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Uplifting the Village Community

VOICE

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The East Indian Magazine

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EAST INDIAN PUNCH

The Mouthpiece of the East Indian Community

***Jesusche Kurzala Motha Maan
Kuruz Hai Aaple Gaathanachi Shaan***
The Essence of the Gaathan Holy Crosses

Gleason Barretto - Old Kurla

Key to any gaathan opens with a Holy Cross which is installed at all entrances and junctions in a gaathan. A gaathan is incomplete without a holy cross as it holds great relevance to the protection and faith of the natives of these village settlements. These holy crosses which saved the gaathans a century ago are not revered by the political leader as they have never realised the importance of their presence. However, impressed as many gaothankars did not stay away from praying at these holy crosses that saved the gaathans. While those around may think, they are saved due to medication and precaution, the native East Indian Community will always believe that these traditional heritage holy crosses saved them.

Usually the Holy Crosses have a special place in the hearts of the Gaathan inhabitants as the laadin or the Cross Feast is celebrated. Every family dedicates a rosary daily across the month of May after which channas and soft drinks are served. On the last day or a special day for the Annual Cross Feast after which special refreshments and celebrations follow after the special rosary. In many of these gaathans the luzar is recited in the East Indian dialect. For the Cross Feast, all locals from the zone contribute towards the expenses and most of these crosses celebrate on 31st May. A few years ago, MGP announced 31st May as Holy Cross Day, dedicates to all our holy crosses across the gaathans of Mumbai, Thane and Vasai.

Restoration of our heritage crosses is the need of the hour as many of them are more than 100 years old and some have even crossed the 200-year mark. The Crosses were mostly made of stones and wood with the year of installation engraved on the foot of these crosses. Creating a data bank of all crosses around the gaathans is a need as will help us all to create awareness, preserve their history and promote their essence. MGP is working on a special online link to create this databank. A special Cross restriction project needs to be launched to ensure all heritage Crosses are preserved in their original structure to give it a perfect heritage connect.

Unique landmarks of Mumbai, Vasai and Thane like holy crosses need to be preserved and give their due respect. the state needs to recognise these landmarks like many other installations which are protected and preserved. In recent times desecration of holy crosses have only increased and they many a times happen when elections draw closer. Special regional cross managers need to be allotted to ensure they are safe at all times. There is a need to install CCTV at all these crosses is required with increase in cases of desecration. Also, when the statues are reinstalled need to be ideally funded by locals and not any politicians or authorities.

Zealous groups that manage the holy crosses and getting active each passing year. This is a positive sign as the youth now take over to preserve and protect our heritage crosses. The local municipal authorities have been serving notices to these crosses and we need to ensure each of our crosses have documentation in place. The crosses now also have statues of Mother Mary and saints. The focus should also be on promoting our native devotions like Mount Mary and St. Gonsalo Garcia at our holy crosses. While the world looked at various solutions to protect from the pandemic the native East Indian Community prayed faithfully at our heritage crosses. May those around know the importance and relevance of these crosses, as many of them are also known as plague crosses. May the holy cross protect Maharashtra and India from this pandemic just the way it did a century ago.

Gaathan Voice Readership Survey

The MGP is proud to bring you the Gaathan Voice bulletin steadily for the past 18 years. We are conducting the Gaathan 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 Gaathan 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.

(For GV PDF / MGP's social Media) Survey Link:

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THE EAST INDIAN VOICE

Last month's issue themed on memories of 'Summer Holidays', truly struck a chord among readers of the Gaothan Voice. This issue we bring you some more articles on topics that are synonymous with the month of May –vacations, cross feasts and preparing for the monsoons by making masalas and pickles while the sun shines. Happy reading!

Rita's Tales - 'Cross Feast in Mumbai'

