

# *The Story of Janakye Bai*



**Narration: Leelavati Zaraunkar and Sita Vaiz**

**Art: Asavari Gurav**

**Translation: Salil Chaturvedi**

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by Leelavati Zaraunkar and Sita Vaiz

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Leelavati Zaraunkar and Sita Vaiz

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## Foreword

As explained by Vithai Zaraunker in the following introduction, this book is the outcome of a project she conducted while she was a Master's student at the Department of Sociology, Goa University. She was guided and inspired by the late Professor Alito Siqueira, who encouraged her to research her own community, i.e., the Velips. It was his unique pedagogical way to let students explore the question of "Hanv Konn (Who am I)?"

Alito was my local guide-cum-mentor while I was a visiting student at Goa University, conducting fieldwork for my Ph.D. from 2000 to 2001. He later became my friend, and he often expressed to me his desire to bring out the outcome of his M.A. students' research. He prepared the manuscript of a collection of his students' dissertations, *Hanv Konn?: Researching the Self*, and passed away in August 2019. Later, thanks to his friends' efforts, it was published in book form in 2021.

The publication of this book is our effort to continue Alito's pedagogical endeavor. We hope that the stories narrated by the Velip women will lead readers to realize the fact that everybody, even those on the margins, has the right to be proud of their heritage, and others should value it.

I would like to thank Vithai Zaraunker and Asavari Gurav for allowing me to collaborate with them. I would also like to express my gratitude to Salil Chaturvedi for guiding and supporting us to complete this book project.

**Kyoko Matsukawa**

Professor, Faculty of Letters,

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# Introduction

The Velip language has been spoken for a long time, since the Velip community has been here in Goa. We can understand how great the Velip vocabulary is through the oral traditions of the community. There are many words in the Velip oral tradition, such as nitra, shingat, uran, mapinle, giras, kokuna, baalan, bhartar, garjarala, sai-sunyachi, palaar, halingara, etc, whose meaning is extremely difficult to articulate as these words are not available in mainstream Konkani.

Our language is also Konkani, but it has no status among the various Konkanis, and I know this very well. Our Konkani is not known as Konkani but as a 'tribal dialect'. My experience and the experience of children belonging to my community tells us that our language is not worth much. It is stigmatised and labelled as 'backward' and is often corrected with upper-caste versions of Konkani. Why our language receives no respect and who benefits by disrespecting our language is very important to reflect upon. I have originally published the story of Janakye bai in our language, that is, Velip Konkani. This step of mine is my resistance to the identity that upper-caste people have created about our language, of being primitive and backward. Our language is no less than the standard Konkani. I understood this when I was doing my M.A. degree in Sociology from Goa University in 2014, while working for a project under the central government scheme "Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage of India." Our culture and our language are great and embedded with knowledge. Our language is as great as our culture. To see and believe in it, I was inspired by my teacher and mentor, Prof. Alito Siqueira, who deepened my understanding regarding such issues.

The story of Janakye bai is based on incest. The Velip community, which is embedded in nature, resists incest, as we come to know through this precautionary narrative.

This story was collected and originally transcribed by me under the project entitled 'Old Songs, New Stories: Tales from the Velips of Goa', and turned into a book form under the consultancy project, Anthropological Research on Education and Voicing of Self-Narratives and Multi-Media in Goa, India, implemented at Goa University in collaboration with Konan University, Japan.

**Vithai Zaraunker**

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