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Standardisation of the Konkani Public Sphere in the Late Twentieth Century

*Joanna Coelbo**

Goa was liberated from Portuguese colonial rule on 19th December 1961. Immediately after liberation, Goa began the process of integrating with the mainland from which it had been cut off for over four hundred and fifty years. Goa, like any other unit of the Indian Union, had to experience the process of nation building which was couched in religious, ethnic, and linguistic nuances. While in the early years of Independence, religion posed a grave threat to the making of 'India', issues pertaining to language soon became a major challenge for nation building. The centrality of language to the functioning and formation of the Union was acknowledged in the politico-administrative decision taken in 1957, for redrawing the territorial boundaries of the Indian Union on linguistic lines. Accordingly, once liberated, Goa too had to comply with the norms of linguistic states. This development brought back into focus the key role that language has played in articulating the public sphere in Goa right from the inception of the Portuguese colonial rule. With the declaration of Konkani as the Official Language on 4th February 1987, one phase of language movements ended.

Though the movement did, in certain ways, reach the stage of institutionalization, language-related contestations continued. While in the 1960s, the language movement inspired political mobilisations, the language dynamics of the 2000s were more inclined towards cultural

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mobilisation and conscious attempt at language development. Literary figures, editors, theatre artistes, religious leaders, and common people alike, contributed towards shaping the relationship between language and the public sphere in Goa. These movements traverse the three stages of ideology, mobilisation, and institutionalisation as conceptualised by Rao (1979: 9). The mobilisations may take both political and cultural nuances.

Morgan (2006: 454) suggests a three-stage model for understanding mobilisations on linguistic grounds: consolidation, politicisation, and actualisation. The articulation of all these three stages takes place in what Habermas refers to as public sphere which is a 'realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed' (Habermas 1989). The public sphere is the 'space where arguments and reasons about the shared real world and hypothetical literary world are made and contested, given and taken, in a manner which is democratic and civil. A portion of the public sphere comes into being whenever private individuals assemble to form a public body' (cited in Orsini 2001: 11).

Language and the Public Sphere in Goa

The literary sphere in India and its transformation and growth, very often mirrors more general processes of expansion, institutionalization, and consolidation in the larger public-political sphere (Orsini 2001: 8). The public and political history of Goa is intrinsically connected with language dynamics in its various *avatars*.

From its beginnings, in the context of colonial hostility, the Konkani public sphere took its nascent steps in the nineteenth century. This public sphere began carving out its own space and identity, though only in the early twentieth century, especially with the efforts of Shri Shenoai Goembab, who is credited with ushering the Konkani renaissance.

Since Liberation, various efforts have been made to add to the fledgling Konkani public sphere of the early decades of the twentieth century. Some crucial phases that the Konkani movement has passed include acceptance of Konkani by the Sahitya Akademi, the recognition of the independent status of Konkani, and finally the declaration of the Official Language Act (OLA), which declares Konkani as the official language of Goa. Yet, issues pertaining to language dominance and contestations continue. In this paper, I have sought to understand how, attempts at

hegemony notwithstanding; there have been attempts at consolidation of the Konkani public sphere since OLA, through the standardisation of the language.

With the passing of the OLA, the Konkani language movement achieved fruition. In order to institutionalise Konkani, it was felt that there is a need for its standardisation. In this paper, with the help of secondary sources as well as in depth interviews with various Konkani pioneers as well as members of the Konkani public sphere, I have analysed the movement for standardisation of Konkani language and its manifest and latent socio-political as well as linguistic implications. The movement to have Konkani included as one of the languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution was a prelude to begin the process of standardisation. This paper documents this firsthand account of the movement for including Konkani as a language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. In doing so, this paper is perhaps one of the first published accounts of the movement for including Konkani in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

Inclusion of Konkani in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution

The Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution contains a list of scheduled languages, originally fourteen, but has since expanded to twenty two. 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. The list has since, however, acquired further significance and usage. The Government of India is now under an obligation to take measures for the development of these languages, such that they grow rapidly in richness and become effective means of communicating modern knowledge. In addition, a candidate appearing in an examination conducted by the United Public Service Commission is entitled to use any of these languages as the medium in which he/she answers the paper.

