CHAPTER III: SCRIPT AS A DRESS CODE

KONKANI AND ITS SCRIPTS

As seen earlier, the language called Konkani was known to and studied by the early Roman Catholic missionaries during the 16th century, the first century of the colonial encounter. During the 17th century they published some grammars, prepared dictionaries and vocabularies, composed hymns and songs for use in worship by the local converts to christianity. It is accepted even by the Marathi scholars that the name Konkani was given to the speech of South Konkan in ancient times and in the 17th century it was known by that name (Kulkarni, 1938: 31). But the language suffered due to the vicissitudes of the colonial policies in that regard. The later lull in the activities was the result of the Decree of the Portuguese Viceroy in 1784, brought about by the internal politics of the religious orders and groups/ classes of clergy (SarDessai, 2000: 14). In the two centuries between the arrival of the Portuguese and the establishment of Estado da India the regional politics of Konkan underwent drastic changes.

The emergence and expansion of Maratha power shaped the history of a large part of India between the 17th and the 19th centuries. Goa as a geographical construct of the present was largely shaped during this period. The Portuguese had sway also over North Konkan till 1739 A.D. (BSK II: 549), while the Maratha power had control over almost the whole of south Konkan except the three islands that comprised the Old Conquests of the Portuguese Goa. The second half of the eighteenth century witnessed the creation of larger Goa through
the addition of the New Conquests. The language and culture of Konkan had witnessed major changes during this whole period of over two centuries.

The British ascendancy in India displaced the Peshwa rule that concluded the Maratha epoch. The issue of Konkani as a language figured in the early years of this transition in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Problems concerning its name and status cropped up in a dispute with regard to the translation of the New Testament called as the Kunkuna Bible Vol. V published in 1818 by the Serampore missionaries 'in another dialect of the Marathi language', in use 'in southern Konkan, in the vicinity of Goa' (Pinge, 1960: 61). The Bombay missionaries did not recognise this kunkuna, saying that:

'We are prepared to state that from Goa northward through the whole of the Kunkun, the Mahratta language is universally spoken with only a slight provincial variation from the same language as spoken at Poona. From the name of the country this language has been called the Kunkunee language, but it differs in so slight a degree from the Mahratta, that in our judgement of able brhmuns whom we have consulted, a distinct version is neither at all desirable nor justifiable.'

According to these missionaries, the name Kunkunee (Konkani) came 'from the name of the country' and the language was not much different from the Mahratta (Marathi). Therefore, they opined, 'a distinct version (of the Bible) [sic] is neither at all desirable nor justifiable'. The version, printed in 'the Balbodh character' i.e. Devanagari script, according to Rev. Bruce, is 'much more easily read than the Marathi version, but its idioms are less easily understood'. One can gather that the idioms were not as Marathi as the character in which the work was printed. Also it is easy to understand what makes the work 'undesirable' and 'unjustifiable', if one notes that the 'judgement' was the result of 'consultation' with 'able brhmuns', who, almost certainly, had to be the Marathi Brahmins, for
whom Marathi was the language of the region. The dialect used in the translation was similar to the one current in Mangalore in the 20th century, which possibly occurred in Goa in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Court Pundits from south Konkan who were consulted, discounted the effort as 'no language at all' (Pinge, 1960: 62 quoting The Oriental Christian Spectator, July 1836). Serampore missionaries considered this criticism as unfounded and in their bid to counter the attack, solicited a recommendation on the usefulness of the specific version from an officer of the Madras Civil Service. But in this battle, the Konkani Bible was the victim. It failed to gain popularity while the other language editions, particularly Marathi ones, had widespread use in the region.

In this sense, the use of Devanagari script seems to have caused this denial of language status to the Konkani version, because it was seen as Marathi, though till then the script by itself was not called Marathi but Balbodh i.e. 'simple' or etymologically, easy for children to understand. This script has been acquired by the Hindu masses in Konkan and Goa, the region of 'Konkani', through learning of Marathi, which is a phenomenon of the twentieth century (Desai, 1990: 12), though it was in use traditionally only among sections of the upper castes engaged in intellectual/academic or administrative/financial matters. In the nineteenth century, the Hindus in Goa had no organised school education system and even in the 'shennaimam' system discussed in earlier chapter the instructions were provided in four different characters (Barpem) rather than specific languages. Even the arithmetical/numerical operations had their own names different from

2. Fr. Maffei, in his Konkani Grammar written in the last decades of the nineteenth century distinguishes between Balbodh and Modi and names the latter as Mahratti.
the ones used in Marathi education in later years and modified further for Konkani in the second half of the 20th century Goa. The language that figured in the ‘Lalits’ (devotional songs and prayers) was Marathi as an element of religious worship. Reading skill was needed to be able to read the ‘Rokhe’ i.e. money receipts and promissory notes written in Balbodh (Devanagari) and Modi (the cursive or twisted script, which was then used for Marathi). In short, the three R’s had limited relation with a specific language as such. Moreover, all this was the privilege of the male members in the upper caste among Konkani speakers viz. Saraswats, as girls were not usually given all this education. Masses had no formal education at all. Konkani speakers who had migrated further south had already adopted the regional languages there for day-to-day communication and even in their literary expression, as can be seen from some names appearing as the pioneers of those languages. In the north, strong Marathi influence and proximity to Konkani as a language challenged the status of Konkani and affected its effective use.

For Konkani speaking community, the language identity is problematised largely by its multiliteral character. As seen above, the use of Devanagari makes it Marathi, for many. It is on the same count that Konkani was mentioned in the past as having no independent alphabet (The daily Dnyana Prakash- 13th march 1924 [Chavan, 1995: XVII]). That Konkani had no alphabet of its own was surprising for many, who considered its written forms (Roman or Nagari) as dressing up

---

5. For example, addition was then called ‘mali’ meaning a garland or chain in common parlance; addition and subtraction together were called ‘terjo’ and the four applications of this latter were taught in respect of four different currencies or mediums of exchange viz. Asuri, Rupia, Newtanka, and Garanv. For multiplication and division the numerical tables were taught not only of whole numbers but even fractions.
Konkani uses five different scripts for writing, as mentioned in the earlier chapters. These five scripts have accompanied the invaders or colonisers from different geographical and cultural regions or have been adopted by those who subjected the language to writing. These scripts are in use for other major languages serving much larger communities and territories. Out of these five, only one – Devanagari - is officially recognised on the basis of its Aryan and Indian character. Of the remaining, two, viz. Kannada and Malayalam are Dravidian and are employed to write the two south Indian languages, while the other two – Roman and Arabic - have their origins outside India, but had their strong presence in cultural, economic, social and political life as shown by the forces of history of the sub-continent.

The earliest use of each of these scripts for writing Konkani is yet to be probed thoroughly. Each of these scripts has some literature in Konkani and often the literary history of Konkani in a particular region is limited to works that are written in the specific regional script. In Kerala the literary history starts with certain \textit{Puranas} in translation and \textit{charitras} in original, manuscripts of which are said to be in the custody of the Konkani Brahmins at Ernakulam\footnote{John Leyden (1775-1811) in his visit to Malabar and Cochin at the turn of the eighteenth century, met some Konkani Brahmins, who showed him ‘Bhagavatam, Linga Purana, Ramayana and Bharata’ in their Konkani translations and also ‘Virabhada Charitra and Parasurama Charitra’ among original works (Mallaya, 1993:2).}; and in secular sphere, the testimonial in Devanagari script by three Konkani Brahmins to \textit{Hortus}
*Indicus Malabaricus*, a botanical compendium of the 17th century (Da Cunha, 1991 [1881]: 43-44). In Karnataka, the reference is made to the songs and discourses of the saints and Swamis of the Konkani Brahmins (Pereira, 1992 [1973]: 39) which, in all probability, are in Kannada script but though the same script is in use among both - Catholics and Hindus - for writing Konkani, the large number of Konkani speakers who are Catholics find their tradition in the hymns, verses and liturgical items prepared by their priests for use in church and at home. Much of the early writings are in the nature of religious instructions, biographies of saints, guide books on moral and spiritual life. Same is true in case of Goa, where the earliest available literary works are in Roman script; they are religious and linguistic in nature and date back to 16th century. As regards Goan Hindus, there is little that can be shown as old Konkani literature in Devanagari script and whatever is documented as extant in the collections of libraries and museums in Europe is largely in Roman script (Naik, 1990: vi) or in Devanagari script but with mentions of some priests as responsible for transcribing/ transliterating the same. Obviously, no single script can claim to represent or reflect Konkani reality in totality.

The factors at play in each of these cases of duality in literary traditions are either community, religion or caste/region and language. In Karnataka, where the largest number of Konkani speakers are found, the duality is further qualified by the language traditions of different regional groups in the past few centuries. A large part of North Kanara having lived under the Maratha rule, then under the Bombay Presidency, followed by the Bombay state, before being included in Mysore state (currently called Karnataka), has the history of Marathi language as
medium of education, administration and communication. South Canara, on the other hand, was earlier a part of the Madras Presidency before it became a part of Mysore (later Karnataka) along with certain regions under local princes. History and geography have interacted in the making of language community and its culture in these regions. Migration of Konkani speakers from Goa to these areas in pre-colonial times, during the early colonial colossus and in later years included those who were adventurous and enterprising, those subjected to forcible religious conversions, those who had moved in search of livelihood and also those who moved there in panic and in an attempt to avoid conversions. All these did have their own distinct group choices in their new settings, informed by their cultural, economic and political imaginations as well as experiences. These were modified over time in their search for stability, security and dignity. Though occupying the territory within the same geographical boundaries and claiming to belong to the same place and language, these groups came to speak of their different scripts as their traditions. They produced literatures, developed institutions and evolved a sense of community. In this way scripts became the tools of identity for Konkani speakers. Large part of their imagination and identity construction was the product of their literature produced in these scripts.

LITERARY HISTORY IN DIFFERENT SCRIPTS

The literature in Konkani is found in four major scripts viz. Devanagari, Roman, Kannada and Malayalam. The fifth one, Urdu has not received the

---

6. In coastal towns of Karwar, Ankola and Sadashivgad, there were Marathi medium schools till the last quarter of the 20th century. In rural places like Halaga and Hulaga, few kilometres from Sadashivgad, such classes were facing closure in nineteen nineties due to compulsion of Kannada and also demand for English in administration Marathi was in use till mid-1970s. In a place like Haliyal Konkani speaking people still consider Marathi as their language.
attention of scholars either due to the small size of the population involved, or because of the regional specifics which restrict the use of the script for Konkani to very small pockets, or its relative isolation within the areas of other languages and scripts.

The first bibliography of Konkani literature brought out in 1963 took note of books in three scripts viz. Devanagari, Roman and Kannada, and left those in Malayalam and Urdu unlisted, for want of any count or particulars. Mention is found of Muslims of Koorg and Nawait Muslims of South Kanara writing Konkani in Urdu script, and also that ‘there have been Konkani books in Malayali script’ (Kelekar, 1963: Preface). The short survey that follows here below suffers the same handicap and has to exclude Konkani books in Urdu script on account of non-availability of ready information even today. The present discussion covers the four other scripts, though not quite exhaustively. The count of books in Konkani has not been kept in later years - scriptwise or regionwise. But the abovementioned bibliography shows that the publishing in Roman and Kannada scripts has been numerically larger and also more regular for a major part of the twentieth century. It is also noted that there is a large amount of writing in these two scripts which has not been published. What the two scripts had in print till mid-20th century in an organised way was largely on religious practices, teachings and also creative writing in the form of novels or fiction, all having good readership. Another feature is that a few writers of fiction seem to have wide popularity and are found quite regular in their literary output (going by the number of publications on their names). In case of publishing in Devanagari in
Goa/ by Goans, this cannot be said because the popular fiction was almost non-existent till late 1960s⁸. Even in respect of the ‘Father of Modern Konkani Literature’, Shennai Goembab, the books running into editions have been hardly two or three⁹. In fact, the Konkani book publishing in Devanagari was a late starter as compared to the Roman script¹⁰. Also the majority of works in Devanagari enlisted in the published bibliography (as many as 68 out of 131) were the ones brought out by four publishers. These included only one professional publishing House, the rest being the Associations or enterprises run by the Konkani activists¹¹.

**Work In Devanagari**

If we consider the numerical strength of Konkani publications in Devanagari script on the eve of liberation of Goa, we realise that the activity of printing and publishing was conducted from Bombay, and we come across only a few titles published from Goa, of which the majority are stage plays by the

---

⁷ In Roman script, for example, writing of tiatr for presentation in local feasts and festivals goes on regularly but no tiatr has been published till early 1980s.
⁸ Barring the works of Shennai Goembab, the first collection of short stories in Devanagari script appeared in 1935, which was published in Bombay by writers from North Kanara (vonnillam) in their dialect but the one by Goans came only in 1959 under the title Bhuim Chamfim (having five short stories, three by Hindu Goans and one each by a Catholic and a Karwari Hindu).
⁹ Gomantipanishat Pt. I and II (stories) and Mogachem Lagn (play) had three editions (1933, 1969, 1989). No other book of his seems to have gone into further editions, though some of them are in demand for academic and research purposes. ‘Sadkeavelim Fulam of Bayabhav was brought out in late 1980s, along with the above, to cater to the demand from Goa University students doing their M.A. in Konkani.
¹⁰ The first few Konkani books in Roman script were published in mid-1850s with Portuguese titles, whereas the earliest Konkani books in Devanagari were a school primer and a Konkani-Portuguese Dictionary – both by Goa Catholics – almost forty years later, in the last decade of the 19th century. The publishing activity in somewhat organised way took off only in the second quarter of the twentieth century with the initiative of the Gomantak Printing Press of Kashinath Shridhar Naik in Bombay.
¹¹. The Associations were Konkan Bharati (which was established in mid-1950s with the objective of spreading the Gandhian views and ideology among Konkani speakers), Konkani Bhasha Mandal formed in 1942; the enterprise was the Gomantak Xapkhano owned by Kashinath Shridhar Naik or ‘Bayabhav’, fully devoted to Konkani and to Shennoi Goembab, hence honoured as ‘the Ashoka of Konkani’. The only publishing House that figured in this was the Zpopular Book Depot run by Bhatkals, a Konkani speaking family from South Kanara.
Saraswats and very few school books written by Catholics. This was partly due to the censor restrictions imposed by the Portuguese dictatorship in the post-republic phase on printing and publishing in Goa, but more because the protagonists of Konkani using Devanagari script were concentrated in Bombay and also because the language as a print medium had negligible following in Goa till mid-1950s. In Bombay it was Kashinath Shridhar Naik who led the publishing work. Goan Hindu youth took to publishing later under his guidance.

