



# A Historical and Political Sociological account of the Dynamic status of Konkani Language in Pre-Liberation Goa, India

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## Abstract

*Multilingualism in India has occupied the imagination of social scientists. Indian multilingualism is so proverbial that people often wonder how communication takes place. Continually emerging new powerful languages challenge the existing socio political order. As society and polity changes, the socio political status of a given language also change. The socio-political status of a language is not static it is liable to change as society and polity changes. This paper considers the dynamic relationship between Konkani language and society in Goa. Based on literature review and personal interviews with a number of language protagonists, this paper attempts to document the dynamic status of Konkani in pre Liberation Goa.*

**Keywords:** Konkani, Language, Public sphere.

## Introduction

India is a multilingual giant. Language addition rather than attrition is an important feature India's multilingual heritage. Continually emerging new powerful languages challenge the existing socio political order. The socio political status of a given language also changes with the changes in society<sup>1</sup>. This paper is a historical account of the Konkani language movement in Goa.

The articulation and development of multilingualism in Goa follows a different pattern from that which is found in other parts of India. While in the rest of India there has been a shift from functional to assertive or contested multilingualism, in Goa the situation was altogether different. Because of its unique socio political history, Goa has always seen interplay of language, religion and governance. In Goa, the dialectic between language and religion has ensured that the phase of contested multilingualism in the public sphere began almost five centuries ago. This paper is a chronological elaboration of this dynamic phenomenon. Through a historical and political sociological account, I have attempted to explicate how multilingualism has given rise to multiple public spheres in Goa.

## Goa's Linguistic History

Language being intrinsic to territory, Konkani's history is linked to the history of the land of its speakers. The Konkani language is spoken throughout the narrow strip of land which is bounded on the north by Malvan, on the south by Karwar, on the east by the Western Ghats, and on the west by the Arabian sea<sup>2</sup>. But Pereira (1992: 8) laments that this oldest of modern tongues was not fated to reign in its own home; very early, official and

religious status was accorded to the vernaculars of the more powerful adjacent territories, Karnatak and Maharashtra<sup>3</sup>.

Unlike many other parts of India, Goa was never under a local ruler at any period in history. Each ruler thus imposed his language and script in the public sphere in Goa. 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. When Goa was under the sway of Kannada-speaking dynasties, Kannada dominated over the local language. The Yadavas, the Bahamanis and the Sultan of Bijapur who ruled over portions of the Konkan 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.

The system of education in pre-Portuguese Goa was largely religious in nature. When the Portuguese conquered Goa, they did not meet unlettered or illiterate masses of people, but those well versed in Sanskrit and Marathi religious literature (Souza 1977: 13). The formal education which was limited to the three upper castes was provided at *pathshalas* or *parishads* by schoolmasters or *aigals* in local languages<sup>4</sup>. The teachers who were called *Sinai* or *Shennoy* or *Shenvi Mama* were actually Maharastrians who were employed in Goa usually as clerks. They would also teach the children of their employers as well as neighbouring children usually in the balcony of big residential houses. In course of time they opened their own informal schools, called *Shenvi mama* schools. As these teachers came from Maharashtra, they taught in Marathi. Hence Marathi became the medium of instruction in schools in pre-Portuguese Goa .

Despite the isolation of Konkani in the political, religious and educational spheres, Konkani continued as the language of the private sphere. Until the arrival of the Portuguese, there was no objection to using Konkani for non-official and non-religious purposes. In fact, not only with regard to language, but in other spheres as well, the various rulers did not intervene in the mundane life of the people. Regardless of who was the ruler, life in Goa continued undisturbed with its unique religious practices, rituals and beliefs and language serving as markers of Goan identity. While rulers changed from time to time, the *Gaunponn* remained, hence the attachment and fidelity to the village and their mother tongue was stronger than loyalty to the rulers and their official language of administration.

