CHAPTER V : THE CHANGING POLITICS OF RECOGNITION

The Konkani language movement in its early days sought a separate identity from Marathi. Shennai Goembab used his energy and intellect to establish the independence of Konkani as a language (Valavalikar, 1930). While blaming Marathi for staking claim over the achievements of Konkani he considered the tendency as expansionist. In this he found that Konkani speakers themselves were not serious about asserting their identity and many who had settled in the metropolis identified themselves with Marathi. According to him, the same was happening with Goan Hindus. His forceful plea to Konkani speakers to stand by Konkani was circulated through his writings. Recognition from the speakers themselves was the major problem. Following him, many took up the task of mobilisation for Konkani. While stylistic and dialectal variety was natural, factors like territorial distance, political divisions, lack of communication between groups of speakers caused by historical factors were seen as the causes for lack of organised efforts on the part of Konkani speakers. But in the course of nationalist struggle the Congress policy had helped in seeking recognition from the colonial government through the census. Later efforts were directed towards getting Konkani a place in the state administration and education (Parishad Souvenir, 1989). Use of political means and constitutional methods for this grew after Indian independence.

1. The Parishad of 1949 demanded a separate state for Konkani as and when Goa was liberated. Around 1952, a delegation from Karwar under Adv. Kamath met the then Union Home Minister to discuss Konkan state. 1952 Konkani Parishad demanded regional language status to Konkani under Art. 347 of the Constitution in the states of Bombay and Madras.
Demands for official status and government recognition to Konkani had started appearing in the resolutions of the Parishad soon after the Indian independence. The demand for introduction of the language in broadcasting was met using the advantageous positions of Konkani protagonists in government administration. However, attempts to make place for Konkani in school education for Konkani speaking children in the Bombay state could not go much further due to the volatile situation with regard to languages in the context of the reorganisation demands that gained strength in 1950s. The clear and loud voices with regard to education in Konkani could be heard only in the eighth Parishad held in liberated Goa in 1962 (Jaag, August 1993).

Under the pro-Marathi MGP government in the years 1962 till 1979 the language issue sparked off hot debates in the early days of the Legislative Assembly. The Ruling party itself had some members who could not speak any other language except Konkani. There were occasions when the opposition forced the ministers to accept and use Konkani in the House. But the government policy to use Marathi in official matters continued to be encouraged on the basis of the colonial precedent and popular support of the majority community and also to project the principle of oneness with Maharashtra intrinsic to the formation of the MGP. The Konkani leadership in Goa had marginal success in introducing and sustaining the use of Konkani in education.

Radio Goa that had been transformed into the All India Radio soon after liberation recognised Konkani as its principal language for the local station.

2 Daily Gomantak Times : 1.2.1993
giving only limited time to Marathi programmes. Recruitment of staff in this establishment, in the first decade of liberation, clearly showed pro-Konkani strategy\(^3\). As regards the local government’s policy on language the ambivalence became more obvious with the MGP legislators representing the Bahujan Samaj voicing their disillusionment. Further the popular demand for English in place of Marathi which came from Hindu majority was used by the Konkani leadership to push forward the need to make room for Konkani as a regional language. KBM activities concentrated on providing text-books and other essential material like grammar books for school children. The text-books written in Devanagari (in the subjects studied at the elementary stage) prepared in Bombay in 1950s were printed with certain modifications and introduced in all the primary schools in Konkani medium. Grammar books were prepared by the GSB individuals who had worked as teachers in the Portuguese schools before liberation\(^4\). The Diocesan Society schools were the pioneers in introducing Konkani as a third language. They had to conduct instruction in Devanagari as recommended by the Education Commission of 1962 but their natural choice was Konkani in Roman script. Though their students studied Konkani in Devanagari they had not much to offer in terms of literature in Devanagari script. On the other hand, the Bahujan Samaj children in Marathi schools had the advantage of script and found their way to publicity and recognition through the GSB-controlled media.

\(^3\) It also showed a pro-GSB strategy. On the programme side almost all the new recruits came from among the GSBs, the only exception being Mr. Ramesh Sakharar Barve, who was a Chitpavan and sided with Marathi. The GSB recruits included Yashawant Mahambre, Purushottam Singbal, Nagesh Karmali, Milan and Pushpa Karmali, Premal Keni, Kamaladevi Rao Deshpande, Hira Chodanekar.

\(^4\) The two prominent names are Keshav V. Prabhu Bhembre and Suresh Borkar. Suresh Pai wrote grammar book in the Kanara variant.
This new crop of Konkani writers brought in the views, problems and passions of the masses into the literary world hitherto dominated by the feudal or middle class litterati. With the Opinion Poll the two language camps were clearly divided and the Marathi side was supported by the large Hindu masses. The medium of Radio being a spoken language medium literary expression in Konkani among the youth from the masses found scope. The print medium in Konkani was making a beginning in this period. Considering the changing time, the Konkani language leadership accommodated the new wave, appreciated the efforts in their bid to contain the new current against their traditional hegemony. By this the masses, that had gained voice against the GSB hegemony, were offered a literary outlet, that worked as a safety valve in the social life in liberated Goa. The access, allowed for the youth from the masses, to media in the post-Poll years also helped the Konkani protagonists in making inroads into the ‘Bahujan Samaj’, the imagined monolithic domain of the pro-Marathi MGP. This lent a broad base to the Konkani literary activities hitherto limited to a single caste and, more importantly, helped counter the criticism against Konkani as ‘Bamons’ language’ or a ploy to please ‘Cristaos’. With this new face the leaders could claim the ‘popular’ support and patronage to language and literature by the early 1970s. This new ‘people’s language’ was now ready for its legitimate position in the national mainstream. The Sahitya Akademi recognition was acquired by projecting the youth force behind Konkani in Goa and presenting a unified image.

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5 In the tenth Parishad held in Panaji in 1974 Youth Conference formed a very important part. No session of the Parishad before or after that had this special show of youth.
of the entire Konkani speaking community on the ticklish issue of script. The Akademi in its decision to recognise Konkani did not refer to a particular script (Gomes, 1999: 15), but the canvassing work was done by the Devanagari group from Goa and also by the GSB leaders in Kerala, individually as well as through their associations, and for whom Devanagari was the rightful claimant to written Konkani. Karnataka Konkani group, dominated by Catholic writers and activists, did not figure in this exercise even though their numerical strength, consistent creative work, and cultural role was of significant value in the plea for recognition. This, in a way, was the genesis of the politics of script.

The decision on script came in a meeting of the Advisory Board for Konkani (headed by the Goan poet B. B. Borkar), constituted after the Akademi’s recognition in 1975. The basis for such decision was located in the objective and a resolution of the Konkani Parishad founded by late Madhav Manjunath Shanbhag and not in any other well defined criterion or principle outlined by the Akademi or any other authority. While the objective of ‘using Devanagari for Konkani’ was seen by Konkani language leaders, mainly the GSBs, as the cardinal principle, the fact that the resolution to that effect was opposed in the second Parishad at Udupi in 1940 has never been mentioned. The Advisory Board consisting of ten members (from the four states having sizable Konkani population), which took

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6. The concerned Sahitya Akademi resolution reads as follows: ‘As Konkani fulfils the criteria formulated by the Akademi for recognition of a language, it is recognised as an independent modern literary language of India’.

7. Kerala Konkani is almost wholly equated with N. Purushothama Mallya and his Konkani Bhasha Prachar Sabha. Even the critics of Mr. Mallya recognise this fact. From Goa Konkani Obheas Kendr and Konkani Bhasha Mandal had sent their representations. KBM office bearers met the Akademi members personally and sought their support.
this decision, had six representatives from Goa, of whom one, Rev. Fr. Antonio Pereira, was a Catholic priest and others were the senior GSB writers and language leaders. The members representing Bombay (Maharashtra) and Kerala were Dr. Dattaram Sukhtankar and Shri. N. Purushothama Mallaya, both GSBs. The two members from Karnataka were from Mangalore viz. Shri. V. J. P. Saldanha and Fr. Willie R. D. Silva. The convenor of the Board was B. B. Borkar, who was a recognised poet and writer in both Marathi and Konkani. It was this Board that decided the script for Konkani on behalf of the Sahitya Akademi.

The role of the convenor is significant and it is seen that during the past 25 years all the convenors, except the last one viz. Msgr. Alexander D'Souza of Mangalore, were Goans. The first Board constituted after the recognition in 1975 continued till 1982 with change in the convenor in 1978. Ravindra Kelekar took over from Bakibab Borkar and continued as convenor for another term in the Board till 1987. The plan was to continue the GSB hold over the Board through Dr. Manoharrai Sardessai in 1988, but was ‘disrupted’ by the entry of Dr. Olivinho Gomes, a Goan Catholic who sought the representation of the state of Goa without the knowledge of this established leadership.

Goan Hindu Konkani leaders (i.e. GSBs) saw to it that only those who toed their line were nominated to the Board. At the time of its recognition, Konkani being identified with the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu, the representation of members was only through the language bodies and not the local (state) government. As a result the specific choices by the organisations were determined by the composition of the leadership and methods of functioning in
these organisations. The language organisations in Kerala and Goa viz. Konkani Bhasha Prachar Sabha (Kochi) and Konkani Bhasha Mandal (Margao -Goa) were under the GSB control. In the case of Karnataka the representation to the KBMK on the Akademi was made with caution and care to see that the individuals nominated did not oppose the ‘accepted stand’ on script openly. The Mandal in Bombay was represented mostly by some GSBs settled in Bombay though their role in the affairs of that association has been more of sympathisers and supporter than of activists. In any case it was ensured that the pro-Nagari members were in the majority and also that Goa had higher representation than all the other regions taken together or at least equal to them, thus stalling any potential challenge from within. The Kerala group having accepted Devanagari over the Malayalam script meant that their representative strengthened the Nagari side.

In the matter of control over the decision making process and policy formulation regarding Konkani, the GSB monopoly was maintained with utmost care. However, there were occasions which posed a threat to this monopoly and these lay bare the cracks in the ‘unity’ of the language movement. They involved caste, community and region as dividing lines, with GSBs as the common factor.

