CHAPTER VIII

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Ever since her inception as an integral part of the Indian Union on 19 December 1961, Goa has been involved in the process of politically integrating herself in the Indian nation-state. Issues pertaining to language have time and again posed a huge challenge to this process. Almost all the major threats to nation building have, in some way or the other, involved questions of linguistic dominance and contestations. Questions pertaining to language have been a part of the public sphere in Goa since her emergence. The public sphere has always been a site where linguistic issues have been articulated, managed and resolved. This study has been undertaken in this context of the ongoing linguistic deliberations.

It is linguistic deliberations like the one that has been witnessed in Goa that have contributed to the formulation of the public sphere per se. The origins of the public sphere itself in Europe can be traced to the developments in the linguistic sphere. The public sphere in England for instance was a consequence to the evolution of the sphere of early modern print. A linguistic turn is hence an integral ingredient for the formation and development of the public sphere.

Concentrating on this interlinkage between language and the public sphere, this thesis aimed at delineating the various language-related issues that have been played out in the public sphere in Goa since 1987. Though the Official Language Act (OLA) of Goa was passed on 4 February 1987, the legal decisions have not resulted in a reduction of linguistic deliberations. Centuries of suppression of the Konkani literary sphere, coupled with the dominance and preference for English has meant that there has been a reluctance to implement the OLA. Notwithstanding efforts at
institutionalisation of the Konkani public sphere, in addition to the Konkani-Marathi divide, there have movements within the Konkani public sphere itself protesting against the perceived hegemony of the Devnagari Konkani lobby. Thus language issues continue to dominate the Konkani public sphere in the twenty first century.

This study focussed on the nature and politics of language use in Goa after 1987. It examined the politicisation of Konkani language in the public sphere of Goa since 1987. The specific research questions of this study were:

1. to trace the development of the Konkani literary sphere in Goa especially after the Official Language Act of 1987;
2. to understand how the political management of multilingualism in India has led to the consolidation of different public spheres;
3. to examine the various nuances that the language movement assumes in the public sphere in the period after 1987; and
4. to discuss the dialectical relationship among religion, language, and polity in the formation of multiple public spheres in Goa.

I have addressed these objectives by using a combination of methods and techniques. I have conceived of this work as an interpretive study. While maintaining an objective social scientific approach to the language dynamics in my own society, I have nonetheless used insights from interpretive methodology in my study. On the basis of an analysis of secondary data obtained from a review of relevant literature and primary data by interviews conducted among the literary elite, I have sought to understand the political sociological dimensions of the Konkani public sphere in contemporary Goa.

The thesis began by introducing the study and specifying the objectives being pursued. Considering the centrality of multilingualism in the various socio-linguistic
articulations, Chapter Two contextualised the evolution and development of multilingualism in India. After delineating a transition from functional to contested multilingualism in Goa, I have argued that the transforming language pluralism in India occurs with the rise of the nation state and the shift from "fuzzy" to "enumerated" communities. The primary factor responsible for this change is the growth of the nation-state. The politicisation of language and the symbolic power associated with it has changed the nature of multilingualism in India. This chapter examined the various modifications in the practice of multilingualism in India today.

I then attempted codifying and interpreting the perspectives on the antiquity of Konkani, the development of Konkani public sphere, and the prevalence of multiple public spheres in Goa. Mainly there are three perspectives on analysing Goan history:-Goa Dourada, Goa Indica and the Orientalist perspective, Chapter Three is a dialogue between Orientalist perspective of Goa and that of Goa Indica. I found that the multilingualism that characterises the public sphere in Goa has followed a different trajectory from that which is found in other parts of the subcontinent. In Goa the dialectic between religion and language has ensured that the phase of contested multilingualism in the public sphere began almost five centuries ago. As unlike most other regions of India, Goa was, at least since recorded history, ruled by non local rulers. Konkani suffered at the cost of the neighbouring languages which because of political patronage increased its hold over the region, especially in the areas of administration and education. This pattern of official disinterest in Konkani saw new dimensions with the arrival of the Portuguese colonial rule. Initially rejected and later incorporated in the conversion process, the Konkani public sphere was nonetheless overshadowed by the twin hegemonic influences of Portuguese and Marathi. Thus with the arrival of the Portuguese policy of Lusitanisation, the public sphere in Goa
saw an interplay of a variety of forces and agents: religious conversion, political expediency, dominance of Portuguese, the counter-dominance of Marathi, and attempts at perseverance of Konkani and its eventual resurgence.