After liberation the things changed with many young Konkani activists, most of them Saraswats, descending on their homeland from their second home that was the metropolis of Bombay. The main work in terms of publishing immediately after liberation involved printing and supply of text-books for schools, some titles to propagate Konkani in education and some periodicals for children to begin with, following the decision of the Za Commission favouring Devanagari. After the eighth Konkani Parishad the work of printing and publishing Konkani in Devanagari script gained momentum, through the local Konkani Bhasha Mandal (KBM) mainly for popularising the language among children and for its use in education. One major ‘event’ that followed the Parishad was the release of five collections of Konkani poems of the same poet, R. V. Pandit (1917-1990), on the same day in 1963.

In the years before and after the Opinion Poll the local Marathi daily Rashtramat carried on the work of promoting Konkani in Devanagari through print whereas the local radio station attracted the local performers and artists to

12 Bakibab Borkar and Ravindra Kelekar were leading this generation.

13 Ravindra Kelekar was the main person who wrote different booklets in 1962 for Konkani Bhasha Mandal Goa. They were titled – Asachi Bhas Konknnich (32pp), Shallent Konknni Kiteuk? (30 pp) etc. and essentially directed to Hindus, being written in Devanagari.
Konkani. Bakibab Borkar (1910-1984), Vishnu Naik, who were the employees with Bombay station of All India Radio till then, continued the work in Goa station and the local recruits like Pundalik Narayan Dande, Krishna Laxman Moye, Kamaladevi Rau Deshpande were soon followed by Nagesh Karmali (b. 1933) and Shankar Bhandari (1928-1987).

In print, the earliest efforts to publish periodicals was that of Kashinath Shridhar Naik of Gomantak printing Press in Bombay in the form of 'Navem Goem' between 1934-37, followed by Ravindra Kelekar’s 'Mirg' (1953-57) published from Wardha, and two others – 'Saad', a quarterly (1952-54) and 'Sallik', a monthly (1955-56) published fro Bombay - marked the next decade. After liberation, Gurunath Kelekar started his periodical Navem Goem from Goa that continued appearing till 1969; others such as Suhas Dalal (Pormoll), Yashawant Palekar (Gomant Bharati), Shantaram Varde Valaulikar (Apurbai) contributed through their respective periodicals/ annual publications. Chandrakant Keni published the trilingual Triveni (Konkani, Hindi and Marathi) for some time during this decade. The continuation of the Union Territory status following the Opinion Poll helped the Konkani literary movement and Goan Konkani writers had their first conference in Margao in 1968. Till then book publishing in Devanagari as a professional activity had not taken off in Goa. Konkani Bhasha Mandal and Gomani Bharati had published a few books by then but only as a part of their programmes of popularisation of language and spread of new ideas in that regard. Sanjivani Prakashan of Gurunath Kelekar published few books for
children in this decade. *Sobit Sahitya Prakashan* had also started its activity but its major productions came in the 1970s.

The publishing activity got a boost with the establishment of *Jaag Prakashan* at Priol in 1970. Others to follow were *Apurbai Prakashan* (Volvoi), *Rajhauns Vitaran* (Panaji), *Shenai Prakashan* (Veling), *Kullagar Prakashan* (Margao) and many others. Some of these came into being only after the recognition of Konkani by the Sahitya Akademi in 1975. Many more started in 1980s with new writers in larger number appearing on the scene.\(^{14}\) Publication of special Diwali numbers of Konkani magazines started on the lines of those in Marathi.

The tenth *Konkani Parishad* held in Panaji in 1974 followed by the recognition to Konkani by the Sahitya Akademi were the major boosters for Devanagari, firstly, because of the renewed commitment to single script – Devanagari – publicly offered by Konkani activists of different states from the *Parishad* platform, and secondly, through the resolution in the *Akademi*\(^{15}\) favouring Devanagari as the script for Konkani. This status of 'modern Indian literary language' also strengthened the claim for inclusion of Konkani as a subject of study in higher education. The newly established Goa Board of

---

\(^{14}\) There were many publications publishing Konkani books in Devanagari starting from early 1980s but most of them were individual enterprises to publish one’s own books or had a few publication each to their credit. e.g. *Nami Prakashan* of Bharat Naik, *Agasti Prakashan* of Dilip Borkar, *Urba Prakashan* of N. Shivdas, *Chamunda Prakashan* of Ramakrishna Zuarkar, *Jari Prakashan* of Bhiku Bomi Naik, *Konkan Times* Publications of Tukaram Rama Shet.

\(^{15}\) In the recognition to Konkani by the Sahitya Akademi there was no mention of any particular script. The decision to restrict the benefits of recognition to Devanagari alone was made through a resolution passed in the Advisory Board of Konkani later. This is confirmed by Pundalik Naik and also by Felicio Cardoso, the convenor of the Board for the last term.
Secondary and Higher Secondary Education introduced Konkani as an optional language at secondary and higher secondary school certificate examinations. Though the shift to English medium at the level of elementary education was almost total in the Old Conquests mainly among Catholics by this time, the three language formula adopted in school education ensured that Catholic students offered Konkani as a third language along with English as the medium of instruction and Hindi as the national language. This also led to their being expected to learn Devanagari for studying the two languages, while all other subjects were taught in English. Inclusion of Konkani in the list of optional languages at the undergraduate level in the University of Bombay followed soon.

With the recognition from the Sahitya Akademi publishing activity got an impetus. The annual literary awards to different books in Devanagari script was a national honour and recognition, which boosted circulation of books and their publishing in a limited way. Many young Goan writers in Devanagari started their own publishing activity and the local government was approached with requests to purchase a few hundred copies of each book for public libraries and schools run by the government. Outside the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu, recognition and awards helped in establishing the association of Konkani with Devanagari script in official and academic circles. This in turn raised demand for the resource and study material in the script. In the decade following the recognition Konkani literary activities in Goa increased with the larger participation of youth who had studied Konkani and also others who considered it as a means of cultural expression. Writing and publishing in Devanagari helped this mobilisation and participation. Demands for opportunities for Konkani on the
television gained voice by 1980s which resulted in the establishment of Programme Generating Facility in Panaji in mid-80s. Goa Konkani Akademi came into being (1985) with its focus on Devanagari as the official representation of Konkani. Its activities, mainly the scheme *Pailo Chonvor* (literally meaning first flowering) of financial grants and subsidies to the first books of budding writers, projects such as *Sahitya Saptak* (Literary Week), workshops for young Konkani writers on different literary forms etc. helped in broadening the base of Devanagari. The Akademi also supported the publication of ‘transcreation’ of the epic *Mahabharata* by Ravindra Kelekar soon after the language became the Official Language of Goa in 1987, and its release in New Delhi at the hands of the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was viewed as a great step forward in the direction of the constitutional recognition that was awaited. This or the earlier translations of ‘*Yakshaprasna*’ and ‘*Raghuvaansha*’ of Kalidasa from Sanskrit to Konkani by Shripad Desai published in 1976, translations of the *Bhagavad Gita* both in prose and in verse\(^{16}\) were claimed as the proof of competency of the language to express the rich ancient Indian thought and ideas, in the line of Shennoi Goembab’s *Gomantopanishat*\(^{17}\). All this shaped the common standard of Konkani in Devanagari, for Goa, and also prepared a base for staking claims to the ‘national’ status. Most of these publications were promoted by Hindus with

---

\(^{16}\) The prose version ‘*Geeta Pravachanani*’(1956) was the translation of Vinoba’s discourses on *Geeta* (*Geeta Pravachane*) in Marathi and in many other Indian languages, and the verse form ‘*Gitay*’ appeared in print in 1960. Shennoi Goembab’s translation in prose, ‘*Bhagavantalena Geet*’ was completed in 1935 but published in 1959. At least ten other translations by individuals from North and South Kanara and also Kerala are mentioned in the latest translation (2002) by Suresh Amonkar.

\(^{17}\) *Gomantopanishat* published in two parts contained stories that reflected the lexical wealth and expressive ability of Konkani. It also implied a search of knowledge and philosophy (Upanishad) of Goa (Gomanta).
the exception of ‘Konkani Sorospot Prakashan’ of Dr. Olivinho Gomes, which has published some works in Devanagari.

A significant step in promoting Konkani was taken after the establishment of Goa University in 1985. The original proposal in the University was for a Konkani Chair but the same was developed into a full-fledged Department of Konkani with the teaching and research facilities from 1987 (Vishwa Konkani, 1995). This was followed by the introduction of the language as an optional subject of study at the undergraduate level in local colleges. The work of preparing study and reference material, however, did not take speed. The University also started the project of Konkani Encyclopedia under the editorship of Dr. Manohar Rai Sardessai. Originally planned to be published in three volumes of around 1000 pages each it was completed in four volumes by 2001, with consistent committed efforts of Dr. Tanaji Halarnkar, the Executive Editor who took over from Dr. SarDessai after the release of the first volume in 1992.

Though the major work in Devanagari script was from Goa, there were attempts by some people from other Konkani regions to write and publish in Devanagari. The works of Nagesh Sonde published through his Vasan
tik Prakashan or those of N. Purushothama Mallaya published by Konkani Bhasha Prachar Sabha, Cochin under his control are more in the nature of individual activities. Also the works of Prof. R. K. Rao through his Konkani Language Institute and all the publications of Kerala Konkani Academy over the past two decades are the prominent instances. The major shift to Devanagari from Malayalam was seen in Kerala, mainly in Ernakulam - in 1970s - with major concentration of the GSBs there. Konkani speakers in Kerala being largely
Hindus, they have followed the GSBs, thereby leaving little scope for script contest. Also in other places, writers and researchers such as Swami Supriya i.e. Fr. C.C.A. Pai (1927-2002), researcher and writer-poet from Haliyal in Uttara Kannada district, J.B. Sequeira (b.1937) and J. B. Moraes (b.1933), both poets originally from Mangalore region but living in Mumbai since decades, Santoshkumar Gulvady from Udupi-Manipal, have published books in two scripts - Kannada and Devanagari.

Journalism in Konkani in Devanagari script has not much to offer, except the daily Sunaparant published from Margao-Goa, which has very poor readership as compared to any other newspaper of any other language in Goa.18 Monthlies such as Jaag and Kullagar have survived for two decades, though the former had plans to suspend publication in mid-1990s due to economic non-viability. Annual Diwali special issues are peculiar to Marathi language periodicals and quite popular in Goa but most of those in Konkani appear quite late and irregularity is not very rare. Perhaps, this is because there is no competition for share in readership and government support through advertisements forms the major source for meeting the cost of production. The same is largely true for book publishing, where the assured purchase of a certain number of copies by the government agencies or departments is the most desired arrangement.19 But in spite of all this the average number of books published in

---

18. Raju Naik, who resigned as the Executive Editor of the only full fledged Konkani daily newspaper in Devanagari script in the early years of the last decade of the 20th century (within five years of the starting of the publication), mentioned the figure of daily sales as 500-700, in his speech at the Silver Jubilee celebrations of KBMK at Mangalore in 2000. The President of Gomantak Marathi Academy in his Press Note in December 2002, quoted the figure of little more than 1200.

19. Goa Konkani Akademi, for example, purchased hundred copies of each title for free distribution to various libraries. From those who have received the Sahitya Akademi awards, three hundred copies are purchased. (Vishwa Konkani 1995).
Devanagari in a year remained below 50 in the last decade of the twentieth century (Naik, 1995)\textsuperscript{20}. In fact the number 52 in 1995 was the highest since the recognition received in 1976 (Naik, 1996)\textsuperscript{21}, as per the records that are available.

**Contribution of Roman Script**

Roman script has been in use for printing of Konkani books since the early 17\textsuperscript{th} century. The major claims of the past glory of Konkani are based on the works in this script. In modern times, printing and publishing of books and periodicals started in this script in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The script being in use mainly among Catholics for religious purposes, almost all the literature in this script is produced and read by them. Hindu writers and publishers are rare to find and those who do, have their commercial interests above all others\textsuperscript{22}. Of late some writings from Devanagari are transliterated to Roman in the monthly *Gulab* regularly but Hindus do not generally write Konkani in Roman script.

The earliest works in the script during the Renaissance period of Konkani were published in the mid-nineteenth century by Miguel Vicente de Abreu\textsuperscript{23}. In the concluding years of the nineteenth century Eduardo Jose Bruno de Souza (1836-1905) wrote ‘*Kristavanchi Dotorn Goyenche Bhashen*’ (Christian Doctrine in the language of Goa) (1897), ‘*Eva ani Mori*’ (Eve and Mary) (1899). some

\textsuperscript{20} According to Fr. Naik there were 45 publications in 1987 while in 1994 there were 50.
\textsuperscript{21} In his review of publication activity in 1995, published in *Amar konkani*, he showed that only 52 books came out in Devanagari of which 23 were children’s books. Many were published by NBT or by some publisher with support from Goa Konkani Akademi and some were Sahitya Akademi releases, all three being the organisations established and by the government and maintained through state funds.

