

THE ORIGIN OF KONKANI LANGUAGE

About the year 550 of our era, a tribe native of the north, according to some belonging to the Rajput clan Agnicula, came to establish itself in the plains of Deccan to the South of Narbada, and founded a dynasty of Chalukias with a seat at Vatapi, in the district of Bijapur.

The Chalukias extended in a short time their sovereignty to the East and the West and came down to the South up to Mysore, forcing back the Kadambas and the Rashtrakutas, who had established themselves to the north of Mysore. Gôa was included in the extreme south-west of the country of the Chalukias. It was this well-known dynasty that gave an important impulse to the arts, a glorious memory of which is to be seen in the famous caves of Ellore. It was also a seat of a vast intellectual work, prominent representatives of which are Shankara, the real interpreter of the Vedanta⁽¹⁾, Ramanuja who proclaimed the supreme worship of Vishnu, the equality of castes and the teaching of popular idioms⁽²⁾, and

(1) Shankara was a philosopher and an ascete. He commented with superior vision all the philosophical Hindu systems, systematised the Vedanta and fixed the Bramahnic orthodoxy. He is the unsurpassable interpreter of Hindu Pantheism. Of a severe austerity, he professed the absolute pantheism, the complete identity of the human and divine soul and founded a monastic order at Cringeri at Mysore which produced famous philosophers. He died at the age of 30, exhausted by his ascetic rigors.

(2) Was the immortal founder of Vishnuism, and the most fervent

Vijnaneswara who wrote a commentary and brought up to-date with great intuition in the *Mitakshara* the Institutions of Iajnawalkya (¹)

In the 12 th. century there arises, however, in the middle of the Chalukias a new family, probably of the same origin, the Ballalas or Iadavas that settled its capital at Duarasamudra, to-day known as Halibide in Mysore, and annexed by conquest the country of Cheras, of Kadambas and of Calachuris. To the north of these there arose a new kingdom of the same family with Devagri, to-day Daulatabad as its capital.

In their eagerness for penetration the Mahomedans made frequent hostile raids to the south spreading on their way mourning and desolation. With this undertaking of devastation, in 1294 the Sultan Alaudin, after having put to sack Chitore, invaded Deccan, defeated the Iadavas of Devagri which he took and sacked. In 1309, Melik Kafur took Orangal and in 1311 having crossed Devagri penetrated into Mysore and devastated the whole of Southern India.

In presence of such assaults, the Iadavas of Devagri and Orangal came to take refuge more to the south and reestablished themselves in 1336 to the south of Kristna and to the west of Tungabandra, in the famous kingdom of Vijayanagar.

There arose in the south of the peninsula a linguistic

apostle of the abolition of castes, and the uplifting of pariahs. Although the Vishnuistic Brahmins are at present the most ardent apostles of castes, the founders of Vishnuism were those who worked the hardest for the uplifting of the depressed classes.

(¹) Vijnaneswara, Vaishnava Brahmin, wrote by the middle of xi century a special commentary to the code of uses and customs of Iajnawalkya known by the name of *Mitakshara* that was greatly appreciated in the maratha country and in the territory of Goa. His work, according to West and Buhler, is important in the Hindu Judicial Literature.

zone of sanskrit origin between the Narbada and the Kaveri in opposition to the rest of the south and the south-east where idioms of Tamil origin prevailed.

This vast zone, that corresponds to the country of the Marathas or Maharashtra, is surrounded in the east by Telugu, in the south by Kanarese, spoken in Mysore and North-Kanara between Malabar and Gôa, — and by Malayalam on the maritime coast to the south of Mangalore. The country that corresponds to the actual province of Gôa is included in the extreme south-west zone thus marked.

«Marathi, says Sir Erskine Perry⁽¹⁾ extends more to the south than any other member of the family of northern languages; and has a remarkable peculiarity, that it is the only language of the western coast, to which the natural barrier of Western Ghats has not put an obstacle in spreading itself on both sides of the mountain; this must be attributed to the Marathas being formerly a race of mountaineers residing on the summit of Ghats, as they say in Baglam, and cultivating the fertile valleys or *Mavals*, that run to the east; as well as the low country of Konkan that lies to their west. Being a warlike race, the isolated mountains that were favourable to defense in the higher and rougher regions, ought to have incited them to descend the abrupt sides of Sahidri hills and to occupy Konkan. The country called Maharashtra that is the first named in the Mahavansa, obtained probably this name and received a distinct language on account of the existence of a Maratha dynasty, in an epoch unknown in history.

