"Everything you've ever wanted is on the other side of fear."
— George Addair

On a green voyage

After sailing around the world, the Arka Kinari has made its way to Goa in the hopes of igniting awareness on climate change and encouraging re-engagement with the sea

Grey Filastine and Nova Ruth

CHRISTINE MACHADO
NT BUZZ

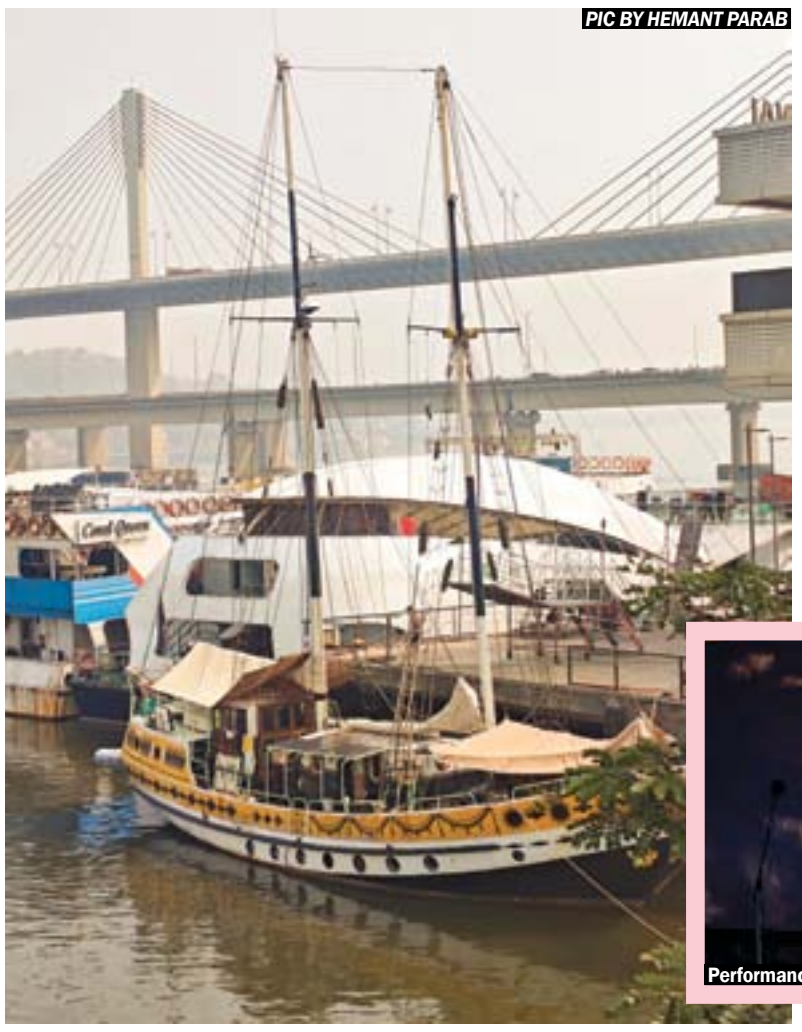
If you look towards the melee of cruise ships docked at the Santa Monica Jetty in Panaji these days, you will notice an intriguing new entrant. Attired in hues of yellow and white, the 70-ton sailing ship christened Arka Kinari has travelled far and wide before making its way to Goan waters this week. Referred to as a floating cultural platform, and spearheaded by artists Grey Filastine and Nova Ruth, the ship began its voyage with the aim of promoting resilience to climate change and re-engagement with the sea.

The idea for this initiative was born out of frustration. As touring artistes, Filastine and Ruth came to a realisation that while they would talk about climate change and the environment, flying to different places also meant that they were increasing their carbon footprint. The couple thus sold their home and used the funds to buy this boat. Since starting out in 2019, the ship, which apart from the duo also consists of crew members, has journeyed through over 25 nations across the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Pacific.

The ship especially made international headlines during the pandemic since it wasn't allowed to land anywhere. "We spent nearly six months trapped in the Pacific surviving outside of civilization," recalls Filastine, adding that there have been many times during their journey when his stoicism has been tested and come up short. "Survival at sea will turn anyone into a mystic," he says.

