

Herald Cafe



THE CARRYING CAPACITY OF GOA



KAVITECHE PAN AND GITTARANG

Trailblazer with disability conquers Annapurna trek

Ritesh Vaigankar, 38, battled freezing weather, a difficult trek and his own physical challenges to come out on top and write his name in Goan record books

Ajit John ajit@herald-go.com

In a feat that defied physical limits and harsh Himalayan terrain, 38-year-old Ritesh Vaigankar has etched his name in the record books as the first Goan with a severe disability to complete the gruelling Annapurna Base Camp (ABC) trek.

A vocational instructor from Bicholim, Vaigankar lives with 88% disability, the result of a high-voltage shock in 2003 that led to severe muscle contractures and the amputation of his right leg. And yet, he stood tall—prosthetic and all—at an altitude of over 4,100 meters, where temperatures plummeted to minus six degrees Celsius and oxygen was scarce.



His motivation wasn't just personal. "I wasn't trekking for myself alone," he said. "I was trekking for every person who's been told they can't. Every person like me."

Vaigankar's mental approach to the trek rested on three pillars: purpose, presence, and patience. Purpose gave him the strength to carry more than just a backpack. Presence helped him focus on each step, each small victory—crossing a tricky ridge, reaching the next rest stop. And patience reminded him that the journey was his own, and didn't have to be fast to be remarkable.

"Being an amputee with left-hand contractures made me plan everything meticulously," he said. "This wasn't just a trek. It was a statement—that I am more than my prosthesis, more than my scars. I belong in the mountains too."



Speaking from a far more temperate Kathmandu, where the mercury read 30°C, Vaigankar recalled his 14-day journey from Goa to the icy trails of the Himalayas. "The hardest part was breathing," he said. "Especially after surviving tuberculosis last year. At high altitude, every breath felt like a battle."

But it was a battle he was prepared to fight.

Vaigankar embarked on the trek on April 13, following a long journey from Goa to Delhi, then to Kathmandu and Pokhara before reaching the trailhead. The terrain was punishing. The altitude was merciless. But he had already survived worse—hospital beds, skin grafts, phantom pains, and countless surgeries.

"I remembered the movie Uunchai, and the line, 'Ek kadam, ek saans' (one step, one breath)," he said. "That became my mantra."

Inspired by para-athletes and fellow adventurers, Vaigankar first began exploring adaptive sports in 2019. But this trek has taken his ambitions to new heights—literally. His family, once apprehensive, now stand proudly behind him.

And he's not done yet. "This is just the beginning," he said with a smile. "This journey isn't just mine—it's for everyone who's ever been told they can't. We can. And we will."



Leave the bad behind, focus on the good

Lenten show: 'Vaitt Adarun Borem Soddun'

Cast: Francio, Molifa, Anselo, Valanko, Grezello, Melvisha, Chitra, Normandez, George Gonsalves, Fr Warren, Elvis Mascarenhas, Blyton, comedian Neto, John D'Silva, David, Meena

Director: Lenoy Gomedes

Band: Lenoy Gomedes (keyboard), Cely (jazz piano), Crusandio (bass), Kassel (drums)

Stage/Sound/Lights: Jerson Fernandes

Pio Esteves

The story revolves around Sr Lisha (Chitra), who takes care of the orphans. There's Professor Antonio Braganza e Fernando (Normandez), who resides with her. There's Santan (Neto) and David (David), who are also there as inmates of the ashram and assisting Sr Lisha.

Sr Lisha is generous at heart and goes out of her way to provide assistance to the needy. But Professor Antonio is wicked at heart and makes plans to grab whatever is there in Sr Lisha's possession.

There are wicked plans afloat wherein Professor Antonio wishes to eliminate Sr Lisha, but things work the other way round. There are also allegations made regarding conversions and the same are dumped on Sr Lisha. There are two different inquiries initiated by CBI officer



(Elvis Mascarenhas) and police officer (Blyton), but innocence is proven.

Lenten Show

'VAITT ADARUN BOREM SODDUN'

In a flashback, there's a family wherein the father (George Gonsalves) resides with his son Antonio (Francio) and daughter Lisha (Molifa as child and Melvisha as teenager) and their upbringing is projected on stage. Family values are visible in this family.

At the ashram, David and Santan are eyeing Jackline (Meena), but among the

twosome, David has a soft corner for the lass. There's mestri Motes (John D'Silva) who comes along to train David and Santan in music. What transverse between the foursome over a period of time and during the second half is worth watching on stage.

Lenten show 'Vaitt Adarun Borem Soddun' written and directed by Lenoy Gomedes throws light on how we tend to commit evil, leaving aside goodness that's around us. There's a small dose of suspense, which gets unveiled in the concluding scene.

In between the main acts, there are biblical scenes calling upon the audience to reflect on Jesus and Zacchaeus, the rich man and Lazarus, Moses and the Good Samaritan.

All the artistes have given fine performances in their respective roles. Chitra stands tall as a nun and is natural in her dress code, body language and dialogues. Normandez stands out as a villain and he is ably assisted by comedian Neto, David and Meena, besides John D'Silva. Brief entries by Fr Warren, George Gonsalves as father and Francio, Molifa and Melvisha as his children are good. Elvis Mascarenhas and Blyton as CBI officer and police officer respectively make a cameo and they are in command in their respective characters.

In the comic acts, there's comedian Neto, David, John D'Silva and Meena who come together to entertain the audience and they carry a good dose of laughter pills. But as the presentation goes as a Lenten show, comedy could have been toned down.

In the category of songs, there's Elvis Mascarenhas who steps on stage for the opening song, followed by solos from George Gonsalves, Cielda Pereira, Melvisha and Grezello. There's a song by Asencia and Melvisha and another on obituaries by comedian Neto, Meena and David. The latter receives an encore from the audience. The concluding solo 'Alleluia' by Cielda Pereira also evoked good audience response. Live band offstage led by Lenoy Gomedes and his musical troupe is appealing to the ears.

The stage sets, besides the sound and lights executed by Jerson Fernandes also deserves a mention and appreciation.

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