The foundations of modern Konkani literature were to a large extent laid by Vaman Raghunath Varde Valaulikar *alias* Shennoi Goembab, in Bombay. Bombay, which was the home of a large number of educated and semi literate Goan diaspora, provided the ideal environs for the development of the Konkani renaissance. Most of today's Konkani stalwarts began their literary journey in the public sphere in Bombay. But after Liberation, the primary arena of the Konkani public sphere shifted to Goa. After 451 years of Portuguese colonial domination, Goa began to experience the process of democratisation of socio-political institutions. Language has played a vital role in Goa's post liberation socio-political history. The parochialising trend in post-colonial Goa has taken a linguistic turn as it was generic of the process of State-formation in India. The issues have emerged not because of the prevalence of multiple language varieties—but because of formal and conscious attempts at parochialisation in the post-colonial context. Every major political transition that the State has experienced has been cloaked, either overtly or covertly, in the garb of language. With the passing of the Official Language Act on 4 February 1987 and the declaration of Statehood on 30 May, 1987, one phase of the political mobilisation of the Konkani public sphere came to an end.

Since 1987, concerted efforts have been made to hasten the institutionalisation of Konkani, though attempts at dominance and contestations continued. Though the focus of Chapter Four has been the growth and development of the literary sphere since 1987, I began by examining the historical background of the rise of community consciousness around language. Though scholars have traced the beginings of
Konkani literature to the sixteenth century, these were primarily in manuscript form. The late nineteenth century had already ushered in the period of the early modern public sphere. Unlike the earlier centuries when Portuguese, and to some extent, Marathi were the language of written communication in Goa, in the nineteenth century the reintroduction of print gave rise to the emergence of Konkani in the literary sphere of print production. The twentieth century further nurtured this sphere. It is a site of hybridity between cultural systems coming out of a long and struggling embrace. This led to the formation of the Konkani nation as an imagined community, as perceived by Anderson. This community consciousness was also strengthened by the developments occurring in the sphere of the performing arts in Konkani. Matsukawa (2002) writes that the leaders of the Konkani movement had to depend on the literary and non literary media, print and performance, in order to circulate their discourse and form the Konkani public sphere. I have thus analysed the developments taking place in these genres. These included the various tiatrs, khells, and jagors, which were mainly patronised by the non elite sections of the Konkani speaking public. I have concluded that though the literary sphere in the realm of print is yet to be consolidated, the non literary Konkani media has progressed unhindered. It has contributed much to the development of the Konkani public sphere.

The twentieth century heralded a radical shift in the social background of the actors participating in the literary sphere. While until the nineteenth century, it was largely the Goan Catholic elite in addition to the missionaries and Portuguese officials who wrote in Konkani, in the twentieth century lower jati Catholics and Hindus too joined the Konkani literary sphere. The complete linguistic bifurcation between the elite and the non elite meant that work that was supposed to have literary merit was written in a language completely different from the one in which popular culture was
produced. This gave rise to high and low language, with a high literary tradition in Portuguese or Marathi and a low tradition in Konkani, especially Konkani written in Roman script.

The liberation of Goa was not only political, but the liberation of the literary sphere as well. A large number of Konkani ideologues who were based outside Goa, primarily in Bombay for work and education, returned to Goa following the departure of the Portuguese. With the subsequent removal of censorship following Liberation, Goans now felt free to express themselves in the language of their choice. But in Goa, nothing concerning language could be that simple. In Foucault’s analysis of the relation between knowledge and power, this relationship is subtle; it is routinised to such an extent that dominance is made to feel natural. The hold that Marathi had over centuries, due to historical reasons, had been so internalised in the consciousnesses of Goan Hindus, that they had come to think of Marathi as their language of communication. The fact that nearly all religious ceremonies were conducted in Marathi and religious literature in Marathi occupied the sacred space in Goan Hindu homes further consolidated the link between language and religion. Marathi was seen as Hinduism’s sacred language.

