

Two wins for Konkani at the Sahitya Akademi awards

Tukaram Rama Shet and Dr Tanvi Kamat Bambolkar bagged the Sahitya Akademi's Bal Sahitya Puraskar and Yuva Puraskar 2023 in Konkani, respectively. For Tukaram, this is his second Sahitya Akademi award but first for Children's literature, while this is Dr Tanvi's first award for her very first collection of short anecdotal tales

Dolcy D'Crus

The beauty of Konkani is easily translated through its written form in poetry and prose. Blessed with great Konkani writers in Goa, it is encouraging to see writers who motivate youngsters to take to writing and not just publishing books but writing accolades for it too. Sahitya Akademi, National Academy of Letters, recently declared the winners for the award this year which includes two Konkani authors, Tukaram Rama Shet and Tanvi Kamat Bambolkar for the Bal Sahitya Puraskar and Yuva Puraskar respectively. Tukaram is awarded for 'Zaan' while Tanvi is awarded for 'Shots'.

While the Sahitya Akademi Awards were first awarded in 1955, Konkani as a language was included in 1977, a year when Ravindra Kekar was awarded for 'Himalayani'. Since then, prominent Konkani writers have won the award including Manohar Sardesai, BB Borkar, Laxmanrao Sardesai, Damodar Maszo, Pundalik Naik and Chandrakant Keri.

Tukaram Rama Shet, Konkani fiction writer, essayist and poet has been writing since 1972 and published the first issue of Shabdul as its editor. He was also the editor of Konkani Times.

He fell in love with writing during his school and college days, way back in the early 1970s when he used to write poems and plays. Inspired by Marathi novelists

like S N Pendse and Vitoram Bedekar, he was further motivated when his poems were published in the daily, Rasthant and his plays were broadcasted on All India Radio, Panjim. After completing his BA in Economics and MA in Marathi, Tukaram worked for the Telecom Department. However, his first love has always been Konkani and especially taking the language in a simple and lively manner to the children.

Tukaram was also associated with movement for official language status of Konkani as an executive of the Konkani Bhasha Mandal and in-charge of the ISM office in Panjim. He also served as an executive and general council member of Goa Konkani Academy, Panjim as well as Chairman and founder member of Balgeet Niketan and Mitra Jagat, Belim. He was also the Executive Chairman of the 15th All India Konkani Literary conference in 2001.

If today, children

can be heard singing poems in Konkani and reciting stories in the mother tongue, then Tukaram Shet has a role to play in bringing about this dedication to Konkani. He revived traditional Konkani children songs, play songs, stories etc. and even composed new nursery songs and rhymes, children songs, action songs, play songs, children stories etc. He founded Balgeet Niketan in 1987 which produced literary, cultural and educational resources, books, audio cassettes, CDs and conducted training of patriotic songs and environmental songs to school teachers.

"I have organised Balmelas in many primary schools all over Goa in co-operation with Goa Konkani Academy to popularize Konkani children songs, poems, games etc and to revive Goan children folklore. For over two decades, I provided training to nearly 2000 Anganwad, IG and Pre-primary teachers. Some of my poems are included in the syllabus for pre-primary and IG students," says Tukaram, who has not only published books for children but also released CDs and educational books including Ballangan, 'Geetbharati -1', 'Geetbharati -2' and 'Goemchi balgeetam, naachgeetam, khalgeetam'. He has also presented papers on Konkani children's literature and children folklore in seminars organised by Goa Konkani Akademi and Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.

Tukaram was earlier awarded Sahitya Akademi award ten years back for his collection of literary essays in Konkani, 'Marmotayam' in 2015. This year, he is awarded for Children's literature which makes it even more special

as he has worked on several children's literature books like 'Zaan', 'Paryavaran geetam', 'Phulaangan', 'Popsham', 'Goemchi balgeetam-1', 'Goemchi balgeetam -2', 'Sudache bhetek' and 'Karamal'.

