The *Eki-Beki* Dispute and the Unification of the Gauda Saraswat Brahman Caste

by

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ABSTRACT

During the early twentieth century, a caste dispute known as the Eki-Beki dispute erupted among a group of historically related Konkani-speaking Brahman castes on the western coast of India. A faction among the castes argued that the variously related Konkani-speaking Brahman castes were originally one caste called the Gauda Saraswat Brahman (GSB) caste, which got split into several sub-castes. They further argued that the time had come to unite all these castes into one unified GSB caste. This faction came to be known as the Eki-faction, which meant the unity-faction. The Eki-faction was opposed by the majority of the members of the above-mentioned castes who disagreed with the idea of unification. This opposing faction came to be known as the Beki-faction, i.e. the disunity-faction. Despite the opposition from the majority, the Eki-faction managed to unite these different castes to form the contemporary unified GSB caste. The Gaud Saraswat Brahman caste in its current form is the product of this dispute. The formation of the GSB caste was initiated by members of these castes who had migrated from different rural regions of the western coast of India to the urban center Bombay. The rise of the GSB caste, however, became a contested process. Dominant non-GSB Brahman groups in Bombay discredited the migrants as being outsiders of lower ritual status. The unification movement was also opposed by the majority of these Konkani-speaking castes residing in the rural regions of the west coast of India. The struggle of the urban migrants for unification involved publication of Hindu texts and changes of normative practices, such as dining regulations and marriage arrangements, that affected the long-standing norms of maintaining ritual purity. Despite the opposition, the urban

migrants partially succeeded in unifying the variously related Konkani-speaking Brahman castes. My dissertation is a history of this process.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the first decade of the twentieth century a dispute known as Eki-Beki (*Ekī-Bekī*) erupted among the Konkani-speaking Brahmans on the western coast of India.[1] These Brahmans were not a unified group of affines but a collection of historically related endogamous groups known as castes.[2] The more prominent castes among these were Shenvi, Sasastikar, Bardeshkar, Konkani, Pednekar, Kudaldeshkar, and Shenvipaiki (also known as Chitrapur Saraswat).[3] A faction of young, urban, and educated men from these castes argued that all these Brahman castes were originally one caste called the Gauda Saraswat Brahman (*Gauḍa Sārasvata Brāhmaṇa*, GSB)[4] which had gotten split into several sub-castes due to unfortunate circumstances. They further argued that the time had come to unite all these castes into one unified GSB caste. This faction of people came to be known as the Eki-faction, which meant the unity-faction.[5] The Eki-faction was opposed by the majority of the members of the above-mentioned castes, who

[1]Anonymous, *Shayadrikhand-Purvardha-Uttarardh Arthat Konkanakhyan* (Desai, Raghunath S., 1947), 21.

[2]The word caste is synonymous with the Indian term *jāt* or *jāti*. I have decided to use the term caste and not *jāt* or *jāti,* as the word caste is more widely used in English.

[3]Frank F. Conlon, "Caste by Association: The Gauda Sarasvata Brahmana Unification Movement," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 33, no. 3 (1974): 353.

[4]I will use the GSB acronym as it is being increasingly used by people of the caste.

[5]Anonymous, *Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*, ed. Ramchandra V. Naik Karande (Second ed., Mapusa-Goa: Shripad Wagle, 1909), 1.

disagreed with the idea of unification.[6] This opposing faction came to be known as the Beki-faction, i.e. the disunity-faction. Despite the opposition from the majority, the Eki-faction managed to unite these different castes to form the contemporary unified GSB caste. The Eki-faction published a supposedly historical caste chronicle, the Konkanakhyan (*Koṃkaṇākhyāna*), which supported their argument of unification.[7] They also made deliberate changes in the long-standing normative ritual behaviors such as the norms relating to co-dining and marriage. This dissertation investigates the role played by textual polemics of the Konkanakhyan and organizational strategies like the staging of co-dining rituals, in the modern constitution of the GSB caste.

Caste in India

Before we get into the details of my argument, I need to engage in a general description of the institution of caste and discuss various theories relating to the caste hierarchy. This will serve two major functions. First, it will allow me to position my argument in relation to the arguments of major theorists of caste, and secondly, it will help to introduce some theoretical and cultural concepts that I will then use in the elaboration of my thesis. So this is more of groundwork than a full-fledged literature review.

[6]"*Tisrya Gaud Saraswat Brahman Parishadechi Samkshipta Hakigat*," (Bombay: Gaud Sarswat Brahman Parishad, 1910), 9.

[7]*Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*.

