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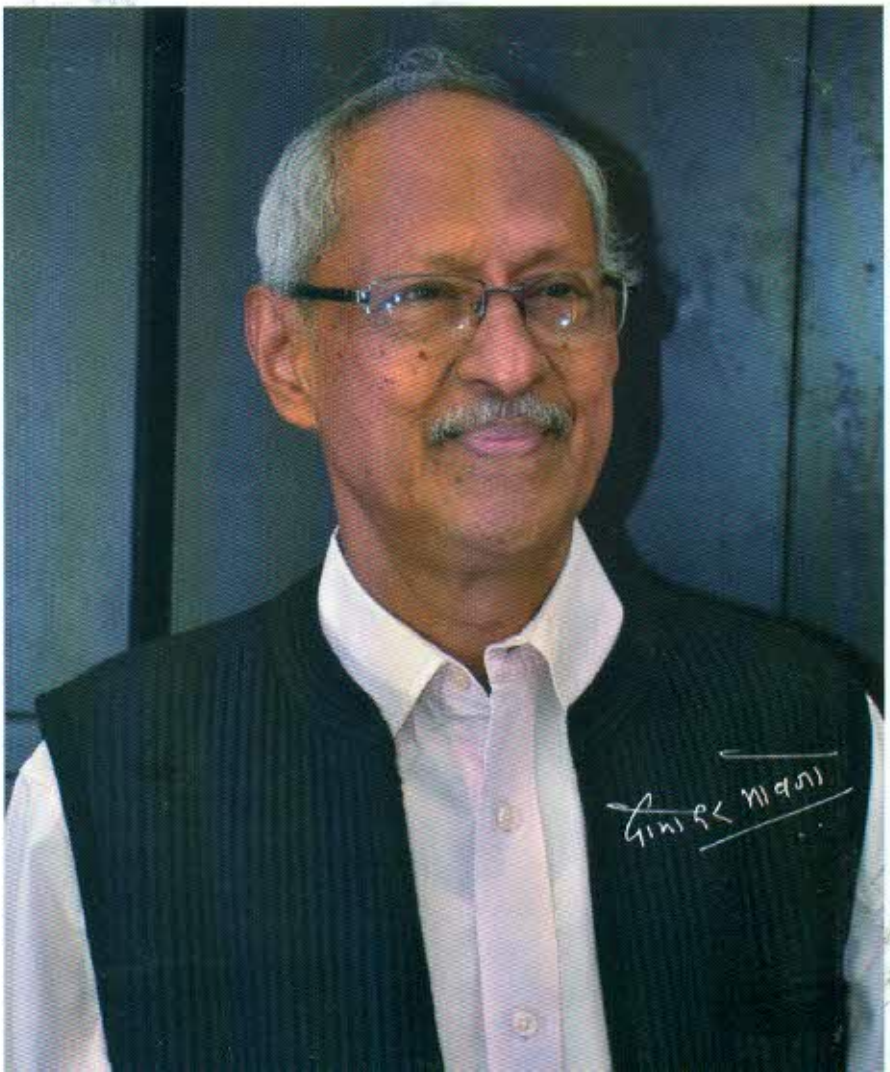


Sahitya Akademi

invites you to

**meet the author**

**Damodar Mauzo**





**D**amodar Mauzo is an unlikely combination of writer, businessman, activist, organizer, and much-loved husband, father, grandfather and trusted friend. Born on the 1st of August 1944, he did his early schooling upto *Primeiro Grau* in Portuguese, alongside Marathi primary. Matriculating in English from Margao, Goa, he graduated in Commerce from Bombay University through R.A. Poddar College. His leadership qualities and expert marksmanship propelled him to the post of NCC Under-Officer commanding a battalion. He was chosen Best Hostelite in 1965 and Best Student of the College the following year for his all-round performance.

While in college, he was instrumental in reviving the Bombay Inter-College Konkani Drama Competition, bagging the individual best actor award and helping his college win

the trophy. In Mumbai, he also discovered his talent for writing. He wrote his first story in 1963 and presented plays over All India Radio, Mumbai. During the early years of his literary career Mauzo was greatly influenced by the life and writings of Vaman Varde Valaulikar or Shennoi Goembab as the father of the Konkani Renaissance was known.