\textsuperscript{22} Prabhakar Tendulkar and his Dalesh Printers from Mapusa are a case in point.
collection of hymns and other works related to religious and family life. His most important works on the language and script were ‘Resurreccao do Concani’ (Resurrection of konkani) and ‘Primeira Cartilha do Alphabeto Mariano’ (First Book of Marian Alphabet) in the opening years of the twentieth century. The first novel ‘Kristanv Ghorabo’ (Christian Home) (1911) and the first periodical ‘Udentechem Sallok’ (The Lotus of the East) (1889-1894), a fortnightly published from Poona, were his gifts to Konkani (SarDessai, 2002: 101-105).

Msgr. Sebastiao Rodolfo Dalgado (1855-1922) compiled his Konkani-Portuguese dictionary in 1893, which contains Konkani words written in Roman script side by side with Devanagari. Twenty-five years before this the first dictionary of the modern times was compiled by an Italian missionary and published in 1868 in Goa (Kelekar, 1963: 66). A decade before Msgr. Dalgado's dictionary, Fr. Angelus Maffei had published his English-Konkani dictionary in Roman script from Mangalore. Another English-Konkani dictionary by Alex M. Dias was published in 1889. In this way the work of pioneers in Roman script for the modern era prepared the ground for rich literary production in the 20th century.

In the first decade of the twentieth century printing and publishing in Roman script was largely restricted to devotional literature though in the second half fiction and drama as well as books on other secular issues were printed. This period is known also for the translations of some theatrical plays and stories.

---

23. Between 1855 and 1866 Abreu published five books from Nova Goa, all with Portuguese titles. They were mostly on religious matters. (See Kelekar, 1963, p. 11)

24. The titles of these two works are in Portuguese, but they are mentioned in Kelekar (1963) under the Konkani titles in Roman script. It was a practice to give Portuguese titles to publications as can be seen from those given to Marathi periodicals in Devanagari published from Ponda-Goa even in the Portuguese Republican phase of the 20th century. Dada Vaidya’s Prachi Prabhaa carried the title Luz do Oriente and Swayamsevak of Priolkar had Voluntario printed on its cover page.
from French, Portuguese and English to Konkani by Shennai Goembab. From the third decade onwards publication of fiction gained momentum (Satoskar, 1975: 194) and by 1950s there were a few writers with a dozen or more titles to their credit. Publishing activity was quite consistent in the Roman script throughout the first half of the twentieth century and the momentum continued till the early 1970s, when the 'recognition' came. But following the 'recognition' and the authorised compulsion of Devanagari script, writing and publishing activity in the Roman script declined drastically (Naik, 1996).

Periodicals in Konkani appeared as the bi-lingual or tri-lingual publications starting from the last decade of the 19th century. *O Concani* (1892), *A Opiniao Nacional* and *O Intransigente* (1894), as Konkani-Portuguese weeklies and *O Povo Goano* (1892), *Leituras Amenas* and *A Civilisacao Indiana* (1893), *A Luz*, *O Bombaiense, O Amigo do Povo* and *The Echo* (1894) as the Konkani-Portuguese—English weeklies survived for varying durations of a few months to a year or two in most of the cases. Little is written about them in the accounts of the language movement. Roman script had its first daily newspaper *A Defesa Nacional* (1894) in Konkani-Portuguese, which was short-lived. The first fully Konkani bi-weekly *Udentichem Sallok* (1894) brought about the shift to unilingual journalism before the close of the 19th century. The early years of the 20th century saw another Konkani daily *Sanjechem Noket* (1907) in Bombay: the following decade witnessed the launch of *Dor Mhoineachi Roti* in Karachi and

---

25. In the first half of the decade there were manuals and catechisms, biographies of saints in large number, while in the last years of that decade an album of Konkani songs (1908), a *tiafr* (1909) and some humorous prose (1910) appeared in print along with religious and historical matters.

26. Antony Vicente da Cruz, Nacimento Dias, Ramon M. A. Dias, Reginald Fernandes, Caridad Domasceno Fernandes are some prominent names.
Vauraddeancho Ixtt in Goa, both of which are published till today. After 1920, many more weeklies, bi-weeklies, monthlies were started in Bombay and Goa and quite a few of these survived for almost half a century and even more in some cases (Barros, 1970: 95). They played a significant role in communication within the language community in the crucial years of its political and cultural transition. While the fact that so many periodicals including daily newspapers appeared in the script shows the intense urge for expression and communication in Konkani among its users, survival of a large number of them for years and decades, even nearing a century in a few cases, is a proof of managerial ability of their publishers and economic viability of these productions. All these were managed by Goan Catholics.

Hindu writers in Konkani tried to publish some periodicals in Roman script, the main among them being *Porjecho Avaz* edited by Bakibab Borkar and *Gomant Bharati* edited by Ravindra Kelekar both published from Bombay in 1950s. Their objective was to politically 'educate' Goan Catholics (Kelekar?) settled in Bombay and also to curb the adulteration of language (Barros, 1970: 96). They did not survive beyond a few years.

Liberation of Goa was seen as the new era for the Konkani Press in Roman script, in Goa (Barros, 1970: 96). The first weekly in the Roman script born in liberated Goa was *Goemcho Saad* (1962) started by Felicio Cardoso, then changed to *Saad* after a year, which was short-lived. *Uzvadd* (1963) could not continue beyond a few months. In 1967 the two dailies - Konkani *Sot* in Roman

---

24. Some of them were started in early decades of the 20th century from Karachi, Bombay and then shifted to Goa. *Dor Mhoineachi Rot, Vauraddeancho Ixtt* are the examples.
script and Portuguese ‘*A Vida*’ - combined into ‘*Diviti*’ which also had the same fate. Many other periodicals appeared on the scene after that but could not continue for long. In late 1970s Gurunath Kelekar’s ‘*Goemcho Mog*’ (1977) had made a room for itself during five years of its existence but was wound up for launching a daily ‘*Novem Goem*’ (1982) in both the scripts independently. This latter in the Roman script did not succeed and was closed after six years and the other in Nagari script did not come out. Another later attempt ‘*Goemcho Avaz*’ (1989) started by Fr. Freddy da Costa could barely survive beyond a little over a year. But the monthly ‘*Gulab*’ (1982) of Fr. Freddy has completed twenty years in 2002.

While literary expression found its way through printing and publications, there was an equally strong stream of popular theatrical activities in *tiatr* and musical expression in *cantaram* mostly as a part of these performances. Themes were generally contemporary and vocabulary drawn from the routine usages laden with Portuguese and English words. The *tiatr* grew as a commercial movement and groups of artists multiplied over the first half of the 20th century (Kale, 1986). The art form drew its substance largely from the traditional performances or *khel* common in Goan villages during festival season and themes reflected the socio-economic as well as cultural and political life experiences of Goans in general and Catholics in particular. Though these performances - amateur as well as commercial - attracted large audiences, they remained oral as a general practice.

---

28 In the post-Opinion Poll years Félicio Cardoso’s ‘*Loksaad*’ followed by ‘*Gomanta Surço*’, ‘*Goemcho Fuddari*’, ‘*Goenkar*’, ‘*Goemchem Fut*’ proved short-lived.

29 In the years following the Sahitya Akademi recognition the Shennai Goembab birth centenary was celebrated and in order to broaden the language movement a *yatra* was planned. It was used to collect funds for starting the daily editions of a newspaper in two different scripts (Roman and Devanagari) of which only one (the Roman script edition) materialised.
because not many writers got their *tiatr* scripts published in book form. Same was true for *Cantar* till the post-liberation boom in audio productions which influenced Goans in Bombay before it entered Goa. Both *tiatr* and *cantar* represent the popular creative genius of Goan Catholics but in terms of literary tradition and wealth they go unnoticed and are often discounted as means of momentary entertainment for the masses.

**Kannada scenario**

Use of Kannada script for writing Konkani is found in pre-colonial times. Ghantkar in his introduction to *History of Goa through Goykanadi script* (1993) says:

`...during the times prior to and even after the Portuguese conquest of this our beautiful land the writing of the native language was done by and large in Canarese script, popularly known as Candevi or Goykanadi. But, unfortunately, only a little of the material in that script is extant or available.' (p. IX)

According to him, around the mid-16th century only the *Goykanadi* script was used in Salcete. This was changed through official policy of the colonial rulers. Also in the New Conquests its use dwindled steadily and by the early 19th century the Modi script replaced it followed by Balabodh. This explains the genesis of the system of training in four scripts that was the order of the day among Hindus at the end of the nineteenth century.

Konkani writing must have continued in Kannada script by those who migrated to the south of Goa. The local script in the new setting (South Canara)

---

30. A government order of 1614 quoting a vice-regal order fixing a time-limit of two years for the village clerk of Cortalim to begin writing his office records in Portuguese language instead of using the "letra da terra" (native script), is mentioned as an instance (p. X) by Ghantkar.
would not have been entirely strange to them, while the language possibly was. Having settled as a community in new places, they continued the use of their own language for internal communication but had to adopt Kannada language for communication with the locals. The degree of internalisation of the local language was determined by the socio-economic status of different groups of these immigrants. While the converts were mostly in agriculture, the upper caste Hindus were either traders or agents-commercial or political—of the local rulers or the colonial powers, which roles demanded linguistic competence for communication. However, the script remained a common heritage.

The earliest writings in Konkani in Kannada script are attributed to Fr. Angelus Maffei, who combined the roles of Fr. Thomas Stephens and Mr. J. H. da Cunha Rivara in his work for Konkani. His dictionaries came within five years of his introduction to the language. The Konkani speakers till then had their folk literature including songs and stories and Catholics in particular had religious prayers, hymns etc. The Printing Press started by the Jesuits in 1882 facilitated the printing of Maffei’s dictionary in 1883. Fr. Maffei gave a call to Konkani speakers to lift their mother-tongue from its plight. He was followed by some

---

31 Dr. Manohar Rai Sardessai opines that it was the 19th century British policy of introducing Kannada language as the medium of education that gave impetus to Konkani language and literature, by presenting a script to Konkani speaking people of Karnataka.

32 Fr. Stephens had made the material in people’s language available for the religious and also initiated the scientific study of the language, thereby addressing the spiritual and the academic needs during the 16th century. Cunha Rivara not only presented Stephens’ historic work to the Konkani people, but also awakened them to ‘restore the mother tongue to its rightful place’. Fr. Maffei’s work of compiling a dictionary and a grammar of Konkani, preaching in Konkani and asking people to serve their mother tongue combined all the three aspects—spiritual, academic and temporal. In this sense he replicated the job of both the above in Karnataka.
priests through their compositions, translations, compilations etc. (SarDessai, 2000: 253). Literary activities in the script started with the landmark publication of *Konknni Dirvem* as a monthly in 1912. Started by a poet Luis Mascarenhas (1887-1961) with the help of U. Kannappa, a non-Konkani person, the magazine initiated and inspired many to write. The fields of poetry and short story were filled with young Konkani writers. The first full length original novel on social theme was *Angel* by Joachim Santan Alvares (1915-1993), published in 1950. Many others followed, prominent among them being V. J. P. Saldanha (1925-2000), A. T. Lobo (b. 1920), Edwin J. F. D'Souza (b. 1948), Stan Ageira (b. 1961), each with a number of novels to his credit. Again, these novels, some running into more than 500 pages each, have run into three or more editions and sold. Other genres like short stories and poetry have been quite rich and popular. Plays written by both Hindus and Catholics have been staged and published. While the tradition among Hindus is linked with temple performances, Catholics refer to *khell* as inherited from their folk tradition for their theatre movement. The earliest play of the modern age is said to be Bolantur Krishna Prabhu's *Chandrahasa-nattaka* written in the beginning of the 20th century and its popularity continued for over four decades in the Kanaras as well as Kerala. Few others such as G.N. Laxman Pai, Umanath Dongarkeri or Dongkerkeri Umanath Rao (1898-1967), Sundar Ullal, Devrai Baindoor or Baindoor Devrayu Aiyangal (1910-1999), Kudpi Vasudev Shenoy, B.V.Baliga (b. 1918) have enriched the Konkani stage in the region. On the Catholic side the beginning was made with religious plays in the 1920s and the progress continued under St. Joseph Natak Sabha in Mangalore established in 1938. A large number of playwrights have
contributed immensely, some with individual score of over 25 plays, though many were religious. V. J. P. Saldanha penned many successful plays which were appreciated. The champion of Konkani stage among Mangllurkars was C. F. D’Costa, the Chafra, ‘considered as the best playwright Karnataka has ever produced’ (SarDessai, 2000: 292). G.M.B.Rodrigues was the author of over fifty plays. There are many others with a good number of plays on their name, also staged successfully and published. Konkani theatre in Mangalore and Bombay has a history of almost a full century.

Journalism in Konkani in Kannada script has made a mark on the entire 20th century because of a number of publications not only surviving but also gaining economic viability and popular credibility. Starting from ‘Konkani Dirvem’ Konkani journalism has come a long way in Kannada script. The metropolis of Bombay has served as the breeding ground for many of these publications in their early stage. Even Dirvem was managed from Bombay for major part of its life, as its editor Alex Pais was a legal practitioner there. With the starting of ‘Raknno’ in 1938 as the journal of the Mangalore Diocese, Dirvem could not survive. In 1948 ‘Sukh-Dukkh’ started as a weekly in Bombay, which was followed by another weekly ‘Painnari’ (1950), ‘Mitra’ (1953) which later became ‘Zelo’ and ‘Konkan Daij’ (1958) on the lines of ‘Readers’ Digest’. The last had to be closed down but others still continue and are economically stable. Few others such as ‘Samajichem Vajra’ and ‘Ekvott’- both monthlies, ‘Jaagmaag’ and ‘Vishal Konkan’ – both weeklies, ‘Sankall’ – a monthly and ‘Samajichem Ful’ (later only ‘Ful’) – a daily, did not survive.
Return of some popular writers to Mangalore from Bombay in 1960s led to starting of some periodicals. Monthly ‘Kannik’ (1965) of Raimundo Miranda celebrated its silver jubilee, while the weekly ‘Udev’ (1974) of Chafra could not continue beyond 1977 and even in its rejuvenated tenure since 1987 it appears irregularly. A number of periodicals have lived for short spans. The two monthlies - ‘Umallo’ (1989) in Mangalore and ‘Jai Konkani’ (1994) from Kundapur – have continued as the latest arrivals on the scene. The two major publications deserve mention for their special features. ‘Amar Konkani’ (1981) devoted to research is published as a half-yearly in Kannada and Devanagari by the Institute of Konkani of St. Aloysius College, Mangalore whereas ‘Kurov’ (1989) is a monthly novel series at the least cost which had published and sold 81 titles by 1995 (Moraes, 1995). This short survey shows the trends of journalism in Konkani in Kannada script, mainly under the control of the Catholics. Besides these, many journals published as Diocesan publications have their specific readership and assured sustainability.

