Konkani and "Goan Identity" in Post-colonial Goa, India

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1. Introduction

Goa is a small state situated almost at the centre of the west coast of the subcontinent, between Maharashtra and Karnataka. The Portuguese used to rule the area and called it Goa Dourada (Golden Goa). It was liberated from Portuguese rule in 1961. But even now Goa is regarded as a place with a blend of Western and Oriental cultural flavours and is a popular destination for both foreign and domestic tourists.

However, this image of “Golden Goa” has never been a stable anchor for the cultural identity of Goans. Since Liberation, they have been asking themselves where they culturally belong. In the post-Liberation period, the political status of Goa as Union Territory has come into question. The merger with Maharashtra was adopted as a political agenda and caused uproars in the area. Although the merger was rejected, the question of “Goan identity” remained unsolved in the gradual process of incorporation into Indian system, and it came to take the shape of language problem towards the 1980s. Goans started to have debates on the appropriate language of Goa. Is it Konkani or Marathi? The former is a spoken language for most Goans whereas the latter is the official language of the neighbouring state, Maharashtra. This paper will attempt
to shed light upon socio-cultural factors behind the language problem in post-colonial Goa. This conflict over the language of Goa can be perceived as the quest of “Goan identity” by various socio-cultural groups. By clarifying different backgrounds of the groups determined by religion, caste and class, this paper will point out the lack of centripetal force of Konkani as the representation of “Goan identity”. In other words, diverse socio-cultural groups took sides with either Konkani or Marathi, conferring different meaning to Konkani.

Language has been an important component of nation-building and identity politics in post-colonial India, as well as in other newly independent ex-colonies of Asia and Africa. Even during the British Raj, there was nascent realisation that language was an essential label for an ethnic group. Towards Independence, Hindi and Urdu gradually became distinguished symbols for Hindus and Muslims respectively, and later came to be identified respectively with India and Pakistan [Rai 2000]. In the meantime, other Indian vernaculars went through a transformation from a means of communication into an indicator of ethnic boundaries. For instance, Bengali and Assamese became a marker to demarcate borders between Bengali and Assamese people [Fujii 1992: 31].

Incorporating increasing awareness of linguistic identity among people into language planning, Indian government employed a hierarchical language policy. At the national level, Hindi and English occupy the top positions. At the state level, dominant vernaculars of the area were declared as the official language after the reorganisation of states based on language in 1956. They are also acknowledged in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. At the third level come languages such as Sanskrit, Sindhi and Nepali, which are listed in the Eighth Schedule, but not associated with any states as official language. Below them are many mother tongues with no official status [Thakkur 2002].

Goa was somehow left behind in the reorganisation of states since its liberation happened only in 1961. After Liberation, Goa became a Union Territory and when it was compelled to decide its political status later, the concept of official language — the language of the state representing the culture and identity of the people in the area — was already available for them.

Despite that, Goa’s identification with its language, Konkani was not easily achieved due to its distinctive profile as a former Portuguese colony.
Even though Konkani was acknowledged as the official language of Goa in 1987 and added to the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution in 1992, controversies over the question, “What is the language of Goa?” has remained unsolved until today.

Newman [2001] traces the changes in Goa’s image and identity from “Golden Goa” during the Portuguese time, through “Indians” in the time of independence struggle, to “Goans” today. He is right to indicate that Goan identity has not been very clear till today. However, his claim that Konkani, spoken by all Goans, “is the cement which binds all Goans across lines of religion, caste and class” should be reconsidered [Newman 2001: 80].

It is true that Konkani is spoken by most Goans. But its standardisation has not progressed very much since the acquisition of the official language status [Kurzon n.d.]. Also, we can find various kinds of Konkani with different accents and vocabulary in Goa. We can see a contrast in the bodies of vocabulary used especially between Christians and Hindus. Christians employ more Portuguese words and Hindus tend to use more Sanskrit-originated words. The difference somehow represents their attitudes towards the language.

In this sense, Suzuki [2001] rightly points out that the “language war” between Konkani and Marathi supporters between 1985 and 1987 reflected a conflict between Christians and Hindus. It was to decide which language was appropriate for the official language as the vehicle for “Goan identity”.

It seems, however, inadequate to single out the religious factor as the cause of the issue of language and identity in Goa. In addition to religion, I suggest another two factors in this paper: caste and landlord-tenant relation. In post-colonial Goa, various socio-cultural groups determined by the above three elements became more pronounced in the process of Goa being transformed from a Portuguese colony to a part of India. These socio-cultural groups took sides with either Konkani or Marathi, which for them somehow represented “Goan identity”.

This paper will outline the development of the language problem in Goa by making use of secondary resources, magazines and newspapers. The arguments presented in this paper on the attitudes of socio-cultural groups towards Konkani are also based on my observations during fieldwork. The paper will conclude that although “Goan identity” is now
prevalently associated with Konkani, many questions on what it really is can still be raised because various socio-cultural groups interpret Konkani and “Goan identity” according to their history and position in society, and moreover, Goan society has been undergoing further changes.

