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Uplifting the Village Community

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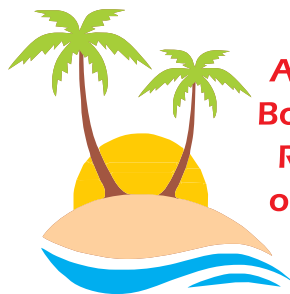
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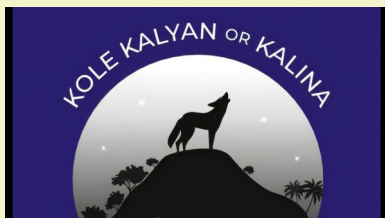


By Jamaica Dlima - Marve

### BOOK LAUNCH: Kole Kalyan - Kalina, a book on the two villages of Kalina, written by Fr. Milton Gonsalves\*

'Kole Kalyan' which literally means "Abode of Foxes" is now called Kalina. This book is written by Fr. Milton Gonsalves featuring the 2 main villages of Kalina - Big Village and Koloverly. The book cost Rs 100/- per copy for personal pickup and Rs 50/- extra for local courier.

Kole Kalyan - Kalina was released on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March at Our Last of Egypt Church, Kalina by Rev. Fr. Rui Comelo. Esteemed guests invited for the launch were Adv. Alexander D'Souza - UCF Convenor, Mr. Reuben Dias - Ex Sarpanch, Mr. Crompton Tixeira - Ex Sarpanch, Mr George Abraham - Ex Corporator. Some of our prominent MGP members too attended the launch.



This is the 5<sup>th</sup> book by Fr. Milton Gonsalves and his next book project is based on the Dharavi Beth islands of Manori, Gorai and Uttan. Kole Kalyan - Kalina is supported for printing and publicity by Mobai Gaothan Panchayat as a part of its "Project East

Indian - Creating an East Indian Identity".

The MGP Team would love to support all books, publications and historical projects on the East Indian Community through printing, publicity, marketing and more. Those interested can contact 9820545302.

### EAST INDIAN PASSO SERMÃO DURING LENT

Mobai Gaothan Panchayat continued to organise the East Indian Sermãos throughout the Lenten season. 'Sermão' is the East Indian word for sermons and therefore is preached in East Indian. During the season of Lent, the Sermão is preached after the Passo service on Sunday evening.

Fr. Botham Patil who is currently based in Rome, preached the Sermãos on Ash Wednesday, Ramacha Paas (Palm Sunday) and on Good Friday. The rest of the Passo Sermãos were preached by Fr. Marshal Lopes, Fr. Andrew Rodrigues and Fr. Joseph Gonsalves respectively. All the Sermãos were streamed on Mee East Indian, MGP's YouTube channel.

### 157<sup>TH</sup> BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF KAKA BAPTISTA \*

17<sup>th</sup> March 2021 marked the 157<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of our East Indian Freedom Fighter Joseph (Kaka) Baptista.

"Swaraj is my birth right, and I shall have it." \*

the legendary quote is often attributed to Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The founder of the Home Rule Movement. However, there is a growing consensus that it was not Tilak, but Joseph 'Kaka' Baptista, a close associate of Tilak who coined the phrase.

Kaka Baptista was a lawyer and one of the founding members of the Home Rule Movement, alongside the likes of Tilak and Annie Besant.

Joseph (Kaka) Baptista was an Indian politician and activist from Bombay (today known as Mumbai). He was the first President of Indian Home Rule League, established in 1916 and was elected as the Mayor of Bombay in 1925. He was given the title Kaka which means "Uncle".

On Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021, members of the Mobai Gaothan Panchayat, along with local activist groups and parties from Uttan, gathered at the Kaka Baptista Chowk, to pay homage and respect to our beloved 'Kaka'.



### MOBAI GAOTHAN PANCHAYAT FOUNDATION DAY

On 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021, Mobai Gaothan Panchayat completed 11 Years of Service to the East Indian Community. The MGP Team thanks all its team members and advisors for their unwavering support.

MGP has around 40 Projects dedicated to the East Indian Community. Our main focus right now is "Project East Indian". With this project, we are aiming to make our community known within the next 10 years. Another focus is to make MGP digitally active and a special team is being created for this very purpose.

MGP looks forward to more community members joining the team to uplift and empower the East Indian Community.

