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Konkani and Assertive Multilingualism in Goa, India

Ganesh Somayaji and Joanna Coelho, Department of Sociology, Goa University, Goa – 403 206, India (email: ganesh@unigoa.ac.in and joannc1@rediffmail.com respectively) think that the magnitude of multilingualism in India has made scholars wonder how communication happens and how social cohesion is maintained. This linguistic diversity itself is not a problem but it is what we intend to do with this diversity that could be a problem. One feature of the multilingual heritage of India is the addition of languages rather than the reduction. A recurring factor in the emergence of new languages is the challenge to the existing socio-political order by an emerging social group that seeks a separate cultural, social and political identity and power. Situating itself in this context, the authors examine the relation between the changing nuances of the Konkani language and society of Goa in India. This phenomenon is a characteristic feature of linguistic plurality, not only in Goa but in India as a whole. The paper deals with the shift from organic accommodating linguistic plurality to institutional assertive multilingualism, while focusing on two issues pertaining to assertive multilingualism in Goa. The authors feel that there is a clear transition from functional multilingualism to contested multilingualism, and that some form of language-related conflict has always been present.

Key words: *language dynamics, plurilingualism, assertive multilingualism, official language.*

“The diversity of languages, as they have been developed and adapted, is a potent fact of life that cries out for theoretical attention.”

(Hymes 1971: vii, cited in Nettle, 1999)

Homo sapiens clearly has an inherent capability for language that is not present in any other species known today. The use of language is one of the most conspicuous and diagnostic traits that distinguish man from other animals. Whether other extinct hominid species such as Neanderthals possessed such a capacity is not yet known. Scholars have written about the evolution of language for centuries, and linguists have attempted to trace its origin, but the ephemeral nature of speech

means that there is almost no data on which to base conclusions on the subject. No current human group, anywhere, speaks a "primitive" or rudimentary language.

Most mythologies do not credit humans with the invention of language, but know of a language of the Gods predating human language. Apart from biblical narratives, anthropologists like Steven Pinker, philosophers like Immanuel Kant and linguists like Noam Chomsky, believe that humans are born with a "language instinct," a neural processing network that contains a universal grammar that has developed specifically for encoding and decoding human languages.

It has been suggested that language evolution undergoes periods of rapid expansion, during which many languages evolve, intermixed with long periods of near-equilibrium, during which languages diffuse and converge, as societies interact, fission and fuse. Language diversity is part of the co-evolution of humans with ecological diversity. Cultural diversity emerges and sustains itself through language diversity. Language diversity enables the representation and transmission of the fundamental aspects of cultures for acquisition by the succeeding generations of the community, and for interaction with other contemporary communities.

Humankind today speaks about 6,500 different, mutually unintelligible languages that belong to at least 250 identifiable large families (Nettle, 1999). This staggering multilingualism is not equally distributed. Linguistic diversity is more the rule with the vast majority of present-day nations, and it is claimed to be of "enormous consequence for the very maintenance of a nation-state. It is not a mere demographic concept defined by the number of languages used by a person, a community or a country. It is fundamentally a socio-political concept defined by the functional relation between languages. It is not merely reached by accidental processes but is inherited and is an integral part of the nation-making philosophy and history for many" (Lewis, 1972: 17 cited in Pattanayak 1990: 1). India is one such state. The linguistic heritage of India is marked by multilingualism. It is a linguistic giant (Annamalai, 2001).

While perhaps to an earlier generation of scholars language diversity seemed so natural that it required no explanation, sociolinguists feel the need to understand and come to terms with this ubiquitous phenomenon. In their attempt to problematise this multiplicity of languages, scholars have used various terms to conceptualise this reality. In defining varying aspects of the phenomenon, there is at times an overlap of nomenclature.

Hence the first step of the exegetical exercise is a clarification of the concepts. Generally, language diversity, multilingualism, functional multilingualism and plurilingualism are the different terms used to describe the multiple language situations in the world. While a number of scholars use the terms interchangeably, others are more cautious. We will now

briefly elucidate some of the meanings associated with three of the most common concepts, language diversity, multilingualism and plurilingualism.