A caste[8] is an endogamous kinship group that has particular social norms and practices for its members and is hierarchically related to other castes. There are literally thousands of castes in India. The social hierarchy between castes was historically marked by norms of purity and pollution that included the restriction and regulation of a wide range of practical, social and symbolic behaviors. Caste rules regulated especially the practices of marriage, social and bodily contact, and the acceptance and consumption of food. The castes that were deemed pure by this internal logic were placed at the top of the social hierarchy, and castes deemed polluted formed the bottom of the hierarchy. Today, the dominance of these social and symbolic norms is diminished; nevertheless social hierarchy based on this internal logic remains significantly intact and is often manifested in practices of social difference, discrimination and distinction in India.

The caste hierarchy finds a justification in a celebrated hymn of the Rigveda (*Ṛgveda*),[9] a text that goes back to the second millennium BCE.[10] The mythological articulation of the caste hierarchy is found in a hymn called Purushsukta (*Puruṣasūkta*), literally the "hymn of man." This ancient hymn states that Brahmans, who are priests and

[8]The term caste is derived from the word 'casta,' which has its basis in sixteenth-century Iberian usage and notions of purity of bloodlines. It is closely related to the English word chaste. See *Oxford Dictionaries,* s.v. "Caste," accessed July 23, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/caste. In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese used the term to denote the social groups, especially the dominant ones, which they found in India. See Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 19-20.

[9]The Ṛgveda forms part of a collection of three more sets of texts. The entire collection is called the Veda[s] and is considered to be the principal scripture of Hinduism.

[10]Ainslie Thomas Embree, Stephen N. Hay, and William Theodore De Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., vol. 1, Introduction to Oriental Civilizations (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 3.

ritual experts, had their origin from the mouth of Purush (*Puruṣa*), the mythical primordial man. From the arms of this primordial man originated the Rajanya (*Rājanya*),[11] the kings and warriors; from his thighs, the Vaishya (*Vaiśya*) or farmers; and, finally, from his feet, the Shudra (*Śūdra*), the servants and serfs.[12] It must however be noted that the Purushsukta does not refer to any concrete social group; rather, it speaks in abstract and disembodied terms, describing the various ranks as mythical essences. The hymn itself therefore need not be taken as a commentary on the social life of the time but establishes a fourfold division of society that is known as the varna (*varṇa*) classification. Varna literally means color and alludes to skin color.

Around 200 BCE we have another text that deals with varna classification, presenting it in the fashion of a legal code. This text is the Manava-Dharmashastra (*Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*). It does mention these varnas as social groups, but, since it is a legal text that states how the society should be, we still must be careful not to take it as a mirror of social reality. The Manava-Dharmashastra recognizes a social hierarchy in the following order: the priests are on the top, followed by the warriors and then the farmer/traders and the servants are at the bottom of the hierarchy.[13] The text also mentions a group called Chandala (*Cāṇḍāḷa*). This group is outside the fourfold varna hierarchy and falls into the category of those marginal social sections that, by their

[11]In later texts the Rajanya category is often referred to as Kṣatriya.

[12]Embree, Hay, and De Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, 1, 19.

[13]Patrick Olivelle and Suman Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*, South Asia Research (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 91.

symbolic status and actual occupation, are considered to be permanently "impure" and, hence, qualified as "untouchable."[14] Today's Dalits[15] can be identified with this group.

The text also takes note of the situation of conjugal union between men and women of different varnas. These unions are not ideal but are recognized. The progeny of such a union is considered a product of a forbidden amalgamation of varnas termed varna-sankara (*varṇa-saṃkara*). Various low-status groups are the products of such hybrid unions, according to this law code.[16] This varna classification has often been seen as a blueprint for the contemporary caste hierarchy.

The British colonial power that replaced earlier Indian rulers reinforced the varna classification through its census-taking and other colonial technologies. In the absence of this British intensification of the varna stratification it seems quite plausible that the current state of the social institution of caste would be significantly different. British colonialism with its Orientalist knowledge[17] and colonial technology[18] constructed caste

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[14]Ibid., 210.

[15]Dalit means oppressed in the Marathi language. It is used by ex-untouchables as an assertive term of self identity as against the patronizing term Harijan used by Gandhi, which means 'people of god' or 'god's children.' Dalit groups have opposed the term Harijan because it casts doubt on the paternity of Dalits. The term Dalit is also politically correct vis-à-vis the seemingly value neutral and academic-looking term ex-untouchables, as Dalits continue to face untouchability despite the practice being abolished by Indian constitution.

[16]For a detailed discussion, see Olivelle and Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*, 208-10.