Shri Ravindra Kelekar one of the pioneers of the Konkani language movement shared that the whole issue concerning inclusion of Konkani in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution started when another Konkani ideologue and French teacher, Dr. Manoharrao Sardesai had gone to France for some academic work. At that time, a delegation from All India

Radio (AIR) was also in France. As Dr. Sardesai had studied at the Sorbonne, he was known there. At one of the programmes in Sorbonne, he was invited to sing at the function organised by the AIR. The Director of the Indian Languages Delegation did not allow him to sing a Konkani song at the event. The reason given was that Konkani was not included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. This event made Dr. Sardesai realise that Konkani should strive to get Konkani recognised in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

At that time, there were eight languages that were demanding inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The Home Minister called an all party meeting to decide the issue, i.e. the criteria by which any language is recognised by the Sahitya Akademi and is the official language of the State or Union Territory, and is included in the Eighth Schedule. According to these criteria, three languages qualified to be included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. They were Nepali, Konkani, and Manipuri.

The inclusion of Konkani in the Eighth Schedule took time because it required lobbying at a specific level. Shri Uday Bhembre, another Konkani protagonist narrates the events that led to the attainment of this goal. Goa Konkani Akademi had published Shri Ravindra Kelekar's 'Mahabharat' in two volumes. The Konkani protagonists decided to hold the book release function in Delhi, and request the then Prime Minister of India to release the book. Shri Purushottam Kakodkar was the then President of Goa Konkani Akademi (GKA). Shri. Kakodkar personally knew the Gandhi family. He fixed an appointment with the then Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi. The meeting was arranged on the lawns of the Prime Minister's house. The entire function was organised by the GKA. Three hundred Goans who were settled in Delhi were invited for the function.

The reason for wanting to hold the function on such a grand scale was because they wanted to show the world that Konkani, as a language, had arrived and was capable of having programmes at such a grand scale. As Shri Bhembre explained, "It was to increase our visibility and make it known to the people that we were capable and the language competent to translate an epic as huge as the Mahabharata".

During his speech at the function Shri Kelekar requested the Prime Minister to help them in getting their demand for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Shri Kakodkar too in his address urged the

Prime Minister to pursue the issue. In his address, the Prime Minister sympathised with the Konkani cause and asked them to meet Shri Narasimha Rao, the then HRD minister. Later the Konkani delegation called upon the HRD minister. Being a linguist, Shri Rao had been briefed of the issue by the people of Konkani Projecho Awaz (KPA) during the official language agitation.

Subsequently, the political situation became unstable when Shri Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated. Shri Narasimha Rao who succeeded Shri Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister, requested the new Home Minister to settle the issue. The main players seeking Konkani's inclusion in the Eighth Schedule were Shri Shantaram Naik, Shri Purushottam Kakodkar, and Shri Dilip Kumar Bahadur. Others like Shri Uday Bhembre and Shri Damodar Mauzo were stationed in New Delhi to handle the necessary negotiation. The issue of inclusion in the Eighth Schedule was to be raised in both the Houses of Parliament on the last day of the Session. The group then met the Speaker who assured them that he would influence the bill, but he could not stop discussions. The Konkaniwadis were afraid that if there were to be any discussions, then the issue might be pushed to the next Parliament session. So the Konkani lobby spoke to leaders of various political parties, from the Government and the opposition. As the issue was already discussed at a previously held 'All Party Meeting', all the political leaders decided not to discuss the matter in Parliament. On the appointed day, both Houses of Parliament passed the bill without any discussion.

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. Shri Pundalik Naik says that this day which is celebrated as *rastriyamanyatadis* (day of official recognition) is a day of recognition of an achievement:

“It is a day of immense pride for every Goan. For, from this date on, Konkani a language, which till 50 years ago, was considered non entity, gained recognition as one of the official languages of India. I feel very proud that my language is printed on the Indian currency note.”