Returning from Mumbai, Mauzo was drawn into the existential Opinion Poll struggle to keep Goa from being merged into Maharashtra. Fuelled by youthful enthusiasm, he braved lathis and delivered fiery speeches. The struggle culminated in Goans decisively voting against merger.

With the battle won, and his beloved Goa secured, Bhai as he is best known, settled into the groove of shop keeper and family man by day, and, writer by night. His prolific output nurtured by timely encouragement from senior writers like Jnanpith Awardee Ravindra Kelekar, eminent journalist and poet Uday Bhembre and Goa's poet laureate Manohar Rai SarDesai, was lapped up by Konkani newspapers and periodicals. His first collection of short stories *Ganthon* was out in 1971. The next, aptly titled *Zagramnam* (Late Nights) followed in 1975. In 1983 he won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel *Karmelin*. This novel translated into Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Kannada and other Indian languages besides English, won him much critical acclaim and catapulted him onto the national literary arena. *Karmelin* which broke new ground as the story of an Indian woman forced by circumstances to work as a maid to an Arab family in Kuwait, unfolds the often sordid reality of life as against the perceived glitz of petro-dollars. We learn of the high price paid to earn them.

Though the eighties began well, the



With Shaila





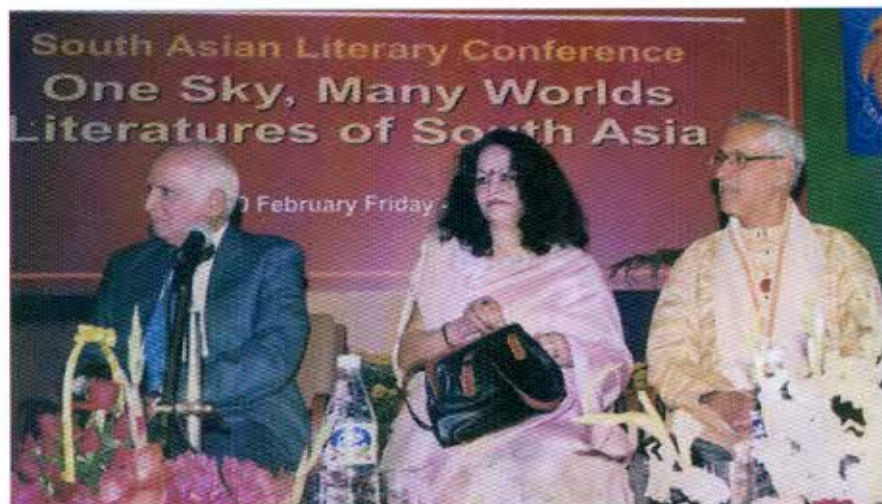
*Being Honoured at the Hands of Ravindra Kelekar*

arduous struggle to make Konkani the official language of Goa took a toll on his literary output. His health too was indifferent. But he took major problems like retinal detachment in his stride, as Goa passed the historic official language bill making Konkani the sole official language of Goa in April 1987. As a consequence of this, Goa soon attained its much desired Statehood and Konkani entered the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The entire fight for Konkani and Statehood was spearheaded by *Konkani Porjecho Awaz* – Voice of the Konkani People, a mass-based organisation of which Damodar Mauzo was a founder member and front-ranker.

As the decade was ending, national TV viewers woke up to Konkani as a powerful literary language. Mauzo's story "Angvonn" was televised in Doordarshan's Hindi serial *Ek Kahani* as "Manauti". The much-

acclaimed story would be re-run several times over the years, before yet another Mauzo story "Khilli" was televised in the sequel series *Ek Aur Kahani* as Nakabandi.