2. Portuguese Colonial Rule in Goa

Afonso de Albuquerque conquered the Goa Island in 1510. It was the beginning of the Portuguese rule of Goa, which lasted for 451 years. The Portuguese, whose aim was not only trade but also the spread of Catholic faith, came to the island with missionaries, such as the Franciscans and the Jesuits. As the number of missionaries increased, pressures of the imposition of harsh religious policies mounted. In 1540, following Bishop Duarte’s suggestion, all the Hindu temples were demolished. In the following year, the Confraternity of Holy Faith and the College of St. Paul’s were established for helping poor Christians, maintaining churches and educating boys from all over the East for the priesthood [D’Costa 1965: 30–32]. These policies were called Rigor de Misericordia (Rigour of Mercy). The harsh treatment of Hindus during this period of 1540–45 was marked by the issue of the enactments regarding the prohibition of the worship of Hindu deities, which led to the setting-up of the Inquisition in 1560. As a result, many of the Hindu population fled from the Portuguese territory.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese sea-borne empire gradually declined through conflicts with the newly emerging powers — the British and the Dutch. Portugal was annexed to Spain in 1580 and less attention was paid to the management of Portuguese overseas territories. Although Portugal gained independence in 1640, “it was too late to repair the damage to the national and imperial economy” [de Souza 1979: 19]. However, the Portuguese managed to widen their territory in India. In 1788, the whole part of present Goa was brought under Portuguese control by the acquisition of Pernem taluka (district). The areas obtained by Portugal in the eighteenth century is called the New Conquests which include seven talukas, Bicholim, Canacona, Pernem, Ponda, Quepem, Sanguem and Sattari. They are distinguished from the Old Conquests, Bardez, Tiswadi, Mormugao and Salcete, the talukas that had already fallen under Portuguese rule in the sixteenth century.
As mentioned above, the implementation of conversion policies at the beginning of Portuguese rule forced the Hindu population to move out of the Old Conquests and this created a demographic difference between the two areas, which is still obvious today: in the Old Conquests Christians are dominant whereas in the New Conquests the Hindu population is more.5)

In 1910, Portugal became a republic. The event brought considerable changes in the demography of Goa. Although rigorous religious policies were softened with the ban of the Jesuits in 1759 and the effective end of the Inquisition in 1774, the Hindus had not been allowed to engage in commercial activities in the Old Conquests. So this political transformation in Portugal resulted in the endowment of religious freedom in Goa. As a result, a large number of the Hindu population migrated from the New Conquests to the Old Conquests.6)

However, Salazar’s dictatorship changed the liberated atmosphere entailed in the freedom movements in Goa. Inspired by the development of independence movements in British India, freedom fighters had started to raise their voices for the freedom of Goa from its colonial shackles. Salazar imposed censorship and suppressed freedom fighters [Shirodkar 1988].

After the independence of India from Britain in 1947, the clamour of Goa to be liberated from Portugal became louder and louder. However, Nehru did not take immediate action, wishing for a peaceful and voluntary return of the territory by Portugal in the same way as France returned Pondicherry. Mounting pressures from non-aligned nations eventually pushed Nehru and on 19 December 1961, the Indian Army marched in and liberated Goa by force (Operation Vijaya).7)

3. The Language Problem in Goa

3.1 The Awakening of the Language Problem before Liberation

A much-debated question in the language problem, which culminated in the 1980s, was which language, Konkani or Marathi, was more appropriate for Goa. Konkani protagonists advocated that the language was spoken by most people living in Goa as a link language, whereas Marathi protagonists argued that Marathi was a more established language, having been used for literary purpose. The latter's main claim was that
Konkani was a mere dialect of Marathi. The origin of this confrontation dates back to the Portuguese period.

The Portuguese did not favour either Konkani or Marathi, though early missionaries, such as Thomas Stephens, compiled Konkani grammar books and did research on local languages [Pereira 1982]. The Portuguese government imposed the ban on the use of local languages, both Konkani and Marathi. The locals were ordered to learn the language of the coloniser. In 1684, a decree was issued by the Viceroy, the Count of Alvor, that the use of local language was prohibited.

In 1764, another decree was issued imposing the Portuguese language on the locals. The decree stated that unless Goans master Portuguese within three years they should not have the right to marriage. Some scholars regard this decree as evidence of the suppression of local languages. However, it is difficult to assess how thorough the imposition of the Portuguese language was. We can also assume that the same kind of decree was repeatedly issued because the language of the rulers did not fully penetrate into the local population. A letter written to Portugal by the Viceroy, Dom Manoel de Portugal e Castro, stated that only two to three percent of the population was speaking Portuguese [Xavier 1988: 176]. Moreover, the church and the state did not have a consistent policy towards Konkani during the colonial rule, according to Olivinho Gomes. Some individual archbishops of the church tried to prevent the locals from speaking in Konkani, whereas the Governor-General of Portuguese Goa appointed a committee for the project of reprinting the old Portuguese-Konkani and Konkani-Portuguese dictionaries and search-
ing for other literary works in Konkani worthy of reprint in 1857 [Gomes 1999: 86].

