



GOA, MONDAY, JUNE 2, 2025

# FROM WARDS & VADDOS

Ground Reports Telling Stories That Matter



O HERALDO

## Santosh Fatrikar carves out a life from stone and tradition

ERWIN FONSECA

**MAPUSA:** The Goan community has long been broadly classified into various traditional categories based on occupation and inheritance. We have mest (cooks), chaari (carpenters and fabricators), khaarvi (fisher-folk), render (coconut pluckers), among others. Each group played a specific role in shaping the social and economic fabric of Goa.

Among them is a less-

er-known yet deeply significant community—one that doesn't enjoy the same recognition, but has quietly supported Goan life for generations. That is the Fatrikar community—stone carvers or those engaged in the chiselling and carving of stone. Today, this age-old profession is on the verge of extinction. Only a few remain, and among them is Santosh Fatrikar, who continues to carry forward his ancestral legacy in service of Goan households.



### A CRAFT LOSING GROUND

Surviving on this trade, however, has become increasingly difficult. Santosh does not hesitate to say that the profession is dying. "I personally cannot predict how much longer you'll see the Fatrikar community active," he confesses. One of his unique qualities, inherited from his father, is maintaining a close record of fairs and exhibitions across Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Goa. Besides the Mapusa Milagres fair, he also participates in the Holy Spirit feast in Margao, popularly known as the Purumentachem Fest.



### AN INHERITED NAME AND CRAFT

Though Santosh may be in his forties, his name—Fatrikar—is not merely a surname but a title earned through generations of labour. "Our ancestors were fully involved in this work of stone carving and chiselling. They were the actual stone workers," says Santosh, who hails from Nipani, a town just across the Karnataka border.

He learned the art with dedication from his father, who in turn learned it from his grandfather. It was not a craft taught in schools, but one passed down by watching, assisting,

and slowly mastering the tools of the trade—chisels, hammers, and raw stone. Today, Santosh is fully devoted to it.

Santosh's connection with Goa dates back to his childhood. He was barely ten years old when, due to limited means of livelihood, his father began taking him along to fairs and exhibitions to sell their carved stones.

It was during one such trip that they landed at the Milagres Church feast in Mapusa, a major Goan fair. That first visit marked the beginning of what would become a 30-year-

long tradition. Every year since, Santosh has travelled to Mapusa to take part in the fortnight-long fair, where his presence is now familiar and awaited by loyal customers.

"This work of stone carving and chiselling is quite tedious and often looked down upon," Santosh admits. "There are hardly any Goans who belong to this community. But across the border, and in larger states, you'll find more of us—those who still carry the Fatrikar identity."

### A TRADE ON THIN MARGINS

The stones that Santosh brings to Goa are sourced from Kolhapur and Rajasthan. He sells them at prices ranging from Rs 50 to Rs 7,000, depending on size and usage. "The smallest stones, like those used as show-pieces, may sell for Rs 50—but we earn hardly anything on them. On larger stones, we make a margin of Rs 50 to Rs 100 per piece."

With demand low, Santosh has also begun selling smaller grinding stones. These are either used for limited household purposes or as decorative pieces, kept in homes to remind future generations of what once was.

While Goa modernises rapidly, Santosh notes that his community and their stones are still somewhat relevant in backward villages of Karnataka and Maharashtra, where modern appliances are less common.

"People don't want to do this work. It's tiring, low-paying, and looked down upon," he says. "With such little demand, you may not see grinding stones at fairs for too long."

Yet, despite the odds, Santosh Fatrikar chisels on, hoping his story, his stones, and his skill will not be forgotten.

### STONES WITH A STORY

The stones Santosh deals with are mostly grinding stones, known in Konkani as vaan. These were once essential in every Goan household. Traditionally found in large or medium sizes, these stones were used mainly by women, who would sit and grind masalas, grains, and other ingredients.

