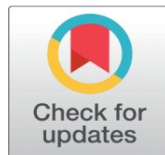


# GSB CULTURE IN PROVERBIAL PERSPECTIVE: A STUDY ON MIGRATION, MYTHS, AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

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## ABSTRACT

The paper explores proverbial traditions of Gowda Saraswat Brahmin (GSB) community by focusing more on to the migration, history, mythology and identity. Proverbs are one of the important sources for passing down expressions and values especially it can also be used as a tool to analyse the socio-cultural background of particular community as it is mostly used in daily routine. GSB or Gowda Saraswat Brahmins are widely recognised brahmin clan in India. They are embedded with large cultural values and strongly believe in Dhrama. A key challenge for language preservation is the gradual loss of oral storytelling conventions put on by lack of written documents. Researching Konkani proverbs shows the expanded narratives of myth migration and culture One of the oldest and most efficient ways for preserving and transmitting down culture from one generation to the next is language. It serves as a storehouse of a community's identity, traditions, beliefs, and collective memory. Linguistic preservation is crucial for conserving the variety of a society's customs, beliefs, and narratives of history due to the loss of a language often ends in a destruction of cultural tradition and this paper helps to recollect these cultures through recording and analysing some of the daily used proverbs in Konkani

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The principal proverb "Manasa, Vacha, Karmana Dharmaya Anusatrya", meaning to uphold truth and integrity in thought, speech, action and Dhrama, reflects the deep-rooted values of the Gowda Saraswat Brahmins (GSBs). The GSBs represent one of the oldest Konkani-speaking categories, who keep alive their cultural traditions over several centuries and regions, particularly through proverbs and oral storytelling. These proverbs represent linguistic time capsules of a community influenced by migration and adaptation, reflecting myths, migratory

experiences, and cultural beliefs. This study analyses how the accumulated memory, wisdom, and historical understanding of the GSB are woven into everyday speech through an analysis of Konkani proverbs.

Gowda Saraswat brahmin or GSB is a widely recognised brahmin community in India which resides primarily in the coastal region of Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka and goa. Saraswathi the goddess who is known for her speech and knowledge is considered as the patron deity of Gowda Saraswat brahmins. As per the historical and mythical tradition says these people existed in north India along the banks of the now non-extinct Saraswati River (which once flowed in the northwestern region of the Indian subcontinent). The scope and function of the Konkani language also formerly known as Saraswati balabasha, is correlated to this river. Based on the Skanda purana's along with sage Parashuram ninety- six Saraswat brahmin families from ten gotras (Bharadwaj, Koushik, Vatsa, Kaundinya, Kashyapa, Atri, Vashista, Jamadagni, Gautam, and Vishwamitra) went to goa after leaving the Saraswati River banks. the presence of brahmin clan in the Konkan province has been proven by the scripts found in goa. it's that the shilaharan monarchs invited kshatriyas and apparently pure Aryan brahmins, across Indo-Gangetic plain to makeshift to the Konkan. As early as the 2nd century BCE the GSB who are part of the Pancha Gowda group of brahmins (north Indian brahmins) are believed to have set down in goa. As a consequences of sociopolitical changes overtime, mainly the colonization pressured these groups to migrate furthered southern west coasts of India, creating Identities in Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra.

In the present time these groups of people are mainly located in goa (with deep cultural and religious connections it is considered as the ancestral homeland) many GSB families shifted in costal Karnataka where they developed themselves in trade, business and temple administrations in regions like Mangalore, Udupi, and Karwar. The community is also prominent in Maharashtra specifically in Mumbai, Pune, and Kolhapur, where they are mainly engaged in occupations such as law and medicine. In Kerala, they are in smaller but notable GSB community that maintains sericultural customs in regions like Kochi, Alleppey, Kollam, Trivandrum etc. Within the GSB community there are several subgroups often distributed by their regional and historical stages where some of them are 'Shenoy' who are primarily engaged in business and trade, another subgroup 'Bhat' specifically a title used for the priest and GSB scholars. Common Surnames found among these communities such as 'Pai', 'Naik', 'Kamath' etc often related with is the variant job roles. Despite geographical distribution, these communities have maintained a common linguistic and cultural legacy with Konkani as their mother tongue, though regional influence have moulded multiple dialects and slang.