This mood of optimism notwithstanding, the Konkani movement had yet to institutionalise. The movement had to negotiate a number of challenges and issues *en route* to consolidation. Apart from fighting for

the implementation of the OLA, the Konkani public sphere also had to deal with questions pertaining to standardisation. Once Konkani was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, the Konkani protagonists began in earnest the process of language standardisation.

Is Standardisation an attempt at Homogenising Plurality?

While the notion of standardisation is applied generously to various media of exchange such as money, weights and measures, when applied to language, it takes turn that is different and infinitely more complex. Standardisation is the necessary consequence of the existence of two or more sometimes opposing phenomena—the presence of multilingualism and the creation of a nation. As long as a language is largely confined to usage within a single linguistic area, there is no need to ‘normalise’ any variety. The interplay of plural languages changes the situation. But the presence of multilingualism *per se* does not necessitate the emergence of standardisation. Functional multilingualism, a feature of Indian multilingualism since millennia, does not insist on attempts at standardisation. The various languages at a speaker’s command complement one another and no single one of the languages is expected to fulfil all the functions of everyday communication (Uberoi 1976: 641). This functional multilingualism undergoes a transformation with modernisation and the emergence of nations and nation states. Bourdieu (1992: 46) succinctly captures the historical context of language standardisation when he writes:

“So long as a language is only expected to ensure a minimum of mutual understanding in the (very rare) encounters between people from neighbouring villages or different regions, there is no question of making one usage the norm for another ...Only when the making of the ‘nation’, an entirely abstract group based on law, creates new usages and functions does it become indispensable to forge a standard language, impersonal and anonymous like the official uses it has to serve.”

Standardisation is thus a consequence of the processes of nation building. Though linked with multilingual societies, its need is felt even in so-called monolingual polities. Such societies may be monolingual, but the way the language is spoken depends on a variety of criteria like region, class, and education. The complexities associated with

standardisation get more enhanced in a multilingual situation. In such polities, one among the many languages is chosen as the standard. Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin are examples of such standard languages in multilingual polities. According to Milroy (2001: 16), the standard language was not seen as such because of the “inherent superiority of their grammatical structures, for their better expressiveness, or for the great poetry composed in them, but because of the fact that their speakers spread them around the world by sword or fire and imposed them on the members of subdued nations.” Once acknowledged as a standard, the language continues to retain its status. The standard language is also accepted as such by other language speakers, because it is perceived as having achieved a pure and genuine status as a consequence of it having undergone the processes of standardisation much earlier.

Initial Attempts at Standardisation of Konkani

From its very inception, Goa the then union territory and later state, was defined on linguistic lines. Konkani was chosen as the language of Goa, though the process was fraught with strong opposition from Marathivadis. While any language is not automatically standardised; it has to undergo a process wherein it is ‘groomed’ as the standard language, the situation was even more complex for Konkani. Centuries of dominance from a variety of languages like Kannada, Marathi, Portuguese, and English, had stifled the growth and development of Konkani. As the language was denied official recognition, its speakers turned to other vernaculars for formal training and usage.

Given this socio-cultural background and milieu, Konkani had to prove its independent status not just to its detractors but even to its users. One major hurdle was to move out of the shadows of Marathi. The dominant opinion, especially among the Hindus, was that Konkani was a dialect of Marathi. This controversy on the dialect-independent language issue was centuries old. Right from the seventeenth century, efforts have been made to bring out various dictionaries and vocabularies to prove the independent status of Konkani. But the Portuguese policy of suppression of the vernaculars, especially Konkani, coupled with the hegemonic influence of Marathi, especially in the domains of education and religion, resulted in the continuation of the Marathi hegemony.

Immediately after Liberation, questions concerning the independent status of Konkani were evoked once again during the phase of the Opinion Poll. Given the linguistic basis of state formation in India, the

status of Konkani seemed to be a defining issue in deciding the future of Goa. Merger with Maharashtra would accede to the view that Konkani was a dialect of Marathi, while retaining Goa as an independent territory in the Indian Union would signify Konkani's independent status. But though Goa retained its union territory status, the status quo on Konkani continued. The primary reason for this, apart from the perception in the minds of a large majority of Hindus that Konkani was a dialect of Marathi, as Goa was ruled by the Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) until 1979. The MGP, whose *raison d'etre* was merging Goa with Maharashtra, naturally promoted the cause and use of Marathi.

