

Primary Education and Language in Goa: Colonial Legacy and Post-Colonial Conflicts*

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Abstract

Languages are a privileged means of social, economic and political mobility. In multilingual countries, like India, they are functionally distributed and the relationship among the different language categories, viz. official language, mother tongue, etc., is hierarchical. Mother tongue languages evoke strong emotions. However, socially less prestigious mother tongues are often discarded in favour of languages useful for social and economic advancement. The language shifts at home, school and other spheres are determined by the social, cultural and political contexts.

This paper examines language shifts in the context of primary education and language in colonial and post-colonial Goa. The language shifts and the consequent controversies in Goa are manifestations of two opposing forces: the instrumental draw of language assimilation and the primordial pull of language preservation. The latter regard language shift as pathological and ubiquitous; the former view it as perfectly normal.

Introduction

Goa joined the linguistic states of India on May 30, 1987, with Konkani, the mother tongue of 95 per cent of the Goans, as its official language. According to UNESCO, 'ideally, the medium of instruction for a child living in its own language environment should be the mother tongue' (quoted in Pattanayak 1998: 134). In Goa, however, due to the anti-Konkani colonial policy, not many Goans could study in Konkani-medium schools for the last few centuries as there were hardly any such schools. In post-colonial Goa, English and Marathi dominated the educational scene, especially at the primary level. Till 1990, when the Progressive

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Democratic Front (PDF) government in Goa introduced the new educational policy, Goans studied either in Marathi or English medium, not in Konkani, except for a few Konkani *'mogis'* (lovers), who enrolled their children in the few Konkani-medium schools. The 1990 education policy, while providing grants to all primary schools conducted in regional languages, denied any State aid to English-medium primary schools which, however, were attended by as many as 40 per cent of the primary school children in Goa.

This paper attempts to examine the present conflict of primary education and language in Goa, in the context of the language and education policies of the erstwhile Portuguese regime and the language-based politics of the post-colonial era. The socio-cultural and political context of the language policy in primary education followed by successive governments as well as the reasons behind the choice of language during primary education by different sections of the Goan populace at different moments in history have been analysed. An attempt has also been made to explain the issues and problems surrounding the medium-of-instruction controversy, which dogged the educational scenario in the state a dozen years ago. The relevant literature available on the topic, since Portuguese times, is examined and analysed, in the context of the overall educational system, and the important aspect of multilingualism, in India.

Multilingualism in India

India is a socio-linguistic giant. It has been a multilingual country for millennia, and since independence a multilingual nation. Its multilingualism includes more than 1,600 mother tongues, reducible to 200 languages belonging to four language families: Indo-European, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic and Sino-Tibetan. Besides being demographically multilingual, the country is also functionally multilingual — forty-seven languages are used in education medium, eighty-seven in print media, seventy-one in radio, and as many as thirteen languages in films and television. In the domain of administration, there are two official languages at the central level, and more than twenty official languages at the state level.

The functional distribution of languages is not static. Social and political formations determine the relative status and power of languages, which are derived from access to resources of the State and the rewards the speaker hopes to obtain on acquisition of a particular language. Multilingualism, then, more than the presence of many languages in a country, involves a relationship between the many languages, which may be decided culturally by the individual, socially by the community, and politically by the State. At the political level, it is reflected in the language categories used in India, viz., mother tongue, minority languages, tribal languages, regional languages, scheduled languages, official languages, and national languages. The relationship between the many languages is more hierarchical as the languages

used in administration and education provide greater access to power and status than others. The relationship, therefore, turns out to be a pyramid rather than a mosaic.

In India, linguistic minorities have maintained their languages for centuries. The eighteen languages listed in the VIII Schedule of the Constitution have been declared by 95.58 per cent of the Indians to be their mother tongues (see Annamalai 2001: 77). At the state level there are majority languages whose population may vary from 96 per cent (Kerala) to 63 per cent (Manipur). The majority languages are often made the official languages of the state. But there are states where the official language is not the majority language of the state (as Urdu in Jammu and Kashmir) or is not the mother tongue in the state at all (as English in Nagaland). The linguistic states also have multilingualism as a shared value but, often, political reasons make the official language symbolise the state. The official language, promoted as a cultural institution and a symbol of the people of the state, marginalises the other languages in the state, leading to linguistic tensions and conflicts. Any discussion on mother tongue, then, should take into account not only the language dynamics of the nation-state but also the socio-economic and politico-psychological make-up of the region.

Secularism and linguistic secularism are ideals envisaged by the Indian nation-state in its Constitution. The Constitution ‘under the Fundamental Rights, Article 29(a) provides the right for any section of the citizens to conserve its language, script or culture. Article 30 provides the right for the linguistic minorities to establish and administer educational institutions’ (Annamalai 2001: 127).

‘The Constitution does not stipulate that the educational institutions maintained or supported by the state should teach the minority language or give education through it to students speaking a minority language. It is to be done by the educational institutions established by the linguistic minorities which of course are protected by the Constitution to get aid from the state.’ (Ibid.128).

Further, as quoted in Annamalai,

‘The VIII amendment introduced in 1956 as Article 350A, enjoins upon the state “to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority group.” The significance of this amendment is that the use of minority mother tongue in primary education is stipulated for the sake of education....’ (Ibid.128).

Multilingualism, today, has become an essential part of the school curriculum. The educational policy, starting from the last phase of the colonial period, has adopted a three-language formula (TLF). The three languages are the regional language (or the official language of the state when the two are different) (Ibid.140), Hindi and English. In Hindi-speaking regions, there is a special

recommendation in TLF to teach a modern Indian language other than Hindi, preferably a south Indian language. The three languages are taught as first, second, and third languages, and under each category one can choose from a number of languages. The TLF does not explicitly state which language should be taught as first, second or third language. The social, political and economic organisation of India, however, has been undergoing fundamental changes since Independence, and this has influenced the choice of languages as upward mobility and access to greater resources and power can be obtained through acquired characteristics like language.