Since the 1980s, the influence of the literary sphere widened to include the non-elite as well as Konkani writers who came from the hinterland Sattari taluka and remote areas in Goa and beyond. Through their writings, the Konkani literary landscape underwent transformations. The dialectal variations, the geographical topography, the varied rituals and socio-cultural and economic customs specific to certain hitherto unknown groups and communities, all entered the Konkani literary sphere. Though the Konkani literary sphere has expanded since 1987, not much progress has been recorded in the genre of newsprint. While there are at least half a
dozen Marathi newspapers in circulation in Goa, there is just one Konkani newspaper which is in Devanagari script. One reason for this is that the Goan Hindus still consider Marathi as their medium of formal communication. As they have been trained to read and write in Marathi, out of force of habit, they still use Marathi. And the Catholics prefer reading an English newspaper rather than a Konkani newspaper in the not very familiar Devanagari script.

Thus, in this chapter, by historically tracing the growth and development of the Konkani literary sphere in Goa, I have attempted to show how this process has been reflective of the larger interrelation between language, religion, and polity in Goa. With the attainment of Liberation and later the Declaration of Konkani as the Official Language, the Konkani public sphere was expected to flourish. Though the bourgeoisie of the public sphere once promised to ultimately be accessible to all, it never did happen. The public sphere was modified to exclude the masses. This hierarchisation between classes and masses has been an integral part of Goa’s historical memory. This categorisation and hierarchisation has spilled over to encompass the language situation in Goa as well. The history of the Konkani’s literary public sphere resembles the cycle of Pareto’s conceptualisation of Circulation of the Elite (Adams and Sydie 2002: 227). Though the protagonists of Konkani in Roman script allege domination by the Devnagiri lobby, an analysis of the growth and development of the Konkani literary sphere since 1987, shows that the divisive trends were a means to maximise the benefits accrued to literary figures and theatre artistes—the literary elite.

These tendencies, considered fissiparous at times, in the Konkani literary sphere, along with the hegemonic dominance of Marathi and the aspirations and preference towards English meant that though the Official Language Act (OLA) was
passed on 4 February 1987 the State has been charged with allegations of non-implementation of the OLA. Though the notion of official language is associated with the modern phenomenon of nation state governance, and nationism, I have argued in Chapter Five that in India the situation has been different. In India questions pertaining to official language have been part of the public sphere since millennia. This is because in India, official language has been associated with linguistic plurality. The independence and the acknowledgement of linguistic plurality in the Constitution changed the nature of multilingualism in India. This is characterised by the emergence of the regional languages as the official languages, which are then used to provide social and economic mobility through government employment and positions of political patronage. Thus as official language is not simply an administrative technicality but has notions of symbolic, cultural, and economic capital; its recognition and implementation is not a given: it involves some amount of negotiations.

Given this context, the implementation of the OLA is not a simple institutionalisation of an ideology. In the politically charged language situation in Goa, Konkani activists persistently complained of non-implementation of the OLA. The resolution of this issue gets even more complicated with the resurgence of the script conflict in public sphere in Goa. Issues concerning the OLA and its implementation in Goa are an example of the perfect marriage between state and civil society, where civil society in its role as the ‘good society’ as given by Edwards (2005) assists the State in fulfilling its duties. In its role as the ‘public sphere’, by putting pressure on the State, by collaborating with it whenever needed and joining various committees set up by the Directorate, civil society through the language ideologues and voluntary associations seeks to help the State implement the OLA.
The very passing of the OLA brought to the forefront questions pertaining to script divide in Konkani. The literary sphere of Konkani in Roman script which existed to some extent, especially among the lower classes of Christians was slowly confined to primarily to the religious realm. The advocates of Konkani in Roman script believe that the OLA sounded a death knell to Konkani in Roman script. They allege that the Roman script which dominated the Konkani literary sphere prior to Liberation was adversely affected by the OLA. They claim that on the grounds that the OLA only mentions the Devanagari script, grants to publishing in Roman script have been stopped. In Chapter Six, I have attempted to show how script is instrumental in the transformation from language as symbol to language as icon. By equating script with ingredients like religion and caste, the Konkani speakers in Goa have invoked the iconic aspects of language in their negotiations of the script politics in Goa.