Whether Konkani was suppressed in a real sense or not, it remained the spoken language. In contrast, Marathi started to win recognition among the Goan Hindus as the language of literature, and thus superior to Konkani. This happened especially after the setting up of the Inquisition in 1560. As mentioned in the previous section, it led to many Hindus fleeing from the Old Conquests to the New Conquests. These Hindus gradually adopted Marathi. In the neighbouring area, that of the state of Maharashtra today, Marathi had been developed for a long time, even before the arrival of the Portuguese. For example, Jnyaneshwar wrote an annotated edition of Bhagavadgita in Marathi in the thirteenth century. Devotion to a popular form of Hinduism, which came to be known as bhakti, began to take hold in Maharashtra in the fifteenth century. The bhakti movement was basically centred on the all-embracing love of God. Thus, numerous saint-poets, such as Namadev, Tukaram and Ramadas, created verse forms praising God in Marathi. Writing poems in the vernacular of the area also meant the rejection of Sanskrit as the representation of Brahmanical authority [Gordon 1998: 17–20; Nemade 1990: 6]. As for prose, we can find the pundit (Brahmin scholar) style and the bakhar (history) style before the establishment of a certain literary style after the adaptation of that of English literature in the nineteenth century [Nemade 1990: 24–36]. By the end of the nineteenth century, the modern style of writing in Marathi had been formed relatively well.

This linguistic superiority of Marathi led to contempt for Konkani among people who were using Marathi. Goans in the New Conquests, especially those of high caste made use of Marathi for literary purpose. For them, Konkani was just a spoken and inferior language. Even in the Old Conquests, Konkani was scorned as “kitchen language”, which means the language for communication with servants. Christian people who were employed by the colonial government found Portuguese language superior because all the administrative works were done in the language of the coloniser.

In opposition to the claim, the nascent form of the Konkani movement started in the late nineteenth century. However, it arose not in Goa itself, but in Bombay.
Since the Portuguese did not encourage the development of industries, the Goan economy slumped in the late nineteenth century and a large number of Goans migrated abroad in search of job opportunities. First migrants headed for Belgaum and Poona. In due course, however, people started to go to Bombay whose economy was booming as an alternative port for cotton after the Civil War in the USA started. Besides, it was possible to get a job in the administrative section in the city, which was the centre of Bombay Presidency.

Among Goan Hindus, Saraswat Brahmans, who were usually landlords in Goa and traditionally capable of reading and writing, started to seek opportunities for higher education and employment in Bombay. Goan Christians were mainly engaged in occupations such as butler, sailor, cook and musician. Later on, migration to Karachi and the Gulf countries started to accelerate.

As a result of the migration, Goan communities were born in cities outside Goa. Those Goan migrants, whether they were Hindus or Christians, started to nurture a consciousness that they have a specific Goan identity, which was different from that of Bombay, and their culture was symbolised by Konkani, their language. Some Saraswat Brahmans especially felt a strong link between Konkani and Goan culture. Their mother tongue was Konkani. They were very much conscious that they were the first settlers of Goa. There is a myth about how they migrated to Goa. Their ancestors used to live on the bank of the sacred river, Saraswati, near Thaneshwar now in Haryana. They became the disciples of the sage Saraswata after the sage helped them live on fish during twelve-year great famine. Ninety-six of the Saraswat families were brought by Parasurama to the Konkan and settled in the most fertile region, Goa. Of these, sixty-six families settled in the sixty-six villages in Salcete; the remaining thirty went to an island called Tiswadi. From there they spread all over Goa [D'Souza 1975: 17; Keni 1998: 1–5; Supner 1993: 185].

Thus, it was no surprise that the most prominent name among the Konkani writers came from the community of Saraswat Brahmans. His name was Shennoi Goembab. He was born in Bicholim on 23 June 1877. He went to Bombay for higher education. After the matriculation examination, he worked in Karachi for a while but eventually settled down in Bombay. He first worked for the Italian Consulate and next joined a German commercial firm in 1906. He worked for the company
for nearly twenty years. Then, he resigned from the position after facing discriminatory action by German officers and began devoting himself to writing.

At the beginning of his writing career, he mainly wrote in Marathi as other Goan writers did. Even though Konkani was the mother tongue of Saraswat Brahmans, most of them did not take Konkani seriously as a literary language. Indeed, there had been few supporters for Konkani. In Goa, a Portuguese officer, J. H. da Cunha Rivara (1800–1879) supported the linguistic status of Konkani by publishing *Ensaio historico da lingua Concani* (A historical essay on the Konkani language). However, it was a rare case. As we can see in a report called “Memorandum on Konkani”, the claim was still strong that Konkani was a mere spoken language and a dialect of Marathi [Collaco et al. 1942].

Then what made Goembab turn to Konkani? There is an interesting anecdote about why he did so. One day, he went to a reputed Marathi playwright Annasaheb Kiloskar to show his play in Marathi. The writer read through it and made a critical remark: “Although your play is good in terms of events, structure and plot, the dialogues are not lively enough and artificial. They are for reading not for speaking.” Goembab was shocked and pondered why it was so. Then he came to realise that he should write in his own language, namely, Konkani [SarDessai 2000: 120]. Goembab published *Konkanni Bhasechem Zoit* (The Triumph of Konkani) in 1926 wherein he strongly claimed the independence of Konkani and Goan identity. Goembab explains his linguistic nationalist point of view:

... The mother tongue of Goa has an independent character of its own. The Goan may go and live in any corner of the world, but stamp of its own on his brain does not abandon its hold over it. And so the foreign tongue cannot so enter his brain as to dislodge his own speech from there. One is never able to acquire renown in a language which on being heard or read does not immediately become intelligible (before one rehearses its meaning), even though one may have embraced it as one’s own mother-tongue. If Goans desire to hold their heads high in the world they should not barter away the freedom of their understanding to the foreign language and become thereby, to that extent, intellectually bankrupt. On the contrary they should love and glorify their
own mother tongue, the Konknni. Only if they do this will they get the necessary facility of expression to write in it and they will then find it easy to write with homely freedom in it [Goembab 1985 (1926): 12].