-Rita Rodricks

The month of May in Mumbai is the time to celebrate 'Cross Feast'
For us as children it was a grand occasion with fun and merriment to say the least.
My father would organize the entire festivities sitting on a coir cot in the compound of our little cottage;
Jobs would be assigned to people, right from procuring the flowers and candles to cooking the food, getting the drinks and inviting the village.
Relatives, friends and neighbors were all invited for this special occasion which used to be the last Sunday in May.
They arrived very much in advance because some of them lived far away.
There was a stone cross down the road in Juhu where we had our holiday home.
A long stretch of beach across our house enabled us to be free to swim and roam.
The Cross was scrubbed clean; candles were kept in readiness and a huge flower garland was put around the cross.
Boughs of the 'Flame Tree' also called Mayflowers were strewn across
At dusk the Rosary was recited with an elderly relative leading the prayers in a voice that was stern;
It was lengthy and loud especially praying for all our deceased ancestors in turn.
A neighbor played his violin melodiously with all of us joining in the hymn singing;
The prayers would end with a harmonious rendition of 'Showers of Blessing'.
Boiled channa (chickpeas) that had been cooked in a huge vessel on firewood was distributed to all who had participated in;
As children, we would carry our handkerchiefs to fill it with boiled channa when attending any Cross Feast, it was given for certain.
An entire pig would be butchered at home for the dinner party;
Along with traditional culinary dishes of chicken and duck there was a lot of food variety.
Singing to the accompaniment of the 'Ghumat' (clay drum) and guitar had everybody tapping their feet;
East Indian and English Songs were sung with much gusto keeping the beat.
Everybody looked forward to attending our annual Cross Feast in the old days;
They all have fond memories which they will remember always!

Summer Holidays at Juhu

Every year from the time we moved to Khar in 1966, as soon as our final exams got over in April we would pack our clothes and household utensils and shift bag and baggage to our cottage in Juhu along with the maids and our black cocker-spaniel Lisa. Our house was near the beach and you could see the blue sea from where we lived. We have admired many a sunset from our upstairs window. We have seen the waves lashing against the wall during the monsoons in all their fury. We could also sight the planes flying low as they passed our house which was on a height. There was just one plot of land which was a coconut grove, separating us from the beach, later a high-rise came up and blocked our view. The shifting used to be done in our car which entailed many trips to and fro. We would live there in Juhu until our vacations got over and then the same process was repeated to get back to Khar in the first week of June when we all resumed school.

A typical day of our holiday consisted of having our breakfast and then heading out to the beach in our swim-suits where we would spend the morning playing in the sand and swimming in the sea without adult supervision as my father strongly believed that since we were natives of the place nothing would go wrong he always said that the sea looked after its own. We were the only children who wore swim-suits in those days; most people would wear their regular clothes to wade in the water. Even my mother would wear a fashionable red, blue and white swimsuit. When we walked on the road in our swim-suits we would get people staring at us. Sometimes the beach would be deserted as it used to be very hot and we used to be the only children around. We would collect sea-shells and sometimes even find a couple of coins on the beach. We would watch the tiny crabs scuttle into the sand.

We were warned to stay away from the jelly-fish which would sting us if touched. We were instructed to return home only at lunch time so there we would be on the beach getting tanned in the sun.

My youngest sister Candy used to look like a gollywog with her curly hair when she got tanned on the beach. When we returned, we would bathe followed by lunch, after which we would sometimes nap or else play until it was evening. Then it was back to the beach for a walk to the chowpatty as it was called where there were food stalls selling Bhelpuri (a savoury snack made of puffed rice, vegetables and a tangy tamarind sauce), ice-cream, bhajjiyas (vegetable fritters), gola-sharbet (ice-candy). My father would leave pocket-money for each of us every day before he left for work in the morning. It was normally twenty-five paise for each child we all got the same amount. We would buy the hot bhajjiyas (vegetable fritter) to eat and settle for a gola (ice-candy) which was shaved ice on a stick on which coloured sweet syrup was poured. The golawala (ice-candy man) would ask us which colour we wanted all of us had our own favourite and we would cajole him into adding more sweet syrup. The golawalla was the same man for many years; we used to leave our footwear with him to look after so we could walk bare feet in the sand. My sister Coretta was the only one who would insist on having the mixed ice-cream cone which cost one rupee and twenty-five paise we would have to buy it for her with the money we had saved or else she throw a terrible tantrum of which we were afraid.

There is a plane park in Juhu, so called because it had a model of an Air-India plane in which people could enter in and sit on the seats. Whenever we went to Juhu for our vacations we would make at least one trip to the park. It had a cup and saucer to sit in, a giraffe to climb on, swings, slides, a tree house, a train, a sand pit. Opposite the park was the police station and we could see the criminals in the jail from the park. That was one jail with a park view. The jail has been boarded up now. The plane too fell apart and a new one has been built in its place.