In such an environment, the Konkaniwadis had to strive to carve a separate niche for the language. One strong issue governing the language or dialect issue was the lack of standardisation of Konkani. A consequence of centuries of disuse of Konkani in domains of education and administration and written communication was that there was no standard script for Konkani. While earlier it was written in a number of scripts like Modi, Halle, Kannada and Devanagiri; the sixteenth century saw the adoption of the Roman script. The Portuguese rule not only gave Konkani a new script, but modified the language in many other ways. While Konkani earlier showed the influences of indigenous languages like Sanskrit and Marathi, with Portuguese colonialism, the language of the colonisers also exerted its influence on Konkani. Hence Konkani vocabulary now incorporated a number of Portuguese words like *mesa* (table) and *janel* (window). A range of kinship terminology was also borrowed from Portuguese. This form of Konkani was primarily used by the Christian converts.

A large number of Goans also migrated to various places in British India and beyond, to escape the Portuguese colonial policies of forced conversion and the Inquisition. This diaspora scattered over various regions like coastal Karnataka, coastal Kerala and Bombay. Though they retained their speech, their language Konkani, both in oral and written form was influenced by languages of the region they lived in. Konkani consequently began to be written in five different scripts (Kannada, Devanagiri, Malayalam, Perso-Arabic, and Roman script). There was a wide variety in vocabulary as well, as the Konkani spoken by the Diaspora was influenced by the vocabulary of the host societies. Thus Konkani in the twentieth century was not a homogenous language but was

characterised by diversities. In the decades following Liberation, when efforts at standardising Konkani were initiated, the Konkaniwadis had to deal with all these historical, socio-cultural and religious baggage.

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. Given prior to this Konkani was not much used for the purpose of education, the decision of introducing Konkani medium schools gave rise to major overhauls in various aspects concerning the language. One of the first issues to be resolved was the appropriate script for Konkani. Though some Konkaniwadis suggested that Roman Script be used for Catholic students, Catholic educationists rejected the suggestion on grounds that it would lead to a kind of communalisation. Hence Devanagiri script was chosen as the script for Konkani. The next question concerned the variant of spoken Konkani to be considered as the standard. This issue was first discussed in the public sphere in the first quarter of the twentieth century. In the beginning of the twentieth century concerted efforts were made by Shri Shenoji Goembab to usher in a Konkani revival. At that time, Shri Goembab himself faced the question of standardisation. In selecting the dialect for standardisation, Shri Goembab showed a preference for the *antruzi* dialect.

Shri Goembab's initiative was an inspiration for a large number of future generation Konkani literary figures. When these writers began producing their own works, they were naturally influenced by the dialect that they had read. Also, as most of them came from *Antruz*, they continued to write in that language.

The Process of Standardisation of Konkani

The process of standardisation which began in the early twentieth century with the work of Shri Goembab continued with increased fervour after Liberation. Shri Purushottam Kakodkar and Dr. Manoharrai Sardessai initiated the standardisation process in post liberation Goa. The recent achievements for Konkani like the OLA and inclusion in the Eighth Schedule helped spur the standardisation efforts. Standardisation involves attempts at normalisation and institutionalisation of the linguistic habitus.

As Konkani was now entrenched as the medium of instruction at the primary school level, the demand for dictionaries also grew. In the

process which leads to the construction, legitimation and imposition of an official language, the educational system plays a decisive role (Bourdieu 1992: 48). Thus the demand placed by the parents, teachers, and students learning Konkani in schools also prompted the duo to work on the dictionary.