But there have also been countless of wonderful memories along the way. "It is always beautiful when we are greeted in remote places by traditional peoples with dances, flotillas, parades, and rituals. These welcomes and often some kilograms of fish are often our only payment for performing in remote islands, and the experiences are unforgettable," says Filastine.

PIC BY HEMANT PARAB



'Arka' (Latin) which means a vessel, comes from the word 'arcere', meaning "to hold off or defend" while 'Kinari' (Sanskrit) refers a half-human, half-bird musician, guardian of the tree of life.

PIC BY ISIRA SOORIYAARACHCHI

Performance on board the ship

Performance on board the ship

On their stopovers in different places, the ship hosts workshops on environmental sustainability and conversations with local communities during the day. At night, the ship transforms into a stage for a performance by Filastine and Ruth, using music to sound the alarm for climate change and cinematic visuals to imagine life beyond fossil-capitalism.

"We have been creating networks of activists, artists, and local communities, stitching together local movements so that people feel less alone in their efforts, and in places like the Indonesian archipelago of 17,000 islands, only a boat can do this job," says Filastine. In fact, he says they have partnered with Pesantren (Javanese Islamic boarding schools) in some ports and this has led to the schools now including environmental education in their curriculum.

In India this year, after their stopover at the ongoing Kochi Biennale, the ship has now made its way to Panaji where it will remain for a week. This has been made possible by the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Mumbai with permission from Department of Tourism, Government of Goa; Captain of Ports and the support of Shanta Infratech Pvt Ltd. with the cruise operators.

In Goa, the Arka Kinari is offering screenings, concerts, talks, listening sessions, and guided ship visits. "They will be screenings their adventures in Southeast Asia and also doing a music programme where they interact with local musicians. Besides this they also have an interesting stage performance where for one hour the boat becomes a stage and they will be projecting images and videos of their travels on the sails," says project manager and curator Dhanya Pilo. These activities, she says, will all be free but given the limited capacity of the boat, not everyone will be able to come onboard.

The Arka Kinari also conducts onboard residencies. And two Goan artists Elka Rodrigues and Sachin Ryan Bhengra who are involved in coastal communities and marine biology were selected for this and had the opportunity to sail from Kochi to Goa. "This experience gave them the opportunity to learn how to sail on a boat and how so many people are living on it. It also allowed them to look at their state from a new perspective since they are looking at it from the sea," says Pilo.

Given Goa's importance as a maritime capital for international trade previously, Pilo believes that this ship will be also an interesting peek into the past for locals. "The harbour used to be full of these ships back in the day. So it is a reminder of Goa's maritime history and what it could have looked like if we had maintained it," she says.

As a passionate sailor herself, Pilo emphasises that there are so many plus points to sailing not just from the maritime point of view but also the environment and cultural side.

"Sailing is not only for transportation of goods. It can teach us how we can live in our planet in a better way and how can we use the rivers and oceans better. It can also be used culturally like in this case," she says.

Beyond their mission, the team onboard is also looking forward to enjoying their first time in Goa. "Personally, I'm a Spanish speaker and understand Portuguese, so I will enjoy the unique mix of Goan cultures," says Filastine. He however admits that he is also a little concerned about the impact of mass tourism on Goa. "I know the downsides of this because my home is the heavily-touristed Barcelona. There reaches a tipping point where local culture can be crushed under the weight of too many insensitive visitors," he says. "I hope that Goa does not also become a victim of its own popularity."

The identity crisis of Arjuna

Abhivyaktee, Panaji production, 'Agyat Katha' recently travelled to Kerala, expanding the reach of Goan Katha Gayan-styled theatre. NT BUZZ learns more about the play which explores identity and self acceptance

KALYANI JHA | NT BUZZ

A musical play by Abhivyaktee, Panaji, directed by Saish Deshpande and written by Antara Bhide has recently been performed at Bharat Rang Mahotsav, an international theatre festival, organised by the ministry of culture and National School of Drama, Bharat Rang Mahostsav, Thrissur, Kerala.