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8. Dr. Dattaram Sukhtankar (three terms i.e. 1975-1987) and Sri Arvind Mambro (two terms i.e. 1988-1997) represented the Mandal till recently. J.B. Moraes is on the Board for the current term (1998-2002).
9. In mid-1980s, for example, Goa was represented by six members of which five were GSBs and one was a Catholic priest. Both members from Karnataka were Catholics. The lone member from Kerala and two from Bombay were the GSBs, one belonging to Kanara and the other to Goa. There was no one belonging to Bahujan Samaj or even a non-GSB in the Hindu members from Goa. In the Advisory Board for Konkani till 2002, the two non-GSB Hindu members from Goa were Kamalakar Mhalshi (1993-1997) and Ms. Jayanti Naik (1998-2002), both of Gomantak Maratha Samaj as also employees of Goa Konkani Akademi. Other numerically stronger cases like Bhandaris, having their members on the forefront of creative and organisational scenario have not found representation on the Board till date.
Also these divisions were manifested in the script issue at some level. The most significant events and issues in this period are: (i) Mobilisation for Konkani, (ii) Official Language Agitation and OL Act, (iii) State Representation on the Sahitya Akademi, (iv) Promotion of Konkani in Goa University, (v) Revamping of Goa Konkani Akademi, (vi) Sahitya Akademi Literary Awards, (vii) Thomas Stephens Konkani Kendra (TSKK) and Dalgado Academy, (viii) Konkani Bhasha Mandal and Goa Konkani Akademi, (ix) Parishad Presidents’ open resentment, and (x) State Policy and Activists’ Response

Each of the above is discussed in brief to understand the nature of forces operating in the name of Konkani and to examine their interrelationships.

**Mobilisation for Konkani**

Sahitya Akademi recognition in 1975 had come after the ineffective protests of the Marathi language representatives in the Akademi. Although ‘no member of the Akademi was competent to speak on behalf of Konkani’, adequate support was garnered by using the positions of people like Purushottam Kakodkar, the Congress MP from Goa, Dr. K. J. Mahale, the Goan Professor of French at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and most important, the President of the Akademi, Dr. S.K.Chatterji, who had already made up his mind to recognise Konkani. The literary productions distributed among the members were in Devanagari script, though that formed hardly 10% of the total output in the language. The Marathi language representative in the Akademi pointed out at the meagre quantity of publications in the script to prove its ineligibility for
recognition. The recognition resolution by the Akademi did not specify the script but the Goan Konkani leadership was firm on that aspect.

Having attained the status long desired, now it was necessary to make it a people's language for which the birth centenary year of Shennai Goembab (1976) was seen as the right occasion. For the whole year literateurs and activists of Konkani went to towns and villages in Goa to present a literary-cultural programme called 'Lallitak' (meaning miscellaneous show) the core of which was the writings and work of Shenai Goembab for Konkani. This provided an opportunity to the new Konkani writers from the Hindu masses to get social recognition, but more importantly, the Konkani leadership could project the 'caste-free' and 'non-partisan' character of the Konkani movement. This was followed by another campaign called 'Novem Goem' march. The need for a Konkani daily newspaper was stressed time and again by Konkani activists but there was no support and patronage readily available. Roman script weeklies and other periodicals had good readership and active involvement of the church hierarchy. The earlier attempts by people like Felicio Cardoso to promote secular press activity in the Roman script had failed. His campaign (in the years intervening the liberation and the Opinion Poll) to use the potential of journalism to expose the misdeeds of the priests and rich people among both the major communities had resulted in the closure of his publications. His attempts to 'purify' Konkani written in the Roman script which he started in this period, had mixed response. Evagrio Jorge had tried to make an impact through his Roman script periodicals but the economics did not favour him. Gurunath Kelekar, a
GSB, started his Roman script weekly ‘Goemcho Mog’ (Love of Goa) in 1977, which became popular among Goans within and outside Goa and even in the middle-east where a large number of them had gone in search of livelihood. However, there were also some Catholics who did not like the idea of a Hindu Bamonn running a successful publication in ‘their’ script (Interview- Gurunath Kelekar).

The political change in Goa in 1980 was seen as the good omen for Konkani and on the death anniversary of Shennai Goembab in 1980, Novem Goem Pratishthan was formed with the objective of launching two editions of a daily in Konkani - ‘Novem Goem’ - in two scripts. A 45-days march around Goa was organised to create awareness and collect people’s contributions for the project. The Roman script daily was started on 17th April 1982 under the editorship of Gurunath Kelekar who offered to close down his ‘Goemcho Mog’ though it had established itself as a popular weekly over the five years.

The new ‘people’s daily’ (Novem Goem), an eveninger, had good readership to begin with but the management problems and ego clashes led to misunderstanding between the promoters. The Pratishthan was chaired by Sara Souza Machado, wife of Froilano Machado, who was an influential politician working for Konkani. While Kelekar was the editor, administrative work was entrusted to Anton Piedade Moraes, who was a government official and had to use his wife’s name for official purposes and to draw salary for his work. The eveninger could not make much headway due to administrative lacunae. Suggestion to bring it out as a morning paper was turned down by Kelekar fearing its comparison with the
other dailies published in other languages, particularly Marathi, in Goa. While circulation was lower than expected, the editorial proficiency was questioned consistently by people like Felicio Cardoso, who had experience in Roman script publishing. Circulation did not rise as planned, advertising revenue remained much below the estimates and differences of opinion within the team at the level of planning as well as execution shortened its life. Nagari edition did not take off. The *Yatra* (the march) introduced the cause of Konkani to the whole of Goa, especially the rural areas, and roped in the youth to work for the language. It replaced the slogan ‘*Konkani Bhas Amchi Mai, Amchi Bhas Amkam Zai*’ meaning ‘Konkani is our mother, we want our language’ (given by Manoharrai Sardesai in early 1960’s) with the new one ‘*Konkani Uloi, Konkani Boroi, Konkanintlyan Sorkar Choloi*’ i.e. ‘speak Konkani, write Konkani, run the government in Konkani’ (interview – Gurunath Kelekar). With the local Congress (which had claimed Konkani as its priority) in power, the popular movement was expected to bear fruit. The OL agitation was the next move.

**Official Language agitation and the Act**

The issue of the Official Language of Goa, Daman and Diu as a Union Territory remained undecided for over two decades after liberation. While Daman and Diu, as the territorial pockets close to Gujarat used Gujarati in education, communication and administration, in Goa the issue was more complex. A majority of elementary schools had Marathi as the medium of instruction, and at the post-elementary stage had English and Marathi but by the
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mid-80s the latter was gradually replaced by the former in most of the institutions. Administration was mostly in English with some role to Marathi at local level institutions such as the Village Panchayat and the Co-operative Society, but only in the new conquest areas.

A Private Bill to make Marathi the OL was brought in mid-1960s during the MGP reign but was allowed to lapse. The legislative assembly of the Union Territory did not discuss the issue any other time under the MGP rule. With the Congress coming to power in 1980, the question of Official Language gained prominence. The pro-Konkani GSB stalwart A.N. (Babu) Naik, strongman of the UGP was instrumental, along with Dr. Wilfred A. D’Souza, in bringing Congress to power in Goa and the Konkani language leadership looked at him with hope. But in the Congress that came to power there were many pro-Marathi legislators and nothing much happened on the Konkani front from the Congress government in its first term. The Chief Minister Mr. Pratapsingh Rane himself was against Konkani.

In the elections to the legislative assembly of the Union Territory in 1984 the Margao seat was contested and won by Adv. Uday Bhembre as an independent candidate against the sitting MLA Babu Naik. It was in this second term of the Congress rule that the OL issue gained prominence. The position of the MGP in the house had improved from two members in 1980 to eight in 1984. A section of the Congress had broken away to form the Goa Congress before the elections but could secure only one seat at the hustings. The two main contenders for the throne – Babu Naik, a GSB, and Dr. Wilfred D’Souza, a Catholic – had
lost the elections. The lone Goa Congress member in the assembly proposed a Bill to make Konkani the official language, which did not get any attention from the House. The Chief Minister, whose party had promised the status of Official Language to Konkani, ridiculed the proposal, humiliated the MLA asking him to speak proper Konkani and advised Konkani lovers to increase literary output in the language. It was this point which brought the issue to the fore.

Congress had to act immediately. The Pradesh Congress Committee under Sulochana Katkar managed to get a resolution passed in the legislature party in favour of Konkani as the OL. The KPA – *Konkani Porjecho Avaz* (Voice of Konkani People) - was formed to get the three demands viz. statehood for Goa, OL status to Konkani and inclusion of Konkani in the VIII schedule of the Constitution fulfilled. The leadership of a young Hindu writer from the *Bahujan Samaj* (Pundalik Naik) and the assured support from the local church authorities marked a major shift in the movement hitherto identified with the GSBs. This agitation, now known as the Official Language agitation, brought in a large number of youth from the *Bahujan Samaj* into the Konkani movement in a big way.

The Goan Hindu masses had got the benefit of mass education and expected to translate the same into economic benefits through employment. The Goan economy was entering a difficult phase with poor returns and falling employment in the mining industry. Growing social mobility fuelled by education among the lower and middle castes placed demands on the state. The growing uneasiness among the youth faced with bleak economic prospects in the state was provided
with concerns for economic security and cultural dignity as constitutional rights. The political agreement on the statehood for Goa also helped the formulation of mass movement. Projection of Konkani as common man’s language and recognition of new writers in Konkani as the representatives of the masses raised expectations of unemployed youth. Hoping to gain from the statehood based on language Hindu youth from the Bahujan Samaj threw their lot with the agitation. With Pundalik Naik as the convenor of KPA the image of people’s movement for people’s language was complete.

However, all the policy decisions were finalised with the guidance and advice of the GSB leader such as Adv. Uday Bhembre, the independent MLA. Dissidence within the Congress against the injustice done to Marathi in the Congress resolution, the Chief Minister’s sympathy to Marathi and his attempt to seek the public official demand, from local self governing bodies like the Village Panchayats and Block Advisory Committees, for Marathi as the OL, and the strong pro-Marathi counter-agitation by the Marathi Rajya Bhasha Prasthapan Samiti (MRBPS) with the involvement of hundreds of local bodies and associations marked the 555 days agitation before the Official Language Act was passed on 4\textsuperscript{th} February 1987, under a Congress whip. The Act, while making Konkani in Devanagari script the OL of Goa, gave ‘similar’ status to Marathi. For Daman and Diu, it provided for Gujarati.

