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## THE STATE OF MARATHI AS A STATE LANGUAGE

R. V. DHONGDE

### I

The formation of Linguistic States in 1956 excluded Maharashtra for political and economic gains and deprived Marathi of her status and the advantages it would have brought. Gujarat and Maharashtra were forced to be a single bilingual state against the wishes of the common people. Under the chairmanship of Dr. Jivaraj Mehta a committee was appointed by the government to consider the development of Marathi and Gujarati. In 1960 this committee recommended the use of Marathi as a state language in the Marathi-speaking regions of the bilingual state and that of Gujarati in the Gujarati-speaking regions. In order to introduce these two languages in government administration in a smooth manner, the committee also recommended the setting up of a Directorate of Language.

Whatever were the motives and views of the then central government, the public resentment against the non-formation of a linguistic state for Marathi was so strong that the government had to yield, and on May 1, 1960, the linguistic state of Maharashtra was formed. The state government appointed a Language Advisory Committee which was entrusted with the first work of providing Marathi designations for the English ones. In order to have similarities at the all India level, the committee first tried to use the Sanskritised translations, but the attempt was quickly given up as the translations were opaque and clumsy. For example, the translation of the English word *deputation* as *pratiniyukti* was more difficult and frightening than the Eng-

lish term. The present term is *śiṣṭamandāla*.

In 1964 the Directorate of Language published a book called *śāsanvyavahārāta marāthī* which discussed issues such as Marathi culture, language policy in democratic rule, and development of technical vocabulary. The Directorate of Language subsequently published books to help the government officers in preparing Marathi drafts of official correspondence.

The Maharashtra government passed the Maharashtra official Language Act, 1964 which came into force on January 26, 1965. This act allowed the use of Marathi, Hindi and English for transaction of business in the legislature of the state. It provided for the use of Marathi for all official purposes. Marathi was to be used in Bills, Acts, Ordinances, orders, rules, regulations, and bye-laws made by the state Government. In May 1966, Marathi was made the language of all Criminal Courts in the State other than the High Court and Criminal Courts in Bombay. Exceptions were made to the use of Marathi for correspondence with the central government, correspondence with some state governments, correspondence with foreign embassies and consulates, accounts to be rendered to and correspondence with the Accountant General, Indian Law Reports, court judgements, orders, and charges, and medical reports and prescriptions.

The state government's intentions apparently seem to be good. If one looks at the circulars, letters, and resolutions issued by the General Administration Department (GAD) from May 1964 to December 1983, one can

easily see the lethargy of the Executive staff of the government. The resolution of the GAD passed in May 1964 dictates that various forms of bills be filled in Marathi and that all the forms be printed in English as well as in Marathi. The letter of GAD I (September 1966) complains of the Director of the Government Printing Press about not printing the forms in Marathi. It tells the Director to return all material received from various departments which is not in Marathi. The GAD circular of May 1967 criticises the practice of the government employees of using English even where Marathi is expected to be used. The Department of Industry and Labour passes a resolution that the proportion of type-writers in English and Marathi should be 65:35. The GAD circular of September 1971 regrets the non-use of Marathi though the non-Marathi employees were trained in the use of Marathi. The GAD circular of November 1972 detects the reason: since the higher authorities use English, Class II, III, IV employees also use English. It asks the officers at the top to use Marathi and submit periodical reports about the use of Marathi. The GAD circular of Nov. 1973 offers the help of the Directorate of Language for translations into Marathi of various drafts, bills, circulars, forms etc. The GAD circular of Nov. 1974 criticises the continued practice of using English and even states that the periodical reports regarding the use of Marathi by various departments are fake. The GAD circular of March 1975 says that in spite of the facilities provided, such as Marathi dictionaries, Marathi type-writers, Marathi training programmes, the use of Marathi has not increased. The GAD circular of June 1975 makes the use of Marathi compulsory for the secretaries. The GAD circular of September 1976 is an example of healthy common sense. It says that the Marathi terminology and Marathi equivalents prepared by the government are an attempt to encourage the use of Marathi. One is free to

use better and simpler words. After all, the structure of Marathi is to be preserved. The habit of translating the English version word by word is bad—in fact better to write the Marathi draft first.