'Agyaat Katha' is Bhide's re-imagination of a segment of Mahabharata, where the Pandavas spend a year in hiding without revealing their identity. It highlights Arjuna's perspective as a transgender woman, Brihannala, which he chose to spend the Agyaat vaas as. It focuses on Arjuna dealing with the expectations of masculinity, rigid ideals of manhood and examines their devastating consequences.

"I was drawn to this segment because Arjun's year as Brihannala is often treated as strategy or disguise. I saw it as an inner rupture. What happens to a celebrated warrior when he inhabits a feminine identity not as performance but as lived experience? What cracks open inside him? That question shaped the script," says Bhide. She explains that in this play, the real battle is not happening in Kurukshetra but in the psyche of Arjuna as Brihannala. "Arjun is mocked for appearing as 'a woman,' the wound is psychological. The forest becomes an extension of his mind. He hunts to recover a threatened idea of masculinity. Each kill is an attempt to prove something to himself. The violence escalates from birds to beasts to near apocalypse, yet no satisfaction arrives," explains Bhide adding that she explored masculinity and how its expression through domination and suppression, turns self destructive.

Saish Deshpande along with the cast of the play

Antara Bhide

"I chose this segment because I found a crisis of identity. The arrow that Arjuna would not release became the axis of the play. Strength, for me, shifted from the ability to conquer to the courage to accept all parts of the self," she explains.

What makes this play even more interesting is the lyrical form (Katha Gaayan) that Deshpande and Bhide has presented on stage.

"Goa has its own traditions of 'Katha Gaayan' (story recitation forms) that combine elements of folk tales, mythology, and local history. This art form is often traditionally performed by bards accompanied by a chorus in a lively and engaging manner," explains Deshpande.

'Agyaat Katha' aims to honour these traditions and has been designed incorporating the structure of the Goan Katha Gaayan folk forms, along with traditional theatre elements from India, and some influences from the Natya Shastra. The narrative is in Konkani, while the drama part is in lyrical Hindi.

"I wanted Katha Gayan because it creates a strong imagery. And as they sing, the image is created in front of all the audience which I depicted in drama form," shares Deshpande.

The play premiered at Sunaparanta Goa Centre for the Arts, Altinho last year for World Theatre Day. It has also been performed at Prayog Saanj at Ponda and at Ravindra Bhavan, Sanquelim. It will next be staged on March 6 at the Ravindra Bhavan, Margao.

In classic mode

Kishor Teli

Bhagyesh Marathe

Aarya Nande

Buddhesh Talkar

Meeta Pandit

Shakuntala Bharne

NT BUZZ

The 42nd edition of the Surashree Kesarbai Kerkar Sangeet Samaroha will be held from February 28 to March 1, 2026. The festival will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Dr. Pramod Sawant in the presence of chairman of Kala Academy Goa Chandrakant Kavlekar, vice-chairman of Kala Academy Goa Dr. Pravin Gaonkar, and member secretary Kala Academy Goa Shankar B. Gaonkar on February 28, 5 p.m. at Dinanath Mangeshkar Kala Mandir, Panaji.

The inaugural function will be followed by a classical vocal concert by Pallavi Patil from Goa and a classical vocal concert by Bhagyesh Marathe (Mumbai).

On March 1, the session will be begin at 10.30 a.m. with a classical vocal concert by Shakuntala Bharne (Goa) followed by an Odissi dance concert by Aarya Nande, Raigarh, (Chhattisgarh). In the evening, the session will open at 4.30 p.m. with an instrumental jugalbandi concert by Kishore Teli (pakhawaj) and Buddhesh Talkar (tabla) from Goa followed by a classical vocal concert by New Delhi-based artiste Meeta Pandit. The session will conclude with a classical vocal concert by Pt. Raghunandan Panshikar from Pune.

In this festival, Rohidas Parab, Amar Mopkar, Shailesh Gaonkar, Mayank Bedekar, and Uday Kulkarni, will provide tabla accompaniment whereas harmonium accompaniment will be provided by Subhash Fatarpekar, Dattaraj Surlakar, Dattaraj Mhalshi and Vasant Gaonkar. The sarangi accompaniment will be provided by Wasim Khan.

Pallavi Patil

Raghunanda Panshikar