Saraswats (GSBs) had their monthly ‘Saraswat’ founded around 1923 and revived around 1941 (Pereira, 1992 [1973]: 41), which was short-lived. Navyug (1949), Sarvodaya and Uzvarh (1947) in Karwar, Konkan Kinara (1950) in Kumta also did not last long nor are now accessible. In 1967 was started ‘Punchakadai’ under Konkani Bhashoddhar Trust which has continued till today in two scripts – Kannada and Devanagari. ‘Jai Konkani’ which has been already mentioned, though published by a Saraswat (GSB), it does not restrict itself to the dialect or style of the caste or matters related to one particular caste/community.
Publications in Kannada script have surpassed all other Konkani publications in any other script. Its readership has remained relatively steady. There have been attempts to explore the celluloid medium in the past two decades. Radio broadcasts have been regular from Mangalore station and only in a small measure from Dharwad station. Not much is now seen from Mumbai station which had played a significant role in forging Konkani language consciousness in the post-independence decade. In education a little bit of effort is seen in Mangalore, that too, isolated and not co-ordinated.

**Malayalam Script And Konkani**

Konkani writing in Malayalam script is a development necessitated by the assimilationist trends in a multi-lingual situation. The Konkani speaking settlers in Kerala have been isolated from the Konkani speakers’ homeland for centuries. While the traditional Konkani speakers here are from all castes, the language is identified with only a small section of elites among them viz. GSBs, who have acquired the name Konkani. They have claims to certain writings on mythological stories which are said to be written in Malayalam script.

With no bibliographical records or written history of literary works till 1960s, Konkani in this script was surveyed by Dr. Jose Pereira, who, in his *Literary Konkani* (1973) mentions the following names under the history of Keralli variant with not many details of their contributions: Amula (or Amulakka Shennai (1851-1902) perhaps the greatest among the poets and poetesses of Kerala, Narayana Narasingha Pai (1878-1959) of Ernakulam. R.C.Sharma (1896-1982) of Pallipuran, G. Kamalammal (1900-1983) of Alleppy, authoress of an
As regards the linguistic studies, a dictionary and a self-teacher of Kerala Konkani by R. Ranganatha Prabhu (1898-1965) of Alleppy, and a primary Konkani grammar of A. Anantasarma Shastri (1910-1965) of Cochin, as also a dictionary of Kerala Konkani compiled by Ranganatha Sheshagiri Prabhu (1919-1965) find mention in Dr. Pereiras’s work. Monograph on Konkani, Census of India-1971 (GOI, 1976) is the result of a study conducted over the decade of 1960s (Mallaya, 1993: 11). Some works aiming at the propagation and popularisation of Konkani after the recognition from the Sahitya Akademi appeared in Devanagari. The major contributions such as *Konkani Swayam Shikshak* (Konkani self-instructor) (1975), ‘*Konkani Vyakaran’* (Konkani grammar) (1977), ‘*Konkani Malayalam Swabodhini*’ (Self-instructor of konkani and Malayalam) (1988), were by Prof. R.K.Rao and ‘*Konkani-Hindi-Malayalam Kosh*’ (Konkani-Hindi-Malayalam dictionary) (1987) of Dr. L. Sunitha bai was brought out under a U.G.C. sponsored project of comparative dictionary.

Though Konkani speakers in Kerala claim to have switched over to Devanagari script in post-1960s, there are many who still write the language in Malayalam script. There are two publications based on the old folk material found written in Malayalam script in Kerala. *Godde Ramayana* (1989) was found in 1982 in the house of a Saraswat in Ernakulam. Written on palm leaves, the work, which is incomplete, is considered around 200 years old (Rao, 1989: v), seen from the style of language and script. The other is also a folk song ‘*Shrawonn*’(1996) transliterated from the one published earlier in Malayalam script ‘for the benefit
of Konkanis in Kerala’ (Kamath, 1996: 7) as transcribed from the audio recordings from the oral recitation. Few others such as *Konkani Lok Geet* (1998 [1976]), a collection of folk songs and *Venkatesh kalyan* (1988), a stotra (prayer of Lord Venkatesha) are now published in Devanagari script.

That the use of Malayalam script was common for Konkani even after 1960s is evident from the ‘Konkann Janatha’, a monthly edited by R. Subhashchandra Prabhu (1941-1996) started in 1972. This is true also for other journals such as ‘Saraswata Ratna’, ‘Vyasa Vani’ or ‘Vaishnava Ratna’ published from different places in Kerala. But the local activists observed that this was the case only with periodicals. In case of books not even ten percent of those published in Kerala after 1960 were in Malayalam script (Pai, 1993: 54).

Having seen the nature and extent of literary work done in Konkani in different regions through different scripts, it should now be easy to understand the reasons why different people consider the modern age of Konkani being ushered in at different times. This dating is mainly the result of their specific regional and communal perceptions about the developments in the language and its literary sphere. Konkani as a language community was compelled by various factors to acquire these differential perceptions, which were represented by different scripts. Multi-literalism as a feature of Konkani can be studied in its different aspects.

---

33. In Goa, the Roman script activities date back to mid-nineteenth century (following Cunha Rivara’s work), whereas in Canara they see the last quarter of the century (1883 onwards – with Fr. Maffei’s dictionary and grammar) as the beginning of the new age. In Devanagari the early twentieth century beginning with Shennoi Goembab’s works) marks the Renaissance whereas in Kerala the modern age of Konkani literature is said to start form the second half of the twentieth century (Rao, 1989: iii).
Factors that caused multi-literalism and the socio-cultural consequences of multiliteralism are important for this study.

CAUSES OF MULTILITERALISM

Formation of Konkani as an Indo-Aryan language has been studied by linguists in the past two centuries. Its relation to Sanskrit through Prakrit and Apabhramsa has been highlighted by scholars. On the basis of this Konkani has been associated with Devanagari script (Dalgado, 1893; Maffei: 1883; Desai: 1993). But the socio-cultural reality of multiple scripts used for writing Konkani has existed for more than three centuries and the issue of script has figured all through the 20th century in all the major discussions on this language and its literature, be it in print (journals, books) or in public debates (Parishad resolutions, literary discussions). The major factors that resulted in this multiliteralism can be categorised into political, economic and cultural ones, each of which are discussed here in brief.

Political Factors

Konkani as the speech of Konkan is firmly rooted in Goa, according to the early religious functionaries who studied the language. Colonial encounter experienced by the port-town Goa of the 15th and 16th centuries has a major role in the making of Goa and Goans, their culture and language among other things. It was a cultural catastrophe of a different kind and of everlasting impact as can be seen from the accounts of various religious, administrative and political decisions.
and actions - reflected in their documents, orders and decrees - made available through translations and excerpts in the past eighty years. The Roman script was made compulsory for use in local administration by the beginning of the 17th century as almost all the comunidades in the Old Conquests were transferred to new converts. Many converts had to leave the territory to avoid persecution for continuing with their old practices. Bardeskars who shifted to the areas across the ghats in the Marathi speaking areas such as Ajra, Gadhinglaj, Ichalkaranji, some villages in Belgaum district, and some others in Dharwar district were left to the care of irmaos without any religious authority for some years before they were organised by the priests (Fernandes, 1996). In the coastal areas of Ratnagiri, Malvan, Vengurla in the present Sindhudurg (Maharashtra) the study and practice of Marathi and Devanagari became common. All these Catholics living under local rulers adopted the local language for social communication, education (even in schools run by christian missionaries) but continued the use of Konkani in their houses and the church. With Devanagari script many of their prayers are in Marathi, church services and sermons are also in Marathi. These are the facts that Goan Catholics, by and large, find difficult to comprehend. In Goa, school education under the Portuguese, largely under the parish schools consisted of learning the Roman alphabet, elements of church music and religious songs, hymns etc. Through these the status of students as subjects of the Portuguese empire was

---

34 During the period starting from the Portuguese Republic (1910) many Goan writers - both Hindu and Catholic - started exploring the old documents of the early colonial period and as a part of nationalist campaign quoted liberally from them often in translation, to arouse anti-colonial sentiments. T.B.Cunha, Menezes Braganza, Dr. Govind Pundalik Hegdo Desai, Adv. Laxmikant Bhembre, and many others have done this. Dr. Panduronga Pissurlencar was instrumental in making many of these available through his writings and also as the Chief of Goa Archives during Portuguese rule between 1931 and 1961.
highlighted and a strong sense of resentment was developed towards anything of
the Hindus or Indian. This created a general feeling of superiority among those
knowing the Roman alphabet and Portuguese language, which symbolised the
Portuguese power. Acquisition of the elements of script, music and religion were
accompanied by change in dress, diet and etiquettes. These formed the substance
of a different political identity, which Goan Catholics carried with them.

At the time of the entry of the Portuguese in Goa, *Goy-kanadi* - a variant of the
contemporary Kannada script - was in use in the village administration (Ghantkar,
1993: XII). Documents written in the script are available in the Goa Archives and
some of them have been published in the book *History of Goa through
Goykanadi script*. In the year of the compilation of Mexia’s *Foral*, 1526,
Krishnadas Shama began his ‘*Shri Krishna Charitra Katha*’, the first Marathi
work written by a Goan (SarDessai, 2000: 31). This was almost half a century
before Sant Eknath wrote his ‘*Bhagavata*’. The use of Devanagari in Goa during
this period is not possible to confirm as ‘it is not clear whether the original
version of the stories from the epics was written or oral’ (SarDessai, 2000: 30).
Throughout the colonial period Roman script was in use in Goa for Konkani
while *Balahodh* was taught by Hindus to their children. After the beginning of
secular education in the nineteenth century there were attempts to publish primers
in *Balahodh*. It was only after the spread of modern Marathi education among
Hindus that *Balahodh* or Devanagari came to be used. In this the role of
nationalist movement is significant. For the first half of the twentieth century the
script movement in India moved ahead through nationalist struggle and in case of Konkani promotion of Devanagari was seen as a national cause.

In the post-independence scenario linguistic re-organisation has made regional and state language compulsory in administration and education. As a result education in state language has gained political support and official patronage. Konkani speakers living in different language territories have taken to this education as a result of which the local language and its script is in common use among them. Those under the British had the advantage of English education that helped them look further for economic development but in the areas under the local rulers local language was promoted and Konkani speakers there were at a disadvantage. In Kerala English education was not quite common till the last quarter of the twentieth century and only elites could afford it. Among Konkani speakers in Kerala the GSBs alone were the beneficiaries till recently. For others education in regional language offered local script which they had to use for their own language. Place of Hindi in the local curriculum being nominal and for only three years in school education, there is not much benefit to Konkani. Political decisions, administrative requirements at national and regional levels differ. Sections of Konkani speakers are subjected to these differences. These differences generate cultural compartments within the language community.

Cultural Factors

Multilingualism can be attributed to cultural history because the choice of script is a part of learning a language for use beyond inter-personal transactions. As a shared system it determines the self-image of the community and its
members. Also, adoption of more than one script shows that the language community in question has had a diverse cultural experience in the course of its history. In case of Konkani we find that script became the tool of identity for different sections in different regions.

Diringer’s dictum that ‘alphabet follows religion’ proved true in the Goan and Konkani context, as is seen from the Jesuit enterprise during the 16th century. What was largely oral till then was soon transformed into written, using the Roman script and also new compositions were added as needed for use by these converts. Over the years the large scale conversions of the inhabitants in the Old Conquests led to increasing use of Roman script for writing the local tongue. This also necessitated the learning of the language by the priests working in the region, which in turn caused further spread of the language through this script.

As introduction of Roman script for Konkani is associated with Christianity and Portuguese rule, it is clear that script is generally seen as a strong cultural weapon. Even before the Inquisition was established in Goa there was a campaign started by the Bishop Joao de Albuquerque to confiscate Hindu religious books with a view to stop idol worship (Bhembre, 1985:28). The First Provincial Council held in 1567 requested the King to prohibit Hindus from keeping their books with them and King Sebastiao decreed that no Hindu should possess any material including books concerning their sects nor they should carry or import such material from outside. This made the destruction of such material in native language an official act.

35 David Diringer in his book 'The Alphabet' published in 1958 says 'It has been said in reference to the Arabic alphabet that 'if' trade follows the flag, the alphabet follows religion' (p.301) (Prabhudesai, 1963: 100).
Imposition of restrictions on marriage performances (Bhembre, 1987: 45-98) or dress code for gentios (Angle, 1994: 43) and such other decisions relating to socio-cultural practices among locals over the long period of Inquisition (1560-1812) were intended to remove all the signs of resemblance between Christians and Hindus. The Provincial Councils of 1567, 1585, 1592 issued strict orders to avoid communication and interaction between Hindus and Catholics, on the issues of faith.

Introduction of new script in the territory and its adoption for a language, that had, till then, nothing consistent in the nature of writing, led to the making of a community forced to sever its links with the past. It also implied sharing an identity with the new political authority reinforced through religion. This new religion made it quite easy for the converts to seek economic opportunities with other colonial powers which had emerged on the Indian scene. The script became a vehicle of transition and transformation in socio-cultural as well as politico-economic spheres. The sense of authority and authenticity was lent to the activities of the local institutions through the script, as seen in the order of 1614 mentioned earlier.