Speaking about the Sahitya Akademi winning novel, 'Zaan' published in 2017, Tukaram says, "The book is divided into ten chapters which follows the life of Subodh as he grows closer to nature. Each chapter delves into one aspect of nature like the village life, rains, winds, hills and fields. By the end of the book, Subodh realises the importance of nature and how we are a part of nature too. The most beautiful example is the metamorphosis of a butterfly."

Since he started writing over three decades ago, how has children's literature evolved? "There are many new writers in Konkani who are writing children's literature which shows growth of Konkani. However, now children have mobiles in their hand rather than the book. It is important to take these original folk songs to the children through children's videos which can be viewed on the phone. Parents should also keep tab on what the children are viewing," explains Tukaram, who is excited to win his second Sahitya Puraskar.

Tukaram is also the award winner of the Rang-let Children Award, GS Aronkar Excellence Award, Kala Akademy Goa Literary Award, Konkani Bhasha Mandal's Pitrakarita Puraskar, Goa Konkani Akademy Award and Dr TMAP Foundation, Maripal Appreciation Award. He is next working on his new book of essays, 'Chitpak Phalaam'.

Another young writer who has grown up in the Konkani literature community is Dr Tanvi Bambolkar

Currently working as an assistant professor of English at Government College, Quepem, she is a force to reckon with when it comes to taking Konkani to different mediums. She is awarded Yuva Puraskar for her book, 'Shots'.

Dr Tanvi has been writing for nearly 20 years of her life but it was her family's support that encouraged her to finally publish her books. She released not one but four books, right on time for her birthday, 'Paaki', 'Shots', 'Logout' and 'Anwari'. Daughter of noted artist and theatre personality, Shridar Kamat Bambolkar and the sister of Kalarand, who also follows his father's suit, Dr Tanvi was exposed to the world of literature in her childhood. "I remember great Konkani writers meeting my father and I grew up in this Konkani family where the environment was charged with great literature. They all have been very inspiring and great guides in this journey. I remember Madhav Borkar visiting our house and asking me to recite my poems. I must have recited the silliest poems as a child and yet he took them very seriously. That motivation has certainly led me to writing in Konkani," says Dr Tanvi.

She completed her doctorate in English at Goa University on Folk Theatre in Goa and post her PhD, she has been researching and documenting various aspects of Goan folklore. She has worked on a project

on Poiquirim Kaloio for the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts. She has translated several children's books and have been published by Konkani Bhasha Mandal and on e-platforms such as Pratham Books Storyweaver and has worked as a news reader and translator at All India Radio, Panjim. She was awarded the first prize for the script 'Logout' at Kala Akademy's full length play competition.

Now married into a literary Konkani family, she is the wife of Hrishkesh and daughter-in-law to Devdas Kadam, a renowned writer. "It is even more encouraging to write as my father-in-law as already said on a public platform that if anyone in the family will take his literature legacy forward, it will be me," says Dr Tanvi. 'Shots' is a collection of short anecdotal tales in Konkani dealing mostly with themes related to life of youth. Various stories in the collection mostly include one incident stories on themes such as love, relationships, marriage, college life, sexual abuse, bus travel experience etc.

Since the awards were declared, Dr Tanvi was flooded by messages. "I felt good to win the award but I also feel a lot of pressure by senior writers. They are encouraging me to keep the consistency in writing going strong. Many feel that the young are not doing enough but I don't agree with that accusation. Young writers are doing quite well in Konkani as many are contributing to the field of education in Konkani too. There are many who are teaching Konkani and even creating content in Konkani. Even those who are completing their PhD in Konkani and are researching should be credited to enriching Konkani," says Dr Tanvi.

She is planning to publish the play, 'Hidimba' which received second place for its script and third for the performance at the Kala Akademy's drama competition. "I have plans of publishing my street plays in the coming future and I also want to write for children. I may also publish my thesis of folk theatre soon," says Dr Tanvi with a brighter hope for Konkani.



Tukaram Rama Shet



Dr Tanvi Kamat Bambolkar