In terms of stakes Goan Hindus had little to complain, as they were provided the option between Marathi and Konkani. Though the issues of equality of status and propriety of dual language with statutory standing remained
unresolved, their significance was more academic than practical. Because of Devanagari script Hindus had a major advantage. Emotionally and culturally they could enjoy a feeling of security in the provisions of the Act. But for the Catholics, who had contributed to the agitation with full strength, it was a symbolic gain with major restraints. They could not reap the benefits of the status attained by their language because of the condition of script. In the 25th state of the Indian union the language that had claimed secular credentials all along had now become a communal cause through the element of script.

The KPA thinktank insisted on a single language (Konkani) as the OL on the ground that the interests of locals could be protected only through a single language. The script issue was pushed under the carpet with a rhetoric like ‘voice has no script’ referring to the word ‘Avaz’ (= voice) in the name of the organisation. The act involved a compromise between the two language camps and created a state of common dissatisfaction. With ‘Konkani in Devanagari script’ as the recognised OL it made the achievement of Konkani purely symbolic (rather imaginary) for the Roman script users and by denying the OL status to Marathi (keeping its position ambiguous through ‘similar’ status) it hurt the sentiments of the majority of Hindus attached to Marathi as their expression of culture.

As for the Congress the Act was a mixed baggage as it divided the rank and file of the party into two rival camps on language issue, while settling the

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10. KPA convenor Pundalik Naik stated that in some places there was a query from the audience at public rallies regarding the script for Konkani to which the leaders and speakers at the rally would reply in these words.
major problems of statehood and Official Language. In the new state with its OL Konkani the Congress had to ensure its continuance in power. Some of the Catholic leaders of Congres in the Old Conquests especially Salcete benefitted from the agitation and strengthened their position in the party set-up. But in the Hindu majority areas the Congress legislators were sure to face difficulties in the electoral battles. To convince the electorate of the wisdom behind the passage of the Act, in order to maintain the support base of the party, the Congress asked the front rankers in the KPA to join the party. This in turn posed problems for the KPA which had maintained a non-political image all through the course of the agitation. It was decided to make the Congress entry of the KPA leaders an individual choice. But the apprehensions and displeasure of the grassroot workers and activists were evident at least in certain pockets (Vagh in Daily Tarun Bharat – 21st June 1989)\(^{11}\). KPA convenor Pundalik Naik felt that the move aimed at securing of political future of Adv. Uday Bhembre, who was an independent legislator\(^{12}\).

Though the OL Act paved the way for statehood it raised new questions in Goa which remain unanswered till today. The status of Marathi vis-à-vis Konkani in the Act was subjected to judicial interpretation and different political parties with Hindu support-base capitalised on these ambiguities and uncertainties. MGP and BJP made use of the provisions in the Act to derive political mileage. The

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\(^{11}\) In places like Canacona in the new conquests where Konkani had made a dent after 1976, the KPA leaders' attempts to enrol members for the Congress party faced stiff resistance and attained very little success.

\(^{12}\) Interview: Pundalik Naik.
script clause gave rise to another movement led by Catholics mainly in Salcete. The formation of a new state of Goa was announced on the basis of this Act and this also paved the way for the inclusion of Konkani in the VIII schedule of the Indian Constitution. Konkani was facing a paradox — awaiting constitutional recognition at the national level but asking for a nominal foothold at the grassroot level.

The assembly elections for the newly formed state were held in 1989. They were also the first after the passage of the OL Act. In 1990 the question of medium of instruction at the elementary stage of education acquired importance in the light of certain judicial directions to the state. The issue had come up as a result of the demand from teachers in private primary schools in English medium for parity in scales of pay. While the judiciary held the demand legally valid, the state asked the schools concerned to follow the principle of educating the children in their mother-tongue to be eligible for government grants for staff salaries. This gave rise to the debate regarding the right of parents to choose the type of education or medium of instruction. Those in the forefront of this agitation spoke in favour of English as the medium of instruction for their children’s education, some even claiming English as their mother-tongue, even though many among them had also been a part of the Konkani language agitation a few years back which demanded justice for their ‘Konkani Mai’ (Mother Konkani). This latest agitation on medium of education was tackled by the state government tactfully. For the purpose of availing government grants and getting their teachers paid in the government scales the school managements were asked to switch over to any
Indian language as their medium of instruction. Nothing much changed on the ground, except for the declaration by most of these schools in favour of Konkani or Marathi as their medium of instruction and getting their teachers on par with other teachers in terms of payscales. Most of these ‘Konkani’ medium schools continued to teach all the subjects (including Konkani) in English (Jaag,) as before, with their English-educated teachers continuing to serve the ‘vernacularised’ schools.

The OL status to Konkani being subjected to specific uses only with the appropriate notification by the state, government machinery continued the use of English as before for all its work. In administrative communication the de facto OL was retained even after the OL cell was established. This cell under a Joint Secretary organised training programmes in Konkani for government officials, supplied typewriters for Devanagari to different departments but neither of them could help the implementation of the OL Act. The OL Cell had many leading Konkani activists and writers as its members, who aired their frustration through the press statements but could not move the administration.

State Representative on the Sahitya Akademi

Since the day of recognition as the modern Indian literary language granted by the Sahitya Akademi to Konkani, the members who represented the language in the national body were nominated by different language organisations. Goan Hindu Konkani leadership played a key role in this nomination. After the attainment of statehood Goa was to send a representative of
the state to the Akademi. The person who managed to get himself nominated as a state representative was Dr. Olivinho Gomes, a bureaucrat-turned-academician who also became the convenor of the Advisory Board. This was not savoured by the traditional leadership of Konkani. The nominee of the organisations was decided by the local body. The ‘seniority principle’ favoured Dr. ManoharRai SarDessai, who, as convenor, would then select his team for the Board. But when it was realised that the representative of the state to the General Council of the Akademi had been nominated without their knowledge these leaders tried to pressurise the state nominee Dr. Gomes to vacate in favour of the organisations’ representative on the basis of the seniority principle. Meetings were convened to resolve the tangle but finally the issue had to be given up as the leadership had no tangible grounds to demand or force the change (Interview – Pundalik Naik, Fr. Pratap Naik). Dr. Gomes opted for Dr. Mathew Almeida of the TSKK and L.A.Rodrigues from Goa, Dolphy Lobo from Mangalore and Yusuf Shaikh, a Goan in the service of the central government and posted at AIR Mangalore. It was most unlikely to find these individuals in the list under normal circumstances as visualised by the established Goan Konkani leadership. The concern of this leadership is seen in the nominations to the national body term after term. They see to it that the individuals in the different bodies of the Akademi do not raise questions that could be uncomfortable to the language leadership or challenge the existing arrangements.
Promotion of Konkani in Goa University

Goa University was established in 1985 and one of its major thrust areas was promotion of Konkani language. The initial idea was to have a Chair for Konkani, for which the person could be selected from among the individuals close to the local Konkani leaders. Dr. Anant Ram Bhat, a school teacher with research work on comparative study of Konkani and Hindi grammar, and Prakash Thali, another teacher and writer with experience of college teaching but with no research experience – both GSBs - were the two main contenders. But in the process of selection Dr. Olivinho Gomes, a Goan Catholic writer in the Roman script who was working with Government of India in the All India Services, topped the merit list even though the selection committee comprised of the people who would not favour his name. Insiders said that the officer used his connections as an All India Service official to convince the highest officials of the University to throw their weight behind him. His selection was challenged in the court of law by one of the candidates reportedly at the behest of some of the policy makers and advisers of the Konkani language movement in Goa. The case was heard and disposed off on technical grounds but at the same time forbidding the plaintiff from approaching the judiciary again on the same matter. The selected candidate on his part managed to get the full-fledged Department of Konkani studies instead of a Chair originally proposed. He was appointed as Professor and Head in the Department of Konkani Language and Literature in June 1987 and then the Dean, Faculty of Languages from 1998, even though his qualifications/degrees were in the Social Sciences and not in language or literarture. Dr. Gomes also established
the Centre For Konkani Development Studies in 1998 under a scheme of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and became its Director.

Another ambitious project of the university was Konkani Encyclopedia for which the post of Chief Editor was created with provision for payment of monthly honorarium. The post was given to Dr. Manohar Rai SarDessai, the retired Professor of French and a renowned Konkani poet, a GSB, who was assisted by other functionaries. The work of contributing material on different topics was assigned to different individuals identified as experts in the respective fields. The response of the experts was poor and the work lingered on. The contract period of the editor was getting over but the scheduled tasks did not progress much. Though the editor wanted extension it was not given as the project had not moved ahead. Instead, a non-GSB, Dr. Tanaji Halarnkar, who was the Director of Students Welfare in the University, and also working as the Executive editor of the Encyclopedia was given the entire responsibility, in addition to his routine regular duty in the University, but with only a nominal allowance and no special honorarium. He took it up as a challenge and managed to complete the project with all the constraints and negligible pecuniary benefits and returns. The work was completed but many among the GSBs, who guided the language movement took the opportunity to refer to him in an unbecoming manner in the context of this assignment while reacting to certain events that challenged the
GSB hegemony in the organisational matters of Konkani.

Revamping of Goa Konkani Akademi

The events referred to above were those in which the functioning of the autonomous body called Goa Konkani Akademi (GKA) established by the Government of Goa, Daman and Diu in 1985 was sought to be regulated as per the stipulated provisions. The issue was raised after the lapse of over eight years from the date of establishment of the Akademi. Though the main demand was that of revamping the Akademi the primary concern was with the way the language movement was made to suffer for personal interests.