The attempts to iconise Konkani in Roman script and to transform the subjective awareness of communities into nationalities have remained unfulfilled. A sense of relative deprivation made the protagonists of Konkani in Roman script to go for collective mobilisations on the ground of script. But I do not think that this issue will follow the Hindi Urdu trajectory and get communalised. There are many reasons for my conclusion. The shared socio religious history of the two communities, which until a few centuries ago, was one, acts as a guard against communal aspirations. Neither are the Devanagarivadis communal. As Fernandes (2006) sys, they are, at best nationalists who mistake similarity for unity. They perceive any variation as a threat to nation building. The aspirations of an increasing number of Goan Catholics towards English, also dilutes the base of the Roman Konkani camp. Reflective of Pareto’s Circulation of Elites, the script controversy is largely limited to the literary
elite in the literary sphere. There is nevertheless a sense of discrimination perceived by the users of Konkani in Roman script which needs to be addressed by the State. As Kubchanadani says, 'in a pluricultural situation, pluralism and encouragement of diversity are the least acrimonious way forward.'

Chapter Seven examines attempts by various actors towards consolidation and institutionalisation of the public sphere. It specifically discusses four language-related issues that have occupied the public sphere in the twenty first century. The first issue pertained to the fulfilment of the last goal of the KPA i.e. the inclusion of Konkani in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The Eighth Schedule to the Indian Constitution contains a list of 22 scheduled languages. At the time the Constitution was enacted, inclusion in this list meant that the language was entitled to representation on the Official Languages Commission, and that the language would be one of the bases that would be drawn upon to enrich Hindi, the official language of the Union. This chapter chronicles the events and lobbying that Konkanivadis engaged in to include Konkani in that list. The inclusion of Konkani in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution on 20 August 1992 marked the end of phase of the consolidation of the formal Konkani public sphere. The achievement of this objective, for many marked an end to one phase of the Konkani movement. For Konkanivadis, it settled the language-dialect issue.

The process of institutionalisation of the OLA in the public sphere involved a number of challenges. One significant political sociolinguistic issue involved the process of standardisation of Konkani language. Standardisation is the necessary consequence of the existence of two apparently opposing phenomena: the presence of multilingualism and the creation of a nation. It is an attempt at homogenising plurality. Though the process of standardisation began in the early twentieth century
with the work of Shri Goembab, the immediate need for standardisation of Konkani in Goa arose when after Liberation the Government decided to convert the erstwhile Portuguese medium schools into Konkani medium ones. For a variety of reasons, the *antruzi* dialect was chosen as the official dialect for Konkani. Hence the process of standardisation of the *antruzi* dialect began on a war footing in the aftermath of Liberation. Given this socio cultural background and milieu, Konkani had to prove its independent status not just to its detractors but even to its users. It had to move out of the hegemonic shadow of Marathi in the first instance, and later, Konkani in Devanagari script. Though language standardisation is seen as a desirable endeavour necessary for the development and adaptability of the language to the multiple uses it might be put to, it involves some amount of politics and politicisation. Standardisation is often the consequence of a need for uniformity that is felt by influential sections of the society. The standardisation of Konkani in Devanagari script is often charged on two counts: one, the marathification of Konkani and the advancing hegemony of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmins and the elite Catholic Brahmins. But the pro standardisation camp counters this allegation by arguing that standardisation can never be a democratic and representative process. These dichotomies are reflective of the very nature of language standardisation— it does not correspond to any concrete reality. Language standardisation fits Weber's notion of ideal type. It is a construct that people try to adhere to, but cannot fully incorporate. Standardisation can never be complete as any language is a living entity. It also does not exist in a vacuum. The standardisation of Konkani is thus influenced by and influences the social situation in which it evolves. Standardisation might be of essence due to the demands of uniformity laid down by governance and education. The issue though has to be empathically and sensitively handled so that a delicate balance is
maintained and variety is not stifled. The representatives of various sections of the Konkani community need to be involved in the standardisation process.

Some supporters of Konkani in Roman script feel that the process of standardisation will soon be redundant because of the growing dominance of English. In this chapter, I have also explicated the relevance of English in India and its nativisation right from pre Independence times to the contemporary. It is this aspiration for English that concerns the Konkani protagonists. What worries them is the percolation of this pro English aspiration to the masses as well. This worry of the Konkani protagonists is shared by the Church, that insist on the usage of Konkani in most of its ceremonies and quotidian activities.