"In the past, Goan women rarely went to flour mills—maybe just to grind paddy or wheat. For everything else, especially recipes that

needed precision and care, they used the grinding stone at home," Santosh explains. "Every house had one."

Depending on usage, the stone would be sharpened once every year or two, ensuring efficiency in grinding. For some hardworking women, this daily grinding would even translate into a source of income—they would sell the masalas they made and earn a small wage.

According to Santosh, food prepared using grinding stones was safer, healthier,

er, and tastier. But things have changed.

"In today's modern age, girls don't want to use these grinding stones. Many houses have discarded them altogether," he says. "Why would anyone spend time grinding by hand when a mixer-grinder does the job in seconds?"

He points out that while electrical gadgets have made life easier, they have also rendered traditional tools obsolete. "These tools gave us automatic exercise and kept us healthy. Now we discard them and run to the gym to stay fit," he says, half in jest, half in sadness.

### FAMILY LEGACY VS MODERN ASPIRATIONS

When asked if he envisions his children taking up the same trade, Santosh grows thoughtful. "On one hand, this has been a family legacy for generations. On the other, I want my children to be educated, to establish themselves in life. This is an era of modernisation."

He is aware of the changing times and the waning interest in traditional trades. For now, he stands alone at the Mapusa fair, chiselling and sharpening stones full day for fifteen days straight, hoping to keep the craft alive for just a little longer.

### 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. Please email editor@herald-go.com or reach us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

## Raghunath 'Appu' Dalal is Pomburpa's 'cycle doctor'

Despite the changing times and a sharp decline in 'patients', Appu has stayed true to his trade. He stocks spare parts for two-wheelers and still travels to neighbouring States to source materials, so he does not have to turn any cycle away

JENIFER FERNANDES

joseph@herald-go.com

**ALDONA:** For over four decades, Raghunath Dalal—better known as Appu—has been a familiar sight in Pomburpa, hunched over a bicycle or scooter, his hands smeared with grease, his eyes focused with quiet precision. Now 63, he continues to run a modest but well-regarded cycle and two-wheeler repair shop in Aldona, a business passed down from his father and sustained through sheer dedication. "This is not just my workplace—it's my pride, my identity," says Appu. "It gave me a life, educated my children, and earned me respect."

His journey began as a young boy, spending hours watching his father at work. There was no formal training, no manuals—just observation and repetition. "Everything I know, I learned by watching him," he says. "Slowly, I picked up the tools, and with time and practice, I mastered the art."

In the early days, bicycles were the primary mode of transport. "The models were simple—no gears or fancy frames," he recalls. "We charged just Rs 20 for a repair." Today, a similar job may cost up to Rs 400, but the number of customers has sharply declined.

"People have moved on to bikes, cars, or electric vehicles. Some even feel ashamed to ride a cycle, especially the educated youth. But I always remind them—these very cycles once carried them to school, through village paths. How can we forget that?"

Despite the changing times, Appu has stayed true to his trade. He stocks spare parts for two-wheelers and still travels to Mapusa and neighbouring states to source materials. "Each cycle may look different now, but the mechanical heart is the same," he says. "What's missing, he adds, is interest among the younger generation to learn the craft."

His own children have taken other paths. "They're educated and employed—and I don't stop them," he says. "But this trade may end with me. No one wants

Each cycle may look different now, but the mechanical heart is the same. What's missing is interest among the younger generation to learn the craft. My own children are educated and employed—and I don't stop them from following their interests. This trade may end with me. No one wants to take it up. One day, when someone's cycle breaks down, they might not find anyone to fix it. That's the future I see —Raghunath Dalal

to take it up. One day, when someone's cycle breaks down, they might not find anyone to fix it. That's the future I see."

Even so, he finds purpose in his daily routine. Appu opens his shop by 9:30 am and works until 6 pm, taking fewer jobs now due to health issues. "There are days I earn Rs 20,000 a month," he says. "Yet people prefer working in shops or offices for less, thinking that's more respectable. What they don't realise is that dignity lies in the work we do with honesty and skill."

