HISTORY OF MODI SCRIPT IN MAHARASHTRA

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Abstract :

A script, which is generally neglected to be mentioned in the discussion on the Indian scripts, is Modi. The use of Modi in official Marathi documents and administration was common in Maharashtra till the end of 19th century. The British Government of Bombay Presidency in the beginning of 20th century for the sake of convenience and uniformity with the other areas of the presidency decided that the Devnagari (Balbodh as it is called in Maharashtra) should be used as a primary writing system in administration. Thus the Devnagari became the predominant script although modi continued to be taught in schools and was used as an alternate script in Marathi writing. The script was widely used even in 1940s by the people of older generation for personal and financial documentation. With the time however the use of modi diminished and now it has become almost extinct.

Key Word : Modi Script.

Introduction :

Traditionally it is believed that the Modi script was developed by Hemadpant, a well-known administrator in the court of Ramdevrao, the last king of Yadav dynasty (1187-1318) at Devgiri. Hemadpant is also credited with a specific temple architecture called "Hemadpanti temples". The general use of Modi in administration is however seems to be introduced by Balaji Avaji Chitnis, a minister in Chhatrapati Shivaji's court. It is said that Balaji while attending Durbar (Mogul Court) at Delhi observed that for the fast transcription of Persian proceedings in Mogul court were written in Shikasta (broken) script as against Nastaliq script, a clear but slower Persian handwriting. Balaji recognized the importance of speed of writing in administrative affairs and thus introduced the Modi script in Maratha

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administration (35). The term Modi seems to be literal translation of Persian term Shikasta.

Strandberg in her work on the Modi documents from Tanjore in Danish collection (36) has given interesting information on Modi writing along with complete series of twelve letters of Marathi alphabets i.e. Barakhadi. The work also contains various theories regarding the origin of modi writing including some fanciful suggestions such as "Paishachi" was written in Modi. We, however, know that the legend of Gunadhyay and Kanubhuti Vetal attached to Brihtkatha belongs to 2[nd]century. Modi is strictly written below the line unlike any other scripts of 2nd century such as Brahmi or Kharoshti. Moreover many letters in Modi are the same as in Devnagari.

Barakhadi of Modi Lipi :
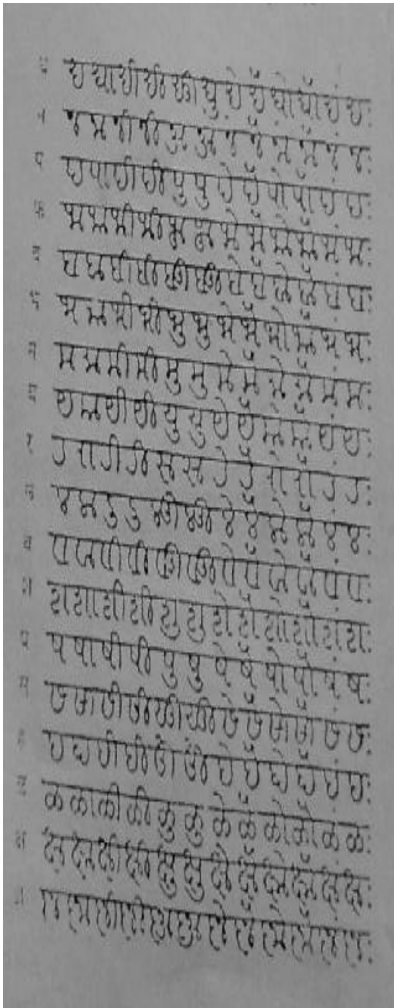
In any case, there seems to be consensus among scholars that the word "Moḍī" is a translation of the Persian word "Shikasta", which means "breaking". Modi was developed as a faster way of writing Marathi as compared to the more complicated Devanagari script. This was done by "breaking" some of the characters of the alphabet (to make them simpler) and also by making them more "circular" in shape, which aided in moving from one character to the next without lifting the pen from the paper. Thus, Modi was a sort of "cursive" (not "shorthand") style of writing Marathi, although reading it may not have been as easy.

Charles Wilkins developed Moḍī metal types, which were used to a limited extent to publish books. The script was still in use until around 1950, when it was officially discontinued due to the difficulty in printing with this script. All Marathi writing since then has been written and printed in the Devanagari script, which is the same script as is used to write Hindi and some other Indian languages.

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Origin :

The Modi alphabet was invented during the 17th century to write the Marathi language of Maharashtra. It is a variant of the Devanāgarī alphabet. The Modi alphabet was used until 1950 when it was replaced by the Devanāgarī alphabet.

Notable features :

Modi is a syllabic alphabet - each letter has an inherent vowel (a). Other vowels are indicated using a variety of diacritics which appear above, below, in front of or after the main letter. Some vowels are indicated by modifying the consonant letter itself.

Used to write :

Marathi, an Indo-Aryan language spoken by about 71 million people mainly in the Indian state of Maharashtra.

Modi consonants :

ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa	ca	cha	ja	jha	ña	ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa	ta	tha

da	dha	na	pa	pha	ba	bha	ma	ya	ra	la	va	śa	ṣa	sa	ha	ḷa

Modi vowels and vowel diacritics :

a	ā	i	u	e	ai	o	au	gha	ghā	ghi	ghu	ghe	ghai	gho	ghau

ka	kā	ki	ku	ke	kai	ko	kau	ca	cā	ci	cu	ce	cai	co	cau

Modi numerals :

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

The Hymn of Independence in the Modi script :

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This sample is from a poem entitled "The Hymn of Independence" in 1903 by Mr. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, one of the most revered freedom fighters of pre-independent India. The poem praises India's past glory and stresses the importance of being independent. The poem is written in a mix of the Marathi and Sanskrit languages using the Modi script.

Summary :

Modi script has been used since 600 to 700 years ago and was used as the administrative language for communication from Yadav Kingdom.This proves more fast in usage than normal devnagari script.

This is a set of 5 books on learning Modi script.The books are complied in an effective manner which gives good practice to the user or student to learn the script.These books suggest the easy and scientific way of writing the modi letters,other details of increasing knowledge in business terms with additional information.Others features of these books include the practice worksheets are provided in the end of each book for proper idea for user.

The graphics and interface of the books are also interesting and very easy to learn the script including Barakhadi.

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