Mother Tongue and Identity

In the words of Dominique Arel (2002: 114–15),

‘Language is a potent force in nationalist politics, since it simultaneously acts as a symbol of identity, a privileged means of social, economic, and political mobility, and a claim to territory. In the modern era, “mother tongue” can either evoke strong emotions or be discarded in favour of another language deemed better suited to increase one’s life chances.’

“‘Mother tongue”, as with all identity categories on the census, can actually be interpreted in diametrically opposed ways.’ (Ibid.99). The United Nations defines mother tongue as ‘the language usually spoken in the individual’s home in his early childhood’ (quoted in Ibid. 99). “‘Mother tongue”, however, can also be interpreted as the language one speaks best as an adult, when the census is conducted, rather than as a child.’ (Ibid.99).

D.P. Pattanayak examines the issue from the Indian perspective in his article, ‘Mother Tongue: An Indian Context’. (Pattanayak 1998: 125–32). According to him, the concept of mother tongue has been taken for granted and not examined carefully. In the 1881 census, mother tongue was defined as the language spoken by the individual from the cradle. A decade later, in the 1891 census, the term was changed to ‘parent tongue’. In subsequent censuses of 1901 and 1921, parent tongue was replaced with ‘language ordinarily used’. In the censuses from 1931 to 1971 the term mother tongue was used. In the 1951 census, mother tongue was again defined as the language spoken from the cradle. Mother tongue, according to the 1961 census, meant the language spoken in childhood by the person’s mother. This definition, particularly in the Indian context, can be inadequate and misleading as, in the patrilocal families, it is usually the father’s dialect that dominates, and the child grows with it.

For some scholars, mother tongue would be that language learnt without formal training. In the multilingual context the primary socialisation or the intimate socialisation of the child involves multiple languages, which would imply more than one mother tongue. It becomes difficult to treat one of the languages, thus

acquired, with precedence. Albert Schweitzer, fluent in Latin, Greek, French, and German, wrote,

‘My own experience makes me think it only self-deception if anyone believes that he has two mother tongues. He may think that he is equally master of each, yet it is invariably the case that he actually thinks only in one and is only in that one really free or creative...’(quoted in Pattanayak 1998: 129).

Further, the 1961 census records *Teli* (caste), *Haridasi* (sect), *Bilaspuria* (place), *Gawari* (rural), *Pardeshi* (outsider), as responses to the query of mother tongue. These responses can at best be considered an assertion of group identity or some indication of attitudes. Announcing one’s mother tongue is like choosing one’s identity from among many. One’s mother tongue cannot be defined by one’s creativity as there are writers creating literary masterpieces in languages other than their mother tongue. For D. P. Pattanayak, the emotional identification with a language also does not provide a steady defining criterion. Mother tongue has also been defined by one’s language use in intimate domains like counting, swearing, naming kitchen utensils, etc.

Distinction must also be made between mother tongue and native language. The notion of ‘native’ is opposed to ‘foreign’, that is, any language transplanted from a foreign country within recent memory. English is considered to be a foreign language even though it is the mother tongue of two million Anglo-Indians, the official language of two states, and associated official language of the union.

Pattanayak also stresses the need to differentiate between mother tongue and L1 (first language). These may not be the same always as L1, L2, and L3 refer to the serially ordered list of languages formally acquired in school. For instance, in Nagaland, where none of the mother tongues is a medium of education, L1 refers to a language other than the mother tongue and this is the case of linguistic minorities in other states also.

Thus, mother tongue is an elusive concept which is difficult to define precisely. After looking at the many interpretations of the label ‘mother tongue’ and the problems associated with such interpretations, Pattanayak writes, ‘mother tongue is both a socio-linguistic reality and a product of the mythic consciousness of a people. It provides social and emotional identity to an individual with a speech community.’ (Ibid.132).

As we have already noted, India’s multilingualism includes 1,652 mother tongues (1961 census) but they are not languages in a grammatical sense. They may include, besides languages, dialects, names of villages, castes, occupations, etc. Probal Dasgupta, in the introduction to ‘Managing Multilingualism in India’, ‘underscores the technical term status of the mother tongue, the language name that a speaker offers to a census enumerator, a name that often marks identity rather

than realities of linguistic usage.' (Annamalai 2001: 14). For instance, one can find a Marathi Muslim claiming Urdu as mother tongue without knowing a word of it. Thus, often, "mother tongue" reflects less the language of an individual than the language of the nation to whom the individual is supposed to belong' (Kertzer and Arel 2002:27).

Against this background we shall look at the question of language and primary education in Goa. In what follows, we will briefly describe the relationship between primary education and language from Portuguese times to the present day.

