Goenche Sarsarikaran (2017)—a book in Nagari Konkani authored by Suresh Amonkar—is a by-product of the author’s long-term project of translating and researching the Discurso sobre a vinda de Jesu Christo (Discourse on the Coming of Jesus Christ), popularly known as the Krisṭapurāṇa (1916), authored by English Jesuit Fr. Thomas Stephens. The book is comprised of nineteen chapters, most of which flesh out a summarised version of Goan history since the arrival of the Portuguese in Goa. Amonkar also peppers throughout the parallel developments in European history of that period that might have influenced the Portuguese presence in Goa. In these chapters, Amonkar merely reproduces existing available information and debates Goan history while avoiding making any claims. These chapters may serve as a good point of initiation for Konkani readers into a broader history of Portuguese Goa. It is only from the thirteenth chapter that Amonkar delves into discussion specific to the Krisṭapurāṇa.

One crucial debate that Amonkar engages with is whether Krisṭapurāṇa was written in Marathi or Konkani. Several scholars have expressed opposite opinions about this, despite it being explicitly mentioned in Fr. Stephens’ original preface to the Krisṭapurāṇa that the text had been entirely written in the Marathi language. The debate over Krisṭapurāṇa’s language, Amonkar records, began with Gerson da Cunha arguing that the language of Krisṭapurāṇa exemplified the classic Konkani which was once spoken in Goa (91). While Amonkar seems to be tacitly disagreeing with Cunha’s proposition of Krisṭapurāṇa being written in Konkani, he does so without critically examining the impulses that were driving da Cunha to make such claims. For the strategic citizenship act that da Cunha was engaged in—to establish the nobility and European identity of Catholic Brahmins in the city of Bombay—it was imperative for him to claim Konkani as a brahminical language. It is only by doing so that da Cunha was able to establish both himself and his peers as legitimate members of the cosmopolitan city of Bombay (Fernandes 93). Thus, da Cunha’s claim that Krisṭapurāṇa is indeed written in archaic Konkani was to qualify the larger politics of identity formation that he was engaged in, which Amonkar seems to have missed in his reflection.
Such lapses on Amonkar’s part indicate a larger problem that the book exhibits at several instances i.e. mere interpretation of sources at face value instead of critically examining their social contexts.

Another key debate around Kristapurana that Amonkar tackles in the book is the uncertainty around its authorship. Amonkar cites scholars such as V.L. Bhave, Laxmikant Bhembre, and Dr. Ananya Chakravarti who have argued that given the literary richness of Kristapurana, its production may have involved newly converted Brahmin Catholics—who were familiar with the literary registers of Marathi Bhakti poetry—as collaborators in the project (101). Amonkar seems to disagree with this and provides insightful arguments to buttress his position. Since Kristapurana is largely based on Christian religious literature, which was available only in Latin, it seems impossible that Goans could access any of it in the initial century of religious conversion (1540–1640). Secondly, Kristapurana also includes episodes that are not mentioned in the Holy Book but were popularized through works such as the Golden Legend (1298) by Jacobus de Varagine, Spiritual Exercise (1548) by Ignatius of Loyola, or La Divina Commedia (1472) by Dante Alighieri, among others (101). Amonkar claims that it was possible only for Fr. Stephens to include such references. While these citations are rather persuasive to fix the locus of Kristapurana’s authorship with Fr. Stephens, it still leaves the possibility that there might have been other collaborators in the project unaddressed.

Catholic missionaries in Goa, Amonkar notes, were faced with a strong resistance and many newly converts continued to practice their pre-conversion faith in secrecy, despite stringent regulations and punitive measures exercised by the office of Inquisition to curb these practices. Responding to this situation, Fr Stephens had to rely on the Jesuit practice of accommodatio, i.e., to adapt Christian knowledge to local cultural norms. His Doutrina Christa em Lingua Bramana Canarim, a catechism written in Konkani was ‘insufficient to meet the intellectual and spiritual hunger of the newly converts’ (79). Kristapurana thus transposed the Bible onto the devotional registers that were familiar to the new converts—chiefly the Saraswat Brahmins who were largely followers of the Vaishnava sect—by adopting what Amonkar refers to as the Vaikunth Praroop (Vaikutna model). Vaikutna refers to the celestial abode of Lord Vishnu—the supreme lord of the Vaishnava sect. In Kristapurana, Fr. Stephens creates a surrogate of the space imagined as ‘heaven’ in the Holy Book as Vaikutna and Christ is presented as the Vaikutna Putra (Son of Vaikutna). This strategic move to conjoin the essence of the Bible with Hindu Vaishnavaite imagery is an underlying reason for Kristapurana’s popularity. Amonkar also records the similarities (of imagery, references and lyrical quality) between Kristapurana and texts such as Bhagavad Gita, Van Purv by Mukteshwar, and Shri Krishna Charitra by Krishnadas Shama. However, given Amonkar’s extensive study of these texts, this thread of comparative analysis could have been explored further, which would have been a valuable contribution on his part towards the discourse around Kristapurana. Nonetheless, in a book that is
mostly populated with derivative information, this meekly explored thread of comparative analysis serves as its redeeming feature.

Overall, the book’s merit lies not in its limited addition to the scholarly discourse around *Kristapurana* but in its attempt to bring out a broader perspective onGoan history in Konkani in a condensed way. The book also includes in its appendix translated versions of sources and documents linked with the production of *Kristapurana*, which could be useful starting points for further scholarly work in the vernacular languages.

**Works Cited**


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