The boundaries of Marathi, to the north along the coast

(1) Sir Erskine Perry wrote a book about the distribution of the principal languages of India, printed for the first time in the *Journal of the Bombay branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Jan. 1853, which Cunha Rivara translated and included in the first part of his *Ensaio Historico da Lingua Konkani*.

are to be found in the mountains Kolwan or the country of the Koles⁽¹⁾ near the Portuguese settlement of Daman; and extend themselves over the Ghats to the north-east along the Satpura mountains parallel to the Narbada or Narmada. Near Nandobar, in the rough valleys of the Tapti, it intermingles with Guzerathi. To the east its boundaries have not been fixed, it is however spoken in Berar and in the open territories of Nagpur and in its entire most easterly boundary it touches the country and the language of the Gonds. From the district of Nagpur Marathi tends to the south-west touching forward near Bijapore and Shankaswar and thence it tends in the direction of south-west to the sea-coast along the line drawn by Col. Welks and Mr. W. Elliot as the western limit of Kanarese⁽²⁾. From Daman, in northern Konkan, Marathi runs along the coast above and below the Ghats up to the neighbourhood of Gôa, where it meets a language which Lassen following the authority of Mackenzie and Ellis, calls Konkani. . . «which descends according to some up to Mangalore, and according to others up to a village four miles to the north of Upi extreme south-west of Marathi.

But what language is this Konkani wedged in between the country of the Marathas and the sea, in the south of Konkan?

Mr. Murphy, formerly first interpreter in the High Court of India, regarding it speaks thus «the examination of the

(1) The Colas always lived in the east and in the north-east above the eastern maritime coast and their country corresponds to Coromandel coast (a corruption of Chola Mandala). The Ramasis or Koles from the Ghats of Bombay came in a recent migration from the east and established in the mountains their small rustic court. At present they speak Marathi with a mixture of Tamil and of Telugu.

(2) The line above referred to is a diagonal that goes from a village above Upi or Udipo (North Kanara) near Cundapore towards the north of Bihar.

grammar of the Konkani language proves decisively to be the same as that of Marathi. The nouns and the verbs are declined in the same manner with small alteration in points of no importance. A general characteristic in which this language participates of Guzerathi and Marwari, is the adoption of «o» as the masculine termination instead of «a» as used in Hindi and Marathi. Konkani explains certain difficulties of Marathi. What are anomalies and defective in the latter, we find sometimes to be the rule and in complete form in the former. It has a touch of a peculiar Bramahnic influence, for there are to be found in common and popular language, to designate natural objects, many Sanskrit words that are not used for the same purpose, so far as I know, in any other part of India.

These words are pronounced in their pure form by the Shenvis; however, in mouths of Christian population, native of Gôa, they are corrupted. Thus, the common terms to mean water, tree, herb are Sanskrit, and pronounced by the Shenvis sound *Udak, Vriksh, Trin*; pronounced by the native christians sound *Udik, Vukh, Tan*.

Father Francis Xavier, an Italian Carmelite, a missionary in Kanara, who wrote a dictionary and a Portuguese-Konkani grammar, begins his grammar with the following foreword: «Although the Konkani language of which I have written a grammar is different from Marathi, they have nevertheless great resemblance between them which can be said to be natural; besides the Konkani language has adopted from Marathi some words and phrases which it did not possess, just as the Latins adopted from the Greek, calling them Greekisms, I shall call these Marathisms».

According to Major J. W. Auld, formerly Superintendent at Santwady, there are 3 languages current in that State. The Mahomedan population speaks Hindustani or Urdu. The higher class speaks Marathi, and the other classes speak

a corrupt form of Marathi which is known there as Kudali, for being chiefly used in the district of Kudal extending itself to the southern districts of the Collectorate of Ratnagiri. «It is this corrupt Marathi, says Cunha Rivara, that is the true Konkani which even more corrupted and abundantly mixed with Portuguese is the common language of many classes, not only in the Portuguese territory, but even in Santwady and other districts».

«This Konkani dialect, says Sir E. Perry, seems to be no other thing than Marathi with a good mixture of Tulu and Kanarese words; the former derived from the inhabitants native of Tulava or Kanara; and the latter from the long subjection of this part of Konkani to Kanarese dynasties from above the Ghats».

It seems, from what has been said, that Konkani is according to some an impure form of Marathi, poisoned with words of Tamil origin, and according to others it is a Sanskrit dialect altered with Marathi, Sanskrit and Portuguese neologisms.

The six Prakrit and Sanskrit idioms that represent in India the Aryan language, are to-day perfectly defined. All of them are of recent formation, and their origin cannot go further than the 12th. century.

They are: Hindustani or Hindi with Urdu, Bengali, Orya, Marathi, Sindhi and Guzerathi, no other local or restricted dialect having any literary value.