In the book, Goembab expressed his pride in Konkani. He tried to prove how independent and different the language was from Marathi by showing some extracts from ancient books.

Even though it was not so strongly felt as Goembab, among the Christian community in Bombay we can find the emerging consciousness of their distinctive way of life, which later will be expressed in the word “Goan identity”. Most young Christians, who migrated to Bombay, did not have enough money to rent a room individually. So they usually lived together with others from the same village and nurtured a strong bond. They rented a house or rooms for this purpose, which were called “clubs”. The clubs also functioned as mutual-aid association, which supplied loans to the members when they were in need of money [D’Souza 1975: 200–217]. As mentioned above, most Goan Christians worked as seamen, cook, clerk and musician, which were considered Western. Exposed to Western culture as well as living in a club with fellow Goans, they created a new kind of “Goan identity”. For instance, the first performance of Tiatr, a musical played in Konkani, was staged in Bombay in 1892. As Kale points out, in Tiatr “one can perceive elements of what may be termed as Goan Catholic ethos” [Kale 1999: 145]. The language of Tiatr used for dialogue was developed on its own and has had very little to do with the Hindu Konkani, espoused by Shennoi Goembab [Kale 1999: 150]. We can say that although Tiatr is also popular among the Hindu population today, it reflects “Goan catholic ethos” perceived by Goan Christians.

Thus, between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, the idea started to appear that Konkani is an independent language and is not inferior to Marathi. After Liberation, the idea spread to Goa and Konkani came to be transformed into the language of Goa.

3.2 The Language Problem after Liberation

After Liberation in 1961, the administration of a Major General and Lieutenant governor followed. Goa became a Union Territory. It was in
1963 when the first election for assembly was held and the Maharash- 
trawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), whose agenda was the merger of Goa 
with the State of Maharashtra, swept to power with 14 seats and became 
the single largest party in the assembly. The MGP won the election by 
getting the support of Bahujan Samaj, which was a conglomeration of 
non-Brahman castes that were exploited as tenant or Mundkars by Brah-
man landlords during the Portuguese time. Dayanand Bandodkar, the 
first Chief Minister of Goa, was also a member of Bahujan Samaj. In 
contrast with the Hindus who comprised the voting base of the MGP, 
the Christians supported the United Goans Party (UGP), which was 

After the first election, the MGP-led government implemented a num-
ber of policies for the uplift of Bahujan Samaj. A number of schools were 
established in villages. The tenants got their own land as the result of 
land reforms. The Goa, Daman and Diu Agricultural Tenancy Act and 
Rules came into force in 1965 and the Goa, Daman and Diu Mundkars 
(Protection from Eviction of Mundkars, Agricultural Labourers and 
Village Artisans) Act was implemented in 1971 [Government of Goa 
1983].

The next step of the MGP government was to make their major re-
form a reality, i.e. the accomplishment of the merger of Goa with 
Maharashtra. However, the central government intervened by claiming 
that Goans should decide their own fate and thus it led to the Opinion 
Poll in 1967. In its campaign, the MGP claimed the cultural affinity 
between Goa and Maharashtra as the reason for a merger and the wider 
use of Marathi in Goa was clear evidence for it. On the other hand, the 
UGP advocated the independent nature of Goan identity, which was 
represented in the form of Konkani. The former tried to lure the Hin-
dus, especially Bahujan Samaj, and the latter, whose main supporters 
were Saraswat Brahmans and Christians, claimed that Konkani was spo-
ken by more than 90% of the whole population of Goa and thus, the 
distinctiveness of Goan identity was proved by this fact. By claiming 
that the mother tongue of Goans was Konkani, Saraswat Brahmans some-
how attempted to show their strong link with Goa as the first settlers of 
the area while Christians tried to stop the merger in order to protect 
themselves from further incorporation into Indian culture, which was 
predominantly Hindu. On 16 January 1967, votes were cast and anti-
merger side won with the decisive 54.20% vote against the pro-merger side.\(^{10}\)

Although the merger of Goa with Maharashtra was rejected and Goa remained a Union Territory, the controversy over which language represents Goa continued. Because the possibility of a merger was discarded, the achievement of statehood became a focal point of debates. The reorganisation of states based on language at the national level in 1956 created a situation in which the recognition of the official language was inevitable for Goa to become a state. In the early 1980s, all the political parties made an election pledge that they would promote Konkani as the official language of Goa. The Congress Party, which pledged the same and succeeded in gaining office, did not implement the policy of their promise. Discontent prevailed among Konkani supporters.