Primary Education and Language During the Portuguese Period

Prior to the Portuguese conquest of Goa, there were in Goan villages, village schools, called *patshalas*. According to George Moraes, 'There was no village but had a school be it in the shade of a grove or in the porch of the temple where the children were exercised in the three R's' (quoted in D'Souza 1975). The teachers in the school were called *Sinais* or *Xennoy* or *Shenvi Mama*. The *Sinais* or *Shennois* would teach in vestibules of temples, porches of big residential houses and verandahs of village administrative offices. The medium of instruction was Konkani, the mother tongue of Goans, and it was written in Kannada script. Marathi was used in Goa only in the late fifteenth century when the Sultan of Bijapur ruled Goa. The Sultan even recognized Konkani as the official language of the state. (Coutinho 1987: 153) Besides the *patshalas*, there were *agraharas*, *brahmapuris* and *maths* (See Pereira 1979). The *agraharas* were a kind of 'studium generale' or universities of medieval India wherein were taught Arts, Sciences and Religion. Other subjects like music, rhetoric, mathematics, logic, politics, etc., also, found a place in these institutions. *Brahmapuris* were Brahman Colonies established near the towns, for the purpose of running educational institutions. They were the meeting places of cultured Brahmins well versed in Vedas, Puranas, Smritis, etc. *Maths* or monasteries taught religion and sacred art. The Portuguese conquest in 1510 sounded the death knell of the Konkani educational institutions. The Portuguese carried on a planned and systematic annihilation of the Goan mother tongue and the educational institutions that fostered the growth and development of the language of Goa, Konkani. According to T.B. Cunha, from the very beginning all Konkani schools were closed to make place for the Christian languages, Latin and Portuguese. (Coutinho 1987: 154).

After the Portuguese conquest, as the number of Christians increased, churches sprang up everywhere with a parochial school, successor to the former *patshalas*, attached to it. These came into existence as a result of a decree by John III, king of Portugal, dated March 8, 1546. (Ibid. 73) The purpose of these schools, financed and supported by village communities, was to teach Christian doctrine,

impart moral instruction and cultivate artistic tastes in the students. The teachers were required to teach the students reading and writing so as to facilitate their reading of the catechism books. The medium of instruction followed in these schools was compulsorily Portuguese, but local language was also used, as the teachers were not well versed in Portuguese and perhaps because the students, too, did not understand the Portuguese language.

The attitude of the Portuguese government towards the Goan language changed remarkably in the latter half of the sixteenth century as it realised that persuasion rather than force was necessary to facilitate the process of conversion and promotion of Christianity in Goa. Persuasion meant that the Portuguese give up their antagonism to Konkani of the indigenous culture. Priests posted in parishes had to be conversant with Konkani. This period witnessed a revival of Konkani, though for a short time. The Holy Spirit College built by the Jesuits, around this period, had a primary school attached to it, which had two sections: one where Konkani was taught and the other where the medium was Portuguese. 'By 1608 there must have been at least fifteen Jesuit schools in Goa where Konkani was taught' (Almeida: 2000), as Salcette parishes were served by Jesuit priests and every parish had its own school. Whatever progress these schools may have made came to an end with the expulsion of the Jesuits. Some of the important books published during this period were: *Christian Doctrine* by Fr. Thomas Stephens, *Arte de Lingua Canarim* by Fr. Thomas Stephens (1640), *Miracles of Saint Anthony* by Fr. Antonio Saldanha (1614), *The Divine Soliloquies* by Joao de Pedroaza (1660). However, the bright interlude was short-lived. Priolker writes, 'The literary movement suffered a gradual decline during the 2nd half of the 17th century and came to an end by the close of the century.' (quoted in Coutinho 1987: 158).

On June 27, 1684, the Viceroy, Conde de Alvor, decreed, 'I assign three years as a period within which the Portuguese language ought to be studied and spoken.' (Ibid.160). In 1745 Archbishop D. Lourenco de Santa Maria made knowledge of Portuguese compulsory to enter into the sacrament of matrimony. (Ibid.161)

This language situation changed with Marquis de Pombal (1749–77). 'The first subject should dwell on the languages of the places where we have churches and missions' (Varde 1977:22), decreed Marquis de Pombal whilst setting up the college of natives. In 1772 Marquis de Pombal, attempting to overhaul the system of education, created two posts of teachers of Reading and Writing (Magister Regius) in Goa. This was the forerunner of Government primary education, or the public schools, as primary education till then was carried on in parochial schools. But, after Pombal, the Governor, Veiga Cabral, on the pretext of poor attendance and inefficiency, discontinued the public school system and primary education was reverted to the parochial schools. As a result of this policy, public education was in

the doldrums. Governor D. Manuel de Camara, in 1823, writes of the disastrous effects of the policy: 'Public instruction here borders on nothingness. In a population of 2,60,000, not a single educational institution can be traced....' (Ibid.7).

Very little was done in the field of education till 1836, when a New Education Policy was introduced in Portugal and extended to Goa and other colonies. The provisions of the policy were actually implemented in Goa only in 1841. A primary school was set up in each village, thereby minimising the importance of parish schools. Parish schools could function only in areas where there were no government schools. Consequently, the number of parish schools was reduced from 49 to 25 for the Old Conquests (Ibid. 8). The New Conquests also benefited as six Portuguese primary schools were established during this period and they exempted non-Christians from religious instruction. The decrees of 1844 and 1845 encouraged privately sponsored institutions of primary education in Goa, and by 1869, there were 112 primary schools. Of these, 37 were government primary schools, whereas 75 were managed by parish schools or by other non-governmental institutions. Only 16 were located in the Novas Conquistas (See D'Costa 1982). The total enrolment in all these schools was a meagre 6,124 in a population of 3,85,000 (Varde 1977:12).

This meant that education, in general, and primary education, in particular, was far from satisfactory. Local Inspection Boards, created by the decree of November 30, 1869, pointed to a number of limitations in the educational system, one of them being the difficulty in promoting education and Christianity through a medium of instruction other than the local language. The Board quoted the then Commissioner of Instruction, Cunha Rivara, in support of its position. 'As a new language can only be learnt by comparison of its mechanism with that of the mother tongue, Konkani language should be made a starting point to teach the Indians any other language.' (quoted in Ibid.13). Accordingly, an order dated July 10, 1871, converted the existing Portuguese primary schools into mixed schools, teaching Portuguese and Marathi. No Konkani medium schools were set up, as there were no books in Konkani. Fr. Joao de Albuquerque, the first bishop of Goa, writing a letter on November 28, 1548, recounts his conscientious efforts to collect books written in Konkani, the language of the pagans, with the sole purpose of destroying them. Even twenty years later, that is, in 1889, the baron of Cumbharjua, who was entrusted with the task of writing schoolbooks in Konkani, did not, for some reason or the other, fulfil the task.