Language diversity: There are three different types of diversity that can be identified in the human linguistic pool (Nettle, 1999). The first type is simply the number of languages in a given geographical area. This type of diversity can be referred to as language diversity. The second type of diversity, called phylogenetic diversity, refers to the number of different lineages of language found in an area. The third type of diversity, i.e. the structural diversity of a particular region or some parameter is the extent to which its languages vary on that parameter. Thus language diversity is the mere prevalence of a multiplicity of languages in a given geographical area.

Multilingualism: It is a sociolinguistic concept used to understand the working on language diversity. Bernard Spolsky (2004) uses the term multilingualism to refer to a society in which a number of languages are used. Khubchandani (1997) says that it is a distinct form of elegant bilingualism or trilingualism learned through conscious effort.

Plurilingualism: Plurilingualism or language plurality is the tendency to use many languages and to accept other languages. It is a political agenda in which a conscious attempt is made to preserve diversity. Spolsky uses the term plurilingualism to refer to the usually differentiated skills in several languages of an individual member of a community. For Khubchandani (1991) linguistic plurality is part of cultural plurality, an ideal and ideological position that emphasises accommodation.

It is thus noted that there is ambiguity and contradictions among the different meanings assigned to the three concepts. For the sake of simplification we will use the concepts as defined by Khubchandani in our discussion of language use in Goa, as we find that the nomenclature as defined by him is helpful in understanding the transforming language situation in India.

According to Khubchandani (1997), during the decades following colonial withdrawal, the subcontinent has been acquiring a new order of pluralism in its cultural and linguistic expression, such as efforts to shed the hegemony of imperial English, and assign new roles to the indigenous languages. Grassroots pluralism is being replaced by mandatory multilingualism. Consequently, India is fast turning away from an organically "accommodating" plurilingual nation to an institutionally "assertive" multilingual nation (Khubchandani, 1991). This presents a challenge and threat to the goal of nation building. He asserts that plurality is the essence of oriental life and warns that efforts to suppress it will have negative repercussions.

In this paper, we will try to trace the change from an organically "accommodating" plurilingual nation to an institutionally "assertive" multilingual one in the context of Goa. Goa, the smallest state in the

Indian Union, contributes to the mosaic of linguistic plurality that is a defining feature of India and the language dynamics thereof.

LANGUAGE DYNAMICS IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTILINGUALISM

India's linguistic diversity is proverbial. According to the 1961 census,¹ there are 1652 mother tongues, which are reducible to 200 language families. India's languages can be traced to four families: The Sino-Tibetan, the Austro-Asiatic, the Dravidian and the Indo- Aryan. The magnitude of multilingualism in India has made scholars wonder how communication happens and how social cohesion is maintained (Annamalai, 2001). But this linguistic diversity itself is not a problem, it is what we intend to do with this diversity that could be a problem (Pandit, 1977).

One feature of the multilingual heritage of India has been the addition of languages rather than the reduction. A recurring factor in the emergence of new languages is the challenge to the existing socio-political order by an emerging social group that seeks a separate cultural, social and political identity and power (Annamalai, 2000). Creating written literature and codifying grammar are some of the means of legitimising the language. Thus the socio-political status of a language is not static; it is liable to change as society and polity changes. The tendency to treat languages as if they can exist in sealed compartments, unchanging and untouched by the world around them is based on the misconception that a language variety which is artificially preserved from the forces of change can survive. Evidently it does not (Krishna, 1991).

Situating itself in the above context, this paper examines the relation between the changing nuances of the Konkani language and society of Goa. This dynamic is a characteristic feature of linguistic plurality, not only in Goa, but in India as a whole. The paper is divided into two sections: section one deals with the shift from functional linguistic plurality to contested multilingualism, while section two deals with two instances that pertain to contested multilingualism in Goa. It should be clarified that although there was a change from organically accommodating plurilingualism to institutionally assertive multilingualism, some form of language-related conflict was always present.