The announcement of formation of the Akademi came in 1984. In the wake of the Congress government assuming power in 1980 the Konkani language leaders looked forward to a shift in language policy. One of the developments expected was the formation of agencies and organisations to support and promote Konkani as a language. Mr. Purushottam Kakodkar, a veteran Congressman close to the Nehru family, claimed that he was assured of the Akademi by the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Another impression was that the two Goan leaders at the national level – Purushottam Kakodkar and Eduardo Faleiro – had

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13 The issue was related to the demand for revamping of the Goa Konkani Akademi as per the provisions of its constitution. The executive editor of the Konkani Vishwakosh supported the demand for revamping in his personal capacity on the basis of principle. In a regular weekly column titled ‘Bekar Thavay Kule Tashi’ in Daily Rashtramat, all those who supported the demand for revamping were ridiculed, mentioning the personal attributes, often referring to the caste or professional background of the targetted individuals. The Editor of the daily was criticised by Fr. Pratap Naik for promoting the trend through this ‘third rate’ writing. (Personal letter dt. 9.11.92 from Fr. Pratap Naik to the Editor, daily Rashtramat).
discussed the issue of the Akademi (Interview - Pundalik Naik). There were other observations in this regard. One was that the Goa Congress was planning to introduce a Bill in the legislature seeking the establishment of the Akademi. So the Congress government was compelled to take initiative to avoid embarrassment. Purushottam Kakodkar himself disclosed that the Akademi was the result of a resolution in a cabinet meeting in 1984 brought by the local Education Minister Harish Zantye who proposed and insisted that Kakodkar be made the President of the proposed Akademi (GKARC 1992: 1). The Akademi was to be formed and supported by the Government of Goa, Daman and Diu. Provision of funds was to be made by the local government under the Education Department budget.

The first Executive Board of the Akademi was constituted under the Presidentship of Purushottam Kakodkar vide an order dated 28th December 1984 (Official Gazette, Government of Goa, Daman and Diu, Series II No.41 dtd.10th Jan. 1985). The Akademi was registered as a Society on 4th March 1986 under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. As per the provisions of its constitution the Executive Board constituted by the Government was to be replaced within two years i.e. by January 1987 and every two years thereafter, by including the representatives of Konkani organisations and institutions. But till 1992 the same Board continued to control the affairs of the Akademi under the Presidentship of Purushottam Kakodkar. Some of the members on the Board were Goans settled outside Goa and even outside India. Some of them never attended meetings of the Board. One of the appointees, Fr. Lucio da Veiga Coutinho expressed his inability
to be on the Board soon after its constitution and in 1989 even submitted his resignation (letter dtd. May 11, 1989 to Secretary, GKA). But the Akademi under the Presidentship of Kakodkar did not effect any changes in its composition.

It was in mid-1992 that the dissatisfaction regarding the Akademi came out into the open. Since 1988-89 the Akademi was targeted in the meetings of Konkani Lekhak Sangh and Konkani Bhasha Mandal but the issue was not made public. In 1992 in a programme organised by the Akademi, copies of a handout prepared in the name of ‘Konkani activists and writers’ were distributed at the entrance of the venue. This prompted some writers and activists to assemble immediately after the function to discuss the ways and means to curb this tendency which could be detrimental to the cause of Konkani and the Akademi. A committee was constituted under the convenorship of Bharat Naik to work towards the reorganisation of the Akademi as per the provisions of its constitution.

The Goa Konkani Akademi Reorganisation Committee (GKARC) met some members of the Executive Board of the Akademi to discuss the matter but was told that it was the government’s duty to act on it. The then Chief Minister Shri. Ravi Naik was approached on 3rd August 1992 by a delegation with a representation demanding immediate action. The action promised by the C.M. did not come about in the stipulated period of one week but the matter was referred by his office to the Education Minister for necessary action (letter dtd. 14 8/92). The GKARC then decided to involve the major groups and organisations working for Konkani all over Goa in its follow up action.
A meeting of 24th August 1992 decided to get the views of the Akademi President on the issue. Accordingly he was approached by a delegation and informed about the demands of the Committee (representation dtd. 27/8/1992), giving him two weeks' time. While welcoming the demands he said that the Akademi Constitution had to be amended following the formation of state and the amendments proposed in 1989 were pending with the government for approval. At the end of the period allowed to the Akademi the committee called a meeting of all the organisations working for Konkani in the state of Goa. In the meeting held on 11th September '92 it was resolved that all the fourteen members of the Executive Board of the Akademi should resign to make way for its reconstitution as per the provisions in the Constitution (Press Note dtd. 12/9/1992) and letters asking for their resignations were sent to individual members. Seven of them were settled outside Goa. One of these seven (Fr. Coutinho) responded (letter dtd. 17th September 1992) saying that he had already expressed his inability to do justice to this responsibility soon after the formation of the Board and had sent in his resignation in 1989 which was not accepted. No response was received from others. None among those in Goa was willing to resign. One of them, Shri. Chandrakant Keni said that government alone had the right to ask for their resignations (letter dtd. 15.9.1992 to Shri. Bharat Naik). Some others considered the GKARC as an attempt to create rift in the Konkani movement (Sunaparant, Sept. 1992). The GKA President said that some members who wanted to resign

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14. This number included Shri. Kakodkar, the President of the Akademi, who used to be in Delhi for major part of the year and visited the Akademi only during his visits to Goa.
were dissuaded by him as that would create a vacuum. He felt that the government had to take appropriate decision and action on the amendments proposed.

The GKARC found that neither the GKA nor the government was moving forward. The attempt to get information on the GKA’s efforts for reconstitution was unsuccessful. Finally the Committee decided to adopt a method of moral pressure and announced a one day programme of collective redemption in a public place (Press Note dtd. 29/9/92). This created some movement among the activists of Konkani. Some members of the Akademi tried to create an impression that the GKARC was dividing the Konkani cadres and in some places the meetings were held to protest against the Committee’s stand. Some members and their near ones cautioned Konkani workers against involvement in the redemption or association with the GKARC activities (Sunaparant, 8th Oct. 1992).

As a last resort the GKARC filed a writ petition on 12th Oct. 1992 in the High Court of judicature of Bombay at Panaji (Sunaparant dtd. 13/10/92) which was heard on 19th October. The court ordered the Goa government to complete the process of restructuring within six weeks. At the end of this period the government sought the additional time of three months but was allowed eight weeks and the reconstitution had to be effected before 31st January 1993. The GKARC movement which continued for four months between August and December 1992 exposed the underlying fissures in the supposedly united Konkani language movement. The press was used by both the sides to give vent to personal
and group feelings (Daily Rashtramat and Daily Sunaparant issues – September to December 1992).

Though the year 1992 was historic in terms of the ultimate achievement that Konkani protagonists had worked for (inclusion of Konkani in the VIII schedule of the Constitution of India) it was also marked by the clear divisions in the ranks of Konkani activists. The veteran Ravindra Kelekar who, as the ideologue of the Konkani movement, spoke about the secular value of Konkani, and criticised the GSBs on different counts in the past, agreed to address the ‘Saraswat Mellavo’ (Saraswat Convention) at Mangeshi in May 1991 against the wishes of many leading Konkani activists. The latter wanted Kelekar to keep himself away from the caste body because they feared reactions from the rank and file among Konkani activists and more importantly from the detractors of Konkani on his association with the caste that was identified with the selfish motives of Konkani language leadership. This move of Kelekar led to debate on the character of the Konkani movement and its leadership. Many of his followers in the language movement approached him personally with a request not to attend the Convention. This debate soon gave birth to Samata Andolan for strengthening social equality. The issues relating to the role of Saraswats as a caste group in the Goan society gained prominence through the second half of 1991 (Karmali in souvenir of First samajik Parishad, Margao - 12th Jan. 1992).

15. Uday Bhembre and Gurunath Kelekar tried to convince him through their personal discussions. Datta Damodar Naik was very critical of this decision of Ravindra Kelekar, and was challenged by the latter in his writings, mainly editorial columns of the monthly Jaog.
While this was fresh in the public mind the GKARC questioned the validity of the continuance of the Executive Board of the GKA for eight years. GKARC had individuals who had claims to positions and role in all the Konkani bodies and organisations by virtue of their long time organisational and creative contribution. Konkani Bhasha Mandal (KBM) and Konkani Lekhak Sangh were the two organisations which had been demanding representation in the Akademi since 1988. KBM as a pioneer institution ought to have a permanent place in the General Council of the Akademi but could not get it though most of those nominated to the Akademi were involved in the KBM in the past and were aware of the prime position of the Mandal in the Konkani movement. The only plausible explanation for the Mandal being ignored in this respect is that it was led by others (read non-GSBs) during the period of the formation of the Akademi. In later years (particularly after Adv. Uday Bhembre became the GKA President) the issue of representation to KBM was revived but the GKA leadership wanted the KBM to be on par with other organisations and to suggest the names of two individuals of which the Akademi would select one to represent the KBM. The KBM president got himself authorized by the General Body to be the sole nominee. This had the background of ego clashes at individual level within the GSB fold, probably due to generation gap. It was also a case of mixing of issues
and interests in the Konkani leadership within the GSB circles\textsuperscript{16}.

In the ad-hoc Board of the GKA initially nominated by the government (1985) there was only one non-GSB Hindu among signatories to the Memorandum as he was considered manageable because of his quiet nature and academic background\textsuperscript{17}. He was projected as the leader of the KPA to give the organisation its \textit{Bahujan Samaj} identity. During the revamping movement of the GKARC he stood by the GKA leadership but soon after the revamping he had to face the wrath of the GSB section in the Akademi. The Presidentship of the Akademi remained with Purushottam Kakodkar for the period of fourteen years till his death. The Vice-President’s chair was occupied by Dr. Manohar Rai SarDessai till the revamping in 1993. It was taken over by Pundalik Naik, the only \textit{Bahujan Samaj} member in the original team. His ideas to popularise the GKA activities and make its programmes broad-based led to greater involvement of youth from masses in Konkani work. But in the second term his interests clashed with the views of the GKA leadership mainly Kakodkar.

To check his influence the GSB leadership used another member of the same caste, N. Shivdas and forced Pundalik Naik to resign out of frustration. The issues of legal status and standing of the Vice-President were debated in the public

\textsuperscript{16} The KBM and GKA were both led by the GSB individuals as Presidents. Raju Naik, a professional journalist who headed the KBM since 1994, was made to work as Executive editor under Adv. Bhembre, a practicing lawyer, who was designated as the Chief Editor of the only Konkani daily in Devanagari script (\textit{Sunaparant}). Naik felt that the attitude of Bhembre was self-centred. Bhembre as the GKA president asked the KBM to send nominations for membership of the GKA General Council which Naik did but with only one name (that of his own) instead of two as prescribed in the procedure. Naik insisted on his name being accepted but the GKA did not oblige. The clash of interest between Adv. Bhembre and Raju Naik had its genesis in daily \textit{Sunaparant} from where it spilled over to GKA and KBM.