Apart from these efforts, there have also been recent attempts by Konkaniwadis like Dr. Tanaji Harldankar and the faculty at the Department of Konkani, Goa University to bring out Konkani encyclopedias, *shabdkhosh*. The GKA through its various activities has also helped the standardisation process. It has constituted a committee which prepared orthography for Konkani. The GKA now publishes books according to their standardisation rules. Though Fr. Freddy had initiated the process of standardisation of Konkani in Roman script, the GKA along with the efforts of Fr. Pratap Naik are currently working on standardisation of Konkani in Roman script. In Roman script, it is the Bardezi dialect that is considered to be most apt for standardisation.

The Politics of Standardisation

The whole notion of standardisation is bound up with the functional efficiency of the language. The ultimate aim is that everyone should use and understand the language in the same way with minimum misinterpretation and maximum of efficiency. Some even fear that if languages were not standardised, they might eventually break up into a variety of dialects that are incomprehensible. Thus, language standardisation is an endeavour necessary for the development and adaptability of the language to the multiple uses it might be put to.

At the same time, standardisation 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 demarcation of a variety as standard language denotes value loaded connotations of good, bad and beautiful. The standard variety is seen as the only correct and good variety of a language and all varieties are thought of as incorrect, bad, and inferior. Consequently, the standard language is often considered superior to other variants and dialects which are then considered inferior. It was this notion of superiority and inferiority that first plagued the standardisation of Konkani. As a dominant ideology at the time of Liberation saw Konkani as a dialect

and hence inferior to Marathi, efforts at standardisation of Konkani were looked at with disdain. Dr. P P Shirodkar, a staunch Marathivadi alleges that in order to prove that Konkani is not a dialect and in their attempt to standardise it, the Konkani protagonists had to resort to distortion of Marathi words, at times even resorting to the creation of new words.

“The language which the majority of the Konkani speakers speak is different from the language of the Konkani protagonists. Thus when the Konkani vadis claim that their Konkani is standard and Shenoi Goembab is the father of Konkani, they are only attempting to prove that they have created the language. These efforts are half baked and unsuccessful. The real motive in starting Konkani classes and other efforts was to get various grants, and get representation.”

Professor Olivinho Gomes, former Professor of Konkani and staunch supporter of Konkani in the Roman script accuses this entire process of standardisation of Konkani as Marathification of Konkani.

Shri Ghanekar challenges this claim of Marathification of Konkani and the centrality that Marathi plays in the process of standardisation. He says:

“Both Marathi and Konkani have influence of Persian. That is perhaps because of the trade relations that Goa and Maharashtra had with Persia. So what people allege as Marathi words in Konkani are actually those that have a common Persian root. Konkani words also have roots in Arabic, Portuguese and Kannada. These kinds of influences are present in every language. And it is not one way borrowing either. The Marathi Saint Dnyaneshwar in his *magnum opus Dnyaneshwari* used some words that are not in use in today’s Marathi but are present in the Konkani that is spoken today.”

While earlier, the opposition to the standardisation of Konkani came primarily from Marathi, since the last two decades, users of Konkani in other scripts also oppose the standardisation of Konkani. The acceptance of a standardised variety by an influential section of society is followed by its diffusion geographically and socially by various means. The opponents to standardised Konkani claim that it is simply an extension

of the hegemony of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmins (GSBs) of Goa. They oppose what they see as the standardisation of only the *Antruzi* dialect. Shri Ravindra Kelekar admits that it is the *antruzi* dialect that is standardised, but he finds this natural. He explains:

“When Konkani in Devanagiri first entered the literary sphere, it was largely the GSBs especially from what is known as *Antruzmahal* that wrote in Konkani. They naturally used their dialect. People were accustomed to reading works written in the *antruzi* dialect. So naturally when the process of standardisation began, it was the *antruzi* dialect that was standardised.”