Despite not having official patronage, the language was developed by the people. It also drew on the resources of its neighbours like Marathi and Kannada, and in turn, supplied to them from its own fund. It developed a script of its own, the *Kandvi* or *Goym Kannadi*, which encompassed all speech sounds in the language, thus setting it apart from the *Halle* or Old Kannada script of the then prevailing rulers (Gomes 2000: 21)<sup>5</sup>. Thus on the cultural level at least, it carved for itself a separate identity. Goans adapted and assimilated the influences of their Brahminical, Buddhist, and Jain heritage as part of their identity. Gradually, it was given visibility in the public domain, at least sporadically. Konkani began appearing on inscriptions during the reign of various rulers. The most outstanding of the inscriptions is the one that is scrawled across the foot of the giant granite monolith of Bahubali, the Jain Tirthankara, the Gomateshwara, at Sravanabelagolla in the Hassan district of coastal Karnataka dated 1116-17 AD<sup>5</sup>. Copper plate and stone inscriptions dating back to the twelfth century have also been unearthed in Konkani in *Kandvi* or *GoymKannadi* script.

During that period there were also various inscriptions in Marathi which borrowing number of words, phrases and idioms in Konkani asserted the native community's tongue as being suppressed by the dominant ruler's alien rule.

Apart from copper inscriptions, Konkani was also incorporated into literature. Old Marathi classics like the *Dnyaneshwari* which is the Marathi translation of the *Bhagvad Geeta*, and the *Lila Charitra* of the Mahanubhav movement of Sri Chakradhar Swami contain a large number of Konkani words, idioms and phrases. Thus, Konkani resources were thought to be qualitatively good enough to be used for Marathi classical writings.

Thus works in Konkani prose and poetry were part of the native Goan contribution to the language. The language was also written in more than one script. Though not given official recognition, Konkani did form part of the public sphere in Goa. This is because successive rulers of Goa did not impose any restrictions on the use of the language. In fact Konkani not only developed, but also had interchanges with the neighbouring languages of Marathi and Kannada. But because of the lack of a

cohesive community feeling and assertiveness among Konkani speakers and the rule by outsiders, the growth and development of the Konkani public sphere was limited.

### **Konkani under Portuguese Regime**

As the influence of over 451 years of Portuguese rule in Goa, has been tremendous, I have focussed on this period at length. When Goa was under Mohamedan rule, Timoja, who was the commander of the Vijayanagar fleet, induced the Portuguese chieftain Afonso de Albuquerque to enter Goa on 17 February 1510<sup>6</sup>.

**The early Portuguese: From Ignorance to Dominance:** When the Portuguese set sail for India, they had a twofold aim: control of the spice trade based in South India and rescue of Christians who they believed were under siege. They hoped to find the legendary Prester John and Christians who were converted by Thomas the Apostle in South India, but were now being persecuted. Though they did not find Prestor John, they did find what they saw as a thriving Eastern Christianity that was so unlike theirs. They then went about converting the local populace to Christianity.

Though the initial Portuguese policy was of non interference with religious practice, it did not last for long. Religious mission was never separate from mercantilism, and conversion from commerce. The Portuguese king functioned as the Grand Master of the Order of Christ and by a series of Papal Bulls (religious decrees) passed between 1452 and 1456, was given authority to conquer, subdue and convert all pagan territories<sup>7</sup>.

Lusitanisation was for Konkani a force at once destructive and liberative; destructive because as a channel of an intolerant westernisation, it aimed at absorbing Konkani culture into itself; liberative because it freed Konkani from the oppression of another intolerant and corrosive, but far less sophisticated culture-the Maratha.

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, the dominance of Portuguese, the counter-dominance of Marathi and attempts at Konkani perseverance and eventual resurgence.