Interestingly, both the stories, one about a young priest and the other about a seafarer – both fairly common vocations among Goans, depict in authentic detail the life of the Catholic community. Though himself a Hindu, Mauzo was born and continues to live in a Christian dominated village of South Goa. This explains the closeness, complete empathy and close rapport he has with the community. But his own community roots are equally strong as one reads his powerful stories like "Tadzodd" which opens to the reader the life in an upper-caste rural Hindu family and juxtaposes it with the life of the family's generation next – a modern, nuclear, urban family, and the conflicts that arise when the



*With Intizar Hussain & Indira Goswami*





*With Geeta Dharmarajan at Katha Festival*

old mores clash with the new. "Tadzodd" is in the anthology *Bhurgim Mhugelim Tim*, the title story of which, is even more powerful and evocative. The English translation of this anthology by Xavier Cota entitled *These Are My Children* published in 2007 by Katha New Delhi was first exhibited at the Paris Book Fair, and is also the first book of solo translations into English from Konkani. *Rumadful*, another collection of short stories albeit of a different genre, delves into the metaphysical.

The 1990s began promisingly as Konkani took its rightful place in the pantheon of modern Indian Languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution in August 1992, after countless bandhs and battles, several lives sacrificed and many lathi blows. The war for Konkani had finally been won. It was time to consolidate

and move forward.

Bhai partially detached himself from his business as his wife Shaila graciously agreed to run it most of the time, leaving him free to write and attend organization meetings and seminars and to mentor young writers. During his tenure as President, Konkani Bhasha Mandal organized in 2002, the 1<sup>st</sup> Akhil Bharatiya Konkani Sangeet Mahotsav, in Margao, Goa. Running over two days in February, it brought together for the first time, Konkani musicians from several genres, and a wide geographical swathe from Mumbai in the north to Cochin in the south, ranging from western music professionals from Goa to exuberant Siddhis who trace their roots to Africa, Muslim Navayats from North Kanara and including Mangalorians and Keralites, all bound together by Konkani



*Receiving Vishwa Konkani Sahitya Puraskar*



With Gulzar & Sunil Gangopadhyay

culture. Appropriately, the Mahotsav was inaugurated by the legendary classical singer Kishori Amonkar, an ethnic Goan and concluded by the iconic Remo, who has carried Konkani music all over India and beyond. It was a spectacle on a grand scale and the logistics were mind boggling, but the group of enthusiastic young men and women with the soothing and well-networked Bhai leading from the front, managed to pull it off with panache.

Besides creative literature, he contributes regular columns to the Konkani Daily *Sunaparant* and articles to other Konkani and English magazines. His fortnightly column "Aapros" in *Sunaparant* which is a critical appreciation of the story published in the previous week, has been running for the last 6 years and despite his plea to discontinue it, popular demand especially from upcoming young writers compels him to carry on.

Damodar Mauzo has traveled widely all over India and Europe. He has also visited several West Asian Arab States under the auspices of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations and China with a delegation of Indian writers.

His stories have appeared and continue to appear in major national magazines and anthologies besides his interview and story in Volume III - *The West of Knit India Through Literature*, Sivsankari's major oeuvre covering modern literature of the major Indian languages. He was also given the single honour of writing the Foreword to the concluding volume IV of the series, which was widely acclaimed.

Though he is basically a writer of short fiction, Mauzo has delved into several other genres with great results. His foray into

writing novels as mentioned earlier, fetched him the Sahitya Akademi Award, while film script writing brought him the Best Dialogues Award for *Shitoo* and the Best Screenplay Award for the critically acclaimed *Aleesha*. He has also written the dialogues for the box office hit *O Maria* which had an unprecedented run of 25 weeks in the multiplexes of Goa. His attempt at children's literature *Kani Eka Khomsachi* bagged him the Goa State Literary Award while his venture into the novella genre won for his *Tsunami Simon* the 2011 prestigious Vimala V. Pai Vishwa Konkani Sahitya Puraskar.

Damodar Mauzo has a peculiar way of writing. In his younger days, his writing would generally begin around 11.00 pm after closing his shop, and having his dinner. He would then write feverishly in long-hand till the story was over in the wee hours of the morn, and then without even going over it, the only draft would be handed over to the publisher. No editing, no polishing! That is the way most of his writing was done. Today, with more major problems like macular hole (eye), cardiac and cancer surgeries, the old schedules are obviously not sustainable. His beloved wife Shaila has stepped in, to give him the space he requires, so that his productivity is not crippled. Despite a more public role, akin to a page three personality, Bhai has produced several more short stories which will shortly be published in two volumes in addition to English translations of another collection of short stories and the prize-winning *Tsunami Simon*.