Cultural function of script is associated with other aspects of cultural life. Konkani in different regions written in different scripts also acquires other elements of language such as lexical and structural items and modes. This is evident in all the styles. In Roman script the Portuguese sounding words have been formed and popularised (e.g. istimacau, cascicao, fugacao, reformad, assertad, zelad, purrad, pezad, cansad), so also in Kannada script there are Kannada sounding words (mundarilam, gadyo, nej, mulo, pakkaso) and in
Malayalam script the Malayalam sounding ones (*mana ayalem, molo, aaraatt*). Numerous rituals and practices are not only named differently but differ also in content. This means that two scripts create two different images that grow into two different systems. In this sense, writing not only restructures human consciousness (Ong, 1990: 78) but also reshapes it socially. Among Goan Catholics, Roman script was not only a symbol of the new Faith but also an image of new cultural and social ethos that these converts were to be offered. Their expressions in language and speech, music and dance, dress and diet, celebrations and festivals were transformed through the element of script. This is revealed in a cursory comparison between Goan Catholics and those living in Marathi language areas. In the areas of western Maharashtra, we find Catholics wearing Dhoti-Kurta or sarees in the regional style and speaking Marathi in the church. For them Roman script is alien and the modern dress western. Their children have adopted Devanagari script and studied in Marathi medium schools, as a result of which they have acquired Marathi as a means of social and cultural expression (Fernandes, 1996). With education and communication in Marathi, their economic prospects lay largely in the Marathi speaking towns of Kolhapur, Pune, Sangali, from where some have fanned out in search of employment or enterprise. Also their political and economic life revolves around Marathi and many among them admit their ignorance of good Konkani (*Uzvadd, Abril '99: 10*). In younger generation among them, however, English is appearing in a big way. Increasing number of children joining English medium schools shows their urge for economic advancement and social development.
Multilateralism of Konkani has its strong cultural basis. Initial Romanisation of Konkani was a tool of christianisation of Goans. Though Konkani language received scientific treatment through adoption of the Roman script, the process of Romanisation also worked as a means of reconstruction of self-image of a section of its speakers. Their religious scriptures and other material of worship such as prayers, hymns were all in this script, because of which their sense of difference from the locals was strengthened. The colonial power used this script in all its affairs and this made a psychological bonding of Goan subjects converted to christianity with the rulers. The community feeling that was developed through the Faith had this script as one of its elements.

**Economic factors**

Konkani had to adopt multilateralism mainly due to economic factors. On the eve of the Portuguese arrival Goa was a thriving port city and a trade centre for the hinterland beyond the ghats. Ships from distant lands overseas carried goods to and from this port (Fernandes, 1989: 61-62). As a maritime trade centre the port town had traders and agents knowing and speaking different languages.

But the policy of Lusitanization adopted by the colonial power affected the economy of the territory as people left their homeland to save themselves from forcible conversions and from the terror of the Inquisition. This forced migration to the coastal areas in the south and the upghats in the east creased the settlements of Goans in the regions having other languages. The addition of New Conquests during the mid-18th century changed the religious composition of Goan population as the predominantly Hindu population was granted the permission for
the preservation of their temples, ministers, Brahmins, rites and customs' (Mascarenhas, 1989: 89). The use of Roman script in writing Konkani had become common among the Catholics in the Old Conquests, whereas the New Conquests had Marathi in Modi and Balbodh characters. Those areas of the Konkan which remained under the Maratha rule adopted Marathi.

In the south, Goans migrated to Canaras and the Malabar coast. The Kannada script was known to the upper caste Goans who in their new settings found positions under the rulers of Ikkeri. Also as traders and agents they had the advantage of knowing different languages in the port city of Goa which they could use to gain foothold in their new places. That is how we find many Goans in the services of the local rulers in the south and also as agents, middlemen between the Europeans (Dutch, British, French, Portuguese) and the local rulers. Their language was in use within the community and in temples. But with their settlements in those regions, they had to learn the regional languages and scripts. Using the respective scripts they tried to write the traditional religious knowledge and the material for worship. In this way Konkani came to be written in Malayalam script. Kannada script was in use in Goa, which they could continue. But the influence of local language could not be avoided. With constant interaction with the locals and learning the local language Konkani speakers acquired many nuances for their language. The Roman Catholics in the Kannada and Tulu regions also made Kannada script their own for the purpose of writing Konkani. In this way migration was a major factor in the multi-literal development of Konkani.
Metropolis had a tremendous influence on the development of Konkani. Goan Catholics had to migrate in search of livelihood as the Goan economy had crumbled by 17th century. British presence in Bombay helped Goan Catholics in getting employment as cooks, musicians, butlers. The dress and diet adopted by Goan converts over the two centuries following the Portuguese rule made them more acceptable to the British. Goan parish schools had given these converts the rudiments of Roman alphabet and writing skills, western music which they could use in their metropolitan life. With their settlements expanding over the years they could develop into a community which prompted them to build a cultural and social world of their own. Script played a crucial role in this. By the end of nineteenth century Goan Catholics had their sense of identity awakened within the metropolis, which was reflected in their publications. Roman script became a symbol of this identity. It kept them close to the British masters and distinct from the larger Hindu community. Their craving for self-expression which was pent up for a long time found a way as they could use printing and communication in the metropolitan settings. Beyond Bombay, they also settled in Karachi from where the publishing activity continued. Roman script served the purpose of developing links with the homeland by using the contemporary and emerging techniques.

In case of Goan Hindus, there were different trends. Those from the Devadasi community who had moved away from Goa after the official ban on their activities in the 17th century (Radhakrishna, 1998: 7) had reached the city of Bombay and sought shelter and support from wealthy families in Parsi and Gujarati communities. Over the two centuries some of the womenfolk got trained in classical Indian music under the renowned masters and gained good name at
the national level. The community had identified itself with the local culture and in their bid to retain their ties with Goa they formed Gomantak Maratha Samaj. As for the GSBs it was a question of establishing as an elite group claiming parity with the Maharashtra Brahmins. Some individuals from this community\textsuperscript{36} had already made name for themselves in the shaping of metropolitan civil life. GSBs had moved to Bombay from Goa as well as North and South Canara. Those from Goa had come in contact with Poona through Bombay and aimed at relating to larger Maharashtrian picture with Marathi as their language. The scripts they used were \textit{Modi} and Marathi. But while the metropolis helped in bringing all the GSBs together they were not readily accepted as equals by the Maharashtra Brahmins. The contest was between the GSBs and others such as Chitpavans and Deshasthas. This led to adoption of Devanagari in creative literary activities in Konkani mainly by the GSBs from Goa and North Kanara. Those from South Kanara used Kannada script in Konkani writing, though with few exceptions. Also there were Chitrapur Saraswats who used either of the two depending on their place of residence (Interview – Heblekar). Many in this community made Bombay their home and gained proficiency in Marathi to become writers of repute in that language. In this way metropolis contributed to multilateralism in Konkani on the one hand and also consolidated the regional groups of Konkani speakers on caste and community basis.

The choice of script was thus guided by economic factors. The Catholic majority in the Old Conquests looked at the wider world of opportunities

\textsuperscript{36} Bhau Daji Laad and K.T.Telang were the two renowned persons who established different institutions, supported different movements and occupied different positions in the institutional life of the megacity.
beyond the seas whereas the Goan Hindus largely from the New Conquests had their world across the Ghats. Hence the differences in self-perception and cultural imaging combined with varying economic aspirations as well as distinct political vision determined the script use in the multilateral scenario of Konkani. The interplay of these generated the issues of internal economy.

INTERNAL ECONOMY OF KONKANI AND SCRIPT ISSUE

Language is considered as a divider not only between communities but also within a community. In case of Konkani this internal division is effected not only by different dialects and styles based on caste, community and region but more through scripts. Because while learning a language is natural to some extent, learning a script is essentially an artificial and planned activity that involves material aspects and planned programmes. In case of Konkani, different scripts have come in use at different times and for different purposes. Each of them have contributed to the making of Konkani language and literature and all the claims of Konkani have counted on these diverse contributions. At the same time, as a result of this diversity, the language community as a whole has never gained access to the whole treasure of the language. In this sense what is claimed as common linguistic heritage is not only distributed between and restricted to specific regional groups, but has also generated divisions and compartments within the community. This in turn has led to contests and conflicts in the form of claims and counterclaims from different sections over propriety and eligibility, equity and authority.
As Konkani is written in five different scripts, its cultural canvas is segmented between these scripts. Users of each script are concentrated in different geographical areas where the cultural space occupied by their language is neither uniform nor politically recognised. Majority of Konkani speakers in India live in the Dravidian language regions, and outside India there are Goans, Mangaloreans and other Konkanis for whom Konkani is their tradition but mostly in forms other than linguistic or literate. This presents a problem of internal economy of Konkani specifically in the context of script.

Internal economy of a language implies the complex conception of the gradations of competence in language and its political effect (Kaviraj, 1990). In case of Konkani these gradations of competence are multiplied more because of scripts than because of regions, religions, castes and communities as is generally seen. Each script in use for Konkani being in use for some other larger, well groomed language or languages there are number of influences of other languages on Konkani through scripts. In case of Kerala, pronunciation of Konkani words in Malayalam style, inclusion of Malayalam words and usages in Konkani leave any Konkani speaker from outside Kerala perplexed. In Goa the influence of Portuguese is immense and those who preserved the language have been used to syntax and morphology of Latin and Portuguese which they adopted for Konkani along with the Roman script. Over generations they have written and read this way and their understanding of the language, and through it that of the community and the world, is shaped by this process. They produced their sacred texts and ritual procedures in this style which has become their own living style. They do not consider it as alien, unknown or difficult but enjoy its natural flavour. But in
the process of the language movement of the twentieth century, the insistence of Devanagari to write Konkani has developed into a trend to ‘cleanse’ Konkani of these ‘foreign’ elements considering them as aberrations and distortions. Those who use these – which also means those who use the Roman script - are obviously at a disadvantage in terms of their communication and exchange. They feel left out of the language community because what they have as language in its written, literary and cultural heritage is denied recognition and position in the larger language community.

**Scripts In Goan Situation**

In schools Konkani in Devanagari could find greater acceptance in the Old Conquests as a last choice, since teaching of Portuguese was discontinued without much thought and Marathi was seen as the religious language of the Hindus. The strong hold of the church on Catholic masses and its growing presence in the field of education in the early years of liberation helped in the introduction of Konkani; but with the decision to attach the schools in Goa to Maharashtra Board of Secondary Education (instead of Delhi Board as recommended by the Za Commission) Marathi had precedence; also the case for Devanagari script got reinforced. But while Catholic children learnt Konkani in Devanagari script as a subject, most of the missionary schools or those run by the Diocesan Society did not give much importance to it. Students were fined for speaking in Konkani within the school premises. Konkani remained a subject which many managed to pass in at the Board Public examination only because of the leniency in assessment criteria adopted as an unwritten policy, to ensure higher percentage of
results in the subject\textsuperscript{37} and to attract more students to Konkani particularly from the Hindu community. As a result the number of students offering Konkani at the Board examinations has increased but the level of competene in the language has hardly improved. Especially among Catholics, finding students with reasonable competency in Konkani in Devanagari script is difficult.

Following the introduction of Devanagari for Konkani in education and literature it was natural to look for its placement in administration. In the early years Roman script was used in forms for applications for ration cards supplied by the government and also in some other official announcements, publications for public information and use. These were widely used by large sections of Konkani readers from the Old Conquests population. But with spread of education and introduction of Konkani in Devanagari script in English schools there was growing use of English that affected the use of Konkani in the Roman script. Hindus by and large preferred Marathi in all such work. Not many among the users of Roman script raised their voice, as English was seen as a status symbol.

English was a subject of study in the scheme of Portuguese secondary education whereas in liberated Goa it was a medium of school education acceptable to all.

Though Konkani found a place in school education, it was given a merely marginal, rather nominal place in official correspondence or state administration by the government authorities. When a beginning was made in late 1980s, following the issue of Notification as provided in the Official Language Act, 1987, it was only with Devanagari as its script. Those who lived as Konkani

\textsuperscript{37} This was admitted by senior teachers in a workshop on orthography organised in 1999 at Ponda. Those involved in the evaluation work at the Board Examinations accept this as a reality.
people and loved Konkani realised that they had no access to the formal administrative sphere that was opened to Konkani. Even in the competitive examinations conducted by the Government of India Goan Catholics studying in Goa were handicapped after the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) revised the scheme of Civil Services Examination around 1980, providing place for regional languages and made passing in the concerned language paper a prerequisite condition for being declared successful. Konkani had not entered the VIII schedule of the Constitution and hence did not figure in the list of regional languages. As citizens of India, the candidates from among Goan Catholics had no option but to learn Hindi as national language or Marathi as the neighbouring language but the script remained a hurdle in their struggle to gain proficiency in the language, which in turn deprived them of the career opportunities in the higher administration. The relative advantage they had with better fluency and facility in English was nullified by the handicap of script for their own language or other Indian languages. Those Catholics who entered the Civil services in eighties and nineties of the 20th century were from among those who were outside Goa for generations and had studied other regional languages in school or at a later stage, thereby acquiring the specific script. In this way, script worked to the disadvantage of a large section of Konkani people, mainly from Goa.

Script also came in the way of meaningful participation in democratic process through the Official Language since under the provisions of the Act, one was expected to write Konkani in Devanagari script, as Konkani ‘in Devanagari script’ alone had become the Official Language. For Catholics Konkani in Roman script was a medium of communication in all spheres of life including religion.
They had always considered it as their language. For them Devanagari was the visible form of Marathi language and Hindu culture. Though Hindus knew Devanagari script, majority - irrespective of caste or community, social or economic status - expressed inability to read or write Konkani in that script, even though they wrote and read Marathi in the same script and spoke Konkani for all purposes in their community life and informal communication. As a result even after fifteen years of passage of the Official Language Act in Goa, government does not receive many letters or applications in Konkani from the public, according to Manohar Parrikar, who as the Chief Minister made a statement to this effect in the state Legislative Assembly in 2001. As members of democratic system, the right of citizens to communicate with the state in their language, duly designated as the state language, exists as a constitutional principle, which in case of Konkani is qualified by the condition of script in law and consequently denied in practice to those who may genuinely wish to use it. In such a situation the users of Roman script feel ignored and cheated (Gomantak Times - ). Their democratic right is qualified by the condition of script because of which their citizenship status is pushed to the periphery.