**Lusitanisation and Language: From Destruction to Development:** When the Portuguese arrived in Goa, they first demolished temples and Hindu literature written in vernacular language. There was even a desire to exterminate those in the population that had no desire to convert. But, after some time, the Portuguese realised that if they wanted to gain a large number of converts, they could not ignore the local language. But the very zeal for the propagation of the Christian faith, the needs of the Government for the lands conquered, or feudatories and the necessities of commercial intercourse made evident to the conquerors the need for the knowledge of vernacular

languages and for securing assistance from the natives, even in the priestly ministry itself<sup>8</sup>. The various councils and Goan constitutions ordered the study of the language of the land. The first Provincial Council (1567, 5<sup>th</sup> Decree First Act) states: "Since this preaching would be more fruitful, if the preacher were well versed in the language of those to whom they preach, the Council very earnestly urges the Prelates that they should have in their diocese trustworthy persons who would learn languages"<sup>9</sup>.

Whoever be the source of their learning, the Portuguese did cultivate the language, at least until the *Alvara* of 1684, which banned the use of Konkani. And they found that understanding the native tongue better aided the confession activity of the parishioners, sick as well as prisoners. Baptising and catechising was greatly helped by the development of literature in Konkani. This literature was primarily religious or sacred in nature.

One of the first and the best example of this kind of Literature is the work of Fr. Thomas Stephens. Sardesai (2000: 34)<sup>9</sup> salutes him as the 'Father of Christian religious literature in India'. Fr Stephens made a close study of the language and the script of the people. In his letter to his father dated 10 November 1579 he wrote: "...and to Goa we came the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, there being received with passing great clarity. ....You will find hardly any piece of writing except on its leaves. Many are the languages of these places. Their pronunciation is not disagreeable, and their structure is allied to Greek and Latin. The phrases and constructions are of a wonderful kind ("Christian Purana" ed. J E Saldanha pp. XXXIV cited in Sardesai 2000:35)<sup>9</sup>.

Fr. Stephens learnt Konkani and Marathi. He prepared the Christa Purana. The epic poem was written in Marathi but with a generous sprinkling of Konkani, and he used Portuguese words when he couldn't get local words to express religious concepts. The Purana was printed in Roman Script.

Apart from the Christa Purana, Fr. Stephens also composed a booklet for daily use in Konkani entitled "Doutrina Christam". Sardesai (2000: 39)<sup>9</sup> points out that it is significant to note that while Fr. Stephens wrote his "Krista Purana" in Marathi he chose to write the Catechism in Konkani, since the latter language alone could touch the bulk of the neo converts.

The arrival of the printing press in Goa in 1556 gave a fillip to create more literature in the colony. Christian books were then printed for the benefit of the converts and as an aid to the process of conversion.

As long as there was a need for books for the purpose of evangelisation, printing activity flourished in Goa. But in the year 1684, everything changed when the Government changed its policy towards the native languages. Till then the ecclesiastical as well as the civil powers had been mindful of the real need for the knowledge and study of the Konkani

language<sup>8</sup>. Not many years earlier the Viceroy, Antonio de Mello de Castro had declared that he himself was learning the language with a view to governing his subjects well, and the royal commands were inflexible in ordering the clerics in charge of parishes to learn the vernaculars.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, 1684, the Viceroy, Francis de Tavora, Count of Alvor passed a decree, wherein in addition to miscegenation, it was also decreed that

" in order to put an end to all inconveniences, it would be suitable if the locals depose the use of their native language, by which many inconveniences would cease that result from their speaking the mother tongue and the Portuguese language at the same time, in order not to be understood. Besides being more convenient for the parish priests to teach Catechism and instruct in the mysteries of the faith .....The ignorance of one or the other is always harmful not only to the political handling of the State, but also to the spiritual welfare of the souls"<sup>8</sup>.