Linguistically, Goa is located precisely on the dividing line, which separates the Indo-European languages of North India from the Dravidian languages of the South (Bradnock, 1997). Like any other state in the Indian Union, Goa too has a diversity of different languages (Table 1).

Table 1
Speakers of Different Languages in Goa, 1991 and 2001

<i>Mother Tongue</i>	<i>Number of Speakers</i>	
	<i>1991</i>	<i>2001</i>
Assamese	145	195
Bengali	1,839	4,111
Bodo	2	7
Dogri	89	93
Gujarati	4,461	9,273
Hindi	37,073	76,775
Kannada	54,323	74,615
Kashmiri	212	472
Konkani	602,626	769,888
Maithili	—	164
Malayalam	12,692	15,081
Manipuri	36	49
Marathi	390,270	304,208
Nepali	960	2,135
Oriya	683	2,681
Punjabi	1,830	1,815
Sanskrit	8	46
Santali	—	24
Sindhi	372	527
Tamil	6,818	7,903
Telugu	7,949	11,926
Urdu	39,944	54,163

Source: *Goa Kesari* 4(9), 1-15 May 2008, p.3.

Although Goa is linguistically plural, the majority of its people speak Konkani and Marathi, and English, Hindi and Kannada are also widely spoken.

More than being a mere demographic category, multilingualism is a socio-political concept defined by the functional relation between languages (Annamalai, 2000). The varieties of languages spoken in Goa have a functional specification with the functions dividing the languages into use in private domain and use in public domain. This functional specification follows the power structure of society, which by its very nature inherently becomes a potential for conflict.

But there is nothing inherent in the nature of language, which automatically makes it the basis for political contestations. In fact, up to the 19th century, we cannot speak of a dominant language with reference to language practices in India; there is the language of ritual and religion, the language of the court and elite, the language of home

and neighbourhood (Pandit, 1977). But mobilisations of linguistic loyalty for political purposes are implicated in the very nature of modern democratic processes (Brass, 1974 and 1994). They are an accompaniment to the arrival of modernity and the associated transition from fuzzy to enumerated communities (Kaviraj, 2002 cited in Thakur, 2002).

ACCOMODATING PLURILINGUALISM TO ASSERTIVE MULTILINGUALISM

The linguistic mobilisations are the by-product of the needs of the modern State (Hobsbawm, 1992). Konkani language protagonists believe that the history of literary Konkani is that of a language under duress. But Pereira (1992) laments that Konkani, which he considers to be the oldest of modern Indo-Aryan tongues, was subjugated. Very early, official and religious status was accorded to the vernaculars of the more powerful adjacent territories, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Genesis of Konkani

At the outset, it should be made clear that this section is not based on a factual historiography of the Konkani language in Goa. Rather it is an attempt at codifying and interpreting the perspectives on the antiquity of Konkani in Goa. It is believed that Konkani is originally the language of the Proto-austroloid tribe the *Konk*. It is claimed that the amalgam of the Prakrit, brought by the Aryans to the Konkani in the 8th century, gave rise to Konkani two years later. But the Konkani language has had a chequered history. There has always been sibling rivalry amongst Konkani and the Marathi (Kamat, 2002).

The Yadavas, the Bahamanis and the Sultan of Bijapur who ruled over portions of the Konkani for a time, gave Marathi official standing. The vacant places of the Konkani Brahmins who migrated to the Vijayanagara Empire, were taken up by the less qualified Maratha Brahmin priests. These Maratha Brahmin priests raised their own vernacular to the position of Konkani (Pereira, 1992).

While Konkani was officially spurned, the people continued to use and develop it. The turning point in the socio-cultural impact on the language was the arrival of the Portuguese and their missionary zeal on the Goan soil. It was the cardinal principle of the missionaries to teach the people religion in their own language. So Konkani and Marathi were adopted by the Portuguese as tools in the proselytising activities. This phase also gave rise to the development of the use of Roman Script for Konkani, which was used for liturgical works.