The state government's intention of making Marathi the language of administration is obvious in the GAD circular of April 1978 which states that by 1980 Marathi should be the only official language. It upholds the recommendations made by the All India Official-Language Conference regarding the use of regional languages. The GAD circular of Jan 1979 declares the central government's decision to celebrate 1979 as the official language year and requests all the ministers to insist on the use of Marathi. The GAD resolution of May 1979 reserves 50% posts for Marathi typists and stenographers. The GAD circular of June 1979 also is an example of strong common sense. It admits that some of the newly coined Marathi terms are opaque. It allows, therefore, the use of English borrowings that have already become familiar. It does not insist on pure Marathi. It says that in course of time Marathi in administration will evolve its own style. It insists only on grammatically correct usage. It also promises to compile a dictionary of sentences that are frequently used in official correspondence. The GAD circular of July 1979 wants to have at least 60% correspondence in Marathi; the target of 100% is for 1985.

The GAD circular of August 1979 reveals how persons in the Executive wing are lethargic. It expresses its strong dislike for sending forms and circulars to people in English. It asks all the departments to withdraw all the English forms, notices, and announcements. The GAD circular of Sept. 1979 asks the secretaries to answer all letters in Marathi; in case the original inquiries are in other languages, they should attach a Hindi translation to the Marathi answer. The GAD circular of Nov. 1979 orders that all government advertisements given to the regional papers be in

Marathi alone. This must have created a strange situation. The authorities must have sent the English drafts to the newspapers asking them to translate them into Marathi. The GAD of Nov. 1979 criticises this way of avoiding work and the circular of March 1980 states how the government was in trouble in the session of the Assembly when members exposed this practice. It asks the department of information and public relations not to accept any advertisement that is not in Marathi.

In promoting the use of Marathi, the Maharashtra government did not take any extreme position. For example, we have already seen that it asks the officers to give Hindi or English translations where necessary. It has already defined certain areas where it wants to continue the use of English. The GAD circular of June 1980 clearly states that the achievement of 100% use of Marathi does not mean giving up English altogether. Its only insistence is on the use of Marathi where communication is possible in Marathi. The GAD circular of October 1980 wonders why even in leave applications, musters, internal correspondence Marathi is not used. It says that unless the employers wish to promote their own language, mere circulars and orders by the government would be of limited value.

The Maharashtra government celebrated in 1988 the 25th anniversary of the state formation. It wanted to use Marathi in all fields. The GAD circular of July 1981 says that this achievement would be difficult since Marathi is still used only in 41% of the government offices. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra appealed to all government employees to use Marathi 100% by 1985. The GAD circular of May 1982 mentions a case that shows the purposeful indifference of the employees. A municipal corporation insisted that it should get all the letters from the government in Marathi. The concerned officials neglected the demand and kept on sending letters in

English. The circular gives a stern warning to all the government officers and other employees that the government will take disciplinary action against such employees. The GAD circular of Nov. 1983 reserves all clerical posts for Marathi and appeal to the secretaries to use Marathi. The GAD circular of Dec. 1984 states that the government officers will meet every two months to review the use of Marathi and the Directorate of Language will keep a watch on the progress.

These reports are self-evident. They show the will of the government and the lethargy of the administration regarding the use of Marathi. The behaviour of the executive is as if it is implementing policies of a foreign rule.

## II

Maharashtra follows the national pattern of education : 10+2+3. The first eight years of school form the level of primary education. In these eight years, the first five years form the lower level and the next three years form the higher level. In Lower-level Primary Education (LPE) only the mother-tongue is taught. It seems that students and parents are free to choose a mother tongue! In English medium schools, for example, most of the Marathi-speaking students declare English as their mother-tongue and it is taught from the first standard. Thus mother-tongue education becomes education in the first language of one's choice. This practice is predominant in the cities and is gradually spreading to small towns. In Maharashtra the medium-wise strength of primary schools is the following :

|          |          |
|----------|----------|
| Marathi  | : 56,000 |
| Hindi    | : 600    |
| Kannada  | : 264    |
| Urdu     | : 2,200  |
| English  | : 850    |
| Gujarati | : 100    |

Comparatively, English-medium schools are fewer than Marathi-medium schools. In

Maharashtra, at present, about 11,260,000 children go to school and 270000 children do not go to school. At the lower primary level only the first language is taught and 30% of the time is devoted to language teaching. In Marathi medium schools English and Hindi are introduced in the 5th standard.

At the higher primary level 32% of the time is spent on language teaching. In Marathi-medium schools English and Hindi are taught as second languages. In English-medium schools Hindi and Marathi are taught as second languages. For other medium schools there is a provision of composite courses in Marathi and Hindi.

