O HERALDO
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Moral bankruptcy and impunity decaying the system

Integrity is often described as an expensive trait, and recent events in Goa have highlighted the moral bankruptcy that seems to pervade our system. The Smart City initiative serves as a glaring example. Swayandipta Pal Chaudhuri, the former CEO of the Imagine Smart City Development Corporation Limited, has been accused of embezzling substantial sums, yet the government has done little more than initiate an inquiry.

Just this week, Dr Shamila Monteiro, who has served as the Director of the Fisheries Department for over a decade, was removed from her position following allegations of misconduct involving overseas trips with family members. This incident, along with a recent case of a police constable assaulting a traffic assistant sub-inspector at Banastarim, underscores the pervasive corruption within our State departments.

The situation is further exacerbated by the actions of Margao municipal staff, who were found to have significant sums in personal accounts, siphoned off from the municipality's coffers. It seems that no sector of our bureaucracy or political landscape is free from corruption and suspicion.

The State government has announced that contractors will be blacklisted for failing to repair roads that have been in disrepair. However, this raises the question: why are the Public Works Department (PWD) officials - from the Principal Chief Engineer down to junior engineers - not held accountable for the poor quality of work that has made life miserable for Goans?

It is a well-known fact that no government office operates without the expectation of a 'service tip' from the lowest-ranking staff to senior officials. The common man wonders how so many officials continue to serve despite ongoing corruption allegations. Why does the government fail to address these issues proactively? Are annual audits being conducted? Or are they merely a formality? The lack of vigilance inquiries into numerous corruption allegations raises serious concerns about accountability.

Moreover, the discrepancies in project budgets are alarming. Projects often exceed their initial estimates by more than double, yet the government seems oblivious to this pattern. Even a layperson can distinguish between quality work and shoddy construction, yet government-appointed consultants and staff continue to squander taxpayer money.

The state of our infrastructure is dire. Poorly maintained roads contribute to fatal accidents, and environmental degradation is rampant. Illegal land conversions are being carried out, benefiting only a few while threatening Goa's natural beauty.

The recent comments by Governor P S Sreedharan Pillai about brain drain prompt us to question whether the government has truly reflected on its failures in providing employment opportunities—not just in the public sector but also by attracting sustainable industries.

Social security schemes meant to assist the differently-abled, senior citizens and those without stable employment are often delayed for months, leaving vulnerable populations in dire straits. The small amounts intended to support these individuals are frequently withheld, exacerbating their struggles.

From agriculture to tourism, every sector is facing a crisis. The taxi problems remain unresolved, and families dependent on mining have been left in limbo for over a decade, awaiting the resumption of legal operations. While statistics may show an increase in tourist arrivals, the reality is that the hotel and food industries are suffering.

Despite holding a significant majority in the Legislative Assembly, two years ago, a major chunk of the Congress party switched sides and joined the BJP. The ruling party faces criticism from the Opposition, which has accused it of deception. However, the history of Goa's politics reveals that no party can claim to be above reproach. When politicians and bureaucrats lack the courage to uphold principles, it leads to a culture of compromise that ultimately decays the integrity of our State.

The moral bankruptcy evident in Goa's governance is a pressing concern. Bureaucrats understand that the political class is compromised, and in order to protect themselves, they will permit the bureaucracy to be compromised as well.

Moral bankruptcy and the impunity of the bureaucracy are decaying the State of Goa.

Konkani language and scripts – a historical linguistic overview on controversies and possible solutions

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Two things unite the Konkani speakers on the Western Coast of India – one is the Konkani language and the other is the plethora of controversies surrounding it. Quite recently, with the Roman script Konkani protagonists as well as Marathi protagonists in Goa demanding an amendment in the Official Language Act of Goa, 1987 (OLA-87), fresh controversies have erupted. Each camp has tried to legitimise its stand. The lacuna of a historical and linguistic response on the subject matter is obviously evident. In the Konkani world, scripts and dialects have caste and religious overtones. Is the Konkani case understood? Can there be a possible solution?