Marathi-medium schools did exist in Goa during the pre-Portuguese period, but it is believed that they were confined to the areas bordering the state of Maharashtra. (Coutinho 1987: 162-3). The Portuguese regime benefited Marathi schools and Marathi, as it divided the Goan community on the basis of religion and culture. Christianisation of Goans meant westernisation of the converts and

persecution of the non-converts, Hindus. The Hindus were the less privileged, alienated from the mainstream Goan life and rendered third-class citizens in their own land. While some Hindus migrated to the neighbouring states, those who stayed back suffered social, economic and political hardships. 'By insisting on Goa's being Catholic and Portuguese, the colonial rulers forced the Hindus ever further towards glorifying the past and adopting the regional culture of neighbouring Maharashtra. The same process prevented the Goan Catholic elite from recognising its own Indianness...' (Newman 2001: 59). As a result of this 'Many Goan Hindus came to define themselves as Maharashtrians, Marathi speakers, while many Goan Catholics thought of themselves as western, Portuguese speakers or non-Indians' (Ibid.59). Also, as Row Kavi wrote in 1987, 'Hindus, who had, by then retreated to the hinterland, brought in Karada, Deshasth and Konkani Brahmins from Maharashtra to teach their children in Marathi.' (quoted in Noronha 1999: 46). Thus, educated Hindus turned to Marathi and 'identified (themselves) with the ancient and intricate traditions of neighbouring Maharashtra.' (Newman 2001: 58–59). But, 'the majority of Goans, Catholic and Hindu, remained untouched by questions of language and westernisation. They simply lived in their traditional way, speaking Konkani, within a common socio-economic system, with similar and overlapping religious beliefs and worldview.' (Ibid.59).

By the end of Monarchy (1910–11), there were 105 government schools — 88 were Portuguese, 7 Marathi, and 10 Gujarathi schools. By 1915 the number of government schools had increased to 141: 122 Portuguese, 8 Marathi-Portuguese, and 11 Gujarathi-Portuguese. (Varde 1977: 49). The Education Draft Plan of 1920 of the Governor, Dr. Jaime de Morais, provided for two types of primary schools: General Primary Education and Rural Primary Education. The medium of instruction in the rural schools was the regional language, but efforts were made to teach Portuguese gradually. The General Primary Schools had Portuguese as the medium of instruction. Even in these schools regional language could be used as an auxiliary medium. The award of Primary School Certificate, however, depended on the proof of his/her ability to speak Portuguese.

In 1920–21 the total number of primary schools had gone up to 244. Besides the 141 government primary schools, there were 37 Portuguese-medium private schools and 66 Marathi-medium private schools (Ibid. 88). In fact, there was a tremendous increase in the enrolment figures during the Republican period, which created additional educational facilities and encouraged both Portuguese and Marathi-medium private schools. However, enrolment in Portuguese medium began to dwindle soon, and Marathi and English-medium private schools began to attract pupils in increasing numbers. Marathi, because it catered to the cultural and religious needs of the Hindus, who identified themselves with Maharashtra and its music, poetry, and arts, and the exploits of Shivaji and saints like Tukaram and

Ramdas. English, also, was gradually becoming popular. The desire to emigrate to India or the outside world attracted many towards English education. Prior to liberation, there were, also, several Konkani-medium schools established by Pilar Society in Sanguem Taluka, some of which are still functioning today.¹

Primary Education and Language (1961–90)

After liberation, efforts were made to review the educational system, and to make it conform to the one generally followed in the country. A step in this direction was the appointment of a committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. B. N. Jha, by the Government of India. The committee was entrusted with the task of thoroughly reviewing the educational system in Goa and to make recommendations for its integration with the one prevailing in the rest of India. Some of its important recommendations were: 1) the medium of instruction at the primary level should be the mother tongue. 2) A minimum of twenty students was required to open a school division in a particular medium. 3) Konkani, if chosen, had to be in Devnagri script. 4) Primary education had to be made free and compulsory for all children between the ages of six and eleven.

With liberation, enrolment in government primary schools experienced a phenomenal increase. This could be due to the availability of free education and that in the local language. Availability of free primary education, inadequacy of the grant-in-aid code for private primary schools, the higher wage aspirations of private primary school teachers after liberation, opening of new schools, etc., led to the decline of private schools. Many of these private schools had to be closed down for want of funds; others were converted into government schools.

The colossal expansion in primary education is reflected in the increase in the number of government primary schools from 176 in 1961–62 to 601 in 1962–63. Enrolments shot up to 55,202 from only 17,028 in the year of liberation. In about two decades, that is, in 1980–81, the number of schools was 1,218. In this year 'the medium of instruction in the government primary schools was Marathi in 726 schools; English and Konkani in 38 schools; Marathi, English, and Konkani in 29 schools; Marathi and English in 45 schools; and in the case of non-government primary schools the medium of instruction was English in 35 out of 48 schools.'²

Arthur Rubinoff, commenting on the construction of political community in Goa, writes, 'In situations where democratic politics begin in a vacuum, as was the case in Goa, the emergence of communally based issues becomes an integral part of the political landscape' (Rubinoff 1998: 85). He further writes: 'such issues offer political leaders the promise of a secure basis of support' (Ibid.85). As such, in March 1963, Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) was founded, which took 'an anti-Konkani, caste and religion-based mergerist position designed to wipe Goa from the cultural and political map' (Newman 2001: 66). The communalist

polarisation was begun and propagated by the MGP. (Ibid.66). The MGP further believed that the language of Goa was Marathi and dismissed Konkani as only a dialect of Marathi. The MGP's communal and merger campaign was successful, as is evident from the results of the 1963 assembly elections wherein the MGP, and its allies, drawing its strength from the predominantly Hindu New Conquest, garnered over forty per cent of the popular vote and won sixteen assembly seats. 'The communal pattern was established in Goan politics for the next decade for the ethnic politics axis preempts other issues from emerging' (Rubinoff 1998: 90). The MGP continued in office till 1980.