Literary activity in Roman script suffered because of non-cognisance of the works in this script on par with other scripts, especially Devanagari. In the literary awards of Goa Kala Academy Roman script books figured only occasionally till the passage of the Official Language Act in 1987. Among the 61 titles rewarded in Konkani between 1973-74 and 1988-89, only 8 were from the Roman script. Three writers were awarded twice in this period (Kala Academy, 1999), which effectively reduced the representation of the Roman script writers.
among the awardees. In case of Devanagari script writers there were such repetitions and in some instances, all the books of a writer published during specific period were rewarded. Considering the number of books published in the two scripts, books in Roman script were often ignored. This created a feeling among some writers in the script that the Hindu stalwarts in Konkani literary and language movement comment on Roman script writers without reading anything (Interview – Tomazinho Cardoso). Once the language was linked ‘officially’ to a single script, the agencies and institutions using state resources considered the work in that particular script eligible for support, encouragement, incentive and reward. In Goa, Devanagari being recognised as the script for Konkani, all the resources are cornered by the section using that script. This has affected the entry of new upcoming writers in the Roman script, as many have turned to English. No book in the Roman script was ever considered for the Sahitya Akademi awards although some sent their entries. Publication of Konkani books by the Sahitya Akademi is limited to those in Devanagari and the sales are very meagre. Suggestion in the Advisory Board for Konkani to publish at least one book in Roman script on trial basis was turned down by the protagonists of Devanagari. The member who suggested this expressed confidence that minimum of one thousand copies could be sold in the Roman script, as compared to only 200-300 copies in Devanagari sold over the years (Interview: Tomazinho Cardoso)\(^\text{38}\). With

\(^{38}\) Though exact figures are not available with any agency, informal discussions with the functionaries of the Akademi reveal the facts of poor returns from sales of books and their lying in stock for long time.
access to opportunities or recognition denied to Roman script literature, writers in the script were disheartened and output in the script was affected over the years.

**Predicament Of Kannada Users**

In respect of a large population of Konkani speakers in Karnataka the script issue has posed major challenge. They produce literature and perform various cultural activities through Konkani but make use of Kannada script for all these. Even the Mangalore station of All India Radio has its Konkani section using Kannada script. With rich folklore, constant literary and publishing activity catering to the language population larger in size compared to Goa, economically viable journals and periodicals, Mangalore Konkanis search for recognition and scope for participation in the larger Konkani movement. All major writers in Konkani had a hope of getting the national literary awards (Sahitya Akademi Annual Awards) for their writings after the senior writers in Devanagari from Goa. But their script became a ‘disqualification’ and in spite of a vast literature in print, many literary works, going into a number of editions, and read by generations, writers from Karnataka were deprived of the award. Their contribution to Konkani literature has been counted while claiming the ‘national’ status for Konkani but the condition of script discounts it as ‘invalid’. Such ‘invalidation’ and ‘disabling’ of a large section of the language community brought forth the issue into the open, in the discussions within the Mangalore section. Goans’ hegemony was questioned openly on the *Parishad* platform through the Presidential Address (Madtha, 1997). General feeling was that the provision of Devanagari as the script for Konkani is welcome but the shift should
be planned over a time period in which other scripts should be considered for awards and other facilities (Interview – Fr. Mark Valdar, Msgr. Alexander D’Souza). But the Mangalore camp also has the GSB leaders who side with Devanagari and consider it as their heritage, though, in reality, they hardly use it. Their contribution to literature being restricted to their community journals and programmes they have no stakes in the benefits and rewards through these creative activities. As businessmen, they look at their language as a means of social, economic and political gains. This is seen in their claim to the linguistic minority status, which actually should be available to Canara Catholics who have little presence in Kannada. They have made their presence felt through the Vishwa Konkani Sammelan (The World Konkani Convention, 1995) and planned the ambitious projects of Vishwa Konkani Sanghatan (The world Konkani Organisation) and Vishwa Konkani Kendra (The World Konkani Centre). In the Karnataka Konkani Sahitya Academy they had their Presidents – B. V. Baliga for a very short term, followed by Basti Vaman Shenoy, a non-literary person for two consecutive terms – and through T.M.A.Pai Foundation they have links with Konkani language organisations in and outside Karnataka as well as with other literary, research bodies under the state and central governments. The political benefits through Konkani and claims to the language and literature as their community heritage make the GSBs the real beneficiaries from Konkani.
Malayalam Script And Konkani Speakers

Kerala has Konkani speakers whose consciousness of their language is still evolving. The GSBs in Kerala have used Malayalam script to write Konkani as a tradition and their view of Konkani, as their cultural language, has linked it with their temples and family rituals. Though they resolved in a caste conference in 1924 to use Devanagari for writing Konkani (Valavalikar, 1928; Sammelan Souvenir 1996), almost all their communication within the community continues in Malayalam script and in temples too, they communicate largely in Malayalam language (Interview – Jayashri Shanbhag). As intelligent mediators and businessmen they have managed to derive legal protections for their caste both under the princely states or the colonial powers before independence and under the constitutional provisions for minorities in independent India (Mallaya, 1994). Their literary activities were little known to outsiders when the linguistic consciousness of Konkani was on the rise in other regions since 1930s. Their leaders have gained access to statutory positions and benefits through Konkani more as a caste than as a language group. This has kept other castes away from the language. Script too has played a part, since the GSBs have the relative advantage (though nominal) of closeness with Devanagari through the learning of Sanskrit, while other castes have been exposed to education and social reforms.

39. The religious texts they have in Konkani are preserved in their temples and they are in Malayalam script. Many of the writers in the nineteenth century used Malayalam script and their community journals are still published in that script. But they project Devanagari as their tradition on the basis of a certificate written in Devanagari and signed by three Pundits/Vaidyas, attesting the names of plants and trees in the work of a Dutchman in 1665 A.D.
only of late, and hence have facility in the Malayalam script. Moreover, linguistic fanaticism in Kerala coupled with rigid caste structure among Konkani speakers has resulted in literary impoverishment of other Konkani castes till recently. Benefits of Devanagari have been available to GSBs because of their involvement in the work of spreading and teaching of Hindi in Kerala.

Metropolitan Mosaic

In Bombay, the work of Konkani gained momentum before independence and reached its climax during the two decades before the liberation of Goa. After liberation Goan activists of Konkani returned to Goa and many leading writers among Mangalorean Catholics left the metropolis to return home. Those who remained in the city continued the use of Kannada script and supported publications in that script. Hindus, mainly some GSBs, wrote in Kannada as well as in Devanagari scripts. Nagesh Sonde started publishing in Devanagari in the last quarter of the 20th century, particularly after the Sahitya Akademi recognition.

Activities of Konkani in Bombay after 1960 were initiated and guided by few individuals among whom F. J. Martyres was on the forefront. Having failed to get Konkani introduced in education in the state of Maharashtra, the Konkani Bhasha Mandal (KBM) of Bombay attempted to run some classes in Konkani which did not spread well. Goan writers based in Bombay published their writings in Devanagari in Goa and won prizes and awards from Goan institutions and government bodies such as Kala Academy. Goan Catholics in Bombay who took to English education developed interest in English theatre; they
also found scope in music industry including Hindi filmdom with their skills in music supplemented by their working knowledge of Hindi and Marathi because of their association with the metropolis for generations. Their links with Konkani were preserved through the church service and popular theatre- Tiatr – or through their community festivals. In any case they had little to offer to Konkani and they found Konkani of little help in their urban life. Growing trend of emigration to other countries in West Asia, Africa, Europe and America over the past centuries had transformed generations of such families into overseas Goans, whose concern for Konkani remained purely emotional. These Goans had little interest in the script issue of Konkani, as their cultural memory of Goa was rooted in the past – free from linguistic politics and cultural contests. They wanted Goa to be an ideal place for peaceful, serene and carefree life.

Script As Language

As a result of all this, the larger community of Konkani speakers whether in Goa or Karnataka, Kerala or Bombay and beyond, had no serious concern for Konkani in literary form. Different regional groupings had their own perspectives on their language loyalty and the script they used reflected the same. With the essentialisation of Devanagari as the script for Konkani only a very small section of Hindu elites made a case not only for the specific style or dialect of Konkani as standard but also managed to keep others out of the fray in their search for social power and political authority that accompanied the recognised state language. In effect the official recognition and honour claimed in the name of Konkani was cornered by a very small section of Goan Hindus through Devanagari script. The
basis of this could be found in the logic formulated by the Father of Modern Konkani Literature in his historic address—'**If we allow two or three scripts to continue, two or three languages will be created out of Konkani. It will not attain a standard form and this will greatly hamper the unity of Konkani nation.**' (Valavalikar, 1945: 58 – emphasis author’s).

**LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL CONCERNS**

In the traditional use of different scripts in the major regional settings certain questions have been posed in the last century. Use of script is seen as a cultural expression by common people whereas scholars have discussed its linguistic importance. These dual concerns contain some ingredients of identity formation through script. History of use of scripts and also suitability of script for Konkani have received attention from scholars such as Fr. Maffei, or Msgr. Dalgado.

Fr. Maffei in his Konkani Grammar observed that:

‘The Konkani language was formerly written with the Alphabet called Bal bodha or Nagari; sometimes it was written with the Modi Alphabet, which is the Mahratti Alphabet. Now the Kanarese Alphabet is generally used, and although it does not express all Konkani sounds, yet it is better adopted for this than the Latin alphabet.’ (p. 1)

The three scripts used for Konkani in reasonably large sections of the language community in the twentieth century find mention in the above observation made in the last quarter of the 19th century. The question of choice of a single script, however, came up only in the 20th century. Fr. Maffei’s observation accepted the antiquity of Nagari and inadequacy of the Latin i.e., the Roman script so also the relative advantage of Kanarese over the latter. Though he referred to the
occasional use of the Modi script for Konkani, no other scholar has discussed it with reference to Konkani. Fr. Maffei opined in the same work: ‘If we write Konkani with Kanarese or Mahratti letters, many things will be settled by themselves i.e., only by writing in a more suitable Alphabet, especially if we prefer the Mahratti or Sanskrit; because with Kanarese something would remain still doubtful.’ (Maffei, 1882: 417). While Fr. Maffei is credited with encouraging the writing of Konkani in Kannada script, his own admission of the inadequacy of the script to express Konkani perfectly is to be noted. His dictionaries and grammar of Konkani provided a springboard for the writing and literary activities in Kannada script. In absence of links with Devanagari script or Indo-Aryan languages, Konkani speakers in the region associated the language with Kannada script and enriched it with literature. In the process they brought their socio-political experiences and their sense of local history to bear on their cultural and linguistic expression, thereby shaping the movement of identity formation. Large numerical presence of Konkani speakers in the Tulu region surrounded by Tulu and Kannada languages brought Konkani writing in Kannada script to life because of the facility of printing available in the script. In case of the Roman script too, it was the technology of printing that gave it preponderance over the other scripts.

The Roman script came to be used widely for Konkani by Goans in the late 19th century for communication which was necessitated by the large scale migration of Goan converts who were made familiar with the script in the process.

---

It is noted that in the 17th century there was a plan to get the types of Devanagari ready in Goa along with the Roman ones, soon after the Printing Press arrived, to facilitate the printing in local language. But the craftsman who was put on the job died before the work was completed and the printing was done in the Roman script alone (Priolkar, 1958).
of evangelisation. The earliest attempt at compilation of trilingual vocabulary in modern times was *Um Novo Vocabulario em Inglez, Portugues e Concanim, Vulgar em Bardez* published from Nova Goa in 1869. There was a compilation of vocabulary of five different languages published in 1892 which reflected Roman script users’ approach towards their communication needs. In the early years of the 20th century, although literature revolved around religious and cultural life of Goan Catholics, a few primers for teaching the language were also published (Kelekar, 1963: 30). *Konkani-English and English-Konkani Dictionaries* (1901) by A. C. S. Francis, *Letter Writer English Konkani* (1907) by A. C. J. Fransisco and such other works showed the trend among Roman Konkani users to learn English, which was strengthened during the middle of the second decade and in the subsequent decades such publications covered three languages viz. Konkani, Portuguese and English. By 1930 the questions of grammar, orthography were responded through publications such as *Gramatica da Lingua Concani — em Portugues e Concani* and *Concani — Ti nittaen Vachunc ani Borounc Xicchi rit* i.e. Konkani – The method to read and write it properly (both 1933) produced by Vicent Joao Janim Rangel. A number of dictionaries and other instructional material produced since 1888 till 1960s showed how committed and consistent the Roman script users were in their use of Konkani and also their practical approach in learning other languages – mainly European – for better prospects.

41. *Vocabulario Concani, Portuguez, English, French and Hindustani* was published by B.X.Furtado & Sons, which had 5 editions by 1937.

