at the centre of our journalism, we bring to you a weekly collection of stories, specially curated from our ground-level reportage which celebrates the joys, and shares the sorrows of people in their grassroots. These are, at heart, very simple stories, simply told. Interesting initiatives, out-of-the-box thinking, dogged persistence on any issue, and the struggles of people over the years as they try and put their disrupted lives back together are not just

news stories.

Each is a document from the wards and vaddos of Goa, a postcard, a letter, a share. This collection is brought to you from O Herald's team of reporters who have been given one simple mandate—go out, travel, and speak to people about their lives. From Wards and Vaddos is as much your project as O Herald's and we welcome all of you on this journey into the heart of Goa. Pls email editor@herald-go.com or reach us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

## Mohan Korgaonkar completes five decades selling produce at Mapusa market

Even as generations of shoppers and vendors have come and gone, Mohan has remained a constant presence, winning hearts with his simplicity and dedication

ERWIN FONSECA

**MAPUSA:** Mapusa Market, with its unique layout and enduring legacy, remains one of Goa's most iconic trading spaces. Considered one of the final civic projects inaugurated by the Portuguese before they left Goa, the market is more than just a bustling trading hub—it is a living memory of the region's economic and cultural fabric. Over the decades, it has helped countless small-time vendors and traders earn their daily bread. Among them is 77-year-old Mohan Korgaonkar from Verla Canca, a veteran vendor who has been trading here since the early 1970s.

Fraile in built but still cheerful and full of spirit, Mohan is far from an unknown face in the market. "I must have been barely in my teens," he says, reminiscing about his early days. "It was not a childhood for playing or enjoying with friends—it was a childhood to work and keep the family going."

Mohan's connection to the market is deeply rooted in personal struggle. He lost his mother at a very young age and, as the eldest, had to shoulder responsibilities alongside his siblings to keep the family afloat. With limited options, he decided to take up vending in the Mapusa market, selling coconuts—an essential Goan staple. "Goans love their fish curry rice," he smiles, "and a coconut has always helped a Goan in times of crisis. It helped me too."

He recalls that when he first started out, coconuts cost just 75 paise each. A hundred coconuts could be bought for Rs 75. "At the rate at which we are destroying nature and cutting down trees, that day is not far when each coconut will cost Rs 75," he adds, with a trace of worry in his voice. "Maybe I won't be around to see it, but it's not far."

In the early days, he remembers, there were only a handful of vendors—"you could count them on your fingers"—and there was a strong sense of order and discipline in the market. "That market of the 1970s is something we cannot get back," he reflects. Over time, Mohan expanded his business to include Moira bananas—famously known as mundollichim kelim. These bananas, once native to Moira, are now widely cultivated in the border areas of Dodamarg, Ibrampur, and Bedshi in Maharashtra.

"When I started buying from farmers in Bedshi in the early 1980s, I would get a sizeable quantity for just Rs 300 or 400—which was a big amount back

offerings is Bharleli Torá, a traditional Goan pickle made from raw mangoes stuffed with a special masala. This tangy, spicy, and flavour-packed delicacy is a summer favourite among those who appreciate handmade pickles that preserve age-old traditions.

For Pratima, food is more than a business—it's a passion, a tradition, and a gift she offers to the world. Despite the challenges life threw her way, she found a way to keep doing what she loves. Her story proves that real success isn't measured in wealth, but in the number of lives you touch.

Her name has become synonymous with authentic Goan flavours. Her masalas have found their way into countless homes, and her food continues to bring people together. From a humble kitchen in Ponda to the hearts of many, Pratima Khandeparkar has done more than just cook—she has preserved the soul of Goan cuisine, ensuring its legacy lives on for generations to come.

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then," he says. Sales were brisk. But over the years, the price of these bananas has risen sharply, while sales have dipped. "Now I have to spend thousands, and with reduced sales, I can't buy as frequently."

Mohan attributes the dip to various reasons—overall price inflation, increased competition among vendors, a lack of discipline in the market, and a general drift of customers. Despite this, he has stuck with his trade. Another vendor named Baya, who comes to Mapusa from Bedshi, has also managed to sustain her livelihood selling the same bananas.