As the *alvara* of 1684 is a landmark document and has been held responsible for the various evils that have befallen on Konkani since then, scholars like Mendonca (2005:42-43) delves into the socio religious conditions of the century to decode meanings and implications of the *alvara* for the natives. He writes that since the *alvara* does not specifically mention Konkani by name, it is probable that it targeted other local languages spoken in Portuguese-controlled areas, though of course had it been implemented, it would have affected Konkani the most. It is believed that the *alvara* was never implemented in its totality<sup>10</sup>. The *alvara* implied that the ousting of Konkani was necessary until perhaps such time as the locals learnt the Portuguese language for religious purposes. The principal authors responsible for the promulgation of such an order were the parish priests who were ordered to learn the vernacular and who being more interested in their own comforts than in the interests of religion gave the viceroy to understand that it would be easier to force all the people to learn Portuguese and thus remove from the few the burden of the study of the vernacular. The identity of the authors, after being secret for some time, was revealed to be the priests belonging to the Order of the Franciscans.

The Holy Inquisition in 1560 which enforced the policy of Lusitanisation also had a detrimental impact on the use of Konkani. The Jesuit, Francis Xavier called for the Inquisition in 1546 to control the 'debasement of European Christian society in Goa as he realised such conduct scandalised the converted Goans and was a bad example'<sup>11</sup>. This institution which was finally abolished only in 1812, was implemented with varying degrees of severity depending on the monarch in power. The Inquisition in course of time came to be applicable to newly converted Christians as well as those who had not converted. Equating religion with culture, adherence to any aspect of traditional culture, including language, was forbidden, though it

is debatable on how earnestly the law forbidding Konkani was enforced. The Edict of 1736 banned indigenous socio cultural and religious practices. Couto 2004:171 underlines the starkness of the situation by enumerating the following events:

1684 :	Viceregal decree forbids use of Konkani in private and public
1731 :	The Inquisition orders Konkani Christians to give up their native speech and to communicate only in Portuguese.
1745 :	The Archbishop restricts marriage and priesthood to those who speak Portuguese exclusively.
1788 :	The Archbishop orders religious instruction to be imparted only in Portuguese.
1812 :	The Archbishop forbids school children from speaking in their mother tongue.
1831 :	The Government establishes primary schools but excludes Konkani from the curriculum, although chairs are set up in Marathi, Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam in some institutions.
1847 :	The Archbishop forbids the use of Konkani in seminaries.
1858 :	An author of Konkani hymns was charged 25 percent extra by the Government printing press because the book was written in a “foreign” language.

Thus we can see that the decline of Konkani continued under the policies of the State and the Church. The only bright though brief ray of hope came when the Marquis de Pombal took over in 1759. He ordered that Konkani be taught in school with the help of dictionaries that were expurgated of any Jesuit influence. He had attempted to extend the control and responsibility of the Portuguese State through educational reforms. But his edicts were never implemented.

In this connection, Sardesai (2000: 66)<sup>9</sup> states: “Inquisition not only had a harmful effect on the development of Konkani language and literature, it also resulted in emigration of Goans to other regions, where the language was spoken. The history of Konkani created the geography of Konkani.” The Inquisition, as well as other developments like the printing of Konkani books in Roman types had the manifest, and at times latent consequence, of creating a yawning gap between Hindus and Catholics in Goa.

### The Formation of the Public Sphere: Language and Symbolic Power in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

**The Rise of Marathi and the Conflicting Public Spheres in Goa:** In the eighteenth century, the Portuguese conquered the areas known as the New Conquests. It wasn't merely centuries that separated the two phases of Portuguese colonialism. Unlike the old conquests, the Portuguese did not follow an aggressive conversion policy in the areas of the new conquests<sup>7</sup>. The difference in topography (while the old conquest primarily

consisted of coastal areas, the new conquest is largely made up of the hilly interior) was one factor that distinguished both the conquests. The others were the nature of administration of the *comunidades* (the Portuguese term for the *ganvcari* system) and the religious policy followed. Language was also a marker that separated the two conquests. Schools in the New Conquest were exempt from religious instruction, and Latin schools were reduced to one in each district (Pinto 2007: 87). The acquisition of territories that were guaranteed religious freedom presented the State with administrative problems, particularly with regard to linguistic decisions

In the areas of the new conquest, the overbearing influence of Marathi was very much present. It was so because these regions till their transfer to the Portuguese were under the domains of the Sawants of Sawntwadi or King Sunda who played a feudatory role of the Satara Crown where Marathi was spoken as well as written<sup>12</sup>. Thus the influence of Marathi grew in the nineteenth century.