We look forward to your suggestions and feedback on 9820545302 or at [mghpmobai@gmail.com](mailto:mghpmobai@gmail.com)

### GAOTHAN VOICE READERSHIP SURVEY

The MGP is proud to bring you the Gaothan Voice bulletin steadily for the past 18 years. We are conducting the Gaothan Voice (GV) readership survey to make sure we hear your opinions and suggestions so that the bulletin can serve you better. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. Your feedback will help us gain a clear understanding of what you expect to see in the Gaothan Voice (GV), which will help us produce a bulletin that is a true reflection of interests and concerns of the East Indian community. We would be grateful for your time and support in completing this survey.

Survey Link: <https://forms.gle/ao6pEpupTxb8DBC47>

To receive the survey link on whatsapp, please contact 9820545302

# RITA'S TALES

## Happy Easter

RITA RODRICKS

Easter is a festival that is celebrated all over the world with joy it is said  
It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead  
The date is determined on a lunisolar calendar as meant  
It falls on a Sunday after forty days of Lent  
Easter was named from the Anglo Saxon Goddess 'Eostre'  
She represented fertility and spring with lustre  
The Easter egg represents new life and rebirth  
So does the Easter rabbit for what it is worth  
Marzipan and Chocolate eggs are exchanged by families and friends  
Happy Easter to everyone hope your happiness never ends!



### KOREZMA - THE LENTEN SEASON

The Lenten season known as 'Korezma' in the East Indian dialect, coming from the root word 'quaresma'. It is a time of penance and fasting. East Indians have been following some lenten traditions for many years and we continue to do so even today.

#### Khursachi Vaat – Way of the cross

Khursachi Vaat, as the word suggests, means 'Way Of The Cross'. It is conducted at Church or in the Gaothans. The Holy Crosses at junctions and entrances were installed to protect the East Indian villages centuries ago. These Holy Crosses are visited during Korezma for the Khursachi Vaat. Gaothan residents assemble in large numbers and participate in this prayerful journey.

#### Ramacha Paas (Palm Sunday)

Palm Sunday is known as Ramacha Pass to the East Indian community. Ramo in Portuguese means a branch and Passo means step. It's a day when branches of palms are blessed and distributed. Each Christian home makes a cross of these palms and preserve it in their homes the entire year. The Paas (Passo) Service is conducted on all Sundays and the service on Palm Sunday is the last Paas. Later in the evening there is a procession of the statues of Jesus and Mary depicting their meeting before his death on Good Friday. The hymn in Marathi, "Hey Paha" is sung by a parishioner enacting Veronica who wiped the face of Jesus. A special East Indian Hymn that is sung on this day called "Dukhi Mauli".

#### Veronica Singing - Hey Paha

This hymn is sung at most parishes with an East Indian majority on Palm Sunday also known as Ramacha Paas in East Indian dialect. After this hymn is sung a procession with the statue of Mother Mary (Dukhi Mauli) and Jesus carrying the cross is carried by the Confrat/Irmãos followed by veneration. This year due to Covid, many parishes streamed the hymn online.

#### Papiyas – Special Prayers and Hymns at Lenten time

Papiya is a Marathi word which means Penitents. Papiyas or Devaats as they are called, are a group of devout Christians who move about from cross to cross in the dead of night, chanting prayers and imploring Christians to wake up from their sleep, get down on their knees and pray and ask for God's forgiveness. (Bhavando, utha tumche neezemanche, deemi ghala, lazaar kara, ek Amche Bapala....). These groups become active from Sunday night before Palm Sunday and their activity culminates in a crescendo on Maundy Thursday (The night of Jesus' Agony on the Mount of Olives). Papiyas organize themselves into groups of 10 to 20 persons or more. They shroud themselves in black or blue or brown tunics with a hood so that they cannot be easily recognized. Their lamentable chants are in the East Indian dialect and similar to Gregorian chants in tones. Listening to their mournful chants can be a hair-raising experience and can send shivers down one's spine, especially when one hears them in the dead of night.

#### Krista Puran – Special Hymns for Good Friday

The Good Friday Service Preparation and Veneration is managed by the East Indian Community Member Church Groups called Irmãos (Portuguese for brothers and sisters), Konfrat (Portuguese for confraternity or sodality). During the service and veneration, the East Indian Community members sing the Krista Puran - an epic poem on the life of Jesus, composed by Thomas Stephens and first published in 1616.

This year unfortunately due to the ongoing Pandemic some of our traditions could not be followed. However, some of our prominent singers released various hymns dedicated to the Lenten season and made it more prayerful

# THE EAST INDIAN VOICE

## The East-Indian Identity in the age of Instagram

"Social media is the ultimate equalizer. It gives a voice and a platform to anyone willing to engage."