From 1963 to 1980 the MGP did nothing to develop Goa's long neglected language, Konkani, but quietly went about setting up as many Marathi schools as possible. Pratap Singh Rane, who was the education minister during Smt. Shashikala's reign and who succeeded her as chief minister, continued the educational policy he pursued earlier. 'Without realizing, the Maharashtrawadis had already quietly, silently, insidiously, surreptitiously, deviously taken over the education in the state.'³ Almost all Marathi schools owe their existence to the government policy of the 60's.⁴ Goans themselves did not favour Konkani as a medium of instruction; most preferred English or Marathi. Some efforts to revive Konkani education, in 1965, are worth mentioning here. That year, Loyola High School, Holy Spirit School and two other convent schools in the city of Margao started Konkani-medium primary sections in their schools. Konkani Bhasha Mandal helped train teachers and produce a series of textbooks for the purpose. In two schools at least, Loyola and Holy Spirit, primary section in Konkani medium lasted eight years. Later, Konkani Bhasha Mandal, too, started a primary school of its own, which is still functioning efficiently. Apart from the Margao Schools, some time later, two other primary schools taught in Konkani medium and have continued till date (Almeida 2000).

In 1986, *The Hindu* wrote, 'Though 90 per cent of the people of the territory speak Konkani, more than 60 per cent of the Hindus have enrolled their children in Marathi-medium schools. Konkani protagonists have no compunctions about sending their children to English-medium schools. There are no takers for Konkani-medium schools.'⁵ In 1986, for instance, 'out of 1,537 primary schools in Goa, only 15 used Konkani, while 984 were conducted in Marathi, the other 538 being mainly in English or Urdu.'⁶

The Konkani language was given official status in Goa on February 4, 1987. 'After centuries of suppression by the Portuguese and 25 years of neglect by Goan government, Konkani ascended to her rightful throne at last.' (Newman 2001: 71). Some months later, on May 31, 1987, Goa became a full-fledged state with Konkani as its official language. In the last few centuries, Konkani language and literature has flourished. 'Today, Konkani possesses considerable literature of all

varieties. Ravindra Kelekar's collection of 400 Konkani publications of high literary standard is enough evidence to prove. Further, Stephen's Konkani Grammar is the first grammar of any Indian language, which was published as early as 1640' (Saksena 1974: 41). There are about twenty-seven grammars and thirty dictionaries in Konkani. J.A. Fernandes, B.B. Borkar, Prof. Ram Chandra Naik, Ravindra Kelekar, Felicio Cardozo, E. George, Fr. Agnelo Maffei S.J., Manohar Sardessai, R.V. Pandit, etc., by their writings, 'have proved that Konkani is an independent and mature language which can adequately express all nuances of thought and feeling in prose, poetry, plays and in music.' (Ibid.41). However, neither Hindus nor Catholics have favoured Konkani as a medium of instruction. They seem to have preferred another language, English, for the earlier colonial Portuguese, and adopted a neighbouring regional language, Marathi, instead of their mother tongue.

The New Education Policy (1990) and the Medium of Instruction (MOI)

Three years after the official language agitation, Goa was caught up in another linguistic imbroglio. 1990 was the year of political instability: defectors, forming an unholy and unprincipled alliance, the MGP-dominated Progressive Democratic Front (PDF), toppled Rane's ten-year-old administration. The PDF ministry adopted a policy decision on May 15, 1990, making it mandatory for primary schools to teach only in the mother tongue of the child. It refused grants-in-aid to those English schools which did not switch over to the regional language, Konkani or Marathi, thereby compelling schools to abide by the policy.

The medium-of-instruction controversy is an unexpected fallout of the High Court ruling in November, 1987, which stated that teachers in all private, non-aided primary schools would have to be paid salaries at par with government schoolteachers. Three months later, The Tenth All India Konkani Writer's Conference, held in Pednem, on February 17 and 18, 1990, passed a resolution that the Goa government should take steps to impart pre-primary and primary education only in the mother tongue, Konkani, and that no grants be given to private schools that harm children by thrusting on them primary education in alien languages, especially English. Absence of financial assistance from the government was acceptable so long as the management of the private schools was not compelled to pay their staff at government scales. The managements of Catholic schools in Goa were the most affected by the government's policy. Over forty per cent of the children in primary schools studied in English medium in 1989-90.⁷ These children and their parents were placed in a predicament. On the one hand, while the Konkani protagonists welcomed this decision, those who desired English education for their children protested determinedly. A prolonged agitation rocked Goa for over two months. Goa was caught up in a language-based conflict, which, as Dominique

Arel would put it, 'can occur whenever *both* the primordial pull of language preservation and the instrumental draw of language assimilation divide a speech community' (Arel 2002: 115).