42. After Goa's liberation in December 1961, Fr. Monteiro’s *Konkanischem Giriypustok* i.e. Konkani Self-Instructor was published in September 1962 in four languages (Konkani in Roman script, Portuguese, English and German) for the use of those Konkani speakers spread all around the world and also for others.
In terms of syntax, Roman script subjected Konkani to the system followed in Portuguese. It also led to liberal borrowings from Latin and Portuguese. As regards orthographic arrangements, 'a modified Roman character bristling with dots, accents and italics' created problems but for the semi-literate Konkani speakers, it was the only option available. While other script users or scholars saw certain lacunae in the Roman script as used for writing Konkani, there was an attempt by a Goan to devise a special alphabet called *Mariano* in 1894. *Udentechen Salok* fame Eduardo Bruno de Souza developed the script and published *Udeteche Salok — Alfabeto Mariano poili Cartilh Goyechi Bhas Vachuk Xicchi* (*Udeteche Salok* — the first book of Marian Alphabet to read the Goan language) in the same year, followed by *Primeira Cartilha do Alfabeto Mariano* (The first book of Marian Alphabet) which was published in the 1901 by Soc. de S.S.C. de Jesus (Kelekar, 1963: 60). Though the alphabet did not gain acceptance and popularity it signified a positive approach on the part of the Konkani speakers to have an independent script for their own language. In the larger Indian picture, this could be seen as a linguistic initiative by the small community that was to see its language dubbed as 'a Marathi dialect' in Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India, a decade later. It must be noted that the exercise, reflecting the Roman script users' concern for their language, has not been duly considered or appreciated in the later accounts of the language and literature.

Goan Catholics, who were the main among Roman script users for Konkani had intellectuals and scholars of renown whose contributions to literatures in different languages have been recognised. Their knowledge of
linguistics too should be quite remarkable considering that many of these were priests or teachers of old and new languages. Hence it is unlikely that they were not aware of the need to regulate and modify syntax and orthography of Konkani in the Roman script. There should have been deliberations on these aspects through their journals and newspapers. But with growth in printing and publishing activity in Devanagari script, some among the Roman script users initiated some attempts at purification of their language and following the Vatican II there were translations of religious texts for regular use, which was somewhat resented by a section of Catholics (Gomes in Souvenir, 1967: n.p.). They favoured preserving their old words and expressions in liturgical translations. Over the years English education affected the utility of Konkani within the public as well as private domain. At the same time, with introduction of Konkani in Devanagari script in education, Roman script writing has been affected and not many youth are found in the list of writers. This has given rise to the question of the future of the Roman script of Konkani (Pemkar in *Gulab* – Julh 1999). Those supporting the Roman script and writing in it have started considering multiple scripts of Konkani as its worst misfortune (D’Costa in *Gulab* Julh 2000).

The adoption of Devanagari for Konkani on a major scale was the development of the early years of the 20th century. In this move by the Goan GSBs major work was of Shennai Goembab, who was supported by Kashinath Shridhar Naik. In their bid to show that theirs was a Brahmin caste in its own right the emphasis was on an independent language having clear and direct

---

43. Felicio Cardoso started replacing the syntax used in the Roman script writings through his periodicals in the mid-60s; the church authorities too, prepared liturgical translations for use in Bombay and Goa but some resented the Goa translation as they saw it as 'purism with a vengeance' due to Sanskritic words included therein.
relationship with Sanskrit. In developing its vocabulary Shennai Goembab ‘boycotted Marathi’ (Satoskar, 1975: 194) and made it a point to avoid Marathi sounding words and expressions, though many of these had become an integral part of colloquial repertory of Goan Hindus settled in Bombay, more so among the GSBs who had the benefit of Marathi education there. His Konkani Nadashastra and Konkanichi Vyakarani Bandavall were aimed at distinguishing the language from Marathi in phonetic and structural aspects. Some words created by him did not deliver the meanings (Satoskar, 1975: 194). However, in later years his example was followed by few Konkani enthusiasts but their approach was criticised by Marathi protagonists on account of undesirable and unreasonable stress on alienation from Marathi (Interview – Bhiku Pai Angle).

The issue of standardisation of Konkani has always figured in all the academic and public discussions and deliberations. In case of Konkani in Kannada script there have been some attempts made through Raknno involving linguists and sociologists from Mangalore. But the outcome was not very positive, as there was no unanimity even on the minimum basic requisites for routine use (Amar Konkani Jan 95). Both organisers and the invited scholars felt that the time was ‘not ripe for adopting standardisation’ (editorial – Amar Konkani: Jan 1995). This was the case with only one dialect – of Mangalore Catholics – and single script – Kannada - under consideration of intellectuals among its users. As different regional styles have been proclaimed as original, pure or genuine (Pereira considers Mangluri as the standard, Shennai Goembab’s

\[44\] In September 1994, there was a meeting of Konkani writers in Kannada script to discuss the issue of standardisation, followed by a Seminar on 28-30 October that year. The three papers read at the seminar were on ‘Konkani Language and Kannada Alphabet’, ‘The Orthography for writing Konkani in the period after Dirvem and Sylvester menezes’, and ‘Community, Language and Writing’.
writings have popularised Antruzi whereas there are claims of purity of their own dialect from Karwari speakers) their individual claims of being fit to be the standard are expected. But Devanagari script veterans and language leaders while evading the issue by equating the written with the spoken have also popularised a specific variety by using the Antruzi dialect in printing and literature as a rule. Their recognised grammarian such as Suresh Borkar does not consider linguistics necessary while studying and analysing one's own language. He fears that 'linguistics would swallow us' and prescribes - 'let's write Konkani as we want it' and 'use linguistics only when unavoidable' (Borkar expressed these views in a workshop organised by Goa Konkani Akademi on 13th March 1999). This approach is challenged by the Jesuits from TSKK who insist on application of linguistic, scientific criteria in the study and research of Konkani. They question the authority and eligibility of Borkar as a linguist and openly criticise his 'official' grammar (Naik, . This debate has traversed linguistic, cultural, and socio-political terrain of Konkani. Devanagari script writing has been guided by a few language leaders (on the basis of their seniority and not through any recognised academic authority) than any scientific methods and procedures. Konkani Bhasha Mandal and Goa Konkani Akademi have published their rules of writing Konkani correctly which are followed by TSKK rules. The seniormost Goan Konkani lexicographer and editor of Konkani Shabdasagar (Konkani Lexicon) Pandurang Bhangi in the middle of the year 2000 honestly admitted - 'we do not have a perfectly written Konkani grammar as of now' (Jaag. Serptember 2000). This is the observation of a committed participant of the Goan language movement and should reflect the reality of the situation. This only
shows that even within the officially recognised script, which is accepted widely (albeit by a small group and in a restricted territory), and disseminated consistently for decades, the target of standardisation has not been achieved. Writing in Devanagari ‘as we want’ has been seen as a narrow caste-based approach and some old activists of Konkani have blamed this approach for their staying away from Konkani.

As a script, western scholars considered Devanagari in high esteem as can be gathered from the following comment – ‘The Indian Alphabet is a marvellous and significant phenomenon quite unrivalled in the world….This Alphabet represents a symmetrical combination of symbols, designed by skilled Grammarians to indicate various shades of sounds, and is grouped in scientific order. The hand of a Brahmanical scholar, dealing with a highly-polished language is detected here.’ (Cust as quoted in Dalgado, 1983[1893]: x-xi). This scientific, symmetrical script appreciated in the late 19th century was found tedious by the Jesuit pioneers in printing during the 16th and the 17th centuries mainly because of the number of characters and their combinations running into few hundreds (Priolkar, 1958: 14). Though printing technology helped Konkani in one way this handicap of too many symbols forced it to acquire a technically more advanced appearance through the Roman characters by giving up its

---

45 Adv. Amrit Kansar, ex-MP mentioned in a seminar held at Bicholim in 2001 on ‘why we are away from Konkani?’ that it was because of the treatment given to his writing in Konkani by senior leader of Konkani movement Chadrakant Keni in the post-liberation decade that he stopped writing in or working for Konkani. His contention was that he had not kept away from Konkani but Konkani leadership had kept him and others like him away.
original characters. Shaping of Konkani in the modern times was largely the work of printing technology.

While this contribution of technology and religion to the shaping of Konkani is acknowledged by the Goan leaders of the Konkani movement, their approach to script as a linguistic element is coloured by their cultural concerns. This is seen in the course of language controversy in Goa. Different scripts have their origins in different geographical regions and also in different historical periods (Ong, 1990:85) and many have developed independently of one another (Diringer 1953 quoted in Prabhudesai, 1963). These affiliations to regions and time spaces set the element of script in the cultural sphere. Transformation of speech and thought result from the movement of speech into the sphere of vision. Looking at scripts in use for Konkani we realise that they represent to a large extent diverse cultural images of their users. The consensus on Devanagari among the GSBs in all the Konkani regions is a part of their strategy to forge a common image. For the other Hindu castes Devanagari, as a rule and as a convention, Devanagari represents religion and through it their culture. The process of sanskritization has contributed to this thinking under the age of modernisation. In case of Canara Catholics script is seen as their cultural reality because of the centuries of interaction with local community. But it can also be seen as the continuation of linguistic tradition as it is accepted that Goan language in pre-colonial period was written in a variant of Kannada script, named as *Halekannada* or *Goykanadi* by different scholars. The Roman script votaries have a point when they consider the script as their identity, since they have learnt it as a part of their religion, education and communication. Their socialisation has been going on
almost wholly through this script. They have gained a sense of community through the sharing of life experiences in the literature produced in that script. Because of their migratory nature they have carried the script and language together and in learning many other languages this script has helped them. In fact their knowledge of the larger world for the past two centuries has been a gift of the script they used. For them script forms the essential element of their culture. In this way the regional Konkani groupings of script users have their sense of culture preserved in their scripts. Those living in Dravidian language territories have evolved a pattern of socio-cultural association and co-operation with the larger language community surrounding them, for which script is seen as a link. The use of Malayalam script as a tradition and also habit continues among Kerala Konkanis including GSBs, though as a community the latter can think of claiming Devanagari to secure certain privileges and to create a distinct identity, because of the economic strength and organised caste authority through their Maths and temples.

Cultural coding also involves gradations within the group, and scripts of Konkani as regional codes promote grading with the help of technology and polity. As a part of nationalist consolidation Hindi was promoted and popularised by various organisations and individuals. Devanagari was benefitted by this and other languages using the script were considered national on the lines of Hindi. Principle of unity through language was extended to script and the efforts such as Justice Sharadacharan Mitra’s ‘Ek Lipi Vistar Parishad’ (conference for the propagation of single script) of Calcutta (established in the beginning of the 20th century, only a decade after Nagari Pracharini Sabha came into being in the
United Provinces) propagated it (Singh in *Maitri*, April 1974). Throughout the independence struggle in the first half of the 20th century Devanagari was promoted as a symbol of national spirit through Hindi, which made the organisers of the first *Konkani Parishad* (1939) mention it as the 'national' script. Later campaign by Acharya Vinoba Bhave⁴⁶, noted Gandhian and promoter of *Sarvodaya* movement, in favour of using Devanagari for all the languages of India (Govindan in *Maitri*, June 1975) caught the attention of a large number of people. It was around the period of independence and mainly in the Constituent Assembly debates that Devanagari script found more supporters, as most of the North Indian Hindu leaders considered the claim of Arabic script irrelevant after the partition of India. With Hindi in Devanagari script named as the Official Language the script gained official status in addition to earlier 'national' character given to it. This made other scripts subordinate in official terms.

In the case of Konkani the script issue was down played on similar basis. Goan Hindu leadership made attempts to involve intellectuals and scholars among Catholics in the *Parishad* and thereby seek their identification with the movement. The metropolitan socio-political milieu contributed to the success of this strategy in a major way. Though there were persons such as Prof. Mariano Saldanha who favoured the Roman script for Konkani, their association with the *Parishad* gave an impression that they had full faith in the total programme of the *Parishad*. With major issues of autonomous political status in the Indian union and hoping to see Konkani win over Marathi Catholics supported the Konkani

---

⁴⁶ Vinoba was in Vellore jail in Tamil Nadu in 1942 where he studied the four Dravidian languages. After 1943 he started speaking about a single script for all the Indian languages. His latest campaign called 'Devanagari for cultural unity in Asia' was announced in 1974 (*NavBharat Times*, Sunday – 17/3/1974).
language movement wholeheartedly, rather unconditionally, thereby enhancing the strength of the ‘unified’ force of Konkani. Because of overemphasis on ‘linguistic nationalism’ in the course of debates on Goa, Marathi was seen as ‘national’ and association of Konkani with the Catholics using the Roman script was dubbed ‘anti-national’. In the process, the image of Konkani as the language in Devanagari script got a boost, even though its literary world was too small and restricted. But with this the Roman script users became the second class Konkani people. In Karnataka implementation of Kannada through state policy was on the rise since 1960s and Konkani speakers using Kannada script were made to feel that their language had no script. As more and more of Mangaloreans came in contact with Goans through media such as All India Radio (Bombay) and the press they realised the importance of coming together for their language. The activities of Mangalore Catholics were made a part of the movement through the KBMK and the statutory requirements were interpreted to suit the interests of the users of Devanagari. The tenth Parishad at Panaji (1974) brought in the GSB interests from the Mangalore region to the forefront through K. K. Pai, thereby making the productive and creative leadership among the Mangalore Catholics take a subordinate role. The GSBs in South Kanara, dependent almost entirely on Tulu and Kannada for furthering their economic and political interests, found it handy to speak for Devanagari in order to undermine the role of Kannada script in Konkani and to strengthen the Hindu basis of the language movement. The collective commitment to Devanagari in the tenth Parishad by all the regional groups was to affect the Kannada users the most as was seen later. This was an indication of their script being considered their cultural deficiency and a wart in
their identity. Equating the Roman script with European culture and Kannada script with the Dravidian, the language leadership sought the monopolistic position for Devanagari in culturally defined national status of their language.

Recognition of the multi-literal reality in case of Konkani over the century is accompanied by the recent suggestions and experiments in transliteration. There are attempts in this direction mainly in Kerala and Karnataka. With the switch over to Devanagari from Malayalam as a policy in Kerala, transliterations of folk and religious literature have taken place. The transliterations from Devanagari to Malayalam script in Konkani are not many in creative literature as the large majority of Konkani speakers are still with the Malayalam language, and thus translations from Konkani to Malayalam are few.