The Church's ecumenical interests were increasingly being overshadowed by the state's more nationalistic ones. Keeping the Christians faithful to the Crown meant isolating them culturally from the surrounding unbelievers and language is one of the principal factors

of culture (Pereira, 1992). In the 17th century, the Portuguese passed a law that banned use of the mother tongue and commanded the Goans to speak Portuguese. In spite of persecution, the Konkani-speaking people hung on to their culture. Eventually the Portuguese acknowledged the functional significance of Konkani in facilitating the conversion process.

It has to be noted that in spite of Konkani's somewhat arduous journey, it has managed to persist and flourish as the spoken language of the people through the centuries. Notwithstanding the minor rumblings pertaining to the language-dialect issue at the literary level that began in the 19th century, there was no such confusion in the minds of the majority of Goans. Nor was there any overwhelming crisis that affected the lives of the masses. As Pandit (1977) asserted, until the 19th century, people accepted and dealt with multilingualism by compartmentalising different languages for use in various domains like court, education and home. While the functional specification of languages follows the power structure of society, the functional change of language in public domains does not affect the use of languages in the private domain (Annamalai, 2000). Irrespective of whether Kannada, Marathi or Portuguese was the state language, people in Goa continued to use their own language in the private domain; Konkani as a spoken language and Marathi for literary expressions, religious celebrations, and medium of instruction.

Until the 19th century, in Goa there existed a kind of functional multilingualism with respect to language use, although of course there were instances when this functionalism was tested. In the 20th century and especially after Goa was liberated in 1961, there was a transformation from functional multilingualism to contested multilingualism. The next part of the paper deals with this aspect of language change in Goa.

CONTESTED MULTILINGUALISM

Different characteristics of Indian plurality in the context of speech communications provide adequate evidence to convince us that assertions of language identity vary at different times and in different places (Khubchandani, 1991). In the 20th century, the language scenario was slowly transformed from functional pluralism to contested multilingualism. While this phenomenon gained magnetic proportions after liberation, its seeds were sown in the early 20th century itself. Two instances stand out in this: Phase i) the resurgence of Konkani literature through the works of Shenoi Goembab (1877-1946); Phase ii) the founding of the Konkani Bhasha Mandal (KBM) in 1939.

Vaman Varde Valavlikar, fondly called Shenoi Goembab, who converted to Konkani at the turn of the 20th century set himself the task of vindicating Konkani's wrongs (Pereira, 1992). His literary contributions to the various genres of Konkani literature gave a kind of renaissance to Konkani literature, especially in Devnagri script. The

enlightenment, which began with Goembab, rekindled the love for Konkani among others. Thus as early as 1939, the KBM was set up with the aim of promoting and preserving Konkani language, literature and culture and to promote the traditions of the Konkani speaking people.

The language controversy, which before liberation was fought at the intellectual level and had touched the emotional chord of the masses in Goa, took a different turn after liberation (Nagvenkar, 2002). While India attained Independence from the British in 1947, Goa was only liberated from the Portuguese rule when Indian troops stormed the Portuguese army in Goa on 18 December 1961, liberating Goa the next day.

Post-liberation Goa has been dominated by the language controversy, which has been taking new *avatars* every now and then. Since languages normally function in a social matrix and since societies depend heavily on languages as a medium (if not, symbol) of interaction, it is certainly appropriate to expect that their social behaviour will be appreciably related in many lawful ways. The language-related questions have divided the people of Goa into two camps: one Konkaniwada, promoting the cause of Konkani and the other Marathivada, wanting to retain the perceived status quo and superiority of Marathi.

These two ideological camps have provided the substances for political actions in terms of collective mobilisations during the four decades of post-liberation Goa culminating in the declaration of Konkani as Goa's official language on 4 February 1987 and Goa's statehood on 30 May 1987.