Konkani's contested origins

Konkani, like other Middle Indo-Aryan languages, is part of the Indo-European language family having its origin in the various *Prakrits* that were spoken in the northern part of the Indian sub-continent. Proponents of the official script, viz. the Devanagari alone can't argue their viewpoint from the antiquity argument. For them, the oldest is the natural, and the natural must be legal and official. Consequently, the Konkani language and the official script issue is a closed chapter for them. From a linguistic perspective, any language can be written in any script. Either a script is created or a script from another language is adopted to equally represent the sounds of a particular language. Hence when we say "natural script" it should have the capacity to represent the specific sounds which the adoptee language has.

What the non-Nagari users accuse the Devanagari lobby is that they have diverted all the government benefits and awards for themselves. In the same vein, Devanagari proponents have worked towards getting the administrative and educational corpus translated into Konkani, with Konkani being taught in Goa, Karnataka and Kerala schools and the state administration in Goa slowly moving towards Konkani. The Devanagari script choice by the elite Catholic clergy of Goa, despite their inability to read or write in that script, is an important point to be considered in the Konkani script row.

Konkani's first script

As pointed out by the renowned epigraphist Eugen Hultzsch, the *Shravanbelagola* stone inscription of the 12th century is a Marathi inscription in the former state of Mysore (present day Karnataka). Its presence in the Kannada speaking region shows the prestigious position that Marathi held even outside its homeland. Moreover, the words *karaviyalē* (causative verb form of – to do) and *suttalē* (surrounding wall) have an entry in Dr Shankar Gopal Tulupule's Old Marathi dictionary. To say it

is the first Konkani inscription would be technically incorrect. Further, considering the historical fact that *Chavundaraya*, a Jain king of the Western Ganga dynasty had an inscription (c. 10 ACE) for a Konkani population at that time, in that part of Karnataka is difficult to assume. The claim that foreign missionaries gave Konkani its first script is equally contentious. Some form of Konkani literature in the Kannada/Kandavi script might have existed. The pre-sixteenth century Ramayana and Mahabharata would have been in that script.

Konkani and Kannada script

Archival records in Goa reveal that Konkani subjects under the Kannada rulers not only adopted the Kannada script, but also had their own version of Kannada to write Konkani which is the *Gõy-kanadi lipi* or the Goan-Canarese script. The comunidade assembly minutes are entirely in the Old Kannada script and the signatures of the Gaonkars are either in Roman script (of Catholics after conversion) or Kannada script during the initial Portuguese regime. The first Goan to be knighted in Lisbon, in 1538 ACE has his signature in the Kannada script. It is due to this reason that the wrong nomenclature of Konkani being called as "*lingua canarim*" came to be used, while Marathi was known as Marhastri. Till date no Konkani manuscripts, either in Devanagari or any other script, which would have escaped the alleged burning of indigenous literature by the Portuguese, are found in the New Conquest areas.

The foreign missionaries knew Konkani and Marathi to be distinct languages along with their scripts. Their letters to their superiors in Rome reveal that they were also keen to get their compositions published in the local scripts – *lettera da terra*. The *Flos Sanctorum*, the only missionary manuscript composed in Goa in the Old Kannada script reveals a lot more. Here we find the retention of schwa. Bi-syllabic and tri-syllabic words in this text, when compared with the handwritten glossary (in Roman script) of Fr Diego Ribeiro perfectly match each other. The schwa is not retained in modern day Marathi, northern Konkani dialects and the Kanara Christian dialect.

Hence, words like *tākli, âstâ, distâ,* etc. were written as *tākăli, âsâtâ, disătâ,* a feature still prevalent among the present Salcete dialect of Goa and to some extent in the GSB dialects of Kanara and Kerala. Thus, we can safely conclude that during the initial stages of Portuguese rule, Kannada was the predominant script for Konkani.