Many of his customers are regulars who trust his judgement and honesty. "They know I'll only do what's necessary. Some even wait for me to open because they know they'll get good service." Appu studied till Class 10.

"Back then, we had few choices. But I don't regret it. I had a strong foundation, and I built a life with these hands—greased, scratched, but proud."

Though the job is physically taxing and often overlooked, he has no plans to quit. "This work may not come with suits and shoes, or an air-conditioned office. But it's enough for me. As long as I have strength in me, I will continue. The wheels may change, but the soul of this work remains—and I remain with it."



## Teacher Alisha Marie Menezes crafts stories - on stage and in resin

Divar-born Alisha Marie Menezes blends performance and craft, inspiring young minds through theatre and expressive resin art. Rooted in tradition yet open to the world, she channels her creativity into storytelling—on stage and in every handmade piece

FRAZER ANDRADE

frazerandrade@herald-go.com

**MARGAO:** Alisha Marie Menezes is a dedicated drama educator and artist who brings stories to life both on stage and through her handcrafted resin creations. Currently teaching at a school, she uses the performing arts to inspire young minds, while her passion for travel and diverse cultures shapes her creative worldview.

Raised on the culturally rich

Whether it's a birthday, a wedding, or a tribute to someone they've lost, I want each creation to carry meaning. It's collaborative, emotional, and very personal —Alisha Marie Menezes

island of Divar, Alisha grew up surrounded by vibrant artistic traditions and community performances. Her family's involvement in cultural events nurtured her love for the arts from an early age. What began as a childhood pastime blossomed into a lifelong calling, with the stage offering her a profound sense of freedom and self-expression.

Alisha's formal journey into theatre began at Kala Academy's School of Drama, where she immersed herself in theatrical theory, acting techniques, backstage operations, and global performance traditions. The rigorous curriculum sharpened her craft and broadened her perspective, deepening her understanding of what it means to be an artist. As the first in her family to pursue theatre professionally, Alisha faced initial skepticism, but today, her parents are proud of how far she has come.

She holds a deep reverence for traditional Goan art forms, particularly Tiatr and Konkani cinema. While she acknowledges the younger generation's shift towards faster-paced, digital content, Alisha remains hopeful. She encourages parents to expose their children to local cultural events, believing even a small spark of curiosity can grow into genuine appreci-

ation—a key step in preserving Goa's rich artistic heritage. For Alisha, performance is about authenticity and emotional connection. She approaches each character with deep commitment, seeking to portray truth on stage and allowing audiences to interpret and connect in their own way. "Effective storytelling," she believes, "comes from rigour, rehearsal, and the willingness to dive into the psyche of a character."



Her creative expression also

finds form in 'The Treasure of Surprises', a handmade gift venture she began during a challenging phase in her life. As the demand for custom cards declined, Alisha stumbled upon resin as a medium—its blend of durability and elegance captivated her. What started as an experiment soon evolved into a thriving craft.

Today, she creates a wide range of resin pieces—from coasters and trays to nameplates, keepsakes, and wall décor—each one thoughtfully customised. Her work often incorporates dried flowers, charms, glitter, personal notes, and even photographs, turning everyday items into heartfelt mementos.

What sets Alisha's resin art apart is her emphasis on storytelling. Every piece begins with a conversation: she listens to her clients' memories, occasions, and ideas, and translates them into tangible keepsakes. "Whether it's a birthday, a wedding, or a tribute to someone they've lost, I want each crea-

tion to carry meaning," she says. "It's collaborative, emotional, and very personal."

Balancing her roles as an educator, performer, and small business owner isn't easy, but for Alisha, the rewards are deeply fulfilling. "When a customer tells me they felt seen, heard, or moved after receiving something I made—it makes all the hard work worthwhile," she says. "It's those smiles, those quiet moments of connection—that's what keeps me going."