Following the defeat of the Official Language Bill tabled by an MLA in the Assembly in July 1985, some Konkani protagonists, most of whom were writers, organised the KPA (Konkani Porjecho Awaz = The Voice of Konkani People) and started intense language movement in various forms. They organised demonstrations and public meetings, in co-operation with some politicians, and publish their opinions in papers that Goa would not be able to retain its own identity unless Konkani was accorded due recognition as the official language of Goa. Meetings arranged in Margao and Panaji, on 11 and 14 November 1985 respectively, attracted many agitators. In response to the Konkani protagonists' actions, the Marathi side, led by the MRBPS (Marathi Rajya Bhasya Prastapanan Samiti = The Committee of Introducing Marathi as Official Language) began protests. In 1986, both sides escalated their agitation and the antagonism between them intensified towards the Silver Jubilee of Liberation, on 19 December.\(^{11}\) The late December of the year was marred by a series of violence, such as the blockage of the highway and the death of seven people. The army was called in to control the mobs. Pressures mounted from the central government on the state government to find a solution to the chaotic situation. Eventually, the Official Language Act was passed on 4 February and Konkani was acknowledged as the official language of Goa.\(^{12}\) On 30 May in the same year, Goa was accorded statehood.
4. Konkani as the Symbol of “Goan Identity”?  
4.1 Religion, Caste and Landlord-Tenant Relation  
In the language problem after Liberation, which was described above, we can find three sets of oppositions determined by religion, caste and landlord-tenant relation: Hindus/Christians, Saraswat Brahmans/Bahujan Samaj, Bhatkars/Mundkars.\(^{13}\) In order to understand why these socio-cultural groups took sides with either Konkani or Marathi, we should look at their relation with Konkani and some changes in the composition of Goan society before and after Liberation.

First we can examine the Hindus/Christians opposition. Hindus are a majority in the New Conquests while Christians are dominant in the Old Conquests, whose geographical and cultural difference were caused by the Portuguese rule. In the sixteenth century, the policy of compulsory conversion led to the demolition of most Hindu temples in the Old Conquests. Many Hindus fled with the sacred image of destroyed temples to the New Conquests.\(^{14}\) They settled in the New Conquests, constructed new temples and began a new life. Hindus were not allowed to enter the Old Conquests even for commercial activities.\(^{15}\) In due course, there emerged certain differences between Hindus and the Christians, such as dress, food, name and the way of worship.\(^{16}\)

As for language, Hindus in the New Conquests started to develop a close relationship with Marathi while they were driven away by the Portuguese. They called Maharashtrian Brahmans to preside over the rituals in temples and Marathi teachers were invited from Maharashtra for the education of children. In the seventeenth century, Marathi was increasingly considered important as the language of the Marathas and had been developed for literary use by then. In the palace of Shivaji, the language was employed for official use and it was established as the language of the court [Gordon 1998]. Thus, in due course, Hindus in the New Conquests developed an idea that Marathi was a superior language to Konkani, which was considered as a mere spoken language. In particular, Hindu elites, such as Maharashtrian Brahmans and Saraswat Brahmans, made use of Marathi for the purpose of writing and official correspondence.

On the other hand, Christians have regarded Konkani as their language over centuries. Although elite Christians adopted Portuguese and
despised Konkani as “kitchen language”, which meant the language to be used for communicating servants, for the mass Christians, Konkani was the language used in the church.

As Portuguese rule ended in 1961, demographic proportion of Hindus and Christians changed dramatically. Even before Goa was liberated, the political shift of Portugal from monarchy to republic in 1910 gave more freedom to Hindus, which led them to migrate to the Old Conquests. But it was after all internal migration. The integration of Goa into the Indian Union caused the migration of a large number of the Christian population to Portugal or Portuguese colonies in Africa such as Mozambique. As a result, the Hindu population came to outnumber their Christian counterparts with a ratio of approximately 60 to 40.

This change in demographic strength united Christians on the grounds of anti-merger and pro-Konkani. As the size of the Christian population shrank due to migration and the “Indianisation” of Goa proceeded, Christian elites in particular had an increasing fear of losing their identity. As far as they were concerned, the good Portuguese Goa, Goa Dourada (Golden Goa), was lost when it was “raped” by Indian Army on 19 December 1961. They somehow relied on Konkani to fill the blank and retain their cultural ties with Goa. The lower caste Christians always used Konkani. But a sense of rivalry against the Hindu population prompted them to have more of a strong consciousness of their language.

Secondly, we can look at two sets of oppositions, Saraswat Brahmans / Bahujan Samaji and Bhatkars / Mundkars together. Saraswats were the first settlers of Goa as the myth of Parasurama indicates. In Goa, many Saraswats were Bhatkars (landlords). Poor people were allowed to reside on the land of the Bhatkars and in return for the right, they cultivated Bhatkars’ lands and did menial jobs [Phal 1982]. Such tenants were called Mundkars and most of them were from low castes.

After Liberation, the relation between Bhatkars and Mundkars changed. The first Chief Minister, Dayanand Bandodkar devoted himself to the uplifting of non-Brahman castes, calling them especially Bahujan Samaj, most of whom were Mundkars. Land reforms such as the implementation of the Goa, Daman and Diu Agricultural Tenancy Act and Rules in 1965 and the Goa, Daman and Diu Mundkars Act in 1971 enabled the Mundkars to have their own land plots. Furthermore, the establishment of primary schools in villages led to increasing consciousness about their
rights and antagonistic feelings against the Bhatkars that they should be compensated for the exploitation in the past.