Konkani and Devanagari script

The earliest confirmed record of the use of Devanagari script for Konkani is the testimonial given by the three Konkani pandits Appa Bhat, Ranga Bhat and Vinayaka Pandit from Cochin in the Hortus Malabaricus composed between 1669 to 1676 ACE. The allegiance of these vaidyas with the Dutch colonial power is worth noting. Interestingly, the first complete Konkani book printed in the Devanagari

script was the New Testament Konkani Bible by the Protestant Missionary William Carrey in 1818 which is in the North Kanara GSB dialect of Konkani. In the modern period Shenoi Goembab, who against the background of the eki-movement of uniting all Saraswat sub-castes, could be credited to promote Konkani in the Devanagari script. His lashing against Goans who considered Marathi as their mother tongue is equally justifiable. Prior to him, Monsignor Dalgado's effort, to represent Konkani in the Devanagari script along with the Jonesian system of Romanization may also be considered. However, neither present day Roman nor Devanagari users follow his method.

Konkani and Roman script

Konkani in the Roman script came be used due to Christian missionaries who scientifically wrote Konkani. A fact which today's Roman script protagonists ignore. Thanks to them scholars can now study Old Konkani literature. In the modern period, Fr Maffei, Shenoi Goembab, Dr Eduardo de Bruno and Mons Dalgado made efforts to represent the Konkani sounds accurately by using symbols or diacritical marks.

The first seven books of Shenoi Goembab in the Roman script serve as a good model of Romanization, different from what is used by the Church today in Goa. Being, an international script this script has the potentiality to unite Konkani speakers all over the globe, at least at the literary level.

An academic proposal

We live in a globalized world. There has been a lot of East West mutual exchange. The appellation of the Roman script as vestiges of the colonizers is redundant today in a globalized world. One could also argue that both Konkani and the Roman script are genetically of the Indo-European stock. Hence rather than colonization it is globalization today, resonating with the Indian ethos of "*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*," which calls us to 'think globally, act locally."

In such a diglossic situation, we have two models before us – the Hindi-Urdu model and the Serbian model. The former, split the one Hindustani language into two, creating mutual animosity. Serbians on the other hand, recognized both the Latin as well as the Cyrillic script.

Today both are taught in schools and used in administration. Could we take a clue? The Karwar convention of 1939 was a national vision for Konkani. Another convention with a "global vision" where all stakeholders of Konkani are equal partners is still awaited.

(Jason Pinto is a Salesian Priest, PhD research scholar in Linguistics, Konkani writer and teacher)

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JASON PINTO

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Mohammad (PBUH) - A benefactor of Women

NAZRANA DARVESH

The relationship between women and Islam has long been a topic of discussion around the globe. As we approach the birth anniversary of the Last Prophet of Allah, Mohammad, peace be upon him (PBUH), on September 16, 2024, it is an opportune moment to explore his profound beneficence towards women.

In the 7th century, a time when women faced significant oppression, Mohammad (PBUH) emerged as a champion of women's rights. To understand his impact, one must delve into his life as recorded in hadith literature. Born an orphan, having lost his father before his birth, he was raised by his foster mother, Halima Saadia. In Islam, a foster mother is accorded the status of a biological mother, with special rights, and her children are considered siblings, prohibiting marriages between them. This bond was evident when his foster sister, Shaima, visited him; he welcomed her warmly, spreading his shawl for her to sit beside him.

Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) first marriage was to Khadija (R.A), an elderly widow in her forties, while he was in his twenties. Despite the prevalence of polygamy at the time, he remained monogamous with Khadija until her death in his fifties. Khadija was a successful

businesswoman, and Mohammad supported her career, showcasing his respect for women's independence.

Islam introduced restrictions on polygamy, establishing conditions that were previously absent. The revelation regarding polygamy aimed to protect the rights of orphans by allowing men to marry their mothers, provided they could treat all wives equally.