\textsuperscript{17} Pundalik Naik as a leading writer of outstanding merit was also seen as a polite young man ready to learn from others. His rural background and education in Marathi medium made him a conscious silent worker, which the GSB leadership appreciated.
during this period of conflict and his motives were questioned. It was the ambition of Pundalik Naik that was seen as a threat and Kakodkar got Adv. Uday Bhembre appointed as his successor even though Adv. Bhembre was not even in the General Council of the Akademi. After the demise of Purushottam Kakodkar in 1996 his successor Uday Bhembre, who had been very close to Pundalik Naik in the past, saw to it that Naik would not be in the picture. Though the GKA had its new provisions for constituting the General Council with representation to organisations, those seen as a threat to the set pattern were excluded by manouevring and manipulation of certain rules and procedures, making use of the legal expertise and acumen of the GSB leaders. For example, *Thomas Stephens Konkani Kendra* – TSKK – a Jesuit institution for language study and research did not find a place in the Akademi set up for this purpose. Also, KBM could find a place only after the individuals of choice of the established GSB leadership gained its control.

**Sahitya Akademi Awards**

Annual Awards to literary works in Konkani given since 1976 became a bone of contention between major regional groups and script users. With a clear control over the decisions with regard to Konkani in the Sahitya Akademi from the time of recognition Goan Hindu leadership of Konkani, made up entirely of the GSBs, rewarded the writers in Devanagari script – all Goans either from Goa or from Bombay – for the first six years. A writer with only one published book in
Devanagari script to his credit\textsuperscript{18} received the award, while many who wrote in the two other scripts – Kannada and Roman – were not considered in spite of good work over the years, only because of the script factor. There was an instance of book published by a Goan poet specifically for the award\textsuperscript{19}.

The Kannada script writers in Konkani found this provision of 'script' unjust and raised the question 'whether the language was recognised or the script' (\textit{Amar Konkani} January 1993). Though they made a representation to the Akademi against the script criterion they could not make any impact. The first seven winners of the annual awards belonged to the first line of the Goan Konkani writers – all GSBs. The second line of writers in Konkani followed before the first ever Mangalorean poet (settled in Bombay) was considered for the award in 1985 after he brought out his collection of poems in two scripts – Kannada and Devanagari – to satisfy the criteria. This was made easy because of his domicile in Bombay and being identified with the KBM there. The greatest of the Konkani poets from Mangalore - Chafra - could make it only in 1989 after his book of poems was transliterated in Devanagari for publication in Goa. Efforts of the Mangalore group to see their veteran V. J. P. Saldanha (\textit{Khadap} to his readers) in the list did not succeed during the 25 years i.e. 1977-2001. The transliterated

\textsuperscript{18} Dr. Dattaram Sukhthankar had a collection of essays which was his only book till then. He is not a regular writer, except for occasional contributions to Diwali special number of \textit{Jaag} and AIR, Mumbai.

\textsuperscript{19} R.V. Pandit, (who had a typical envy against Dr. ManoharRai SarDessai for the recognition and appreciation the latter received ) had his book of poems \textit{Dorya Gazota} prepared for the award from his earlier Roman script publication of the same title. This was the same as done by Dr. SarDessai in \textit{Pissollim}. 
version of one of his novels was brought out as a new edition specially with the objective of seeking the award but was considered ineligible to fulfil the criteria of time-frame. The novel could not be considered for the award on technical grounds and the feeling of stepmotherly treatment to Kannada script Konkani grew further (interview – Monsgr. D’Souza). The controlling group was keen on the script issue and representations from the Kannada users to allow their entries for the awards for a few years were rejected. But at the same time books published in two scripts were considered. Also these leaders’ keenness to silence the Mangalore group was evident in their preference to Chafra over any Goan writer in Roman script in transliterating the works to Devanagari. This hurt and insulted the Roman-using group in Goa (Interview - Tomazinho Cardoso).

In the matter of awards certain factors became quite obvious. It was not the quality or merit in the strict sense that counted. As the awards were given looking at the contribution to the movement, rather than the literary work itself, those writing in other scripts felt that at least a few of their writers deserved some consideration in the matter. Though the seniors in the movement made repeated appeals for more of prose and serious writing as against the predominance of poetry (Kelekar in *Jaag* 19), it was poetry that received the award in more than 50% of the cases20. Also there was not a single year when the award was not given for want of quality or merit. In other major languages, there had been

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20. Out of the 25 awards till 2001, 13 were for poetry. While 3 went to collections of essays, only 2 each were awards for novels and travelogues, 4 went to short stories, and 1 to a collection of one-act plays.
occasions when the awards were not given (Rao, 1985). But in case of Konkani, the argument was that it was the amount (money) that mattered and as it was the state fund, there was no reason to deprive writers of the same. In certain cases, it was the attitude of implicit protest against the supposed GSB 'tendency' to monopolise the awards that decided the winner.

Literary awards were sometimes seen as the recognition for contribution to the language movement in general and balancing acts in terms of regional considerations also figured in some cases. All such things led to some amount of injustice to genuine works of merit in a few instances. Because of the approach of sharing the spoils literary merit were given a back seat. This gave some substance to the Goan Marathi protagonists' observations that the literary and language movement in the name of Konkani was a ploy to attract people in support of a partisan cause, and also that anything in Konkani, irrespective of literary value or creative worth, could win a prize (Konkani Diwali 1999). In case

21. 'Gomanchal Te Himachal' a travelogue by Dilip Borkar was awarded for 1995, against a collection of poems by Shankar Ramani, a senior poet known also for his Marathi poems. The latter was favoured by poet Madhav Borkar, a member of the jury. The non-GSB Goan member of the panel – Ramesh Veluskar – himself a Konkani poet and lover of Ramani's poetry, favoured the travelogue with the support of the third member (a Catholic)-college teacher from Karwar-who 'could not differentiate between the two works in Devanagari'. The awarded work mattered less than the writer's social position and his 'contribution' to language movement. In his personal interaction Ramesh Veluskar-confirmed that his decision was guided by the resentment towards the GSB attitude of taking others for granted. Madhav Borkar regretted this 'undesirable' approach. (Based on personal discussions with the two in course of interviews).

22. The short story collection Rudra by Gajanan Jog (Goa) could not make it as also R.S.Bhaskar's collection of poems (Kerala) though they reached the final round of selection on two occasions. The literary worth of both these works and contribution of both the writers was also known.
of Konkani writings in Karnataka, the grievance of neglect became less vocal after the formation of The Karnataka Konkani Sahitya Academy, which started rewarding the publications in Kannada script after 1996. Also the policy of equal consideration to all scripts by Dr. T. M. A. Pai Foundation for their literary awards eased the situation. Over the years, critics of the script monopoly have been making attempts to get their works transliterated to Devanagari for being considered for the awards. This, however, is true only of Kannada script writers in Konkani, whereas the Roman script writers who are the rightful descendants of the pioneers of Konkani have not yet figured in the list of awardees. Their script is their handicap, though their work for the language is unique and historic in more than one sense. The Catholics in Goa and Bombay have their Konkani bodies and organisations, celebrations and affiliations but in official terms they remain non-entities on account of their script. Their issues and concerns have been voiced through institutions such as Thomas Stephens Konknni Kendra and Dalgado Academy.

**Thomas Stephens Konknni Kendra (TSDKK) and Dalgado Academy:**

Though Konkani Bhasha Mandal (KBM) as peoples' organisation and Goa Konkani Akademi (GKA) as an autonomous body established by the state government have been functioning for the cause of Konkani language, literature and culture, their stress is on Devanagari as the real and official image of Konkani. Led and guided by those who have grown under the tradition of Devanagari, these institutions have an evasive approach to other scripts of
Konkani and to the work of Konkani done in other scripts. Devanagari is in use for Konkani in Goa and Bombay, but only within a section of the Konkani community. Other communities/regions identified with scripts other than Devanagari deserve attention in the study of Konkani and such study needs a more open and flexible approach. To strengthen this, there have been two significant attempts – one on the part of Jesuits in the form of TSKK and the other, short-lived but note-worthy, by the Roman script votaries in the name of Dalgado Academy.

TSKK was established in early 1980s and run by Goa Jesuits with the principal aim of ‘the scientific study and promotion of Konkani language, literature and culture’. With well-equipped library and well thought out projects on different aspects of study and research, the Kendra has been recognised officially by GKA. The staff members of TSKK work on different committees and are involved in the work of different cultural bodies and associations as their members. Though methodical in their work and scientific in their approach to the study of Konkani, they have been criticized and avoided by the Goan Konkani leadership.

TSKK has published rules of Konkani orthography and grammar, some old Konkani literature edited by the scholars working in the Kendra, books for use in pre-primary schools and handbooks of Konkani for teachers etc. The two scholars Dr. Mathew Almeida and Dr. Pratap Naik have their research work in linguistics with special reference to Konkani and have attempted to analyse the ongoing language activities on the basis of their knowledge and experience. In
this they have often pointed to deficiencies in academic work done by some
Goans without adequate qualifications, necessary specialisation or proper study,
which has caused distress within the established leadership or the academia
among them. Genuine academic questions on the work related to linguistics of
Konkani have been responded by some people through the press, acquiring pen-
names to criticise these scholars, and Dr. Pratap Naik in particular. TSKK has
been consistent in its work of popularising Konkani, linguistic and literary
research and training teachers, research-minded youth. Their objection to the idea
of ‘One Script, One Language, One Community’ on sociological and scientific
basis is well known. All this has led to Goan Konkani leadership among Hindus,
particularly GSBs, keeping away from the institution, avoiding it in the task of
expanding the Konkani activities, and encouraging isolation in the academic field
of Konkani.