The ongoing language dynamics can be viewed as a continuum with several crucial phases at which point, the Konkaniwada² and the Marathivada³ crystallised in the backdrop of communitarian identity struggle in Goa. The first phase revolved around the merger issue. The fundamental question was whether Goa should remain a separate region or merge with Maharashtra. The question of Goa's political identity became entwined with the question of cultural identity, with language serving as a major vehicle in this process of language formation. The Marathivadis favoured merger while the Konkaniwadis opposed it. The political mobilisations that followed the merger issue, and which had language as the major issue, finally culminated in the opinion poll of 1967. The majority of Goans rejected merger and asserted their faith in Konkani as the language of the people of Goa.

Another phase of the language polemics in Goa concerns the statehood issue and the official language question in Goa. Given the linguistic basis of states in India, declaration of the official language became intrinsically linked to state formation. The Konkani language protagonists proposed that granting of official status to the Konkani language and its inclusion in the Eight Schedule was imperative for statehood. Accordingly, on 4 February 1987, Konkani was made the official language and on 30 May

1987 Goa attained statehood. Since this is an important juncture in the phase of institutionally assertive multilingualism in Goa, it will be dealt with in some detail.

THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE ISSUE: AN ATTEMPT AT INSTITUTIONAL ASSERTION

The concept of an official language is one which has been addressed by a number of scholars. For Bourdieu (1991) an official language is one, which, within the territorial limits of that unit, imposes itself on the whole population as the only legitimate language. He however rejects Chomskian and Saussurian linguistics which are based on the fundamental assumption that language is to be constituted as an autonomous and homogenous object, amenable to linguistic analysis. Bourdieu (1991), on the contrary acknowledges the socio-historical conditions that establish a particular set of linguistic practices as dominant and legitimate. Through a complex historical process, sometimes involving extensive conflict, a particular language or a set of linguistic practices has emerged as the dominant and legitimate language, and other languages or dialects have been eliminated or subordinated to it (Bourdieu, 1991).

The official language is intrinsically linked to the state, both in its origin and in its social use. It is in the process of state formation that conditions are created for the constitution of a unified linguistic market, dominated by the official language (Bourdeiu, 1991). There is a belief that a common language is necessary for nation building. According to Stalin, 'a national community is inconceivable without a common language' (Stalin, 1976 cited in Chaklader, 1990). There was a strong move in the era preceding Indian independence, and soon after, that there should be a national language serving as a marker of identity and which would act as a glue uniting the various territories of the Indian nation state. The problem then arose as to which language should be designated as the national language. Many of the national leaders wanted Hindi to be accorded with the status. But non-Hindi speakers, especially those from Tamil Nadu, rejected this move. Finally Hindi was officially declared as one of the official languages of the Union. Eighteen other languages were also acknowledged as official languages in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution.

But notwithstanding this constitutional resolution, there is ambiguity among the people about whether Hindi is the official language or the national language. A national language is one which enjoys use throughout an entire nation in the political, social and cultural realms. An official language, on the other hand, is one that is used for the operation of government. This semantic confusion about whether Hindi is the official language or the national language even finds its way into books regarding the language issue. This confusion stems from the way Hindi has been

formally labelled as an official language, but was simultaneously forwarded in a nationalistic manner (Baldrige, 1996).

An important factor influencing Konkani's future as a state language was its recognition by the *Sahitya Akademi*.⁴ All the Konkani organisations approached the *Sahitya Akademi* and sought recognition for Konkani. Manohar Rai Sardessai, Shri Ravindra Kelekar, and Uday Berber lobbied hard in Delhi to get for Konkani *Sahitya Akademi* status. There was a powerful Marathi lobby working against the Konkani activities, but people belonging to other linguistic communities like Gujaratii and Kannadigas signed the statement advocating Konkani's inclusion in the *Akademi*. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, a renowned philologist visited Goa and supported Konkani's acceptance by the *Akademi*. Subsequently, the General Council of the *Akademi* resolved in February 1975, that Konkani should be granted *Akademi* status. Bhembre recalls that this development led to political mobilisation in Maharashtra, and subsequently one member of the *Akademi*, Vasant Bapat, passed a resolution that the *Akademi* should reconsider its decision to grant *Akademi* status to Konkani. But after a year, the General Council of the *Akademi*, concluded that it had taken the right decision in granting Konkani *Sahitya Akademi* recognition. Thus on 26 February 1976 Konkani was finally granted recognition by the *Akademi*.