Marathi, still rough and arcaic in the 13th. century, reveals itself for the first time between 1300 and 1400 with Mukunda Raj, Namadev and Jmneswar and attains its definite form only with Ekanath (1550-1600) to which follows the most brilliant period (1600-1820) during which shine Ramdas, Tukaran, Waman Pandit, Mukteshwar, Shridhar, Mahipati and others animating by the brilliancy of their lucid tspirit the stormy and warlike activities of Marathas.

In 1469 Gôa came under the power of the Mahomedans and in 1510 under that of the Portuguese. A short time later there began in the Konkani, and especially in Gôa, a systematic repression of the use of the vernacular language and of native traditions and habits.

By a ruling of 30th. June 1541, intolerance began its iniquitous work ordering all the Hindu temples to levelled with the ground. In a letter of 8th March 1546 King John the 3rd. seconded with pious anxiety the campaign that had been initiated, formally ordering D. John de Castro to destroy idolatry in Gôa, to demolish pagodas, to forbid Hindu festivals and to punish with severe penalties all those that made any idol of wood, stone or metal.

In 1557 during the government of Francis Barreto, new and more threatening laws were published, one among which is as follows :

«I make it known that taking into consideration the great damage, that results to the service of God and my own and the troubles that might arise by employing in my service in these parts, both in judicial as well as in administrative matters Brahmins and heathens and being desirous of regulating this, by this Letter of mine I order and defend that from its notification forward, no officer of mine, as well as superintendents of my land, managers, treasury and customs officers, accountants, farmers of my customs houses and any other incomes, judges, clerks, notaries and any other officers both of justice as well as of revenue shall employ on no ground whatever, a Brahmin nor any other infidel in their work under the penalty that by doing the contrary any of the above named officer shall run the risk of losing their posts and the Brahmins shall be imprisoned, and their property, forfeited half being for me, and half for the person that denounces; and this is to be so understood in this city of mine of Goa, as well as in all other cities and fortresses;

and regarding the damage done to the service of God, and my own due to the employment in the above named cities and fortresses of Brahmins and heathens, employments, that are given to them by my Governors, Captains and Officers; I am pleased to order, henceforward not to serve them, nor give them any employment, and that all those should be given to the Christians, and not to Heathens, and thus order that all the Superintendents of whatever office in the land should be Christians and offices be given to them and not to any Heathen or Infidel».

The above regulation, corrected and extended, was converted into a law, on 23rd. March 1559, a year famous by the abundant legislation against the Hindus.

Pitiless persecution, spoliation and arrests were consecrated as a systematic rule. A reckless campaign of extermination was raised against the natives, ordering the prohibition of their worship, their spiteful dismissal from public offices, the cruel destruction of their temples, the forced handing of fatherless children into the hands of the jesuits, the withdrawal of rights of succession to non-christian widows and children and the most shameful protection to accusation and apostasy (*Archivo Port. Oriental*, fasc. 4.^o). To the violent destruction, there followed the violent teaching of Christian doctrine, the confessions and aimless arrests.

In spite of one or other sparkle of good sense and of moderation, the inconsiderate hunting of everything that was Hindu manifested itself with the same intensity in political condition and in the sphere of education.

In 1574, Moniz Barreto published a new regulation ordering «all the Pandits and Hindu physicians, who should go about in this city, and its suburbs on horseback, in sedans or in palaquins, to pay a penalty, for the first time 10 *cru-sados*, a second time 20 for the *Sapal*, and to lose the horses,

sedans or palaquins, and for the third time to be taken captives for the galleys of the King, my lord».

In 1633, the Count of Linhares, in his regulation of 11th. of January, ordered that no Hindu could live, «nor have houses of residence in the lands of Salcete» took away their honours, deprived them of the prerogatives of Gauncar, and of Jonos imposing on the recalcitrant the penalty of «losing their life and all their property».

In 1684 a law was passed ordering the pure and simple suppression of the mother tongue of the natives. The Count of Alvor in his Charter of 27th. of July determined: «that it was convenient that the natives of these regions gave up the use of their native tongue, and all began to speak the Portuguese language... for which purpose I assign them three years, during which time, all shall generally speak the Portuguese language, and shall make use of it only in their tracts and contracts; that are made in our lands, and on no account of the language of the land, under the penalty of proceeding against them with the demonstration and severity of punishment that might be deemed necessary...».

«In the first fire of conquest, comments Cunha Rivara, pagodas were rased to the ground, all the emblems of Hindu worship reduced to fragments, and all the books written in the vernacular language were burnt, as coniving or suspected of containing precepts and doctrine of idolatry. The desire was also to exterminate the whole portion of the population, that did not immediately convert; and it was not this desire only of that time, but even two centuries later there was one who with masterly soberness adviced the Government this measure⁽¹⁾. Advice of Father Caetano de

(1) Cunha Rivara, *Ensaio histórico da lingua Konkani*, Nova-Gôa, 1858, pág. 13.