As the idea of ‘One script, one language, one community’ has been
made into a mission statement over the years by the established Goan leadership,
those using other scripts for Konkani have attempted to express their disapproval
in their own way. *Dalgado Konkani Academy* was one such expression. It was
formed by a group of Konkani writers, journalists, priests, teachers such as
Tomazinho Cardoso, Fr. Freddy D’Costa, who used Roman script for writing the
language and others such as Fr. Pratap Naik, who did not agree with one script
principle. Some members, mainly the Mangalorean priests working in Goa, were
well versed with all the three major scripts used for Konkani. Their concern for
the Catholics, and sense of loss because of insistence on Devanagari alone,
prompted them to initiate organise efforts to assert the alternative view on script. 
In their bid to project the Roman side, establish the fact of the historic role of that 
script in Goa and its practical relevance for a large section of Konkani community 
they brought together the like minded people under the banner of the Dalgado 
Academy named after Mons. Sebastiao Rodolfo Dalgado, a Goan priest and 
lexicographer of late 19th century. This new formation had the background of the 
amendment proposed to the Official Language Act by Luizinho Faleiro, which 
was rejected at the early stage. The amendment suggested a time frame of 25 
years to be allowed to the Goan Catholics for their switch-over to Devanagari. His 
proposal for the continuance of the Roman script till such switch-over had not 
been entertained. The Roman script users were encouraged by TSKK to take the 
organisational course and Dalgado Academy came into being. Though it was 
formed out of genuine love for Konkani and in the interest of a large section it 
could not continue for long and most of its promoters now avoid speaking about it 
in detail (Interview – Tomazinho Cardoso, Fr. Pratap Naik). As the attempt was 
seen as a challenge to Devanagari the entire GSB leadership of Konkani was 
against the idea and express their inability to recall any details. The Academy was 
formed with the objective of procuring for the Roman script its due. With the 
quick and silent exit of the Academy from the language scene within a year after 
its formation the established Hindu leadership of Konkani was saved of another 
move to stress Devanagari and to undermine the role of other scripts. But within 
their own language bodies, they had lot of complexities in their interrelations. 
against their proclaimed claim of single script as the sure solution to all the major
problems faced by Konkani. Konkani Bhasha Mandal of Margao and Goa Konkani Akademi of Panaji were established and nurtured by the GSB stalwarts in the Konkani movement but over the years they had problems which were born not out of script differences but out of other socio-economic issues that confront organisations and institutions run on democratic lines.

**Konkani Bhasha Mandal (KBM) and Goa Konkani Akademi (GKA):**

While considering the final phase of the struggle for constitutional position to Konkani a peculiar situation of institutional contest can be noticed within the movement in Goa. KBM as a pioneer Konkani institution prepared the ground for the larger language battle in Goa. The first two decades of its functioning under the hostile MGP rule proved its need. Konkani acquired the space in education at all levels due to efforts of the KBM. Its members played a crucial role in ensuring a place for Konkani at the school, college and university levels of education. Communication and media considered Konkani in a positive way because of KBM. But the formation of the GKA by the government affected the standing of the KBM in the eyes of the state. Though the GKA members were the ex-functionaries of the KBM their approach to this parent body changed. The KBM leadership passed into the hands of the non-GSB Hindus around the same time as the formation of the GKA. The top leadership of KBM comprising of GSBs
moved en masse to the GKA established by the state government. The emergence of young non-GSB writers and leaders - such as Pundalik Naik, N. Shivdas, Tanaji Halarnkar - over the 70's made it imperative to recognise their presence in the organisational set up of the Konkani movement. The first non-GSB president of the KBM in this phase was Felicio Cardoso, the pro-Nagari Catholic free from the church control, a freedom fighter with socialist ideas and a journalist turned teacher of Konkani. The transition to non-GSB Hindu leadership was intervened by his term.

As a result of the establishment of the GKA by the state government, the role and status of KBM as a representative body of Konkani language was affected. The state support to Konkani would now be available only through the GKA. Though KBM had not been receiving government funding for a long time, due to non-compliance of certain statutory and technical requirements, it had the right to ask for state support for specific activities or projects of language promotion. But with the formation of the GKA the state government linked all matters related to Konkani with this body under the state control. KBM had its representative on the state run Goa Kala Academy prior to the establishment of

23. In the first Executive Board of the GKA, three of the six members residing in Goa viz. Shri. Chandrakant Keni, Dr. Manoharrai Sardessai and Adv. Uday Bhembre were the erstwhile KBM presidents. The fourth was Shri. Ravindra Kelekar, the seniormost writer (advisor to KBM and Konkani movement as a whole) representing Konkani language on the Executive Board of the Sahitya Akademi at that time and the fifth was his contemporary Shri. Pandurang Bhangi, a Konkani poet. It was said that MLA of Margao and the GSB leader Babu Naik was the person involved in this formation along with Chandrakant Keni.

24. KBM had received government grants during the tenure of Adv. Uday Bhembre as the President in early 1980s when Congress came to power. The same was to be matched by certain amount from the KIV sources. But instead of that, KBM spent the amount and could not submit the accounts as required under the government rules. Further grants were not available from the government, though accounts were submitted much later and attempts were made to restart the government support. But it was not revived. Same thing had happened in case of grants received for the publication of literary anthologies of Konkani, the work on which was completed after a gap of almost a decade.
the GKA. The same was now allotted to the GKA on behalf of the Konkani language organisations/bodies.

The new non-GSB leadership of the KBM had no access to state resources but had a challenging task of running the organisation which had no resource base of its own. The young workers managed to build the resources through programmes such as *Konkani Shikshak Sanad* (Teachers’ Training Programme) and completed the pending projects of publication. The government support for the KBM library was received under relevant scheme of assistance. The past liabilities of the KBM were also cleared.

The leading seniors - GSBs controlling the KBM affairs till then - who had found place in the GKA considered the new leadership of KBM as ineffective and often remained away from the KBM, particularly during the tenure of the non-GSB writers as KBM President. The absence of these seniors at the tri-decadal celebrations of the KBM in 1992 was interpreted as ‘boycott’ and discussed in the press by the activists (Tanaji Halarnkar in *Sunaparant* in the first week of Oct. '92, Damodar Mauzo in *Sunaparant* dtd. 18th October 1992). Later years saw some ‘new’ elements (with little or no real involvement or attachment to the KBM in the pst) occupying the positions of power using the ‘laxity in the election process’ (Interview – Tanaji Halarnakar, Pundalik Naik) supported by the

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25 Sushrut Martins became the KBM President with the support of members from Panaji. He was a student activist but not a recognised Konkani worker. He could make it as a youth from North Goa and a Catholic supported by most of the active workers and writers from Panaji and Mapusa under the strategy planned by Shri. Karmali, who led and advised the Panaji group against Margao group of seniors.
"secularist" GSB individual whose claims to organisational authority were partially thwarted by the senior KBM leadership in Margao. The KBM elections in the past were a cool affair with poor turn out at the General Body meetings, and leading to the "unopposed" elections of the Executive Committees. It was only after the formation of the GKA that the Panaji group found opportunity to take positions in the KBM.

Konkani Lekhak Sangh was born as a parallel organisation of Konkani writers and activists predominantly from Panaji. The guidance and support came from Mr. Nagesh Karmali who had problems with the hegemony of 'Margao people' in the KBM. The young writers mostly non-GSBs who were supported by Karmali in their literary activities came together under this Sangh (Interview – N. Shivdas, Pundalik Naik). It worked more as a protest group or pressure group against KBM and later sought representation to the GKA. In the case of KBM such representation ought to have been automatic, as it was the pioneering organisation or a parent body of Konkani in Goa for over two decades, but was never considered seriously during the formation of the GKA and became a matter of individual confrontations in later years.

The revamping of the Akademi in 1993, as per the court directives in a case filed by the GKARC, was followed in 1994 by the take-over of the KBM by a team led by Raju Naik, GSB youth from Margao. The decision making in the KBM had shifted out of the direct involvement of senior group in Margao for nearly eight years (1986-1994). With Raju Naik as the President, this was expected to change. The GKA revamping process had also caused realignment of
forces within the Konkani movement. The revamped GKA continued under Purushottam Kakodkar, the Vice-presidency now going to Pundalik Naik for his ‘service’ to Konkani. By the end of the tenure of the Board it was found that this representative of the Hindu masses in the GKA was asking for more, which the traditional GSB leadership could not entertain. The secular and undisputed leader of Konkani such as Uday Bhembre, a strong supporter of Naik in the past, who was considered as a balancing factor between the young and the old groups, was transformed into the pro-GSB strategist and later found Pundalik Naik’s demands wrong. Purushottam Kakodkar, in his attempt to weaken Naik, decided to forgo his own monthly honorarium, thereby depriving Naik of that benefit. Another term for Kakodkar was secured because of his Delhi links, in spite of efforts of Pundalik Naik to get himself promoted. The tussle between Naik and Kakodkar continued till such stage when aged Kakodkar declined in health. In this situation he resigned from the post of President. Pundalik Naik continued as the Vice-president. As Kakodkar favoured Bhembre as his successor and made sure that the state government nominated Bhembre to the post after him (even though Bhembre was not involved in the work of the Akademi in any capacity during this term)²⁶, Pundalik Naik tendered his resignation as the Vice-president.

The GSB leadership of both GKA and KBM continued after 1996, with Bhembre replacing Kakodkar in GKA and Raju Naik getting the second term as the KBM President. But the individual interests of these two soured the relations

²⁶ When the Executive Board was being constituted for that term, Bhembre was approached with a proposal that he would be taken as a member but the latter refused, says Pundalik Naik.
between the institutions. Also the two Konkani leaders representing two generations competed for the electoral opportunities with a Congress ticket in Margao. The KBM under the young team took initiative to rope in youth from the masses with Youth Festival of its own and also tried to construct the Konkani Bhavan to house its office and the school. Earlier efforts in that direction under the non-GSB leadership of KBM had poor response, but with the GSB individual in command, resources were managed and the project costing over Rs. 25 lacs was completed within a year. By 1998 the elections to the KBM turned into a political battle on prestige issues. KBM platform was used to attack the GKA openly. Three consecutive terms for Raju Naik as KBM president led to constant confrontation with the GKA and persistent demands for direct government assistance without GKA intervention. Youth force mobilised by the KBM through the annual activities like Goa Yuwa Mahotsav was perhaps intended to be used to exhibit the anti-seniors sentiment and resentment towards them. But the frontranking leaders in the movement managed to turn the tide and get the key mobilisers on their side. These key mobilisers such as Sandesh Prabhudesai, Shridhar Kamat, Prashant Naik, with the background of students' movement guided by leftist ideas, found the appeal and approach of the seniors (considered as secular minded) more valid and sincere. This realignment in a way helped in getting a secular and democratic face to the movement to replace the caste image under the GSBs. The KBM leadership on the other hand tried to bring the Catholic section closer through different activities. They found the professional theatre activists (users of Roman script and essentially catering to Catholic
audience) quite willing to get some recognition from the 'mainstream' / 'official' section that KBM represented. Some active elements of the Konkani movement from Mangalore were brought in to create a feeling of initiative for broad-basing the movement. During the process of completion of the Konkani Bhavan there was a suggestion from a prominent GSB fund raiser to form a Trust in the name of the Bhavan.

