

Herald Cafe



FOOD SAFETY AT HOME

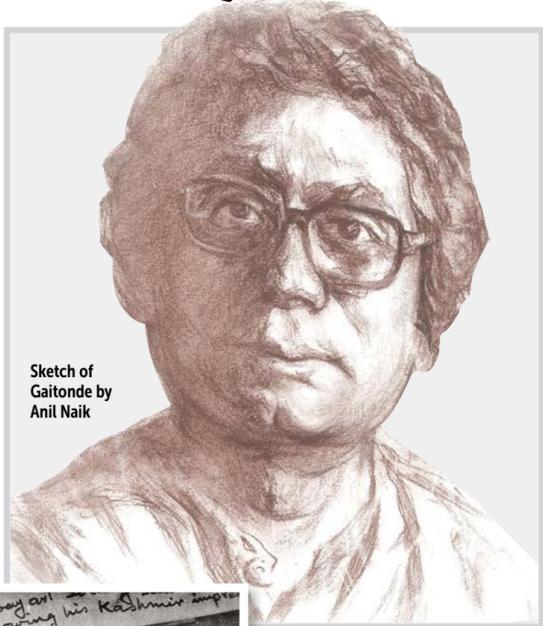


TYPE 5 DIABETES IN THE SPECTRUM

Vasudeo Gaitonde: The Enigma at 100

Vivek Meneses

In the ongoing, uncomprehending neglect of Goan art and culture – no state is so incompetent and careless about its own priceless legacies – we are passing yet another major milestone without acknowledgement: the birth centenary year of Vasudeo Santu Gaitonde (1924-2001). This very great artist and master abstractionist with roots in Uccasaim is only ever remembered here when another auction record falls, but for the most part his beloved Goa prefers to stay oblivious to him, even more so than to Francis Newton Souza (1924-2002), his equally great contemporary, friend and co-conspirator in the seminal Progressive Artist's Group in 1940s Bombay. Happily, it is quite different in the rest of the Indian art world, where Souza and Gaitonde are two of the hottest commodities, and with consistently rising prices and a stream of new books and exhibitions with fresh information and interpretations.



Sketch of Gaitonde by Anil Naik

sing them for me?" I sang Konkani songs for him. Then he asked me about my schooling in Goa. When he heard my second language was French he asked me for my French books. For the next week or so, I became his French teacher. He went on to teach himself. He went to France several years later, but he was already planning to go and was preparing for it."

Another evocative snippet from those times comes from the artist's sister Kishori Gaitonde Das, as told to Kamlesh Devrukhkar: "that house, the verandah, the space under the staircase, the loft, all formed Baal's world. These were his formative spaces. This was where he sometimes sulked, occasionally felt suffocated but also where he found a certain strength. I believe the toughness that hereditarily filled a Girgaon chawl after years and years of facing sun, rain and wind found its distilled manifestation in Baal's life there." She says her brother's "reticence was responsible for the creation of several myths around him; but he remained free of their coils, never once allowing his focus to shift from his work. It was not an easy thing to do. To rise from this chawl to the heights he attained was itself a miracle. He would never have blossomed within those four walls. Had he allowed the responsibilities of home and family to enmesh him, he would not have become the VS Gaitonde he did."

manufactured an absurd alternate narrative of the artist as some kind of sannyasin. That angle is nonsense, as we see throughout *Between Two Mirrors*, including this memoiristic recollection by Dadiba Pundole, whose thoughtful contribution is one of the best parts of the book: "People say Gaitonde's mind was always occupied in spiritual thoughts about art. I never noticed any such thing. For me he was always a perfectly normal, gentlemanly individual. He was not stubborn or difficult. He had very few complaints, negligible in fact compared to other artists. He faced everything that life threw at him without grumbling or questioning. This too set him apart from others. None of the artists of that generation lived lives of comfort and plenty. There were exceptions to the rule like Husain and Akbar Padamsee. But by and large, life was a hand-to-mouth affair."