When Bahujan Samaji or Mundkars came to be educated in school, they started to be aware that their language was Marathi. The competence of the language used to be limited to Brahmans and they took it as the symbol of their mobilisation. Bahujan Samaji accused Saraswat Brahmans of promoting Konkani to keep them politically and economically backwards [Nagvenkar 2002]. This claim was made not only due to antagonistic feeling among Bahjan Samaj towards Saraswats, but also rivalry between Saraswats and other Brahmans, such as Karhada/Padhe Brahmans, Daivadnya Brahmans, Vishwakarma Brahmans. In fact, many of Saraswats also supported Marathi, though their community was considered to be a staunch supporter of Konkani as many of first leaders of Konkani movement were Saraswats, including Shennoi Goembab, the renowned Konkani writer.

The socio-cultural structure and its changes between before and after Liberation are reflected in the profile of Konkani protagonists. At first, in the 1960s and 1970s, the leaders of the Konkani protagonists mainly belonged to the community of Saraswat Brahmans. They began their career as Konkani activists when they went to Bombay for higher education. At that time, the children of rich Goans went outside Goa due to the lack of educational institutions after secondary level. There they first associated themselves with Konkani movements by becoming members of Konkani society at college and by publishing Konkani pamphlets. They read Shennoi Goembab's works and were deeply influenced by his thoughts about Konkani and the independent nature of Goan culture from Marathi and Maharashtrian culture. But by the 1980s, as more Bahujans came to be educated, some of them became Konkani leaders, after realising that they could express themselves best in Konkani. We can see the social mobilisation of Bahujan Samaji in this change.21)

These socio-cultural factors played an essential role in the language conflict of Konkani and Marathi after Liberation. Different groups took part in the battle with various causes of their own. Some of their reasons were more politically oriented. There were political games behind the merger issue. Maharashtrian politicians financially supported the campaign for their political gains during the run-up to the Opinion Poll.22) It is said that they promised to give Bandodkar an important position if he
won in the referendum and if the merger really happened. On the other 
hand, for many Konkani writers who spearheaded the agitation, it was 
more a cultural issue. We should pay attention to how each socio-cul-
tural group committed itself to the language movement and with what 
sort of consciousness of their own history.

4.2 Can Konkani be the Symbol of “Goan Identity”? 
Since the end of the nineteenth century, the same kind of arguments 
have repeatedly been employed in the Konkani movement that Konkani 
is the most essential part of “Goan identity” because most Goans speak 
the language.

For example, in an editorial entitled “Goan Identity” (11 November 
1986), the editor of a Goan daily, Herald, states as follows:

The cultural genius of Goa is symbolised by the culture of Konkan 
of which Goa has historically been the finest jewel... The Goan fish curry, rice and Goan feni are by no stretch of imagination the 
manifestation of colonialism. The Mangueshi and the Shantadurga 
temples are as much symbolic of Goan culture as are the Bom 
Jesus Basilica, the Se Cathedral and Masjid at Ponda... And 
the vehicle of Goa’s unique and distinct identity has always been 
the Konkani language.

It is true that Konkani has been the mother tongue for most Goans 
and used for communication as a link language. With this claim, after a 
series of agitation Konkani was acknowledged as the official language of 
Goa in 1987. However, as we can understand from what was discussed 
above, different socio-cultural groups associated themselves with Konkani 
in various ways. For instance, the cultural meanings of Konkani among 
the Christian masses are different from those of Saraswat Brahmans in 
the sense that historically the language has been functioning in their life 
in a different way: for Christians it was also the language of the church, 
and for some Saraswats it was an indispensable means of differentiating 
themselves from Maharashtrian Brahmans. For some Christian Bhatkars, 
Konkani is not their mother tongue as they speak Portuguese at home. 
There are Hindus who advocate that Marathi should be the language of 
Goa though they also use Konkani as a means of communication. We 
can see how different socio-cultural groups confer different meanings on
Konkani.

This is in part due to the lack of consensus about a standardised form of Konkani. It can be assumed that the contemptuous feeling towards Konkani among higher castes or Bhatkars prevented Konkani from becoming a literary language. Moreover, a variety of dialects in Konkani are also an obstacle to the process of standardisation. First of all, bodies of vocabulary differ from Hindu to Christian communities. Besides, we can find differences from one area to another, where major dialects are Bardesi, Angrez and Saxiti. There are differences between castes as well [Miranda 1978]. Moreover different scripts, Devanagari and Roman are used in Goa, which play a fundamental part in drawing boundaries, especially between Hindus and Christians.23) Even though there are a series of encyclopaedia published by Goa University and both Konkani-English and English-Konkani dictionaries are published, full standardisation is still difficult to be achieved. There are three major organisations engaged in the development of Konkani: the Konkani Basha Mandal (Konkani Language Group), the Goa Konkani Akademi of the government and the Thomas Stephens Konkani Kendra (centre) run by the Jesuits. We can find some co-operation between the first two bodies, but no clear consensus has been attained over what standardised Konkani is. Indeed, Konkani is not only spoken in Goa but also in outside Goa along Konkan coastal areas from Maharashtra to Kerala. Therefore, we can say that although Konkani achieved the official language status, there is still some space for arguments over its status as a symbol for “Goan identity”.