- Amy Jo Martin, Founder and CEO of Digital Royalty

The East Indians of Mumbai (Bombay) are the sons and daughters of the soil. From farmers, fisher folks, toddy tappers and other traditional occupations, we've gradually and steadily transitioned to conquering great heights in various fields including journalism, law, education, health, arts & films, photography, to name a few. In a multi-cultural world, it's vital that the present and future generations of East Indians retain their culture & traditions. Given that we are in this age of technology, social media plays a strong role in reaching out to a much wider audience. Young and old alike are seen sharing their life stories, food journals, dance victories and everything else under the sun on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. It's a make or break game on these platforms but the potential is vast and the audience, welcoming. Why then, should an indigenous community, now dispersed globally, not make a sound about its culture, tradition, music, art, cuisine, and heritage, in a hope that the world knows, recognizes and appreciates them?

We, the Vakola East Indian Association (V.E.I.A.) primarily took to social media to promote our 15<sup>th</sup> year Anniversary Celebrations in 2019 and launched our Facebook page. Gauging the response, we transitioned to Instagram in 2019 and the response was great. Instagram attracts billions of users worldwide. Interacting with like-minded users is a great way to remain connected, share, understand & collate ideas.

In May, last year we caught on to the trend of doing 'shout-outs' locally and eventually even reached out to East Indians globally. These shout-outs gave us an opportunity to shine a spotlight on local talent, support budding entrepreneurs and small businesses. Amongst the growing users there's an interesting bubble of the East Indian clan: From selling grandma's best kept secret aka Bottle Masala, to Lugas, from extensively researching and documenting age old heritage stories (@eastindianmemoryco) to conducting native village walks (@dharavi\_island) from learning new E.I. Marathi words (@can.dee.duh) to making fun, interesting videos dubbed in the local Vadval dialect of Vasai (@young\_dokri\_saloni\_), Instagram is seeing the East Indian pride shine through. P.S. I'll need a separate space to cover all the amazing food accounts that showcase East Indian cuisine.

We're leaving no stone left unturned. During the lockdown last year, we witnessed the rise of home-chefs, bakers and a multitude of East Indian home kitchens. Instagram accounts likewise surged. Each new day brings fresh, creative content via photographs, videos and documenting traditions, promoting culture, from the E.I. community not just in India but also Australia, USA, NZ, Hong-Kong, Malaysia, Canada, Dubai to name a few.

Being an East Indian on Instagram provides a platform to highlight the plight of our Gaothans, raising social-economic issues and hoping that the government gives us our right dues. Covering local news, local events, conducting contests is a great medium for communication thereby reaching out to a vast network of people. The visuals, the accumulation of data in one place makes it easier to use along with the wide range of creative tools.

Overall, to summarize, there's a sense of pride and awareness that's building up among the younger generation. The East Indian identity is engraved in their hearts. We're not limiting our traditions to just wedding celebrations but going beyond to understand and appreciate our Reetiñ-Reevaj. The East Indian buzz on Instagram is growing and alive. It's fun, interactive and trending. We're here to welcome the world into our universe!

- Belmira Miranda, Vakola

Gone are the days when it took you an immense amount of patience to explain to someone why you are called an 'East Indian' as opposed to our cultural counter parts (Goans & Mangaloreans) who are identified by the geographical locations that they come from. Speaking from experience I have come across several descriptors for us East Indians – people who don't have a native place; East Indians who live in West India; people who speak 'avaar-tavaar' marathi and so on. None of these are offensive as such, but it's interesting to see how we are perceived.

One mention of the word East Indian today, and it's not uncommon for someone to nod knowingly, and join in the conversation. More so on Instagram, where loud and proud East Indians have been showcasing our culture with pride, putting up posts about anything #EastIndian will gain you numerous 'likes'. What does it mean to be an East Indian in an age where Instagram trends come and go in no time? The past year has seen a surge in all things East Indian on Instagram. Hashtags like #EastIndianCuisine, #EastIndianWeddings, #EastIndianBand and so on have seen hundreds of hits. The vibrant East Indian way of life is available for all to see and appreciate online.

Today, there is no dearth of posts about the East Indians on social media – be it history, culture, traditions, food, songs and more. It's heartening to see East Indians from all age groups posting images, sharing experiences and sparking conversations, for the world to view us and know us better.

- Candida Remedios, Vikhroli



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## Korezman Coronachi Laat Tari Zaili Paas ani Khursachi Vaat

*Korezma in the Time of Corona*

**Gleason Barretto - Old Kurla**

**D**ays get challenging in these trying times of the pandemic and for the East Indians, faith gets even stronger. The Community that resides predominantly in the Gaothans has seen the toughest times as they saw this city convert from fields, rivers and forests to becoming the 'Financial Capital' of the country. The ancestors always believed in the power of prayer and this great faith created wonders. The signs of this undying faith are seen in the many churches that our community helped build, across Maharashtra, and the grottos and holy crosses that are seen at prominent spots in the Gaothans.