The Konkani Marathi controversy entered the public sphere in Goa with the publication of an essay written in 1807 by John Leydon.. In this essay, Leyden chalks out a hierarchy of languages in which he places Konkani as a dialect of Marathi. A colleague of Leyden's, William Carey, a Sanskrit scholar spent eleven years translating the Bible into Konkani. He disagreed with Leyden. While he did not expressly refute Leyden's opinion of Konkani being a dialect of Marathi, he speaks of it as a language in its own right<sup>13</sup>. The views of these two scholars gave rise to two distinct ideological camps: Marathism and Konkanism.

This rise of Marathi at the cost of Konkani was further consolidated by the Portuguese colonial policies. It suited the Portuguese Government to encourage this state of affairs as no other language posed as big a threat to lusophone identity than Konkani. In 1812 the Archbishop Galdino prohibited the use of Konkani in primary schools as a medium for both teaching and conversation in order to further the spread of Portuguese. But this policy was directed only towards Konkani. Though state and church policy indicated a specific preference towards Portuguese and against Konkani, the history of policies regarding Marathi and English reveals an inability to actually confront a strong campaign promoting English and Marathi. The proponents of both the languages had learnt to deploy cultural and linguistic powers for different uses and with greater proficiency<sup>14</sup>.

In 1836, there was state recognition of privately run primary schools that did not instruct in Portuguese. These reforms also allowed for knowledge of French and English. In 1843, however, the state found it necessary to set up Marathi and Konkani classes in Goa to facilitate accurate governance since Marathi alone was spoken by one group of people and both old and new documents were written in that language. This policy, namely the setting up of Marathi schools in the first half of the

nineteenth century, was a consequence of having to dilute its thrust towards cultural assimilation, to accommodate the realities of governing new territories and the requirement for acknowledging cultural difference (Pinto 2007: 97)<sup>14</sup>.

The economic domination of the British colonial state over Portuguese territories forced a number of Goans to seek employment in British India. This link between Goa and the British was initiated during the Napoleonic wars when British soldiers were stationed in Goa in 1808. In the early years of the century, there were a number of emigrants to Bombay in search of employment. Hence there was a demand for English medium schools and the first state run English medium school was started in 1869. Interestingly, at least in the beginning, it was not the intelligentsia and elite, but the working classes who were drawn to English- medium schools.

In 1853, Marathi types were introduced in the national press. Court verdicts relating to land rights were printed in both Portuguese and Marathi. In 1871, when all schools in the New Conquests were converted into bilingual schools teaching in both Marathi and Portuguese, the sphere of Marathi widened to become the spoken and official language of the new conquest.

**From *Lingua Brahmana* to *A Lingua das-criades*: The Decline of Konkani:** Apart from the early phase of the Inquisition, the only edicts against language were directed against Konkani. This is because no other language posed as much a threat to identity and loyalty to the Crown than Konkani. Konkani was that one language that united all Goans irrespective of religion, caste and ancestry. While those in power actively sought to increase the dominance and spread of Marathi and English, almost all interested groups were either indifferent or actively opposed to the development of the Konkani language. With no state backing, nor a popular campaign around the language, nor a dominant indigenous group to argue for a place for Konkani within the educational system, its speakers were excluded from those circuits of power to which Marathi, Portuguese and English were granted access (Pinto 2007: 96)<sup>14</sup>. In such a situation Marathi and Portuguese occupied the discursive spaces that Konkani could have had. The upper castes that moved to town for professional reasons participated entirely in Luso-Indian culture and spoke mainly in Portuguese. In their efforts to assume Western identity, Konkani became a liability that they were ashamed of. Christian families began to call Portuguese their mother tongue and speak it even at home, something which had not happened earlier.