5. Concluding Remarks

As mentioned above, after Goa was liberated from Portuguese colonial rule in 1961, the political integration of Goa into the Indian Union began. In due course, a question of where Goa culturally belongs arose. It was in part a result of Portuguese rule that Goa came into existence geographically. As Henn points out, there was the process of “the becoming of Goa”, which was “of contestation, reconciliation and invention of spatial images”, and Portuguese influences were also assimilated as well as other cultural elements [Henn 2000]. However, under Portuguese rule, no general consensus was achieved over what was “Goan
identity”. It was partly due to an internal geographical division into the Old Conquests and New Conquests with their different ratio of Hindus and Christians. Liberation was an important moment for the reinvention of Goa, which had lost Portugal as their cultural reference. Besides this religious distinction, caste and landlord-tenant relation existed for drawing boundaries among various groups.

The result of the Opinion Poll in 1967 rejected the merger of Goa with Maharashtra and it was acknowledged that Goa would retain the political status of Union Territory. On 4 February 1987 the Official Language Act declared that Konkani was the language of Goa, which was followed by the promotion of Goa to the twenty-fifth state of the Indian Union on 30 May of the same year.

This historical process led to the rise of consciousness among people that Konkani is the language of Goa. However, due to the lack of standardisation, Konkani has not had a strong hold as the official language and is still regarded as a spoken language by many Goans. This paper showed that different socio-cultural groups had interpreted Konkani in various ways and there had been a gap between the linguistic and symbolic status of Konkani.

Moreover, we can see some changes in Goan society over the last ten years, which give twists to the language problem. First, Goans are opting for English more than ever, considering that it is a strong weapon for job opportunities.24) This aspiration for English is a phenomenon that can be observed among Goans regardless of religious affiliation, caste or economic status. Secondly socio-cultural composition of Goan society has also been changing. As one of my informants put it, “these terms, Bhatkars and Mundkars are not applicable today. Mundkars got their own properties and the lands of Bhatkars got fragmented”. Thirdly, an influx of labourers from different states gives Goans an insecure feeling about their job opportunities. Now Konkani is represented more as the language of Goans, in opposition to those “outsiders”.25)

Therefore, it can be said that the contestation over Konkani and “Goan identity” continues and Goan society is still in the middle of a decolonisation process as well as other former colonies [Chen 1998]. We should observe what will happen in Goan society in the next ten years.
Acknowledgements

This paper is based on fieldwork in Goa, which was conducted between March 2000 and September 2001. The research was funded by Asian Studies Scholarship Program 1999 of the Ministry of Education, Japan. Two more visits were made between February and March, and August 2002. I also received financial supports from the Shibusawa Foundation. I am grateful to all those who helped me out in Goa. I am thankful to Professors Naoki Kasuga, Satoshi Nakagawa and Eisei Kurimoto for reading early drafts of the paper. I would also like to express my gratitude to the anonymous reviewers of the JJASAS for their insightful comments.

Notes

1) For example, King [1998] gives us an insight into how Nehru had difficulties in tackling language problem: he attempted to keep a unity of the country by postponing the process of reorganising linguistic states.

2) Languages specified in the Eighth Schedule are as follow: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Panjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.

3) According to the Census of India 1991 (http://www.censusindia.net), distribution of 10,000 speakers by languages in Goa is as follows: Assamese 1, Bengali 16, Gujarati 38, Hindi 317, Kannada 464, Kashmiri 2, Konkani 5,152, Malayalam 111, Manipuri negligible, Marathi 3,336, Nepali 8, Oriya 6, Punjabi 16, Sanskrit negligible, Sindhi 3, Tamil 58, Telugu 68, and Urdu 342.

4) When the Inquisition was set up, it appeared at first to have aimed at convicting the Jews and the Muslims in Goa. Francis Xavier suggested the introduction of the Inquisition in Goa in his letter dated 16 May 1545.

The second necessity for the Christians is that your majesty establish the Holy Inquisition, because there are many who live according to the Jewish law, and according to the Mahomedan sect, without any fear of God or shame of the world. And since there are many who are spread all over the fortresses, there is the need of the Holy Inquisition and of many preachers. Your majesty should provide such necessary things for your loyal and faithful subjects in India [Silva Rego, Documentação para a História das Missões do Padroado Portugues do Oriente, vol. III, Lisboa 1950, p. 351, quoted in Priolkar 1991 (1961): 23–24].
5) We can see the contrast in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Conquests (A)</td>
<td>189,753</td>
<td>136,673</td>
<td>6,920</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>333,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>56.92</td>
<td>40.99</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Conquests (B)</td>
<td>38,591</td>
<td>218,942</td>
<td>4,609</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>262,172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>14.72</td>
<td>83.51</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (A) + (B)</td>
<td>228,344</td>
<td>355,615</td>
<td>11,529</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>595,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>38.34</td>
<td>59.72</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [D'Souza 1975: 140].

6) For example, in M village of the Old Conquests where I conducted research, nine Hindu families came from the New Conquests and formed a small community in a part of the village around forty years ago.

7) For a detailed description of events between the independence of India and Liberation, see [Gaitonde 1987].

8) It is said that those Saraswat Brahmans who migrated from Goa, were despised by Maharashtrian Brahmans for eating fish. The latter, who were pure vegetarian, claimed that the former were not real Brahmins.

9) This name is pseudonym. His real name is Vaman Raghunathshenoi Varde Walawalkar.

10) For more information on a political progress towards the Opinion Poll, see [Esteves 1986], [Fernandes 1997] and [Rodrigues 1996].