Rubinoff writes, 'In the face of a challenge by the nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to its Hindu base, the MGP began emphasizing its regional identity.' (1998: 121). The blatantly discriminatory measure of denying grants to English-medium schools by Smt. Shashikala Kakodkar, Education Minister in the MGP-dominated PDF government, should perhaps be seen in this light. The moot question is whether the pro-Marathi Education Minister was really interested in changing the medium of instruction at the primary level to the mother tongue as per the national policy, or whether it was plainly a renewed attempt at 'Marathification' of Goa by giving a fresh lease of life to the Marathi schools, which were already losing their students to English-medium schools at the rate of approximately 2,000 students per year.⁸ The total number of students in all Marathi-medium schools in 1980–81 was 78,607; it was reduced to 58,310 in 1989–90.⁹

The decision of the government to provide financial aid to regional languages — to Konkani, the official language, and to Marathi, and to deny it to schools imparting education in English, the official language of the Union, was a political one,¹⁰ meant to 'denigrate that language (English) and enhance Marathi.'¹¹ Politicization of education is not unique to Goa. 'Language policy in education in India has been more a political bargain and choice than of academic requirements and practical considerations.' (Jayaram 1993: 93–94). Planned and implemented under the direction of the Marathi protagonist, Smt. Shashikala Kakodkar, the policy certainly did not consider the furtherance of Konkani, the official language of the state and Konkani schools, but intended to maintain the status quo, that is, 'the historical accident of the stranglehold that Marathi acquired over Goa by virtue of the fact that Portuguese colonial regime suppressed Konkani and actively discouraged the setting up of schools in Konkani.'¹² That Konkani also benefited in the bargain is another story altogether.

The PDF government's audacity, haste and intransigence with which it pushed through the policy, changing the medium of instruction to the regional language, at the same time denying grants to English-medium primary schools, forced the managements of 119 Catholic schools under the Archdiocesan Board of Education (ABE) to protest and challenge the policy and seek grants for its many schools. Initially, the Church-run schools agreed to the change of medium of instruction but demanded postponement of the policy by a year for better implementation of the policy as teachers were not equipped to teach the language and other infrastructural preparations were required. With this decision 'the church was pitted against the pro-English medium parents, some of whom took out vociferous protest marches.' (Noronha 1999: 51). ACMI (Action Committee for

Medium of Instruction) came to be recognised as the representative body of parents. The secretary of Diocesan Society of Education (DSE) himself assured ACMI that their views would be considered before taking a final decision on the medium of instruction.¹³ Later, the ABE did modify its stand about switching over to Konkani medium from the following academic year, as is clear from the Archbishop's circular. 'But in the changed circumstances It is obviously not possible to give any firm commitment of accepting the responsibility of necessarily changing the medium of instruction from the next academic year.'¹⁴

It must be noted that language is a fluctuating marker. While in 1987 people fought to enthrone *Konkani Mai* onto the throne of 'official language', three years later the same people wanted to retain English as a medium of instruction at the primary level and, as the survey indicates, even today desire to educate their children through English medium schools at the primary level. As Dominique Arel writes,

'People often add languages to their linguistic repertoire, and might experience a shift in their "private" language (the language they feel most comfortable with) during their lifetime or, more commonly, might have children whose private language differs from their own. Nationalists portray this linguistic assimilation as forced, unnatural, and fundamentally illegitimate, the result of destructive policies by the "imperialist" state. Yet, from a comparative standpoint, linguistic assimilation is a "normal" occurrence: not in the sense that most people assimilate, but in that, in most national groups whose language is socially less prestigious, and therefore less useful for social advancement, there are individuals who choose to assimilate.' (Arel 2002: 93).

The protest movement continued till the end of August 1990, but slowly died down. After about four months, the Archbishop brought out one more Circular, which settled the MOI controversy. 'After deliberations with relevant bodies of the church like ABE, DSE, DPC (Diocesan Pastoral Council), Diocesan Council of Priests, discussions dealing with relevant aspects and implications of the issue under reference...we have decided that Konkani will be the medium of instruction at the primary and pre-primary level, starting from June 1991 in our Church-run schools.'¹⁵ Whatever the outcome of the medium-of-instruction controversy, the voice of the people seems to have been throttled as the policy ignored the educational reality of the time, and struck a death blow to the very schools that were most popular in the state. It underscored 'the cultural fact that the majority of English-medium educated parents of the post-liberation era both in north and south Goa would by all means prefer their children to study in English-medium schools.' (Martins 1990). These parents had spoken to their children from childhood in English to enable them to master the language of basic and higher education, and that of status and upward mobility.

Earlier, 'Socially, social stratification based on caste... Economically, the feudal and agrarian form of economic system did not provide for upward economic mobility by language choice or other means.' (Annamalai 2001: 69). But since liberation and democratic polity, industrialised economy and Constitutional provisions of equal opportunity to all segments of society, there is greater scope or at least hope for various sections of society for upward mobility and access to power and resources through acquired characteristics including language. The policy deprived these sections of society of the equal opportunity to education in the language of their choice. It meant that the provision made under Part IV of the document 'National Policy on Education 1986' dealing with 'Education for Equality' was overlooked, as it had said that 'The new policy will lay special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunity by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far.' The policy adopted an ostrich-like approach to the fact that English is the mother tongue of several children in Goa or at least that it is the language mainly spoken in many households. The National Policy on Education 1986, in its Programme of Action 1992 under Minorities' Education, stated that 'It shall be the endeavour of every state and of every local authority within the state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups'. The Education Policy of the Goa government failed to incorporate this important provision, thereby disregarding the educational needs of the children from the English-speaking households whose mother tongue may be said to be English.

Review the Policy?

