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The Languages of Goa



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1/1

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The People's Linguistic Survey of India
The National Editorial Collective
List of Volumes
Acknowledgements
Foreword
A Nation Proud of Its Language Diversity: Chief Editor's Introduction
Introduction to the Volume
Contributors to the Volume
An Appeal to Readers
Abbreviations

1. Diglossia and Konkani Identity
Madhavi Sardesai
2. The Konkani Language
Rocky V. Miranda
3. Konkani Grammar and Lexicon: Contribution of Missionaries
Rocky V. Miranda

<https://orientblackswan.com/details?id=9789352875481>

2/3

4/20/25, 1:04 PM

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-  **Revival of Konkani: Important Milestones**
 Orient BlackSwan
 (https://www.orientblackswan.com)
5. The Regional and Social Varieties of Konkani
Krupali Naik
 6. Linguistic Richness on the Banks of River Mhadei
Prakash S. Pariekar
 7. Konkani Variety of Pernem Taluka
Shashikant Punaji and Priyadarshini Tadmokkar
 8. Saxxti Konkani
Edna Vaz Fernandes and Denis Vaz
 9. Velip Variety of Konkani
Mohan Gaonkar
 10. The World of Konkani Proverbs
Manohar Pai Dhungat
 11. Contribution of Folk Tales to the Konkani Language
Dr. Jayanti Naik
 12. Cultural Unity in Zagor and Sotryo
Shyam Verenkar
 13. Konkani Literature
Damodar Mauzo
 14. Konkani Theatre: A Perspective
Shridhar Kamat Bambolkar
 15. Tiatr
Andre Rafael Fernandes
 16. Christian Marathi Literature
S. M. Tadmokkar
 17. Marathi in Goan Life
Narayan Desai
 18. Padye Social Variety
Ruta Paradkar
 19. Goan Urdu Konkani
Yusuf A. Sheikh and Aliya Shaikh
 20. Portuguese Language in Goa
Maria do Ceu Barreto
 21. The Place of the French Language in Goa
Edith Melo Furtado

6



Linguistic Richness on the Banks of River Mhadei¹

Prakash S. Pariekar

INTRODUCTION

Sattari *taluka* is situated in the north-eastern part of Goa. To its north lies Maharashtra, where its east lies the boundary of Karnataka. This region is by and large mountainous. The Mhadei river, which originates in the Western Ghats, flows through this region. Many tributaries join this river, hence this river never runs dry even in summer. During the olden days, people of this region practised a kind of shifting cultivation known as *Kumeri* farming. A kind of a silt-based system of cultivation of paddy known as *Puran Sheti* has traditionally been in practice on the banks of Mhadei river.

Both sides of this river contain human settlements in large numbers. Horticulture is an important activity carried out in this region. A unique kind of folk culture thrives on the banks of Mhadei. Different folk festivities are a specialty of this region. Konkani is the main language spoken here. The life of people living on the banks of river Mhadei is unique and special, and this is reflected in the Konkani vocabulary used in the area.

The following text introduces some typical words which are closely linked to the lives and habits of the people in the region.

TYPES OF FARMING

Kumeri Cultivation (a kind of shifting cultivation)

After felling trees in a hilly area, the ground is prepared and finger millet (known as *Nāṇ*) is sown at the onset of rains. In earlier times, *kumers* (those practising *kumeri* cultivation) used a hand axe for felling trees) called *kurāḍ* or *pāl*. The *kurāḍ* was an axe with a wooden handle and was used for felling trees whereas *pāl* was a kind of hand axe similar to a big chopper. It was used for felling trees, cutting branches, etc. This was done after *sāvsār pāḍvo* (also known as 'Gudi Padva', the start of a new year according to the Hindu lunar calendar). Depending on the size of the area to be cultivated, a cer-