11) One young man was shot to death by a policeman in Margao and others were killed in a fight between youths of Agacaaim and Dongri villages. In the first case, the reason why the young man was killed was not very clear. In the latter case, it is said that the fight was caused by a dispute over a sluice gate and was not directly related to the language movement [Goa Today, January 1987: 9]. However, they became “Martyrs of Konkani” and the story of the boy who were shot in Margao was made into a tiatr, which is a Goan popular musical [Goa Today, May 1987: 58].

12) For more a detailed sketch of the development of the movement, see [Suzuki 2001].

13) Goan Christians retained caste stratification after conversion though Christian doctrine advocates equality among human beings. Generally, the Christian community can be divided into six basic strata: Bahmons, Chaddis/Chardos, Gauddes, Sudirs, Mahars and Chamars, and Kumbis/Gauddis. Bahmon is almost equal to Brahman, Chaddi to Kshatrya, and Sudir to Sudra. The existence of Gaudde among Christians, instead of Vaisha, is peculiar in Goa. See [D'Costa 1997].

14) In M village where I carried out research, there is a tale that Hindu villagers fled away from the Portuguese after hiding the murthi (divine image) of Satari temple down in a well. It can be assumed that the present church was built up on the site of the temple in 1600 as a chapel. Those Hindus evacuated to Ponda and founded a new temple for Satari [Pereira 1978].

15) This policy was softened later. However, according to Mr. Gurudas Pai, Hindu merchants could not enter Panaji without changing their clothes into shirts and
trousers before 1910.

16) Goan Christians have Portuguese name such as Maria Rodrigues and Antonio de Souza.

17) Goans who were born before 1961 are entitled to Portuguese passport. If the concerned person is able to produce required documents, it is possible to acquire a passport even today. Regarding migration and the formation of Goan Christian communities abroad, see [Mascarenhas-Keys 1979, 1987 and 1993].

18) The proportion of the Hindu and Christian population changed before and after Liberation as shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>260,144</td>
<td>49.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>262,648</td>
<td>50.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>270,105</td>
<td>50.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>268,398</td>
<td>49.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>307,127</td>
<td>56.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>230,984</td>
<td>42.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>384,378</td>
<td>59.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>227,202</td>
<td>38.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>751,261</td>
<td>64.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>349,225</td>
<td>29.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Population of other religious communities are not included in above figures in 1900 and 1910.
* Source: [Angle 2001: 26].

19) One of my informants, who was in his seventies and a Portuguese speaker, used the word, “rape” when he was talking about Liberation of Goa. There still is a mixed feeling about the ousting of the Portuguese among an old generation of Christians, especially a section of people who benefited from Portuguese rule. João da Veiga Coutinho attempts to write a history of Goa to come to terms with the loss of “Goa Dourada” and a part of their cultural core [Coutinho 1997].

20) The exact definition of this term is not clear. They can include Kshatriya Bhandari Samaj, Gomantak Maratha Samaj, Vaishas, Kshatriya Maratha Samaj. However, a Kshatriya Bhandari man told me that they were not included in Bahujan Samaj.

21) Now most of the young and active Konkani writers are from the community of Bahujan Samaj.

22) For details of the involvement of Maharashtrian politicians in the campaign of the Opinion Poll, see [Rodrigues 1996].

23) The problem of script in Goa is also important and should be discussed further. Although the Language Act, which was passed on 4 February 1987, states that the official language of Goa is Konkani in Devanagari script, Roman script has been utilised in the church till today since the missionaries transliterated local languages into the script in the sixteenth century. In contrast, the Hindus have been using Devanagari script, in which Marathi and Hindi are also written.
The use of different scripts could function as a device for letting people recognise cultural boundaries clearer than before. It can be said that this happened in Goa during the period of the language agitation between 1985 and 1987. We can point out that the opinions of Konkani protagonists were mainly disseminated through an English newspaper among the Christians, whereas the claims of Marathi supporters appeared in Marathi dailies whose readers were mostly the Hindus. Somehow, Roman and Devanagari scripts acquired distinct functions and were transformed into signifiers representing the essence of both cultures.

Some Hindus make comments on Christian Konkani such as “Christians use corrupted Konkani”, and “Theirs is not real one”. These remarks mean various things. It can imply that Christians often employ Portuguese words. But at the same time, we can interpret it that corruptions derive from the Christians’ writing Konkani in Roman script. Roman script did not originate in India. It was imposed by the Portuguese and can be associated with the memory of their ancestors being driven away to escape compulsory conversion. In contrast, the Christians, as mentioned above, have increasingly considered Konkani in Roman script as their tradition. For the Christians Konkani in Roman script became an essential symbol of proof of their cultural ground after Liberation.

To make things more complicated, outside Goa, other scripts are utilised besides Devanagari and Roman script as their tradition. Konkani speakers in Karnataka make use of Kannada and those in Kerala write the Malayalam script. The Muslim population use Arabic for writing.

24) After Liberation, the administrative language was changed from Portuguese to English and we can find a great impact of English in Goa as well as in other parts of India. Although primary schools run by the government and the church are in either Konkani or Marathi medium, the number of parents who send their children to private schools of English medium has been increasing. This English domination in Goa should also be discussed further in relation to the position of English in India.

25) Keni considers the influx of non-Goans as “new threat” to “Goan Identity” [Keni 2002: 21]. This issue of Goa Today (August 2002) in which this article is found features “Goan Identity”.

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Census of India 1991.