We wish him all the best even as we wonder - what next?



## A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

1971	<i>Ganthon</i>	<i>Collection of Short Stories</i>
1975	<i>Zagrannan</i>	-do-
1989	<i>Ramadful</i>	-do-
2001	<i>Bhurgim Mhugelim Tim</i>	-do-
1975	<i>Sood</i>	<i>Novella</i>
1981	<i>Karmelin</i>	<i>Novel</i>
2009	<i>Tsunami Simon</i>	<i>Novella</i>
1976	<i>Kani Eka Khomsachi</i>	<i>Children's Story Book</i>
1977	<i>Ek Ashil'lo Babulo</i>	<i>Juvenile Novel</i>
1995	<i>Chit'tarangi</i>	<i>Collection of Children's Stories</i>
2003	<i>Oshe Ghodle Shenoy Coenbab</i>	<i>Biographical Sketch</i>
2003	<i>Unch Hazes Unch Mathem</i>	-do-

### PUBLICATIONS IN TRANSLATIONS

*Karmelin* in translation into Hindi, Marathi, Kannada, Bengali, English, Punjabi, Sindhi, Tamil, Oriya, Maithili and other Indian languages, all published by Sahitya Akademi.

*These Are My Children*, a collection of stories in English Translation published by KATHA, New Delhi.

### FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Two Volumes of short stories, English translations of short stories, and the Novella *Tsunami Simon*

### A CHRONOLOGY

- 1944 Born at Majorda, Goa on 1<sup>st</sup> August.
- 1966 Graduated in Commerce, Bombay University
- 1968 Took over the family business
- 1968 Married his college friend Shaila
- 1973 Konkani Bhasha Mandal Literary Award to *Ganthon* – 1<sup>st</sup> collection of Stories
- 1973 Goa Kala Academy Literary Award for *Ganthon*
- 1973 Toured various European countries
- 1976 KBM's Literary Award for *Zagranna* – Collection of Stories
- 1977 KBM's Best Drama Manuscript Award for *Nilem Nilem Sovnem Ek*
- 1978 Goa Kala Academy (Children's Year) Award for the book *Kani Eka Khomsachi*
- 1983 The Sahitya Akademi Award for the novel *Karmelin*
- 1984 Travelled in West Asian Arab Countries under the auspices of ICCR
- 1985 Presided over The All India Konkani Sahitya Sammelan
- 1986 Founder-member and front ranker of *Konkani Porjecho Awaz*
- 1987 Featured in DD National Channel's popular series *Ek Kahani* with Manauti.
- 1997 1<sup>st</sup> Goa State Film Festival Best Film Dialogues Award for *Shitoo*
- 1998 Katha (New Delhi) Award for "Minguel's Kin"
- 2001 Elected President Konkani Bhasha Mandal, Goa.
- 2002 Organised the 1<sup>st</sup> All India Konkani Music Festival
- 2003 Awarded Janaganga Puraskar for *Bhurgim Mhugelim Tim*
- 2003 Elected member of the General Council of Sahitya Akademi where he served on the Executive Board and was elected on the key Finance Committee. He was also the Convenor of the Advisory Board for Konkani.
- 2004 The Film *Sood* – The Revenge based on his novella *Sood* produced.
- 2005 Best Screenplay Award for the film *Aeesha*.
- 2006 Visited China in a delegation of Indian Writers.
- 2006 "Nakabandi" based on his story "Khilli" featured in *Aur Ek Kahani* on DD.
- 2006 Goa State Reward for Cultural Excellence at national Level.
- 2007 Goa State Cultural Award
- 2010 Awarded Senior Fellowship of Union Ministry of Culture.
- 2011 Vishwa Konkani Kendra's Vimla V. Pai Sahitya Puraskar for *Tsunami Simon*