The Quran states, "And if you be apprehensive that you will not be able to do justice to the orphans, you may marry two or three or four women whom you choose. But if you apprehend that you might not be able to do justice to them, then marry only one wife" (Quran 4:3).

Thus, the Prophet's later marriages often served to strengthen political alliances or provide support to widows. His marriage with the divorced wife of his adopted son was as per the commandment of God to break the tradition of ignorance which recognized the adopted child as a real child.

Among his wives, only Aisha (R.A) was not previously married. Aisha is celebrated as a prominent scholar of hadith, the collection of his deeds and sayings. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) entrusted her with the authority to address religious queries, a practice that continued after his passing. She established the first school of Fiqh (jurisprudence) in Islam. Their relationship was characterized by affection and playfulness, exemplified by the well-known incident where the Prophet (PBUH) challenged Aisha to a race.

When asked about the Prophet's domestic life, Aisha (R.A) described him as actively engaged in household chores, stating, "He patched his clothes, swept the house, milked the animals, and bought supplies for the house from the market. If His shoes were torn He mended them Himself. He tied the rope to the water bucket. He secured the camel, fed it and ground the flour with the slave." (Bukhari). He lived by the principle: "The best of you is the one who is best to his wife, and I am the best of you to my wives" (Tirmidhi). He emphasized the importance of kindness, stating, "You will be rewarded for whatever

you spend for Allah's sake, even if it were a morsel which you put in your wife's mouth" (Bukhari).

The Prophet (PBUH) also upheld the dignity of women by condemning those who disclosed their wives' private matters, labeling them among the worst of people (Ahmad).

History witnesses the unprecedented affection he had for his daughter Fatima (R.A), whom he treated with great respect, standing for her when she entered the room and declaring, "Fatima is a part of me; whoever makes her angry, makes me angry" (Bukhari 3767).

Beyond his family, Mohammad (PBUH) worked to elevate the status of women in society, granting them rights and dignity. He abolished the practice of female infanticide, warning of the severe consequences on the Day of Judgment for such acts.

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souls are reunited (with their bodies), and when the infant girl, buried alive, is asked for what crime she was slain, and when the records are unfolded, and when the veil of heaven is removed, and when Hell is set blazing, and when Paradise is brought near, then each person shall know what he has brought with him" (Quran 81:7-14).

He emphasized the importance of consent in marriage, as illustrated by an incident where a girl sought the Prophet's help against her father's decision to marry her off without her approval. The Prophet granted her the freedom to accept or refuse the marriage, highlighting that fathers should not have absolute control over such matters (Abu Dawud).

Mohammad (PBUH) also recognized women's right to divorce. In one instance, he facilitated the divorce of a woman who requested it from her husband, provided she returned her dower (Mahr). To protect women's honor, he mandated strict conditions for accusations of adultery, requiring four witnesses.

In the 7th century, Islam granted women the right to inherit, long before modern movements for women's rights emerged. While the shares of inheritance differ between men and women, these distinctions are justifiable based on their societal roles. The

Quran states, "To men belongs a share of that which parents and near kindred leave, and to women a share of that which parents and near kindred leave, whether it be little or much—a determinate share" (Quran 4:7).

The Prophet (PBUH) warned against tampering with these laws, stating, "Even if a man worked all his life... either depriving his heir by making a wrongful bequest, he would be consigned to Hell" (Ibn Kathir, vol. 2, p. 218). A terrifying warning in which those who either tamper with God's laws of inheritance or violate the legal bounds categorically laid down by God in His Book are warned of unending punishment.

Prophet also taught: "The one who has a daughter born to him and does not bury her alive, nor keeps her in disgrace, nor prefers his son to her, Allah will admit him to Paradise" (Abu Dawud).

The Prophet emphasized the importance of treating mothers with utmost respect, stating that a mother deserves the highest regard, followed by the mother again, and then the father (Bukhari).

In conclusion, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) provided a comprehensive code of life that not only recognized but ensured a social space for women in society. His teachings and actions continue to inspire and uplift women's status in the world today.