While the Christians, especially the upper caste urban inhabitants (the rural still clung to Konkani) dissociated themselves from Konkani, the situation was even more pronounced with the Hindus. Tormented by the Inquisition and the Portuguese policies of discrimination, Hindus sought refuge in the devotional verses of the neighbouring Marathi literature. The association of a language with a religious community helped construct a Hindu identity within Goa and prepared the

ground for the formation of specifically Hindu associations (Pinto 2007: 109)<sup>14</sup>. The staunchest proponent of Marathi during this phase was Suriagy Anand Rao, the official translator to the Portuguese Government who vociferously blocked the development of Konkani. He believed that Konkani was a corrupt form of Marathi and that anyone who spoke this corrupt form could easily understand the pure form that was spoken in the North.

From the above discussion it appears that its status having been shunned by both Hindus and Catholics, Konkani entered a phase of decline. Once associated with prestige and called *Lingua Brahmana*, it was reduced by the nineteenth century to being the “language of servants”. This has led to what Branganca calls ‘denationalisation of Goans’ which he elaborates in a paper as follows:

“The obstacles set up to the cultivation of their mother tongue deprived Goans of their most natural instrument for the expression of their highest thoughts and deepest feelings, checked all spontaneity and deprived them of a literature worthy of the name. Ashamed of their uncultivated language, the educated class professes to despise it. Forced to write in a foreign language, they are bound to produce merely imitations lacking in the creative spirit .....Hence the poverty of our literary productions in Portuguese, English and Marathi reflect their effort at refinement and effects of style, but are empty of substantial thoughts. An ape-like literature lacks vitality because it has no roots in the soil where it is born”<sup>15</sup>.

While some might argue that denationalisation is too harsh a term to describe the situation, could it be that shame in language led to shame in identity? This could perhaps be the reason why the Catholics opted for a whole scale borrowing of a Luso Indian culture and the Hindus clung on to the Marathi customs and traditions.

**Formation of Multiple Public Spheres:** The reintroduction of the printing press in 1826 in Goa along with a struggle for constitutional monarchy in Portugal led to the transformation of the public sphere. New public institutions for intellectual improvement, public improvement and educational standardisation were set up. And public life, or at least the public life of the small Goan Catholic and Hindu elite, was saturated with print.

Though the literacy rate among Goans acted as a limitation on the popularity of publishing, the print media did grow. Since the first daily in Goa emerged in 1900, newspapers were never a disposable, easily acquired commodity, and their arrival and absorption may have been awaited and then extended across the week and until the next made its way in the hands of the purchaser (Pinto 2007: 129)<sup>14</sup>.

The efforts to censor and control the production of newsprint were thwarted by the existence of another print market in Bombay. Aware of this, those using alternative print market not only offered in their publications a direct counter to the colonial state, they also acted as a link connecting Goans and Portuguese to British India and other places where Goans had a closer association.

The linguistic repertoires of the nineteenth century Goans were finely stratified. Elite Catholics and many elite Hindus were literate in Portuguese and Konkani while elite Hindus were also literate in Marathi. Konkani was not employed in any official or elite public realm. This linguistic stratification coupled with an active printing press led to the emergence of multiple public spheres.

### **The Elaboration of the Public Sphere in the Twentieth Century**

The foundations of modern Konkani literature were to a large extent laid by Vaman Raghunath Varde Valaulikar *alias* Shennoi Goembab. The impact of his personality and writings is felt on writers even till this day. Taking a vow to revive the lost pride of Konkani, he devoted his entire life to explore what he believed to be the innate strength and beauty of his language. In order to make the Konkani speakers assert their identity, he had to restore to them their own language sorely neglected and constantly despised (Sardesai 2000:119)<sup>9</sup>. Through the various genres of his writings, he attempted to depict Konkani's literary antiquity. While in the beginning he wrote in Roman script, he later used Devanagari script for writing Konkani.