Getting *Sahitya Akademi* recognition was a precursor to demanding statehood. Pundalik Naik is credited with the leadership of this movement. The movement began when a member of the Legislative Assembly, Luizinho Faleiro, submitted a Private Member's Bill demanding that Konkani be made the official language of Goa. This bill was rejected. This move taken by the government angered one Konkani protagonist, Babu Naik of the Konkani daily *Sunaparant*, and he initiated an agitation. Accordingly, an organisation, *Konkani Porjecho Awaz* (KPA) was formed.

The three specific aims of the KPA were making Konkani the official language, granting statehood to Goa and the inclusion of Konkani in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution. Once again, the political future in Goa rallied around the language issue. Meetings were held. The Marathi protagonists formed an organisation, the '*Marathi Rajya Bhasha Prastapan Samiti*' (MRBPS) to defend their cause. The Marathi protagonists demanded that the Marathi language, which they claim is written, spoken and read more often, could not be denied 'First' language status.

Thus the two camps once again pitched themselves against each other. In the agitation that followed, there was bloodshed and violence. Both the Marathi and Konkani protagonists try to dissociate themselves from this violence. Manohar Rai Sardessai lamented that both Catholic and Hindu 'goonda' elements tried to transform the language agitation into a communal movement. He claimed that he cautioned the agitators that there was no need for this religious animosity. In his words, 'the

mango is already ripe. There is no need to throw stones. It will eventually fall.'

Nevertheless, a virulent conflict ensued and on 4 February 1987, Konkani was made the official language of Goa, and on 30 May 1987, Goa attained statehood. This second major language movement left a bitter taste, because of the violence and bloodshed associated with it. After attaining statehood, the next major concern for the Konkani language protagonists was the inclusion of Konkani in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution. Unlike the previous language movements, which derived their strengths from collective mobilisations, the movement for inclusion of Konkani in the Eight Schedule did not involve the masses. As this movement involved intensive lobbying and personally meeting MPs, the members of the Konkani ideological camp like Manohar Rai Sardessai, Ravindra Kelekar and Uday Bhembre, went to Delhi and campaigned for this cause. They put forth the argument that any language, which the *Sahitya Akademi* recognises and which is the official language of the state, should be included in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution. Finally as a result of intensive lobbying and persistence on the part of the Konkani ideologues, Konkani was included in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution on 20 August 1992. Thus, three decades after attaining political liberation, Goa finally became a state with Konkani as the official language and Marathi as an associate language.

With the achievement of the goals of declaration of official language and Konkani's inclusion in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution, for some the language movement had reached another level. The next section deals with issues that are connected with the implementation of the Official Language Act.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE ACT

Regarding the language of administration, the Constitution provides that "the Legislature of a state may by law adopt any one or more of the language in use in the state or Hindi as language or languages used for all or any of the official purpose of that state (Article 345). The President may direct the state for a language to be officially recognised throughout the state or any part thereof for such purpose as he may specify. If there is a demand from the speakers of that language who form a substantial proportion of the state for all or specified official purpose (Article 347 cited in Annamalai 2001: 135). In keeping with these two articles of the Constitution, the legislative assembly passed the Official Language Act on 4 February 1987. Konkani is the Official language of Goa, Marathi may also be used for all purposes, is how the Official Language Act in Goa defines the position of Marathi in it (Barbosa, 1995). Accordingly, the Government of Goa appointed on 19 December 1987, as the date from which "Konkani Language shall be the official language for the purpose of replies by the government whenever

communications are received in Konkani language” (GOG, 1987). The government under the department of official language also constituted an Advisory Board for effective implementation of the Goa, Daman and Diu Official Language Act 1987 (Act of 1987) consisting of a Minister for official language and 12 other members.