But the aspiration for English continues, and the laity differs with the Church. They see English as an indispensable tool to upward mobility. A number of staunch Konkanivadis are also in keeping with this stance. English is associated with the ideology of modernity and progress and native languages with the ideology of tradition and cultural values (Annamalai 2001: 124). Dr. Madhavi Sardessai reiterates Annamalai’s views when she makes a distinction between avoiche bhas ani potache bhas (mother’s language and the language of the livelihood). It is this perceived importance of English in the public domain which makes Konkani protagonists acknowledge its necessity and encourage its use. But this fear of the hegemonic role played by English is nothing unique to the language situation in Goa. This perceived threat and dilemma is a result of the push and pull forces of pluralism and homogenisation. In this rapidly globalising world where English as an international language is seen as the instrument of upward social mobility, holding on to the regional language is considered an integral part of maintaining one’s own identity.
In my understanding of the role played by language in chartering the public sphere of Goa, I have noticed that there has historically been a sense of persecution and victimisation integral to the survival and development of Konkani. This sense of persecution, inferiority, and the resultant struggle has persisted in the public sphere even after the declaration of Statehood and the passing of the OLA.

Now the players have changed. While earlier the Konkanivadis felt the hegemonic influence of Marathi, today in addition to the threat faced from Marathi and English, there is a division in the Konkani camp itself. And in this new phase of the Konkani movement, the Devanagari camp is taking the position that Marathi took in the earlier Konkani-Marathi controversy, and the advocates of Konkani in the Roman script have adapted the 'victimised and persecuted' stance of Konkani. The Devanagari camp puts forth the same allegations that the Marathivadis once levelled against Konkani for denying Roman Konkani camp their demands: the lack of standardisation, uniformity and quality of writings of Konkani in Roman script. The Roman Konkani camp seeks to counter these allegations by building up of Konkani literature in Roman script and forming associations devoted solely for its development. Like the Devanagarivadis, they too have begun their own process of standardisation.

The age of globalisation also encourages parochial tendencies. The Goan diaspora still nurture their primordial identity of language in the diaspora. A case in point is the contemporary activities by Konkani organisations in Karnataka to advance the use of Konkani of especially in the realm of education and culture. I have focussed on the Konkani cultural organisation, *Mannad Sobhann* to show the power of performance and image as an alternative to written media, in the process of the formation of a public sphere. The umbilical relationship that the Konkani community
in Karnataka has towards Goa and Konkani gets heightened in north coastal Karnataka. Konkani speakers form the majority in places like Karwar, Joida, Haliyal and Supa. Feeling a strong sense of socio cultural kinship with Goa, there has been a movement to merge these regions with Goa. While Karnataka has strongly opposed this move, the people of Goa are ambivalent on this issue. This movement is still in its fledgling stages. It needs to be seen what course it will take. Though Shri Kelekar is optimistic about the movement, given the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Konkani ideologues in Goa, I do not think that the movement will be successful. Shri Sail too opines that the movement needs the support of the Konkanivadis in Goa, in order to survive.

Questions may be raised regarding the applicability of Habermas’ notion of the public sphere to analyse a socio-linguistic reality far distinct in space and time. A Foucauldian conception of the micro-politics of power and the inherent power dynamics of language itself would render such a free public space impossible. Furthermore, the concept of the public sphere was designed to explain large historical and political changes from a philosophical viewpoint; how well can it explain literary and aesthetic changes? That too, in the contemporary era of a different socio cultural reality? These doubts notwithstanding, I have used Habermas’ notion of public sphere as a sensitising concept and a framework to understand the development of the multiple public spheres in Goa since 1987. I felt that using public sphere as a sensitising concept has enhanced my understanding of the language dynamics in Goa since 1987. Nevertheless, the contradictions inherent in the concept of public sphere need to be revisited in the further examinations with reference to other empirical situations.
Another limitation concerns the focus of my study. Though the title of my thesis is on 'Language and the Public Sphere in Goa', I have attended only to the Konkani public sphere as I am familiar only with English and Konkani. I have delimited my study in this way. The transformations in various other public spheres especially the Marathi and the Portuguese in Goa may further be studied to get a full view of the public spheres in Goa.