By the end of this academic year, 2001–02, the medium-of-instruction policy will have completed a dozen years since it bulldozed many schools to adhere to its dictates. No government since 1990 has attempted to re-examine and redraft the policy lest it stir up a hornet's nest. An opinion survey conducted among an unsystematically selected sample of 810 people from two talukas (310 from the New Conquest taluka, Quepem, and 500 from the Old Conquest taluka, Salcete), to understand the attitudes of parents vis-à-vis the medium-of-instruction policy, after a lapse of nearly a dozen years since its implementation, unearths some interesting facts. The two talukas were selected considering the time and feasibility aspects and also the fact that Goa is divided into Old Conquests, which have more Catholics, and New Conquests, which are sparsely populated and overwhelmingly Hindu. The respondents belonged to a cross-section of the population of the two talukas and included housewives (268), teachers (106), 'service' (103), 'business' (77), labourers (24), doctors (15), tailors (17), farmers (14), drivers (14), seamen (14), clerks (12), nurses (8), fisherwomen (5), mechanics (4), servants and peons (4),

sweepers (3), carpenters (3), and toddy tappers (3). Of the 310 respondents from Quepem Taluka (less than 0.5 per cent of the total population of Quepem taluka, which stands at 64,518), 151 persons were Hindus, constituting as much as 48.70 per cent of the sample population. Christians numbered 136 and Muslims and others 24, forming 43.87 and 7.74 per cent of the sample respectively. Salcete, though smaller in area (by 25.31 sq. kms) than Quepem taluka, is densely populated with a population of 2,19,897 persons. The study is based on the sample of 500 persons, less than 0.25 per cent of the total population of Salcete. The sample comprised 347 Christians, 123 Hindus, 25 Muslims and 5 persons of other religions, constituting 69.4, 24.6, 5 and 1 per cent respectively of the total sample population.

The following tables show the distribution of sample population according to mother tongue, language spoken to the child from childhood, desired medium of instruction, opinion on the allocation of grants-in-aid to schools in different media and enrolment or intent of enrolment of children in schools conducted in different media.

The tables reveal that 78.51 per cent of the sample population claim Konkani as their mother tongue. Comparatively very few have declared Marathi (8.27 per cent), Hindi (4.81 per cent), and English (3.58 per cent) to be their mother tongue. The sample, apart from Urdu, Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil, and Gujarathi mother tongue speakers, also includes some who claim to be bilingual (English/Konkani; Konkani/Marathi; English/Marathi; English/Hindi; Hindi/Marathi; Urdu/Hindi), and trilingual (English/Konkani/Marathi).

A closer examination of the data regarding the language spoken to the child from childhood and the declared mother tongue reveals that the percentage of Konkani-speaking persons has decreased by roughly 16 per cent and that of English-speaking persons has increased by 12 per cent as compared with the declared mother tongue percentage. Besides, there are, certainly, a number of respondents, a few of whom are personally known to the author, who have declared Konkani as their mother tongue, despite having spoken English in the household all through their life. These respondents, and many others, who may have done likewise, feel they betray their 'Goanness', when they declare any language other than Konkani as their mother tongue. This is the case even when their parents have spoken to them in English from the cradle and are convinced that only English will equip their children to perform better academically and socially, enhance children's employment opportunities, and give children an edge over others in the competitive world. 'For many children of English-speaking parents the regional language is the grandmother's tongue' (Martins 1990). In these cases it seems more appropriate to say that Konkani is their grandmother's tongue, and English, the language spoken from the cradle and in childhood, their mother tongue. What happens if these parents claim to be a linguistic minority and declare English to be their mother tongue and demand State aid!

Table indicating distribution of sample population according to mother tongue, language spoken and medium of instruction desired

Language and Media	Mother Tongue						Language Spoken to the Child						Medium of Instruction Desired																	
	Quepem			Salcete			Total			Quepem			Salcete			Total			Quepem			Salcete			Total					
	F	P		F	P		F	P		F	P		F	P		F	P		F	P		F	P		F	P				
English Konkani Marathi Urdu Hindi Malayalam Tamil Gujarathi Kannada Eng/Konk Eng/Mar Eng/Port Eng/Hindi Konk/Mar Hindi/Urdu Hindi/Mar Eng/Konk/Mar	9	2.90	20	4.00	29	3.58	27	8.71	103	20.60	130	16.05	182	58.71	349	69.80	531	65.56												
	233	75.16	403	80.60	636	78.52	195	62.90	314	62.80	509	62.84	34	10.97	88	17.60	122	15.06												
	40	12.90	27	5.40	67	8.27	32	10.32	29	5.80	61	7.53	68	21.94	35	7.00	103	12.72												
	12	3.87	3	0.60	15	1.85	13	4.19	3	0.60	16	1.98				1	0.20	1	0.12											
	11	3.55	28	5.60	39	4.81	9	2.90	23	4.60	32	3.95																		
	3	0.97	3	0.60	6	0.74	2	0.65	1	0.20	3	0.37																		
	1	0.32	2	0.40	3	0.37				2	0.40	2	0.25																	
	1	0.32	1	0.20	2	0.25																								
			4	0.80	4	0.49				3	0.60	3	0.37			1	0.20	1	0.12											
			3	0.60	3	0.37	16	5.16	15	3.00	31	3.83	6	1.94	10	2.00	16	1.98												
Total							1	0.32			1	0.12																		

Table indicating respondents' opinion on grants-in-aid and enrolment in schools in different media

Language and Media	Grants to be given to Schools						Admitted/ Will Admit in Schools					
	Quepem			Salcete			Total			Quepem		
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
All Media	184	59.35	378	75.60	562	69.38						
English	73	23.55	60	12.00	133	16.42	140	45.16	263	52.60	403	49.75
Konkani	23	7.42	35	7.00	58	7.16	41	13.23	99	19.80	140	17.28
Marathi	20	6.45	14	2.80	34	4.20	57	18.39	28	5.60	85	10.49
Urdu												
Hindi												
Malayalam												
Tamil												
Gujarathi												
Kannada												
Eng/Konk												
Eng/Mar												
Eng/Port												
Eng/Hindi												
Konk/Mar	1	0.32			1	0.12						
Hindi/Urdu												
Hindi/Mar												
Eng/Konk/Mar												
Not Resp.	9	2.90	13	2.60	22	2.72	72	23.23	110	22.00	182	22.47
Total	310	100	500	100	810	100	310	100	500	100	810	100

* Abbreviations: F - Frequency; P - Percentage.