These developments notwithstanding, Konkani Language activists complain that the Act has not yet been implemented in any significant manner. They argue that neither is the proceeding of the House fully conducted in Konkani nor is official correspondence of the government in Konkani. But this scenario is not unique to Konkani and Goa alone. Krishna (1991) argues that in other states as well, even though at the district and lower levels the administration communicates with the people in the regional language, they hesitate to use it in administrative writings. Although administration glossaries have been compiled in almost all state languages, they are believed to be inappropriate and lack ease of expression and accuracy (Krishna, 1991). There is of course much more to the pro-English attitude in the state than the technical problems faced by the administrators. This determination is conditioned by the educational system which has divided India into two distinct communities—English speakers and speakers of other languages. The administration is pro-English, because it is the English-speakers who control it (Krishna, 1991).

But the situation is gradually changing. Krishna (1991) gave the example of Karnataka, to show how the administration is hesitant to use the official language for the purpose of communication and correspondence, especially at the higher levels. But today the situation has changed. Now, Kannada is freely and often solely used in all levels of administration. So if it took Karnataka, which acquired statehood in the late 1950s, nearly five decades to get to its present position, it may be just a matter of time before Konkani reaches the level which the Konknavadis want it to attain.

This desire of the Konkani protagonists also stems from the obliteration of the distinction between the instrumental and symbolic functions of the language (Annamalai, 2001). With population and power in its favour, the official language is treated as *de facto* the national language of the state making all people in the state identify themselves with it and pay allegiance to it (Annamalai, 2001).

One of the consequences of the Declaration of the Official Language Act is the process of standardisation. Although the process of standardisation may be at work for a long time and results into a uniform writing system and conventions of spelling and the development of literature, it is the legitimisation of languages that provides the most important thrust towards standardisation (Pandit, 1977). The process of standardisation of Konkani, which started with *Shenoi Goembab*, who for all practical purposes initiated the development of Konkani language,

snowballed after the declaration of the Official Language Act. A recurring factor in the emergence of new languages is the challenge to the existing socio-political order by an emerging social group that seeks a separate cultural, social and political identity and power (Annamalai, 2000). The Konkani organisations, by assisting and initiating funding of publications, encyclopaedias and grammar books, have furthered the process of standardisation. Whether or not standardisation is desirable and the politics associated with it have a bearing on the entire process are beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice to say that the process of standardisation of the Konkani language has progressed so rapidly, especially after statehood, that some Konkani protagonists like Chandrakant Keni and Olivinho Gomes believe that it is complete.

But in keeping with the twists and turns that the language movement in Goa has to navigate, there is another debate that has invaded the public space. This issue concerns the script usage for Konkani. Although Konkani is written in five scripts, only Konkani written in Devnagiri is recognised as the standard one and the official language of Goa. This has sparked a controversy, albeit more than a decade and a half later. Thus the current contestation is over the official script for Konkani.

There has always been a current of resentment, if not anger, about Konkani in Devnagiri being declared the official language of the state. On the eve of the passing of the Official Language bill, more than 300 Konkani supporters stormed the office of the *Herald*, a leading Goan daily which played an active part in the language agitation, alleging that by making Devnagiri the sole official script, the Language Act has betrayed them. But in the larger interest of Konkani language, these murmurings were stifled.