In Karnataka on the other hand there have been consistent attempts to transliterate the works from Devanagari to Kannada and some works from Kannada to Devanagari. The two journals — *Amar Konkani* and *Panchakadaiyi* are printed in both the scripts – Kannada and Devanagari. There are few books printed in two scripts\textsuperscript{47} one of which was awarded the Sahitya Akademi award in 1985. In Goa publishers in Devanagari script are not so enthusiastic about this though there have been some pieces published in periodicals. The transliterations from Kannada script are restricted to the works of C.F. D’Costa (*Chafrai*), one of which got him the Sahitya Akademi award.

The Goan Konkani leadership, aware of the need to get acquainted with literature in all the three scripts, in order to prepare a standard, published *Konkani Lipi Bodh* (Konkani Scripts Instructor) in 1960, but later on it stressed the need for everyone to learn Devanagari, irrespective of the script one used. The elite leadership found the political change in Goa favourable for such a move, as the Roman script users in general were in a cultural fix after the exit of Portuguese, though educated and enlightened section among them understood the benefits of liberation and democracy. They were promised by the Indian Prime Minister much before liberation that their language and culture would be preserved and protected (Kelekar, 1965) but this promise was later used by a small section for its own advantage through its language organisation. The issue of script remained dormant for some time in the face of larger issues such as regional autonomy and was later forced to silence under the cover of consensus. But while the users of scripts other than Nagari produced literature their socio-cultural self-representation suffered due to script related policy of the leaders. Script and language acquired the role of social and political levers under the Goan leadership.

**SOCIO-POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES**

Konkani as a national language placed in the Indian Constitution, got its recognition conditioned by the element of script, which acts as a socio-cultural qualification and a political provision. Looking at script from these perspectives, the concepts and practices of nationalism, pluralism and federalism draw our attention.
The 'national' identity that Konkani strove for was to give the sense of equity to the language community. It also entailed the provision of equality of opportunity for the community. While the 'national' character acquired by the language was based on the so-called 'national' script, this script-linked recognition held the other scripts in use for Konkani 'un-national' or 'less national' and certainly not qualified to be 'as national as' Devanagari. This sounds strange, especially when viewed in the context of constitutional recognition to English as *lingua franca* or Kannada as a national language and thereby its Roman or Kannada scripts as nationally recognised, shared and widely used scripts. When the protagonists of Konkani were branded 'anti-national', its Roman script was certainly a major factor. The critics of Konkani also looked at the 'alien' hand that cradled the speech for giving it the status of language. In the extreme analysis, Konkani became 'anti-national' in their eyes, because a section of its speakers opposed 'nationalist' elements in Goa, during its liberation struggle; and worst, a few among these pro-Konkani elements considered themselves citizens of the Portuguese colonial state. All these arguments, formulated in the philosophy of nationalism have not lost their relevance even after the national recognition to the language, because the basis of the argument is indirectly maintained, if not admitted, in the script provisions under the constitutitional recognition. This is the instance of categorising the unwanted and sanitising it by the use of the 'national' myth. Which Konkani and whose Konkani is this national language is the question leading to the changing politics of recognition which is in the process of evolution.
Pluralism pervades our social and political life as the Indian nation. In the context of languages and scripts the Indian situation is unique. There have been attempts at enscripting the tribal speeches and many of these have been given the Roman script by Christian missionaries in the course of their religious activities. Gandhi wanted Hindustani to be written in both the scripts – Devanagari and Arabic. On the other hand Vinoba insisted on adoption of Devanagari not only for all the Indian languages but also for South Asian languages. While during the nationalist movement, Devanagari was given a boost as the common script through the propagation of Hindi, in the few years before independence, scholars were seeing ‘Romanization as the vital point in the solution of the main linguistic problem of India’ (Chatterji, 1943). But in the course of linguistic reorganisation of states, Hindi speaking areas were untouched. Following the passage of the OL Act of 1963 by the Indian parliament the Union Government in its attempt to resolve the issue of writing the minor and tribal languages, appointed a committee through its Central Hindi Directorate which had its Section for Developing Languages. The Committee under the leadership of Dr. Baburam Saxena recommended Devanagari script for writing all the minor and tribal languages in India which also included Konkani (Interview – Madhav Pandit, a member of the Committee). Plurality of languages in India is complicated by plurality of scripts in respect of some of them, such as Hindustani (written in Persian, Arabic, Devanagari, Roman), Sindhi (Perso-Arabic, Gurumukhi, Devanagari), Kashmiri (Persian, Arabic, Sarada, Devanagari and Roman), Maithili (Tirhutiya or Old Maithili and Devanagari), Newari (Old Newari and Devanagari), Manipuri (Bengali, Assamese, Old Manipuri or Meitei,
and Devanagari), Santali (Bengali, Oriya, Devanagari and Ol-chiki based on the Roman) and Mundari (Roman and Devanagari). In many of these, the assimilationist attempt is seen either through Roman or through Devanagari (Chatterji, 1974).

In the case of Konkani its plural character is evident in script and literary expression. Literature as a reflection of history brings out different images in the socio-cultural evolution of a community. The same is true for Goan Catholics and Hindus, whose cultural experiences under the two faiths, economic and social issues involved in their development as a community and even geo-political perspectives vary. The churches and crosses mean different things to these two different groups. Dreams and aspirations, values and visions they have acquired through their religious, cultural expressions and experiences also differ. In the movement aiming to create a Konkani community these variations and perceptions ought to be accommodated as a common heritage. This was possible by treating each script and its literature on par with others, before these cultural complexities got integrated into a single common vision. But with decisions and actions to ‘fast forward’ the formation of the language identity these plural elements were ignored and planned standardisation was given a go bye.

When Konkani was projected as a common inheritance and proposed for the official status in Goa, its importance in the scheme of state formation was understood. Imaging of Konkani community by its migration and associating Konkani language with its consolidation would also imply planning for

---

48 Mangalore Catholics have their history of captivity by Tipu Sultan in 1799 and the consequent sufferings during the period as the major event in their social history, but it has little impact on the Goan Konkani reader, or even on Hindus among the Mangalore Konkani.
unification of these scattered groups in the contiguous territory as far as possible in the Konkani state. That would make the logic of language as the foundation of state in the federal scheme more convincing. But while Konkani was promoted as a political symbol, no claims or appeals for inclusion in the proposed Konkani state were welcome by the language leaders by and large. The dream of Konkan state had lost its relevance after the formation of Maharashtra and during the discussions on Vishal Gomantak leaders would avoid speaking of the neighbouring Konkani territories. While all the claims of Goa were based on some old geographical features such as rivers and forts now in the neighbouring states, getting them back into Goan borders as Konkani lands has never occurred to Konkani leaders. In terms of scripts, a large section of these Konkanis across the Goan borders have a tradition of Devanagari, in spite of which Goa has not thought of any change in its territory. Where language has worked to the advantage of a small regional group, language leaders have managed to retain the advantage to a still smaller circle through the script factor. In federal set up the sharing of constitutional authority in the name of state language is cornered through the element of script.

As the movement in the name of language has reached its political target of having a state for Konkani – the Konkani Rashtra that Shennai Goembab visualised, it has also brought up the issues of greater import – What does a language mean to its users who have limited access to it? How do people and communities view language in their identity formation? What is the role played by script in this process? Why and how does a script gain significance and what is
its cultural function? Does script have social and political functions? A look at
the interrelationship of script with language, culture and identity can help.

SCRIPT, LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY

Language as a cultural tool gives its speakers a sense of community. As a group, they share it - viewing its literary productions and verbal treasures as their cultural assets. They also manage it and contribute to it in their own way. As language users, their degree of participation in communicative transactions and creative applications of language, in modern organised socio-political structures, are determined by their ability to master the elements of alphabet or writing system and the related skills. For a language having the history of different writing systems in use it is more challenging for different groups of users to share the linguistic wealth equitably. As one's socialisation and education are central to the process of acquiring knowledge of language and script, there are restrictions to the variety of scripts and languages one can master and use with reasonable efficiency. For a language community to be coherent, it has to be located in a contiguous territory and live there for long time. In the absence of this the feeling of language community is difficult to develop. In modern times learning a language means mastering its application for formal communicative functions in writing, which involves the element of script. In this way script acts as a constituent element of culture.

Culture as a way of life includes both material and non-material aspects and any changes effected in these aspects from outside the community without
adequate preparations are viewed as an attack on culture. Script comes under both
the domains. As a system of symbols that constitute language, script is essentially
a mental construct, a scheme of encasing a language and a means of
comprehending the contents of language. Its association with religious scriptures,
generally located in antiquity in case of major religions, provides it with spiritual
powers and as an asset acquired in the stage of early socialisation it attracts
sentimental attachment of the individual. As an element of material culture, script
has its impact through the school books, religious text material, and a plethora of
applications in communication that shape one’s social and cultural life. It has
significance even in economic terms, as scripts act as tools of record-keeping,
accounts and administration. Hence any alteration in the script arrangement of a
community is sure to affect its sense of psychological security as well as material
well-being. There are also some set ideas about the script use, transmitted
through generations, which are identical to other cultural norms and practices.
Many scripts are linked to certain languages which in their turn carry a cultural
baggage. If this link is disrupted, some social effects are likely. That is the reason
why language shift is relatively easy to effect. As one learns a language with its
script any attempt to separate the two results in cultural dismemberment for those
using the combination.

This multiple role of script in the life of an individual or a community
also relates the element of script with personal and cultural identity. While one
may be familiar with more than one script, and may be using them for different
purposes, the script to be used at the most intimate or most personal level is
certainly decided by the historical and socio-cultural background and experiences
of an individual or a community. Those who claim Devanagari as ‘the script’ of Konkani have their claim to the intellectual elite status in the traditional Hindu society. Those who use Kannada have their own cultural story that they want the script to reflect. The same is true of the Roman supporters. These regional and cultural identities are the products of their respective historical experiences, political life situations and economic demands. They divide the world of Konkani into smaller segments with their peculiar and distinctive socio-cultural views. This is the socio-political reality.

At the same time, one cannot isolate oneself and one’s community in the matter of script in the present context, because the modernising forces are strong and it is the ability, the aptitude, and the efficiency in communication with larger area and diverse settings that widen the scope of development of a language community. From this angle, the growing incidence of shift to English education (and obviously its Roman script), which is a common phenomenon in all the regions occupied by Konkani speakers and also a universal trend in the all India context, is a lesson for the community. This has received the attention of the established leadership of Konkani. In the name of Vishwa Nagari a modified Nagari-Roman system was proposed soon after the recognition of Konkani (Jaag – March 1977)49. But no further moves are seen in the later years. Modern technology has facilitated transliteration at a time when the language itself is being abandoned under the forces of globalisation. While the ‘Konkani identity through a particular script’ is being propagated and insisted upon, the language community as a whole is losing the internal grip.
There are organisations and celebrations in the name of Konkani but the public response to these has not remained what it used to be. The past few sessions of the *Konkani Parishad* and the *Sahitya Sammelan* have received lukewarm response of people, though some new groups have gained entry to Konkani. Over the past decade or so resentment has been growing within the Konkani literary groups which had its echoes in the two sessions of the *Parishad* at the close of the 20th century. There are moves to involve prominent figures in the cultural world of Konkani Catholics in the events identified with Hindu-led organisations but the impact is momentary and involvement of Catholics in such events has not shown any consistency. Recent national events such as *Sahitya Sammelan* at Margao in 1998, or *Konkani Sangeet Sammelan* in 2001 brought in the leading *tiatr* artists and singers to perform and participate but their involvement was merely symbolic as they acknowledged the recognition and appreciation received but had nothing more to offer in absence of any plan of action or cultural projects devised by the organisers. Presence of Remo as a cult figure at the state level *Goa Yuwa Mahotsav* in 2000 was an event that had little follow up in terms of cultural integration. Konkani was never projected as the regional identity, while as a cultural identity it was defined by language and further conditioned by script. Larger identity concerns never figured in the century-long struggle of Konkani.

---

27. It was suggested that the entire writing of Konkai could be done using 21 letters of an 'international form of Devanagari alphabet', which could be used also for all the other Indian languages.
Search for Konkani identity has gained speed in the last decade of the 20th century. This period is also characterised by increasing organisational and formal interaction among the Konkani people spread over the narrow strip of western coastline of India. While there are efforts by regional Konkani groups to know and understand one another, there is also a feeling of deprivation and distancing developing between the groups. Goan Konkani leadership may want to expand the terrain of Goan identity through Konkani language (Interview — Gurunath Kelekar) but the condition of Devanagari is inbuilt into this image. There are Mangalore Konkani intellectuals who have something to share with Goan Catholic group not connected to Devanagari, but the bogey of Goanness as an attachment with Konkani is not acceptable to these scholars of Konkani (Interview — Dr. Rev. Pratap Naik). Those who question the monopoly of Devanagari and Goan varieties in Konkani look at the cultural past of the community for the elements of Mundari and other languages found in Konkani and also point to the wide ranging plurality in the social and cultural universe that tend to shape the future of Konkani (Madtha — Address, 1997). Non-resident Goans, especially Catholics settled all over the world, search for their identity in the socio-political history of the territory but limit their linguistic craving to some annual cultural presentations and the feasts of their village saints or villagewise football teams and tournaments. Hindus, largely the GSBs, look at Goa as the home of their family deities and ancestral homes and properties. Goan Hindu elites leading the local Konkani movement insist on Konkani (essentially defined by Devanagari script) as the symbol of Goan identity and look for opportunities to manage public institutions and organisations to attain this objective. Roman
Catholics living in Goa face the dilemma because their identity is being questioned without any regard to their self-perception as Indian citizens. In case of other groups of Konkani community outside Goa, the process of marginalisation in language matters has gained official acceptance, not only in their respective states of domicile but also by the Konkani state of Goa. Even those who have accepted Devanagari (e.g. those in Kerala) have their grievances of being neglected and ignored when it comes to benefits and advantages available for Konkani. Goan Hindus from lower castes have come to Konkani recently in a small number, and have started getting disillusioned with the dream of Konkani. Their leadership has been critical and resentful of the elitist hegemony. While constitutional provisions and federal system have created a fragmented language identity through the element of script, a larger cultural identity is still elusive.