To look on their worship tradition most of the gsb are Vaishnavites and who have great liking for Madvachariya and Advita Vedanta principles, incorporating wide varieties of Hindu customs into their religious acts, other than Vaishnavites there are also different groups who follow Shivaism and Shaktism. Other than considering goddess Saraswati as main deity, GSB people also worshiped lord Venkateshwara (Balaji, which is a reflection of their Vaishnavite ancestry), Santha Durga, Mahalasa Narayani etc.

A vast yet little-studied source of cultural knowledge, the proverbs and quotations of GSB community reflect the values, beliefs and historical experiences of the members. Although proverbs are crucial for forming and upholding cultural identity, research on GSBs focuses primarily on the immigration history, religious acts and linguistic inheritance, sometimes disregarding the worth of these proverbs

as keepers of cultural memory. Even though Konkani literature and oral traditions have been the topic of some research, an important absence in the literature is the limited examination of how these proverbs convey the concepts of migration, cultural storage and identity. The GSB have a specific cultural ethos which has been generated through displacement and adaptation. Their culture is historically famous for the waves of migration across different regions of India. These experiences are captured in proverbs, which gives us insights into the community's fear, resiliency and strategy of coping, but there haven't been a thorough effort to examine these sayings in a systematic way within the structure of identity, negotiation and migration. Proverbs also act as a bridge for passing down cultural information from one generation to another, affecting cultural attitudes and establishing social norms. Many of these oral transmissions are in the risk of being lost as Konkani usage declines and the power of dominant language grows higher.

This study aims to answer the following question:

- 1) In what ways can GSB proverbs illustrate past trends in community migration, displacement, and cultural adaptation?
- 2) What can be learnt from GSB proverbs about how the community views outsider interactions, belonging, and self-identity?
- 3) How do these sayings serve as repositories of cultural memory, conserving myths, historical occurrences, and conventional wisdom?

## 2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The current study extends to the areas of folklore, cultural anthropology, and migration studies by looking at GSB proverbs as historical objects that embody values of society, migration, and identity. Listing these sayings helps preserve Konkani culture in the face of spoken language extinction. By providing insights into how oral traditions preserve identity, resiliency, and collective memory over generations, it underscores their importance in cultural transmission.

The history of Saraswat's is a record of their struggle for existence and a chain of migrations, the longest and the most wide spread among any community in India. Despite all the tribulations, the community has been able to preserve their culture and traditions intact, over many generations. Their traditions are unique and tolerant that they worship Shakti, Shiva and Vishnu as well. The exact origin of the Saraswat Brahmins is not known definitely. But, the Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavata have references of the community. According to Puranas, Saraswat brahmins are Aryan migrants from Central Asia who are believed to have come down to the Indian sub-continent through the Hindu-Kush mountains and the Khyber-pass in about 2000-1500 B.C. But a generally known origin of Saraswat Brahmins dates back to the time when they started settling down, on reaching the Indian sub-continent, on the banks of the long Saraswathi River. Many of the proverbs gives us the reference of the GSBs residing in Goa. Some of them are: 'Goya pharangelyale Jale' (The goa has now become the colony of Portuguese) Pg no: 41

This study helps to investigate the cultural and symbolic elements embed in Konkani proverbs and mainly focuses on a qualitative research method, discovering more, it aims to discover the deeper significance, values and viewpoints that these sayings convey rather than only evaluating data. Since proverbs are generally full of cultural values and uniqueness which qualitative method can provide insights into collective memory and identity formation. The research relies on textual analysis as it is the most suitable for exploring oral traditions within culture and language as these proverbs are considered as artifacts. this research also dives into how Konkani

proverbs servers social, historical and cultural functions within the public and private digital archives by which close readings and thematical analysis which provides documentation and interpretations which is necessary in understanding expressions in the selected community.