The moves on the part of the KBM president to challenge the hegemony of the seniors found support from a small section of the Bahujan Samaj led by Pundalik Naik, whose attempt to gain control of the GKA had failed. As a result of this the KBM biennial elections started being fought under the rival panels, as against the unopposed elections in the past when hardly 10% of the members attended the General Body meetings and the nominations received from them for the positions would sometimes be less than the posts to be filled. In the post-94 scenario the enrolment and quality of membership were guided by the electoral considerations. With re-election of the KBM leadership in 1998 the anti-GKA stand hardened further.

Also the All India Konkani Parishad's 'closed' character was sought to be rectified through the involvement of youth. To achieve this, the XIV Akhil Bharatiya Konkani Sahitya Sammelan (All India Konkani Literary Conference) 1998 was organised at Margao between 23rd and 25th January 1998.

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27. In 1990, for instance, the General Body that elected the Executive Committee for the two year tenure was attended by only 30 members and only ten nominations were received for the 12 positions in the Committee.
28. There were charges that the membership was given to those who had nothing to do with Konkani language and literature or the KBM and its objectives. These votes in block were used to seek re-election in the face of limited genuine voter turn out, especially in 1998.
to link it with the Goa Yuwa Mahotsav (Goa Youth Festival) held on 20th and 21st January making it a Konkani Saptak (Konkani Week) between 19th and 25th January by adding a childrens' get-together on 19th January and a book exhibition with a seminar on 22nd January. But the national literary event did not find the response of youth who had responded in large numbers to their cultural fest just two days earlier. The hopes of building support base of youth for Konkani were belied, the plan of making the Sammelan successful in Goa had a limited success.

The KBM president Raju Naik in his third term had a team that had only one non-GSB member in the Executive Committee. The arbitrary behaviour of the group was criticised openly by some sections. The Parishad session was planned in Belgaum. GKA had moved out of the phase of conflict by replacing Pundalik Naik with N. Shivdas, of the same caste. But the relations between GKA and KBM had continued to be strained. The key mobilisers of youth were finding the KBM functioning increasingly autocratic. Communication between the different bodies working for Konkani was becoming problematic. In this situation Pundalik Naik as President of the XXII Parishad at Belgaum came out openly against the attitude of expediency and hegemonic tendencies in the movement.

The attempt by the KBM President Raju Naik for re-election of his panel for the fourth consecutive term in April 2000 led to open confrontation. GKA President Uday Bhembre, who was attacked by the KBM leadership on various counts, managed to forge the unity of different sections, projecting another uncontroversial secular-minded GSB writer – Damodar Mauzo – as the prospective KBM leader. Elections were fought with unprecedented interest
resulting in the record turn out of members for voting. In the confrontation between the forces that worked behind the KBM and the GKA the apex national body of the language i.e. All India Konkani Parishad also came to be used as the official platform to challenge its own ‘policy’.

*Parishad Presidents’ Resentment:*

The Parishad had the five main objectives at its foundation. The script issue was relegated to the background all the time on the basis of one of these objectives i.e., ‘to use Devanagari - the original/ natural and national/ Indian script for Konkani’. The resolution, ‘Devanagari script should be used for Konkani’, at the first Konkani Parishad in 1939, added to making Devanagari the script of Konkani. In the successive Parishads, and subsequently the sessions of the Parishad, in different regions the issue of script was made into a non-issue through the functionaries and experts/ authorities who made a passing reference to multiliteralism but stressed on the authenticity, necessity and naturalness of Devanagari for Konkani.

In some instances the acknowledgement of fact was clearly evident. Santoshkumar Gulvady in his article ‘A Script for Konkani: Should We Fight?’ (Mogrem Parishad Souvenir, 1989) said, ‘When Devanagari was adopted for Konkani, it was thought that a major problem was over. In reality a series of complications developed’. He felt that, ‘let people write Konkani in any script they choose. They should be recognised as Konkani people. Let the script not divide us.’ As a responsible member of the organising host institution and an
insider of the Manipal Pai establishment his fear of ‘script split’ further hampering ‘the much needed development’ has substance. This was realised in the medium of instruction controversy in Goa in which the dividing lines were getting strengthened by communal rift. The ‘vertical split’ on ‘a trivial point of script’ culminating in ‘a slow death dose to the language’ was to be avoided by setting ‘a deadline to resolve our complications of script …by A.D. 2000’. At the same time ‘every Konkani person should get an equal opportunity to participate in building our Mai Bhas’. He does realise that recognising ‘only 8% of Konkani speakers as real Konkanis’ (on the basis of script) was for all practical purposes ‘a death blow to a living, vibrant and expressive language’ (Gulvady in Mogrem, 1989). The business acumen of Pais in running the Kannada weekly ‘Taranga’ under the editorship of Gulvady to make it the most circulated and popular magazine in the language justifies his stand on script. But the ambiguity ingrained in the whole argument of an accomplished journalist seemed to exhibit the balancing act.

The more assertive and academically strong position was taken by the President of the XXI session of the Parishad in Mumbai (1997). In his Presidential address Dr. William Madtha, a linguist by training and a disciple of Dr. S.M.Katre, distinguished between unity and uniformity to say that what was being proposed and promoted in the name of uniformity was detrimental to the language. He spoke of pluralism and contested the imposition of script and standardisation by a particular style, meaning Goan Hindu Konkani (Madtha, 1997). Stressing that script could not be equated with language or literature he
placed the creation of Konkani script at the top of Konkani language planning. He hoped to see transliteration gaining momentum with increasing use of computers and suggested the continuance of production and publication of literature in different scripts. The assessment of ground reality regarding the readership, popularity, quality in different scripts through field studies should decide the script and standard form for Konkani, he opined (Sunaparant, 26th Jan.1997). The stand of Dr. Madtha as the President of the Parishad was seen by a Goan writer and a leading member of the Parishad, Nagesh Karmali, as ‘conservative’ and ‘status quoist’. Dr. Madtha’s approach was seen as ‘advocacy of the specific Konkani section of Mangalore’ and contrary to the long established principle of the Parishad viz. ‘One Language, One Script, One Literature’. He was also reminded by Karmali that in 1939 it was the Konkani speaking leadership from Karnataka, more than that of Goa or Bombay, that had forcefully led the move to adopt Devanagari as the authentic script for Konkani. Citing the sacrifice of the Goan users - of the Roman script on one hand and of the Marathi language on the other - the larger good was shown as the end. Kerala Konkani was seen as coming closer to Goa Konkani after the adoption of Devanagari in place of Malayalam script there. The attempt of Mr. Karmali in his article was to show that the script issue was already decided and further discussion on that count would perpetuate the confusion and chaos experienced by other languages such as Santali having different scripts in use (Sunaparant, 4th Feb. 1997).

The very next session of the Parishad (XXII session at Belgaum in Karnataka) held in January 1999 was also marked for the dissenting voice of the
President from the *Parishad* platform. Mr. Pundalik Naik, whose involvement in the *Parishad* dated back to 1974, was selected as the President because of his own claim\(^29\). The KBM President Raju Naik, who worked as the *Parishad* General Secretary, favoured the candidature of Naik as he found in him an ally to counter the forces that worked under the seniors in the Movement. Naik in his Presidential address criticised the GSB hegemony and their attitude of exploitation and monopolisation (Presidential Address, 1999). Speaking on behalf of the Hindu masses he made observations about the approach of the Goan Catholics towards Konkani and concluded that they have taken a divorce from Konkani, admitting openly that no planning was done for the Catholics to shift over to Devanagari when they gave up the Roman script. He held the main section of Konkani movement (meaning the Goan GSB leaders) responsible for this and lamented the fact that the Catholics had political leaders of Konkani but not the literary ones. His observation that the youth power was ready to work for Konkani but the leadership was ‘scared of this force’ (Presidential Address, 1999: 17), referred to his open confrontation in the GKA and the persistent clash of interests seen in the strained relationship of the young President of the KBM with the veterans of the movement.

On his part Pundalik Naik joined forces with the KBM President Raju Naik with a view to raise pressure on the state to implement the Official language

\(^{29}\) According to Mr. Naik he should have been given the Presidentship of the *Sahitya Sammelan* at Kochi in 1996, as was desired by the organisers there. But Nagesh Karmali managed to get it, and there was disappointment among the leading organisers such as K. Gokuldas Prabhu. Naik also felt that denial of opportunity to him had its reflection in poor attendance at the event in Kochi.
Act. A meeting was convened at Margao on the Official Language Day (4th February 1999)\textsuperscript{30} in which an Ad-hoc committee for the implementation of the OL was formed.

\textbf{State Policy and Activists’ Response:}

The language and literature were projected primarily as cultural resources of the language community at large. The movement seeking social status and political standing for the language speakers was, however, identified with smaller sections. All through the three decades after Goa liberation the reins of popular movements of Konkani remained with the GSBs, who roped in the individuals from the Hindu masses and those from the Catholics for specific purposes. In the sixties the Opinion Poll was won with the whole-hearted support of the Catholics. The Sahitya Akademi recognition was ensured by showcasing the regional and religious forces in unison, justifying the claims of literary standard with numerical strength that included users of the four major scripts for Konkani coming from all the states on the west coast of South India. The OL agitation was made broadbased with the involvement of the Hindu \textit{Bahujan Samaj} and the Catholic masses. The real test of the Konkani movement was to be in the state of Goa, where the political worth of the language was to be tested.