Dr. Madhavi Sardessai, faculty at the Department of Konkani, Goa University goes further and asserts that standardisation need not be democratic. She explains that standardisation cannot be representative; it is the impact factor that is more important. She also feels that though in the beginning it was the *antruzi* dialect of the GSBs that was standardised, over a period of time other variants also got incorporated in the standardised variety. Dr Tanaji Haldankar's views resemble Dr. Sardessai as he believes that he found his Konkani (i.e. the Konkani of the *bahujan samaj*) no different from the Konkani that was being standardised. By and large, it is the *antruzi* dialect of the GSBs that is recognised as the standard one. Shri N Shivdas, a Konkani writer from the *bahujan samaj* does not resent the strong influence of the GSBs on standardised Konkani. He opines:

“We have to compromise for the welfare of the language. For how long will we fight? We ultimately belong to one thread. Otherwise, our cultural identity will get threatened. To avoid this, we have to build a bridge of compromise.”

The process of recognising and legitimising different language varieties (dialects) always comes with valuation; and valuation is never just about the language. It is about people who use the language. The process of language valuation, among other things, accompanies the correction the legitimisation of power, the product of social and cultural relations of sameness and difference, and the creation of cultural stereotypes about social and cultural groups (Pennycook 2001). In recent years, the divide in the Konkani camp, which is primarily based on the script, is in a way a reaction against the perceived hegemony of Hindu as well as Catholic

GSBs. The issue of standardisation, as mentioned earlier, is being seen as an example of GSB hegemony. The supporters of Konkani in Roman script claim that Catholic students not only find Devanagiri script difficult, they also feel that some of the standardised Konkani words are alien to them.

The Devanagirivadis disagree with this claim. Shri Uday Bhembre articulates the views of this camp:

“Standardisation refers to spelling and grammar. It does not mean that we have to give the different words used. Words add to the richness of a language. Standardisation focuses on how to write the language. If there is no word for something, then we can create a new word, or borrow from other languages, including Marathi. This does not mean that Konkani has no power to express itself.”

Dr. Madhavi Sardesai adds that there are no standardisation rules for vocabulary. Standardisation is mainly used for spellings and for grammatical decisions such as which form of the verb is to be used. She feels that the way a word is written does not curb dialectical variation. However, a number of college teachers of Konkani disagree. They cite instances to show how during the evaluation of examination answer scripts, they have had to reject Konkani words used by a student because it wasn't part of the standardised Konkani. Students of non standardised variety may tend to develop an inferiority complex regarding their dialect. Writers like Shri Mahabaleshwar Sail, Konkani writer from Karwar feels that standardisation should not apply to writers (especially creative writers) but should be confined to only academic purposes. Professor Khubchandhani further elucidates this point when he says: “the standardisation process aims at bringing unity for official purposes only. The aim is primarily for the purpose of education and use as official language. It should encourage diversity and variety in other spheres.” Shri Damodar Mauzo opines that if any writer feels that his/her dialect is being left out he must assert himself/herself and write in his/her dialect.

The dichotomies and ambiguities associated with the process of standardisation of Konkani is an ongoing one. It is perhaps reflective of the very nature of language standardisation. In its true sense no language can be fully standardised. For some, the only fully standardised language is a dead language. He believes that it is appropriate to speak more

abstractly of standardisation as an ideology, and a standard language as an idea in the mind rather than a reality- a set of abstract norms to which actual usage may conform to at varying extent. Language standardisation fits into 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. Language does not exist in a vacuum. It is influenced by and influences the social situation in which it evolves. Konkani then, like any other language, can never be fully standardised. All the Konkaniwadis agree that the standardisation of Konkani is an ongoing process that is constantly evolving. Shri Rajay - Pawar, Konkani playwright, actor, director, poet, and a Konkani teacher sums up the views when he says:

“The standardisation of Konkani is an ongoing process. No language is fully standardised. Even English, which is considered a global language, is constantly evolving and accepting words from other cultures. This universal trend will continue.”

Issues pertaining to standardisation will continue to play out in the public sphere in Goa. As the Official variant gets standardised, the politics of standardisation will also continue to be played out. Some supporters of Konkani in Roman script feel that the process of standardisation will soon be redundant because of the growing dominance of English.

Summary and Reflections

The process of institutionalisation of the OLA in the public sphere involved a number of challenges. One significant political socio-linguistic 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 first 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 attacked on two counts: the marathification of Konkani and the advancing hegemony of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmins, or 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.

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