Pundole met Gaitonde when he was just 17 – his father Keki was the artist's gallerist – and recalls that "the generation after that did nothing but complain. The nature of people's needs had changed radically. There was a desire now to enjoy the material pleasures of life. Gaitonde was aware of the changing times. He was not a fool. But they did not affect him. He never discussed these things. They did not figure in his life. He had a one-point demand. Live your life and let me live mine. You live as you like, but I will live on my own terms." And also, "Gaitonde was blunt. Put differently, we might say he was totally honest with himself and with others. There was not a shred of hypocrisy in him [and] he lived only in the present moment. That is what made him special. If only the rest of us could live only in the present like him! If that happened, we would have to redefine the human being. He was a rare human being. Unlike the rest of us, he had shed the burden of negative emotions."

Gaitonde was blunt. Put differently, we might say he was totally honest with himself and with others. There was not a shred of hypocrisy in him [and] he lived only in the present moment. That is what made him special. If only the rest of us could live only in the present like him! If that happened, we would have to redefine the human being. He was a rare human being. Unlike the rest of us, he had shed the burden of negative emotions.
—Dadiba Pundole

independence struggle. I am, first and foremost, an individual. I cannot be circumscribed by any collective thinking and I will not acknowledge any thought that does not appeal to my reason."

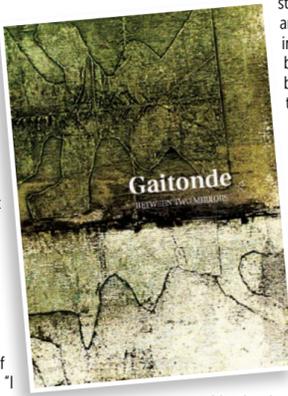
Gaitonde stood for liberation and emancipation in all its forms, and that included his own freedom to be walk alone, which is another thing he shared with Souza. Unfortunately, the Indian art world has misinterpreted that fierce independence of spirit – a very Goan trait – with being reclusive, and



The Progressive Artists Movement (1947)

To be sure, market-driven notoriety comes with inherent problems, and in the case of Souza the biggest hype is almost invariably tied to fake paintings being mainstreamed by shady dealers and auction houses. Gaitonde's oeuvre was quite well documented before his death, so there is no equivalent flood of fakes, but the two are exactly the same when it comes to a general lack of respect in terms of scholarship and writing that is adequately grounded in the facts of their lives. Anyone can say anything – and to sell paintings everyone says whatever works – with all that dross sifting directly into the mainstream. It is this prevailing free-for-all that makes Gaitonde: *Between Two Mirrors* (2025, Chinha Publications) so immediately compelling, with its vivid mix of first-person recollections plus the artist in his own words, with everything unlocked from Marathi for the first time in Shanta Gokhale's wonderfully engaging translation.

Between Two Mirrors is an improved edition of an original tribute to Gaitonde that was researched, edited and published by Satish Naik in 2007, and now contains 74 archival photographs and 120 reproductions, plus many interesting recollections and eyewitness accounts that add greatly to the reliable information about India's greatest abstract painter. Best of all is the cool, sardonic voice of the artist himself, as in this 1964 interview with SV Vasudev of *Illustrated Weekly*: "I am not wedded to any dogma or belief or narrow loyalty. For example, I am not a nationalist, burning with borrowed patriotism, to want to paint a scene of the



SWIPE RIGHT

'Clueless' is getting remixed as a TV series centred on Dionne

The 1995 movie, 'Clueless' followed Alicia Silverstone's Cher Horowitz, a California high schooler who had a penchant for matchmaking. The movie was also adapted into a TV series in 1996 and ran for three seasons. But now a new creator wants to bring it back with a twist. The new series will be centered on Dionne, Cher's Black bestie played by Stacey Dash. It is not clear if Dash, or anyone from the original cast, will be involved. Different networks and streaming services are said to be clamouring for the new show, which is being executive produced by Corinne Brinkerhoff.

Athiya Shetty and KL Rahul introduce their baby girl to the world – meet Evaarah. The couple shared the first glimpse of their newborn daughter by posting photos on their Instagram feed

The Grand Easter Ball 2025
FEATURING GOA'S TOP BANDS

HOSTED BY SHANE DA COSTA & ALDRIN MONTEIRO

CAMILOS LAWN, CORTALIM
AFTER MIDNIGHT MASS

FOR INFO & TICKETS:
+91 97623 12395 / +91 9145230085

SPONSORS: LIGH VERSE, Bullseye ENTERTAINMENT, ABHIS LED WALL, DOPETICAL ILLUSION