With the conferment of Statehood on Goa vide the 57\textsuperscript{th} amendment to

\textsuperscript{30} Since the Official Language Bill making Konkani the OL was passed in the legislative assembly of Goa, Daman and Diu on 4\textsuperscript{th} February, 1987, this day came to be celebrated every year as the OL Day through the Goa Konkani Akademi. Seminars, discussions are arranged to review the status of OL, discus ways and means to speed up implementation of the Act.
the Constitution in 1987, the language policy of the state government became vital in terms of local administration, school education, democratic participation. The OL Act passed by the legislature of the Union Territory (that included the pockets of Gujarati speaking Daman and Diu) was questioned by those who found the provisions relating to Marathi unjust. Marathi side, on the other hand, tried to prove the Act as irrelevant, as it was passed by the legislative assembly of the Union Territory and not the new state. The OL Act satisfied no one: Catholics did not get the Roman script though Konkani was the OL, majority of Hindus who read and wrote Marathi felt deceived due to the ambiguous status accorded to the language (use of Marathi allowed for the purposes for which Konkani would be used, which implied 'equal status') in the Act. The Act provided for the issue of specific Official Notifications for the use of OL in specific areas of administration. The state used this provision and issued two separate Notifications making it mandatory for the government authorities to reply to the correspondence from the public in the language used by the individual senders (either Konkani or Marathi). The orders were ineffective because neither the administration nor the people were keen to change over from English. The need and prospects of emigration had made English the medium of school education for over half a century, central administration for the first twenty five years of liberation had based the administration firmly in English. People of Goa, particularly the youth in the post-liberation phase, had to make hard cultural choices. On the one hand, they valued identity that they could locate through language and culture of their own, but on the other, there were economic
compulsions that gave primacy to English as a cultural asset on which rested the opportunities for migration and mobility. This dilemma informed the public choices and demands during the integrative phase of Goa. Statehood led to political instability in which the language issue came up time and again as a handy tool to swing the public opinion or distract the popular attention from the serious economic or constitutional issues. The exception to this was the OL training programme for the government functionaries initiated in 1990 during the tenure of Churchill Alemao as the minister in charge, followed by the purchase of Devanagari typewriters for use in administration. Neither of these were put to use and the OL Act remains a unfulfilled promise.

The non-implementation of the Act has figured in the press writings and Konkani gatherings occasionally (Khandeparkar, 2000; Mauzo, 1996). The Goa Konkani Akademi has in its annual calendar the two days marked for celebration – the Constitutional Recognition Day (20th August) and the OL Day (4th February), which are used to discuss the achievements of the movement and apathy of the state. The Akademi as a state funded autonomous body finds its hands tied and the movement is in doldrums. Those who led the movement in the past have either occupied some official position in the Akademi or are running the KBM. With no effective dissenting voice and nothing more to demand from the state activists and leaders are not sure of the status of the movement. The OL cell created in the state administration is not equipped even to enforce the maiden order issued so far with regard to implementation of the OL Act (Sunaparant, 4th Feb.1997).
The Advisory Committee of the cell was constituted with a number of Konkani writers as its members. The non-functional committee remained on paper and the members, unable to get the government authorities to activate it, finally resigned from the committee in anguish. While the top level administrators – All India Services people – were not serious about its implementation, the local politicians made it a tool of pacifying Konkani protagonists.31

Goa Konkani Akademi organised a seminar on OL on the OL Day in 1997 and submitted its recommendations to the state as desired by the then Minister for OL and the Chief Secretary. The Plan of Action was suggested but it remained unattended to. The issue was given a boost around the Belgaum session of the Parishad under Pundalik Naik. At the inaugural function of the Yuwa Mahotsav on 7th Jan. 1999 Naik reminded the then CM about the implementation of the OL Act and specified the deadline of the OL day (4th Feb. '99) for the same. In his Presidential address at the Belgaum session (15th Jan.'99) he reiterated that the time to wait was over. The OL day that year was used as an occasion for a get-together in Konkani Bhavan and a committee called the Official Language Implementation (Ad-hoc) Committee was formed to prepare the blue-print for the implementation of the OL Act. This committee organised a convention on 16th May '99 in Margao, which resolved to protect and promote Goans' identity, culture and economic interests, to put an end to the language controversy, to ensure the optimum utilisation of Goan resources in the interest of

31 One of the top bureaucrats was quoted as saying that implementing the use of Konkani was a sure way to pack them off. (Pramod Khandeparkar in Gomantak Times 25.1.1999). The Ministers for OL year after year assured publicly that the Directorate of OL would be made functional and Konkani would get its due.
Goans and to stop further erosion of Goan identity and culture. To fulfill these objectives *Goa Hit Rakhan Manch* (Forum for protection of Goan interests) was formed in the same meeting. This *Manch* worked as a pressure group in respect of certain economic interests like government employment where knowledge of OL was to be verified under the specific provisions. But this exercise could not sustain the tempo for long. Most of those who spearheaded the move were made to take up the responsibility of the KBM after the elections to the body in 2000. While the move was initiated by Pundalik Naik, who had challenged the established GSB leadership openly from the platform of the apex body of Konkani language, in the course of its formalisation and consolidation the focus was shifted from the implementation of the OL to the larger Goan interest, which amounted to sidelining of the main issue. This was seen as a wise move considering the stalemate created in the social life by the language controversy. Those in the *Manch* wanted to convince the Marathi side that they were willing to work together for the economic well being of Goans. This was not easy to accept, in the opinion of the Marathi protagonists.

In the year 2000 the issue of OL was raked up in the state legislature by the two Hindu majority political parties - MGP and BJP. Two different Bills seeking amendments to the existing Act were proposed, prompting the Konkani side to raise their voices of protest. The show of strength this time was to pressurise the government to maintain status quo. The strength mobilised from the Hindu masses through the GKA-sponsored literary schemes, KBM's popular activities for youth over the years was exhibited on the streets of Panaji, the
capital town on the eve of the commencement of the monsoon session of the legislative assembly of Goa in 2000. This was the first time that a public demonstration of Konkani force was managed without direct involvement of the church and the Catholics. The proposed Bills were allowed to lapse after the political objective of embarrassing and cornering the government was achieved, followed by the BJP-supported government coming to power. The issue was forgotten after the BJP formed its coalition government under the first GSB chief minister in Goa. The occasion of the completion of 125 years of Shennai Goembab’s birth was used to seek government support to the idea of celebrating the year as ‘Asmitai Vors’ (The year of identity). Environmental issue like ‘Save Madei’ (a popular movement against the plan of damming upstream in Karnataka the lifeline of Goa – Mandovi river) was linked to the celebration of this year (and through it to Konkani language movement) which invited criticism of the Marathi side. While the language has attained legal as well as ‘national’ status its popular use and wider acceptance have remained a distant dream.

The language movement has caused some change only in ‘official’ and ‘literary’ terms, which has benefitted only a small minority. In education the language has found a place at the university level that too only in Goa but those offering the language at that level are left to their fate as no provision is made by the state machinery or by the education system to provide them opportunities. The language bodies and organisations have nothing ambitious or attention worthy to offer in their functioning and planning, except the role of distributor of goodies in terms of awards, positions and opportunities within a limited regional and caste
circle. As a result the ‘historic’ struggle for national status to a language has culminated in securing the prestige and positions to a select few within the section of a language community. In the world of competitive politics script has come in handy to those having access to education, administration and power-play in the regional scheme of things. Their predicament is clearly seen in their attempt to stress that the identity and culture called Konkani is found only in ‘their’ language, which is defined by ‘their’ script.

All the issues and events hereto discussed lead us to certain posers in relation to what the language has achieved through the long movement. While multiplicity of scripts has been shown as the strength of the language (Borkar in Konkan Times -??), there is repeated and consistent appeal in favour of a single script (Keni, Karmali, Rao, Mallaya, Swami Supriya from the Parishad and Sammelan platform). The political trends and administrative mechanisms have been used to support the single script to gain authenticity and status. But in the process the living system of language and its link with community has come under pressure. While by appropriating the language in official terms in the name of script, an elite caste among Hindus has provided a security cover for itself, the language as a whole has suffered a setback. Those using scripts other than Devanagari have realised that their language has no standing in official terms, which also deprives them of many opportunities of fuller participation in cultural life at different levels. The questions of distributive justice and enjoyment of fundamental rights also figure in the process. Cultural compartmentalisation in the name of script puts hurdles in the process of developing a sense of equality of
status and that of opportunities. Those who have their most intimate and inseparable aspects of cultural and social life defined through their language, find themselves outside the arena of recognition because of script. Their identity is defined in terms of symbolic expression with acquired system instead of their living and vibrant mode of self-representation through their tradition. While the attributes such as scientific, natural, appropriate and national strengthen a medium of script they also essentialise an aspect in the cultural domain to restrict the entry of others.

While the claim to Konkani started as a search for identity by a Hindu upper caste group its association with the old religious literature of the Roman Catholics made the whole issue appear secular. In the course of political transformation in the colonial regime in Goa during the early decades of the 20th century, the same caste tried to identify itself with the neighbouring Maharashtra through growing Marathi influence. But the metropolitan experience of the caste led its intellectuals to stress cultural differences using the language and region as the bases of identity. Nationalist movement, and promotion of Devanagari through it, worked towards gaining credence to the Aryan-Hindu character of the language, which expressed itself through the element of script. Though there was general consensus on Devanagari as the common and ideal script for Konkani its acceptance by all the sections was simply taken for granted, its popularisation through education and communication remained neglected. The votaries of Devanagari especially from Goa captured the movement and using their closeness with the Congress party and government at the centre managed to achieve their
goal of making Konkani in Devanagari script 'authentic' and official. In this process the large Catholic population from Goa and Karnataka, producing large amount of literature and using their language in their community cultural life was left out, as the scripts they used for Konkani were pushed to a corner in the eyes of law and the state. This transformed the debate on recognition to language into other larger issues of culture, identity, polity, citizenship and civic rights. Politics of recognition in this period has undergone change as there are castes, communities, regions claiming their share of recognition with respect to what the language has supposedly achieved.