To adapt to changing times, Mohan now sells a variety of supplementary items rooted in Goan tradition—local limes, eggs, kokum, chikoos, water pickle, local rice, and other lifestyle food products. These items help sustain his business, especially during times when banana or coconut sales dip.

Over the course of five decades, Mohan has raised five children through this humble trade. He credits the market and his work for keeping him mentally and physically active, even in his old age. "This market has given me everything," he says. "It has made me who I am, and I've earned goodwill from people."

But he is clear-eyed about the challenges and responsibilities of doing business. "Any business must be done sincerely. The goodwill of people must be earned. Only then can a business be truly satisfying and rewarding," he says. "If someone only thinks of earning by hook or crook, such a business can never stand the test of time."

For Mohan, Mapusa market is not just a place of trade—it is family, identity, and history. And though the faces around him may have changed, his presence remains a reminder of an era built on hard work, honesty, and resilience.

## FORGOTTEN RESOURCE: THE FALL OF A RURAL STAPLE

Thanks to his cows, Krishna has an endless supply of cow dung—a resource he says is very precious. During the rainy season, it is stored in the shed, while in other seasons, it is dried and used as manure in the fields. "In the old days, we used to dry over a thousand cow dung cakes and sell them. Before LPG became accessible, cow dung was used as fuel. It has many benefits—even today, it enriches the soil in fields and flower pots."

He recalls a time when dried cow dung cakes sold for just 25 paise each, and the demand was high. "People would preserve it and use it during the monsoon as firewood. But sadly, those days are gone. Today, we hardly make 200 to 500 cow dung



cakes, and we use most of it ourselves. There is almost no demand anymore."

Cow dung, he says, is still an excellent organic fertiliser. "Some of it we shape into cakes, and occasionally, a few people come and take it for other purposes. But nowadays, most people prefer chemical fertilisers, which, in the long run, spoil the soil."

"People used it to coat the floors to keep them cool and clean. But now, with modern houses and expensive tiles, that tradition has been completely forgotten."

## Home chef Pratima touches lives with her authentic Goan flavours

Known for her handmade masalas and traditional dishes, Pratima Khandeparkar, has become a trusted name among locals, food enthusiasts, and even caterers across Goa. Her kitchen is not just a place of cooking—it's a space where generations-old recipes, techniques, and values continue to thrive

MANJALI NAIK

**PONDA:** In a world dominated by fast food and instant mixes, there are still a few who believe in the magic of slow-cooked, hand-ground, and lovingly prepared meals. In the heart of Ponda, Goa, one

such culinary artist, Pratima Khandeparkar, is keeping the soul of Goan cooking alive. Her food is more than just delicious—it's tradition, nostalgia, and the kind of warmth only home-cooked meals can bring.

Long before her name was known among food lovers and caterers, Pratima spent her days cooking in a school kitchen. She wasn't a chef in a grand restaurant, but the satisfaction of preparing meals that nourished and comforted others was enough for her. Her hands moved with experience, her spices blended with instinct, and every dish carried the unmistakable essence of home.

But life had other plans. When health is-

### PRATIMA'S GOAN SPECIALITIES

- Gavti masala,
- Reachado Bangda
- Prawns curry
- Chicken Xacuti
- Bharleli Torá

golden flatbreads filled with sweet lentil stuffing, each bite brimming with comfort and joy.

Seafood lovers crave her Reachado Bangda, a fiery and tangy mackerel preparation marinated in her signature recheado masala. Her prawns curry, lush with coconut and perfectly balanced spices, reflects a depth of experience that only years of cooking can bring. And for those who enjoy Goan non-vegetarian favourites, her Chicken Xacuti, slow-cooked with roasted coconut, poppy seeds, and a complex spice blend, is nothing short of a masterpiece.

One of her most unique

Even when I left my job, I never left the kitchen. Cooking has always been my way of holding on to tradition, expressing love, and feeding people with faith, fire, and everything I carry in my heart — Pratima Khandeparkar