The Document on the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000), in its section on Medium of Instruction, states that 'in the case of those students whose mother tongue is different from the state language or regional language, the regional language may be adopted as a medium only from the third standard onward. In the earlier years the students' mother tongue ought to be used in such a manner that a smooth transition from the students' operations in the mother tongue to those in the regional language naturally take place at the earliest.' In Goa, the Education Policy has made it mandatory to use the regional language, not English, from the first standard onwards in all schools aided by the government. Thus, children who speak English in their households and whose parents desire English education for their children have to pay hefty sums as fees in private schools or be forced to admit their children in schools where the regional language, which is not their household language, is the medium of instruction. These parents either make tremendous financial sacrifices, enrolling their children in privately managed schools, or send their children to government-aided schools where the regional language is as alien to the child as any other foreign language and, as mentioned earlier, emphasizes the importance of mother-tongue medium. The policy deprives these children of the necessary 'central factor behind the nurturance of the children's mental and emotional make-up'.

While the government has made primary education in regional languages free and accessible to all, the data indicate a pronounced preference for English-medium education, with 65.56 per cent favouring it as against 15.06 and 12.72 per cent preferring Konkani and Marathi respectively.

Further, an overwhelming majority (69.4 per cent) is of the opinion that grants should be given to all schools, irrespective of the medium of instruction. While 16.42 per cent opted for restriction of grants to English-medium schools only, and 7.16 per cent for exclusively Konkani schools, a lesser percentage, 4.19, were in favour of grants to Marathi-medium schools only.

In addition, the fact that 49.75 per cent of the respondents claim to have admitted or will admit their wards to English-medium schools as against Konkani (17.3 per cent), and Marathi-medium schools (10.49 per cent) confirms the trend towards English-medium primary education. Some respondents in Quepem taluka said that they enrolled their children in schools conducted in the regional languages, as there were no English schools in the vicinity. In 1994–95, the 13 English schools had 10,793 students while in 1999–00, the number of schools shot up to 37 and the enrolment has increased to 15,687. However, enrolment in Marathi schools, which was at 55,122 in 1994–95, has plummeted to 47,533 in 1999–00.¹⁶

The fact that there is an increasing demand for English education should persuade the government to reconsider releasing grants to all schools regardless of the medium of instruction.

Conclusion

Education is a fundamental right deriving from the right to good life. The State, committed to universal elementary education, has a special responsibility to ensure its realisation. Even in the erstwhile Portuguese regime, steps were taken to achieve the goal of compulsory enrolment. (Varde 1977: 80). One of the major achievements of the Goan government, since liberation, has been the rapid expansion of education in Goa. However, English and Marathi, and not Konkani, became the new languages of primary education in Goa, as many of the private primary schools run in Marathi or English before, were simply converted to government schools after liberation. Konkani was introduced in some schools, but most Goans were opposed to Konkani-medium schools and still are. There has been a widespread desire to study English, clearly the language of the future. However, in Goa and elsewhere, 'assimilating to another language, whenever language acts as one of the main markers for the group, is perceived as pathological and iniquitous by nationalist leaders.' (Arel 2002:99). And therefore, 'the "backward-looking" conception of a language-based identity, where the true identity is the one that allegedly prevailed before assimilation, collides with the "forward-looking" conception which can go as far as projecting one's language preference in the future.' (Ibid.115).

The government policy to provide grants-in-aid to regional languages came at a time when over 40 per cent of primary school students were studying in English-medium schools, and the parents were keen to have their children educated through English. As discussed earlier, the PDF new education policy was a political decision. Even twelve years after the education policy, introduced to further the interests of Marathi and Konkani, and to stifle English schools, the English schools have not died down but are mushrooming fast. Despite the exorbitant school fees and the consequent burden on the parents, enrolment is escalating rapidly. In fact, vernacular schools are losing out to English-medium schools both quantitatively and qualitatively as the few English schools can pick and choose their students, as there are a number of takers for the few English primaries. While there exists a strong preference for primary education in English, it seems that politics and politicians would rather ignore popular opinion and 'get away with extremely cynical manipulation of atavistic sentiment among people whose past is written in entirely different styles.' (Newman 2001: 268). In conclusion, it may be stated that while the promotion of Konkani education seems necessary from the viewpoint of maintaining Goan identity, objectivity demands a sensitivity to the changing social, cultural, economic and political aspirations of various sections of the Goan community.

Notes

1. *Navhind Times*, June 18, 1990.
2. The report of the committee for revitalization of the educational system of Goa, Daman and Diu.
3. *Herald*, May 24, 1990.
4. *Goa Today*, June 1990.
5. *The Hindu*, December 28, 1986.
6. *The Indian Express*, December 30, 1986, p.8.
7. *Goa Today*, June 1990.
8. *Herald*, June 16, 1990.
9. *Goa Today*, July, 1990, and Educational Statistics at a Glance, 1980-81, Statistics Section, Directorate of Education, Government of Goa.
10. *Goa Today*, July 2000, pp.16.
11. *Goa Today*, July 1990, pp.12-20.
12. *Herald*, May 24, 1990.
13. *Herald*, June 26, 1990.
14. Archbishop's Circular, July 24, 1990.
15. Archbishop's Circular, December 14, 1990.
16. *Goa Today*, September 1995, pp.59, and Educational Statistics at a Glance, 1999–2000, Statistics Section, Directorate of Education, Government of Goa.

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