The first generation of language activists inspired by Goembab included Shri Ravindra Kelekar, Dr. Manohar Rai Sardesai and Shri Uday Bhembre. These Konkani stalwarts began their literary journey in the public sphere in Bombay. They had gone to Bombay either as students or young professionals. And it was in the contradictory environment of freedom (India was a free country at that time), and the hegemony of Marathi, that Goans discovered their Konkani identity and felt the need to spread this awareness.

Shri Bhembre feels that this awareness was the need of the hour. There were a number of Goans in Bombay. Among these Goans, for at least 95 percent of the Hindus, Marathi was the language of Goa. These Hindus who mostly belonged to the older generation were pro-Marathi as there was a tradition of Marathi in Goa. They would hold meetings and rallies to put forth their views. Shri Kelekar remembers that in 1945, Goan Hindus in Maharashtra organised a Marathi conference in Bombay. Shri Purushottam Kakodkar was invited to preside over the function. In his Presidential address, Shri Kakodkar, an associate of Gandhi and a *Satyagrahi*, spoke on how Konkani unites Goans. Feeling insulted and humiliated by this praise for Konkani at a Marathi conference, the President of the conference walked out. Thus there was a situation of language

conflict in Bombay wherein the older generation was pro Marathi and the younger one, especially upper caste Hindus were advocates of Konkani.

The public sphere for Konkani was further enlarged when the All India Radio, Bombay, devoted a daily half-hour slot for Konkani. This slot consisted of Konkani news, plays, music and song. Pandit Jitendra Abhisheki, Dr. Manohar Rai Sardesai, Shri Uday Bhembre, Shri Chandrakant Keni and others contributed to endeavour for the cause of Konkani. Shri Keni said that working in the AIR was an opportunity to study various kinds of Konkani literature. Shri Bhembre proudly recalls that he was the one that announced the news of Goa's Liberation on All India Radio.

Thus before Liberation, there was no Konkani movement in Goa. The movement was alive in other parts of the country, with the epicentre at Bombay. Goa's historical and political condition led to large-scale migration to different areas of South India, thus widening Konkani's geography. The torch for Konkani was carried out in these areas, before Liberation. For instance, from the time of its inception, the 'All India Konkani Conference', held its first six meets outside Goa.

Though pro-Konkani dialogues in the public sphere were banned in Goa, these discourses were very much part of the agenda of political prisoners lodged at the Aguada and Reis Magos jails. Shri Naguesh Karmali, freedom fighter and Konkaniwada, gives a fascinating account of how the Konkani movement was pursued in the prisons. Apart from discussions and discourses supporting the cause of Konkani, there was also a handwritten Konkani journal that was prepared by the inmates and circulated amongst themselves.

While in the twentieth century Bombay was the locale of the Konkani movement, after Liberation, the primary arena of the Konkani public sphere shifted to Goa.

### **Conclusion**

This paper traced the changing status of Konkani language in Goa. While the origins of Konkani are shrouded in antiquity, ever since recorded history, Konkani has played a prominent role in defining the socio political as well as religious landscape of Goa. As society and polity changes, the socio political status of a given language also changes. The socio-political status of a language is not static it is liable to change as society and polity changes. The status of Konkani language underwent a series of changes from being considered a language of the Gods to being denigrated as being a language of servants. But in all this time it was the lingua franca of Goans. In post-colonial Goa too, language has come to play a dominant role in defining Goa's political and cultural identity. As is the case with any post colonial phenomenon, the status of Konkani language even in the twenty first century is influenced by the interplay of history, religion, and power in colonial Goa.

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