The history of secondary school education and that of university education in Maharashtra shows a wavering attitude towards Marathi. Maharashtra shared this vacillation with majority of the states. The Report of the Medium of Instruction Committee of 1961 published by the Maharashtra government clearly stated that mother-tongue should not be the medium in secondary education. The reason offered was that the minority-communities would suffer and according to Article 350-A of the Constitution of India linguistic minorities are entitled to receive instruction in their mother-tongue at the primary school level. The commission allowed the teaching of the regional literature as a subject but disfavoured the use of the regional language as medium. Another argument put forth by the commission was that universities are all-India bodies and therefore the use of the regional language at the university level would defeat this purpose. University scholars would not be able to converse with scholars outside Maharashtra if Marathi became the medium at the university level. The commission, however, recognized the fact that most of the university students were weak in English. The solution was to take the help of institutions like the Central Institute of English. The commission recommended the adoption of the three-language formula

proposed by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in 1957 and made English compulsory up to the first degree stage. The commission even noted that there was no statutory provision with regard to the medium of instruction in the Nagpur University Act (1923), the Poona University Act (1948) or the Bombay University Act (1883). Only the Marathwada University Act (1958) laid down that 'the University shall endeavour to promote the development of the study of Marathi and the use of Marathi as a medium of instruction and examination'. The commission finally gave a warning that national unity would suffer if Marathi is allowed to be the medium at the secondary school level and the university level.

The new education policy of 1986 admits that the introduction of the three-language formula has failed. It has neither made the students fluent in any language nor has it enabled them to communicate effectively. The new education policy lays stress on primary education and adult education where the use of the mother-tongue is emphasized.

At present, in Maharashtra the Marathi medium secondary schools teach Marathi, English and Hindi. The English medium schools are free to teach a modern European language such as French or German, or Sanskrit in lieu of Marathi. In the six universities in Maharashtra and in the higher secondary schools, English or Marathi are allowed to be used as medium. In practice the use of English is more dominant than the use of Marathi [(cf. Dhongde (1983)].

To facilitate the use of Marathi in university education the state government called a meeting of the vice-chancellors at Kolhapur in 1967. It was decided at that time that the government's Directorate of Language should prepare a technical vocabulary for all subjects. One wonders why educationists in this country always neglect the advice of experts, past experience, and the complexity of problems. In 1968, the linguist, P. B. Pan-

dit expressed his views on technical vocabulary :

'There is a language of science. One needs science and not the terminology to begin a scientific discourse in any language.'

The Directorate of Language of the Government of Maharashtra has published so far the vocabularies of Economics, Geography, Education, Agriculture, Biology, Mathematics, Chemistry, Sociology, Commerce, Logic and Philosophy, Library Science, Physiology, Geology, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Politics, Literary Criticism, Statistics and Psychology and a few, such as the terminology of Linguistics, are in the press.

The meeting of the vice-chancellors in 1967 entrusted the work of preparing text-books in Marathi, in various disciplines to Maharashtra Vidyapeeth Grantha Nirmati Mandal. It has, by now, produced a number of text-books on different subjects.

The government's text-book bureau—Balbharati—produces all the texts for primary education (standard 1 to 8). It appoints language committees consisting of experts and language teachers and these committees prepare texts for Marathi, English, Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati, Sindhi and Kannada. The texts are finalized only after intensive try-outs. For subjects other than languages, all

the texts are first written in Marathi and then they are translated into other languages.

The first Marathi encyclopaedia was prepared by G. T. Ketkar in the first half of the 20th century. At present there are quite a few Marathi encyclopaedias. The Maharashtra Rajya Sahitay Sanskriti Mandal started an ambitious project of Marathi encyclopaedias and its first volume was published in 1976. By now it has produced ten volumes.

In the case of dictionaries, though there are some good bilingual dictionaries, there is no comprehensive monolingual dictionary of Marathi words. The domain of specialized dictionaries such as the dictionary of synonyms, the dictionary of quotations, etymological dictionary, thesaurus, etc. is still unexplored.

The universities, the text-book bureaus, the Directorate of Language are making efforts in promoting the use of Marathi. What is badly needed is a Marathi Institute that would undertake the linguistic study of Marathi, do research and prepare courses in Marathi language teaching, investigate the historical aspects of its development, and relate Marathi language and literature to its social and cultural perspective. In this regards Maharashtra is far behind Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and even Goa.

#### Note

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