All our relatives and friends were aware that we used to shift to Juhu during the summer vacation so they too would all descend on us during that time for their vacation. Usually they would stay for a week after which the next lot would come, sometimes on a Sunday we would have around fifty people from all over. We had people coming from Colaba right up to Thane. There used to be water-shortage but that did not deter anybody. We children would be roped in to fill water because the man employed for the job, Pedro would be too drunk. Aunt Virginia, who was my mother's youngest sister and her children who were the same age as my sisters would regularly come to spend their holidays in Juhu. My sister Jackie would organize plays in the evening with two teams competing against each other. The stage would be set up outside the house where we had an open-air place which was on a height, with a bed sheet as a curtain, seating arrangement were made with benches on ground level and our next-door relatives would be invited to add to the audience. It used to be quite entertaining despite their petty quarrels because as usual somebody always wanted to be on the other team or somebody did not want the role they were given to act. All in all, it used to be a good show with us applauding them. When we got back to school in June during the new academic year, our first English essay used to be 'How you spent your summer vacation' we had no problem because we were writing the same things for years. I am glad the teacher always changed every year. We did have fun times in Juhu, the house was sold and a new multi-storied building has come up in its place. All we have left are our memories.

Carrot Pickle

-Sybil Rodrigues

Ingredients:

¼ kg carrot (cut into strips) add some salt and keep aside.

¼ cup oil

¼ cup vinegar

¼ cup sugar

Grind the following in ¼ cup vinegar the following ingredients:

½ tsp Cumin seeds

1 tsp mustard seeds

5 Kashmiri chillies (discard seeds)

½ tsp methi seeds

6 flakes garlic

Small piece ginger

½ tsp. turmeric powder

Method:

In a vessel boil the ¼ cup vinegar and ¼ cup sugar. When the sugar is melted, add the ground the masala and its water and cook for a while. Then add the carrots cook for some more time.

Heat ¼ cup oil in a pan when it is hot add it to the carrot mixture and mix well. Then turn off the flame. Allow it to cool and bottle.





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Heritage Crosses



Cross Name: Jacinto Cross
Built By: A. F. Jacinto
Year of Installation: 1883
Gaothan: Kolvery Village, Kalina
Cross Feast Day: 2nd Saturday Of May



Cross Name: Orlem Cross
Built By: Orlem parishioners during the plague.
Year of Installation: 1804
Gaothan: Orlem Market
 - Valnai Gaothan
Cross Feast Day: 31st May



Cross Name: Rodrigues Family Cross
Built By: Rodrigues Family
Year of Installation: 1880
Gaothan: Madh Gaothan
Cross Feast Day: 29th May



Cross Name: Santacruz Cross.
 This is the "Santa Cruz" (which means "Holy Cross" in Portuguese), which gives the suburb of Santacruz its name.
Built By: The East Indian inhabitants Of "Khulbhowree" village.
Year of Installation: Original cross erected pre-1850
Gaothan: Santacruz (West)

Tendli Pickle

-Sybil Rodrigues

Ingredients:

1/2 kg Ivy gourd
 Wash, wipe the ivy gourds (tendli) and cut lengthwise into 6 pieces.
 Add salt and dry in the sun for 2 hours (optional).
 1/4 cup oil
 1/2 cup vinegar
 2 tbsp sugar
 Grind in 1/4 cup vinegar
 10 Kashmiri chillies (discard seeds)
 1 tsp methi seeds
 1 tsp mustard seeds
 15 small flakes garlic
 Small piece of ginger

Method:

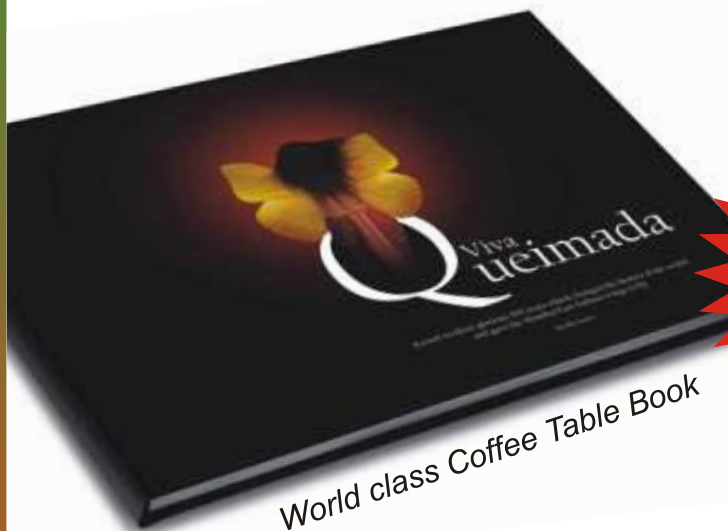
Take a deep bottom vessel heat 1/4 cup oil and fry the above ground masala.
 Add the tendli and 1/2 cup vinegar and cook till tendli is done. Lastly add 2 tbsp sugar. Cool and then bottle.





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