The simmering discontent of the Romi Konkani protagonists flared up at the 25th All India Konkani Parishad (AIPK) held at Panaji, Goa. The Romi Konkani supporters, threatened by the slogan of 'one language, one script, one people,' propagated by the AIPK, decided to boycott the *Parishad* and form its own counter movement. Thus the battle lines have been drawn and differences have come to the fore. The advocates of Konkani in other scripts have got together, and under the leadership of Dalgado Konkani *Akademi* (DKA), have given December 20 as the cut-off date for the government to accept their demands. The objective of the DKA is the inclusion of Konkani in the Official Language Act.

The feeling of betrayal apart from material and economic considerations is the underlying forces propelling this most recent protest. As Uday Bhembre (2005), a staunch advocate of Konkani in the Devnagiri script, put it, there are two major grievances for those who write in Romi script. One is that books published in that script are not eligible for *Sahitya Akademi* and *Kala Akademi* awards. Two, writers and publishers of books in Romi script are not eligible for benefits of some of the schemes of the Goa Konkani *Akademi*. In his presentation

'Roadmap for Faster Development and Standardisation of Konkani Language', Bhembre (2005) puts forth some suggestions to overcome this perceived grievance. But the fact that the protest and agitation still continues shows that language-related conflicts are not easily resolvable. Thus Goa is now in the midst of another language-related contestation, although this battle for dominance is within the same language.

CONCLUSION

The language diversity throughout the world and particularly in countries like India is staggering. In an attempt to capture and explicate this diversity, linguists and other scholars have used a variety of concepts. Some of the most commonly used terms to describe this phenomenon are language diversity, plurilingualism and multilingualism.

In this paper, we have used the concepts delineated by Khubchandani as our framework. With the help of the model of plurality square, we have attempted to explicate with empirical evidence from Goa how India has moved from an organically plurilingual to an assertively multilingual nation state.

India has been a multilingual country for millennia and since independence it has been a multilingual nation. Multilingualism is more than the presence of many languages in a country; it involves the relationship between languages. This relationship may be decided culturally by the individual, socially by the community or politically by the state. Whatever the agency that defines this relationship, there remains a relationship between the various languages spoken in a nation. This relationship could be one of consensus or conflict, depending on a host of factors. The status of a particular language keeps changing. As there is an intrinsic link between language and society and as language is a social process and product, the change in the status of a language is closely connected to the changes taking place in the social milieu and in the imagination of its speakers.

This paper has traced the changes that the Konkani language has experienced through the years. It has conceptualised these changes as being a transformation from organically accommodating plurilingualism to institutionally assertive multilingualism, but this has not been a smooth and linear process. Focussing on the current phase of institutionally assertive multilingualism, this paper has discussed the variously nuanced consequences of an important aspect of this type of multilingualism, namely the debate over official language issue.

Guided by models of the West, Indian planners considered the presence of a multitude of languages as a hindrance to nation building. Consequently, many of the transitions sought through the modernisation processes are "externally" induced rather than "internally" generated. We have to reverse this process. As the Joint Parliamentary Committee

called to look into the problems of linguistic states itself noticed, our language diversity is not something of which we need to be ashamed. It is our wealth, an asset (Chaklader, 1990). Maintaining language plurality is a way of ensuring that we do not forgo this wealth.

NOTES

1. The 1961 Census provides the benchmark data on mother tongues in India that is used for all sociolinguistic analyses thereafter. The subsequent censuses do not provide data on mother tongue.
2. The Konakanivada is the language ideology of the Konkani ideologues that assert that Konkani is an independent language and not a dialect of Marathi. They claim that Konkani is the language of the people of Goa.
3. The total votes in favour of merger into the state of Maharashtra was 138,170 and the total votes in favour of the Union Territory was 173,190. This thin margin of 34,021 votes could be one of the reasons for the continuance language controversy.
4. The *Sahitya Akademi* was founded by the Government of India on 12 March 1954 to foster and coordinate literary activities in all the Indian languages and to promote through them the cultural unity of India. The *Akademi* organises national and regional workshops and seminars; provides research and travel grants to authors, publishes books and journals, and presents the annual *Sahitya Akademi Award* in each of the 22 languages it supports.

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