S. Joseph, Dominican Father, Book of Monsoons, n.º 94, pág. 121, 1728.

«The whole system of Inquisition used to tend, not only to the extirpation of creeds and idolatrous superstitions, but also to the uses and innocent habits, that could more or less remotely retain any reminiscence of the Asiatic society, prior to the conquest. The language was consequently involved in this general proscription» (1).

The Archbishop D. Lourenço de Santa Maria, in his pastoral letter of 21st. November 1745, reminds once more the observance of the Charter of Count of Alvor, adding that no one (2) will be admitted to the orders of Deacon and of Mass, if he did not show besides other knowledge and virtues «the science and the use of speaking only the Portuguese Language, not only the candidates but also all their near parents both men as well as women, as proved by a rigorous examination and careful attention of the Very Reverend Vicars...» And resolves further... «we are compelled to institute, create and forbid again in this island of Gôa and the adjacent islands and in the two provinces of Bardez and Salcete the contracting of matrimony of all man or woman, that does not know or does not use and speak the Portuguese language».

The destruction of all that was an original creation was planted as a supreme dogma and indefectibly translated into plentiful and pitiless legislation. Against the very language «there arose an implacable war, which if it did not succeed in extinguishing and in proscribing, because it is beyond human powers to abolish a language when one desires; it succeeded, however, in corrupting and adulterating it, almost aniquilating the monuments that were already of its litera-

(1) Cunha Rivara, *loc. cit.*, pág. 64.

(2) *Idem*, pág. 69.

ture, with great prejudice of the intellectual and moral culture of this people».

The Marathi of the 14th. century ought to have been an infantile idiom, and of course, the native manner of speaking of ignorant people, without parchment, without any grammar or syntax, definitely fixed: it should have been the rudimentary and archaic Marathi. Afterwards, while Marathi was fixing its forms, and beautifying its words and was entering vigorously into adolescence in the rest of the country of the Marathas, in the coastal regions, under the intolerant control of the Portuguese, the vernacular language must have remained stationary in its badly defined forms impregnated with all the endogenous and exogenous impurities.

It is this Marathi, half barbarous, viciated with the Kanarese and Portuguese words and sometimes fondled with Marathisms and Sanskritisms of the missionaries, that is the vernacular language of the Goans. As it could not have had vernacular cultivators, nor its own grammar in that remote epoch in which the ordinary languages, considered less worthy of formulating elevated thoughts, were merely reserved for the ordinary speech of ignorant people, Konkani has not its own inheritance. The archaic documents, that escaped from the Portuguese hunting, must have become mixed with the primitive Marathi documents of that time. The grammars *ad usum Delphini* (by delphin here is meant the missionary) printed in Rome to which the learned Cunha Rivara makes reference are treaded upon the Marathi grammar with Sanskrit translations carried by the missionaries. So arbitrary and artificial is, according to the learned, the make up of such grammars, and so dissimilar they are among themselves, that it is hard to believe that they were destined to fix the formulary and the ritual of one and the same language.

Filipe Neri Pires, a son of Gôa, professor of Marathi and

author of a Marathi grammar (Bombay, 1854) demonstrates in the manner that follows the analogy of Marathi with Konkani: «The declensions of its nouns, together with its terminations and inflexions, the affixs, the suffixs and the prefixs; the personal, the possessive and the relative pronouns, the terminations and the conjunctions of its verbs; its auxiliaries, the postponents, the conjunctions and the interjections; the same syntax and finally all the rules by the structure of the sentences of this dialect are regulated, in a word, the whole mechanism is identical to what is explained in this book. (Marathi grammar)».

There is not therefore any other grammar nor other syntax for Konkani other than that of Marathi: The *Purana* of Father Tomas Estevão and that of Father Vaz Guimarães, the catechisms and other books of devotion of the Christian missionaries, are not remarkable for their purity; on the contrary they certify, notwithstanding the laudable effort of the learned Cunha Rivara, the absence of original and pure literature in the dialect of Konkani. The works of the missionaries are written, according to the opinions of the learned, either in Marathi-Sanskrit or in Marathi-Konkani.

Konkani cannot be therefore but Marathi of primitive times, still not free from locutions and popular forms and penetrated in the *Novas Conquistas*⁽¹⁾ of modern Marathisms, among the Shenvi Bramins of Sanskritisms and among the Gôa christians of Portuguesisms and other vices proper of a linguistic ruin.

SANTANA RODRIGUES.

(1) A narrow piece of hinterland at the foot of the Western Ghats under the Portuguese rule at a more recent date.