**E**aster is incomplete if lent is not observed the East Indian way to purists. Fasting and abstinence is not the only highlight of the East Indian observance of lent. Practices like the Paas on Sundays, Khursachi Vaat at Church as well as to all the local crosses in Gaothans, Papiya singing, Krista Puran and the arrangement during Holy week by Irmous and Confraternity are features that make the typical season of lent. For a community in which faith is embedded, the cancellations of these traditional religious practices during lent was saddening. A lot of these could have been organised but due to various restrictions owing to the pandemic, the community missed it 2 years in a row.

**V**isits to church for mass and personal prayer has been replaced by a virtual one and the feeling of being in the House of God has been missed. Parishes in the Archdiocese followed their own guidelines as per their comfort without taking the laity into confidence. The Archdiocese released its own guidelines without consulting what people really wanted. While across the world re-opening churches was the priority, in Maharashtra the church was only following the State Government without taking the community at large into confidence. Different churches were following different rules; while several churches devised arrangements to accommodate the faithful, in keeping with the guidelines issued, entry in to some churches was restricted. The Church in Maharashtra had now changed from 'Fearless' to a 'Fearful' church.

**A**t this point, appreciating some initiatives by a handful of churches is a must. Some parishes kept their churches open throughout the day so that people could visit and pray in these challenging times. Some churches increased the frequency of masses to accommodate as many, and even allowed more attendees ensuring that safety protocols of social distancing were practised. We saw a certain church having a serpentine queue for confessions, since not all parishes in the vicinity were having confessions. Due to local parish restrictions, many of the faithful visited nearby parishes to attend daily mass. The Holy Week arrangements were particularly saddening with many churches conveniently cancelling all scheduled services and going online totally. A Week of great significance to the East Indian Community that begins with the Ramacha Paas, followed by Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Pasku Cha Sann with special prayers and hymns like Papiyas and Krista Puran, it was a sombre Holy week this year too.

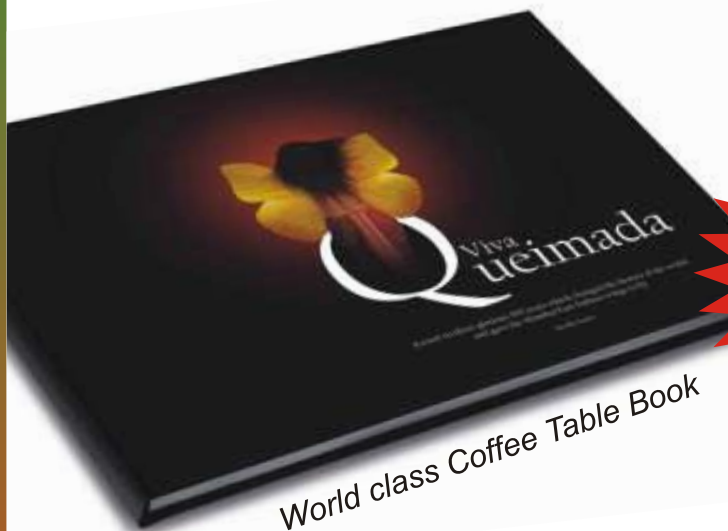
**A**ctive community members did not lose hope but created alternatives to ensure as many practices were followed as per tradition. Khursachi Vaat was held at Gaothans, where the faithful visited as many significant holy crosses in the vicinity as possible. Devaats went around singing Papiyas at midnight in their own Gaothans. Irmous and Confraternity in some parishes were allowed to create re-enactments of the passion of our Lord for the weekly Passo service. Family prayer got prominence with daily rosary or stations of the cross. Local groups arranged for ration and hampers for the needy families. This was a clear indication that we as a community are dedicated to our faith even in these trying times.

**T**imes have changed and so should our minds. Blindly following the religious guidelines may not work as our faith is much stronger. There are vested interests trying their best to block the East Indian Lenten Traditions with support by the BCC Coordinators and this needs to be stopped. Staying safe and following protocols is important but only targeting a silent and peace loving Christian community should not be tolerated. Creating a voice for the laity to speak out against the Government is the need of the hour as our Archdiocese has terribly failed. The Archdiocese silence can be either due to obedience to the law of land or maybe we are obligated to political leaders. The East Indian community should stand firm and it's time we speak and shout out as indigenous people. Time for change from a 'clergy driven' to 'laity driven' church.



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