A thorough grasp of the community's way of life can be reached by exploring deeper key elements such as religion, food, language, norms of society and art, each of these elements combine to the broad weave of cultural identity were each of them has numerous proverbial examples that add in transferring culture from one generation to the next. In GSB's view religion is considered as something intact private and personal versus the public one. The GSB's religion favours the freedom, flexibility and uniqueness in relating to the god. There are different ways from which these community's young minds might choose based on the religion, the GSB culture also allows a fertile open space for the soul to grow, which is helpful on many levels. GSB's scope of religion and culture is of wide range and also follows the path of dharma. Religion is also considered as a manual for social organisation, daily life, seasonal festivals, celebrations etc. One of the major factors (deity) for linking generations is 'Kuladevatha' namely Santha Durga (A form of Durga Devi), Mahalasa, Mangesh (A form of Lord Shiva), Damodar (Krishna). All these Kuladevathas plays an important role in reinforcing community gathering, family reunion etc. In their belief they do follow daily worship and, in every house, they maintain a prayer room called as 'Kudidharala' where there will be deity installed and a hanging lamp will be attached and lit every day after cleansing themselves and offers prayers and chant mantras and slokas. All these customs are practiced from ages as their knowledge system are mainly transmitted orally or through the Sanskrit or Konkani text namely Puranas, Vedas, Bhagavad-Gita, Upanishad etc. They also conduct many rituals from birth to death of an individual. At the time of the birth, they start the ritual performing 'Gud Lavap' called as sweetening the mouth of infant baby indicating the joyous occasion and the baby to be intelligent. When the baby is 12 days old there is a ceremony called Palya Davarap (Cradle ceremony) along with the Namakaran (naming ceremony). If it's a boy child Jawlo (a child's first haircut and keeps a Shika) and Upanayanam (sacred thread wearing ceremony) is performed. One of the major Konkani proverbs relating to the Upanayanam is "Brahmak Moonji Manduche" (the thread ceremony of Lord Brahma). The next most important and auspicious ceremony is the marriage where in GSB culture the marriage is conducted in grand were there are various functions starting from Cheli Chovap, Utar Ulavap, Nischayathamboolam, phula malap, urdha muhurta, vardik, humra velan varap, and Satyanarayana pooja at home. Some of the sayings on marriage are:

- "Cheli Chandi dholo kurdo"- The girl is beautiful but she is blind.
- "Vardik Jalena thari mantovanthulanth gelo ki na"- Marriage was not conducted yet he passed through the pandhal.
- "Ganapathi vardikek phalya muhurta" - The muhurta for marriage of Ganesha is early in the morning.

The various milestones of life's are celebrated in the GSB Community are Sashtiabthapoorthi (60th birthday), BheemarathaShanthi (70th birthday), Sathabhishekam - (80th birthday), Navathi (90th Birthday), Shatabdi (100th birthday). Apart from the joyous occasion GSB community mourns at the time of death by conducting the rituals according to the Garuda Purana where the 13th day, 5 ½ months, 1 year are considered as important days to attain Moksha (Heavenly departure) for the departed souls. The sayings related to the death are "Samayu vathachi manishu marthachi parthana"- Time is fast moving, man dies and he never

returns). "Moshnathu hallel mode"- (The dead body that is taken to burial ground). "Melel ammak pind vale"- (Obligations to the dead mother).

Other important aspects of marking culture is cuisine. Cuisine is lot more than sustenance for the Gowda Saraswat Brahmin community. It is a warehouse of customs, memory and shared principles. Food represents the most significant presentation of their cultures. orally inherited food habits from generations to generations has a close connection between the cultural expression and food customs. GSB community's cuisine is so corelated to festivals and celebrations. for each of their festivals they have different types of food menus to look at the examples are 'Rontos and dali thoy' (rice bread and thadka dal), made on the day of 'ukuli' (festival of colours). 'Hittu and kelya ambat'(rice and urd cake steamed inside jackfruit leaves with ripe banana coconut and jaggary mix syrup filled with cashews) along with this they serve a wide variety of feast on the banana leaf called 'Samsarpadvo Jevan' on the occasion of yugadi (New Year for the community). There is another menu for Krishna Janmashtami which is popularly known as 'Astami Phalaru'. It is mainly prepared on the night of Astami, where some of the main dishes are Kheri (delicious broken wheat dish infused with jaggery syrup), Gajbaj (Colocasia Leafy gravy with mixed veggies), Sivakarne (Crunchy cucumbers mixed with spicy coconut chutney), Roasted and sugar-coated cashews, Banana Chips, elephant yam chips etc. Aside from all this one of the favourite dishes of the Konkani people is the 'Patharvodo', it is made out of Colocasia leaves. This typical Konkani treat that can be served for breakfast or a complete meal at night for dinner. It is also often consumed as a side dish with rice. Children adore it so much because of its velvety texture. It is rich in vitamins, calcium, iron and other nutrients. Its preparation is a time consuming though. It is also prepared for numerous occasion and family get together due to its general popularity as a loved food item among Konkani's. Although the availability of the Colocasia leaves is limited hence this dish is becoming endangered.

There are a wide range of proverbs relating to food and drinks, some of them are- 'Dhoodh pilel garak dhosh aattonkanaka' Meaning Do not think ill of the house where you have drunk milk. Meet khelolo udhak pitholo- (He who eat salt will drink water).

Language is a powerful Tool which helps us to understand and preserve a community's principles and beliefs along with societal norms. Proverbs -short and effective sayings through Wit and humour meet and mingle to make some of them which adds on the spice and cream of any language, and also helps to capture the knowledge of people within the significant conveyors of its cultural heritage. A few contain the quintessence of empiric knowledge. Others carry a world of compressed wisdom. The wide range collections of these saying (proverbs) in Konkani reveals valuable insights into the cultural past of its users. Konkani is a marker of identity which includes of various genres like Folk songs, lullabies, spirituals (bhajans), and proverbs that embody the cultural and historical heritage of the area are all part of its rich oral record. A key challenge for language preservation is the gradual loss of oral storytelling conventions put on by lack of written documents. Proverbs acts or functions as offering advices. It helps to impart knowledge among people reinforcing morals, making arguments, providing comfort inspiration and last but not the least proverbs act as a cultural bench mark among its users which clearly passed down the cultural wisdom. where there are used to guide behaviour and connect with shared experiences within a culture.

Proverbs act as a bridge to pass down the culture by using simple yet powerful language. According to Mieder (2004) "A proverb is short generally known sentence



of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed, and memorable form". It ensures to keep the past traditional culture of the community and plays a vital role in maintaining the elements of the present culture. By researching the proverbs of GSB society is to know the people in their traditional form along with their principal atmosphere. Proverbs are in a way experiences which are acquired from ancestors and passed down to succeeding generations. Finnegan (1970) emphasises that "Proverbs are part of the oral literature of a culture functioning as a form of social control and collective memory". They mainly gives us a gist of the society and its cultural background and mainly about the events took placed in each period, not least but also gives us an idea about the leaders and people who were mainly involved in the history of the community for example: 'Goichi bhuyi Mhal pai ghar' (The soil of Goa is the house of Mhal Pai), 'Mhal Paiku Jhor, sagalyak gavanku pej' (When Mhal pai has fever all the people of Goa will take rice porridge). 'Mhal Paiche Kana galntanle anik makka melthale' (The waist ornament of Mhal Pai will fall on the ground and I will get it). The above proverbs centres around an important personality of Mhal Pai an administrator who was petty king of the Mahal.

This is not only applicable to the Konkani proverbs but it is valid to the whole world in different literature and cultures. The African proverb 'It takes a village to raise a child' means it is not only about the parents but children are extended families and communities that are actively involved in bringing up children, this saying says a lot more about the African culture. In India, we say 'Adithi Devo Bhava' meaning Guest is equivalent to God, this proverb shows how Indians treat the guest with their immense hospitality and well-behaved manners. In each literature proverbs not only gives us an idea about their culture but also about their occupation, ways of living, gender norms, morals, ethics, trees, plants and surroundings etc.

Proverbs were studied by scholars utilizing a number of theoretical frameworks, each offering a distinctive take on the nature and purpose of proverbs. According to the works of Clade Levi- Strauss "Structuralism is on earliest and largest school of thoughts. It sees proverbs as binary creations that symbolise the structural challenges in a society such as good versus evil, Man versus Nature, tradition versus modernity for example "Doodh ghetha ghetha gud jamna" (Milk doesn't become sweet just by fetching it). In accordance to this perspective these sayings express the cultural logic that guide collective through rather than mere facts. Functionalist approaches as listed by Malinowski (1944) that concentrate on the pragmatic significance of proverbs in keeping up social balance and transferring cultural details. In GSB community proverbs are mainly used by the elders to advice the younger generations on marriage, Finance, households concern etc. The literature on these sayings whether examined through structural and functional frameworks proverbs underscores the moral architecture and believe system of a culture for a scholar working on minor community like GSBs. Studying these sayings is not just linguistic analysis, it is an act of cultural preservation.

Another major aspect of this paper is about myths in GSB culture, some of the proverbs relating to the myth of heaven and moksha are "Suthak dhornu swarghari chalo" (He entered heaven with the help of a thread) (Bai, 122). "Naragak naav vaat Swargak ekki" (There are nine paths to hell and only one to heaven) (Bai,112). "Kashinthu gelari Rameshwar gelari paap Suntana" (The sins are not washed out if you visit Kashi or Rameshwaram) (Bai, 122).

The historical migrations and cultural identity of GSB community have been extensively studied. However, the majority of this research has concentrated on

historical and religious themes. The analysis of these proverbs within the selected community states several key themes That reflects the culture, myths and migration. The findings are organised around these themes with illustrative examples provided to support the research.

Theme	Proverb	Meaning	Key Interpretation
Moral	Koppu hakka nashu santhoshu vagalak nashu	Anger is cause of self-destruction and happiness is the cause of destruction of others	Expresses the idea that the individuals can become jealous, dissatisfied or spiteful of one's happiness especially when it is expressed.
History of GSB	Goya pharangelal jale	Goa has now become a colony of Portuguese.	As a consequence of Portuguese rule and religious conversions, it indicates the decrease of Konkani tradition, language, and Hindu practices.
Myths	Ganpatilel vardik	The marriage of Ganesha	These sayings are usually used by the elderly people or in informal communications to make fun of someone who delays an important task or to demonstrate uncertainty about the possibility of something arising.
Cusine	Dhoodh pillel garache vasho mejunakka	Don't count the bamboo poles of the house where you have drunk the milk.	It is wrong to concentrate on someone's flaws or imperfections after they have shown generosity and hospitality.
Festivals	Asjalari astami najalari ekadasi	If there is money, the festival of Janmastami is celebrated, if there is no money, fast is observed.	It means that the regardless of the money the basic elements of a religious observance like fasting, prayer remain unchanged. It promotes the idea that one's opinion may be customised to fit their financial circumstances.
Friendship	Apath kalanthu pamcho Kharu mithru	A friend in need is a friend indeed	It highlights that the friendship is beyond than just having fun together. In situation of difficulties, distress, or horrible situations, a true friend prove their worth by remaining loyal and standing beside each other.
Caste system	Kumbarak ghut matke na	The potter has no unbreakable pots	Nothing is totally indestructible or everlasting, no matter of how strong, bright, skilled a person maybe. This shows how temporary life as well as wealth is.
Husband and wife	Pathivratha bayil gharak deevosi	A chaste woman is like the lamp of the house.	The lamp signifies consistence, comfort, ambiance and direction. In the same way, the women's chastity provides mental stability and ethical clarity to the house.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The paper concludes by emphasising the need for digitalisation of these sayings which are in a way considered as gems to passed down wisdom from generations to generation. Where the integration of folklore studies in research and the necessities of communities driven linguistic preservation efforts. As GSB community mainly rely on oral tradition, these proverbs are one of the major ways in which helps the coming generations to know more about the culture myths migration etc happened in this community. This paper helps to get a gist of how proverbs act as a tool to transmit the values of GSB as reflected in Konkani proverbs. Through the lens of the

cultural theory, it is clearly stated that proverbs are not merely sayings rather they serve as a living text collecting memory over centuries.

However, the research also draws a spotlight over the challenges faced by oral traditions. With the decrease of Konkani usage among its users due to the rise of increased usage of other domain languages, these proverbs are not been highlighted. This study contributes to the growing body of work on oral literature and migration studies. By placing focus on relatively less research in minor community dealt into the future studies of comparative folklore, language preservation. Last but not the least, the study acts as a safeguarding the soul of GSB community and the stories they speak about themselves.

### **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

None.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

None.

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