[17]By orientalist knowledge, I specifically imply productions of art and scholarship like paintings, literary works, scholarly descriptions and theories that represent a way of viewing society and places in Asia as the inferior 'Others' of Europe. See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). For the particular Indian contours of British orientalism see Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley:

as a traditional, rigid, fossilized, racist and irrational form of social hierarchy that is peculiar to India.[19] Louis Dumont's classic *Homo Hierarchicus* (1966) is one of the most influential and important books on the subject of caste hierarchy. He refers to caste hierarchy as the "caste system." One of his important arguments about this "system" is that hierarchical ordering of society is peculiar to India when compared to the West, which he associates by default with the principle of the assumed equality of human beings. He further argues from the study of texts that the caste system existed from the very beginning of Indian society and that it matches the varna classification. His third main point is that in the caste system the domain of religion is superior to that of power. The figure of the Brahman priest, who reads the religious texts and performs the rituals, has superior status to the figure of the King, who holds the political power.[20]

University of California Press, 1997). I also think of Foucault and Cohn here: Foucault for establishing the link between knowledge and power, and Cohn for showing the hegemonic power of the British orientalist knowledge system.

[18]By colonial technology, I refer to practices like mapping, the census and ethnography that were employed by the British colonial state in India. See Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).See also Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*, Cambridge South Asian Studies (Cambridge Cambridgeshire; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Public Worlds (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). For an example of the employment of colonial technology by the British in 1818 to control the newly conquered areas of Maharashtra, India, cf. Martha Kaplan, "Panopticon in Poona: An Essay on Foucault and Colonialism," *Cultural Anthropology* 10, no. 1 (1995). She employs Foucault's concept of 'techniques of Power.'

[19]Ronald B. Inden, *Imagining India* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000).

[20]Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, Complete rev. English ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

In making these arguments, Dumont continues in the line of the Orientalist views of British colonizers as well as the general consensus of Hindus. He focuses on the varna classification and on Brahmanical texts at the expense of looking at the role of political power in mediating the caste hierarchy.

One of the complexities of the varna classification is that it is based on the idea of inherent essences. Each varna in that sense has a unique substance. This view too is manifested in the caste hierarchy. A person belonging to a caste is believed to have particular traits. As much as it is recognized that these traits have to do with upbringing, i.e. "nurture," there is also a belief that caste is connected to biological inheritance, i.e. "nature." This understanding of biology has a moral connotation, in that it connects the idea of a biological substance with ideas of what are good ritual and social norms. For a man belonging to a caste that falls under the varna category of Brahman, for instance, such norms include performing elaborate daily and yearly rituals that have magical powers. These norms have influenced food habits, dress code, professional inclination, marriage and all other aspects of personal and intimate life. The high status and therefore privilege of being a Brahman could be lost if one did not follow these ritual and mundane norms.[21] Sometimes it has been possible to enhance social status by adhering more strictly to these norms of the purity-pollution complex. Today the belief in essences and

[21]For the transactional nature of caste see, McKim Marriott, " Hindu Transactions: Diversity Without Dualism," in*Transaction and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behavior* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976), 109-37.

the purity-pollution complex is significantly reduced, but even a hundred years ago, the belief in this internal logic of Indian society was hegemonic.

In the late 18th century, British scholars translated the Manava-Dharmashastra into English, and by the early 19th century it was used to administer justice to Hindus. This move was motivated by the British rulers' desire to give uniform justice to their newly conquered Indian subjects and to prevent being manipulated by pundits (*paṇḍit*s)[22] and/or Indian clerks, whom the British found misleading. This administrative move reinforced the importance of the text and the varna-based classification found in it. The move also reveals a certain Protestant proclivity to take ancient texts as sources of authority.[23]

The varna classification gained more prominence in the early twentieth century when British ethnography began to classify Indians according to their caste status. British census officials categorized the people of India according to the varna scheme. This led to several social groups petitioning the authorities to classify them into the varna which they thought appropriate.[24] In this way the colonizers became arbiters of which caste belongs to which varna, a function that had been sometimes performed by Hindu kings and Muslim sultans.

This is not to say that varna norms and religious texts were not important forms of social classification in Indian society prior to the arrival of the British. O'Hanlon and Minkowski have shown how questions regarding the varna status of different social

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[22]Pandit is the title of an expert Brahman in traditional Hindu texts such as legal codes.

[23]Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, 19-38.

[24]Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 238-50.

groups, such as the Shenvi caste in Maharashtra, were being raised in the seventeenth century.[25] Another good example is that of the Maratha chief Shivaji, who had to get Brahman priests from Varanasi to coronate him as a Kshatriya (*Kṣatriya*) king, since local Marathi-speaking Brahmans refused to accept his claimed status as a Kshatriya. He then, besides hiring a Brahman priest from outside the Marathi-speaking region in order to get himself consecrated as a king, had a chronicle produced that traced his ancestry to Kshatriya kings of the past.[26] The point that I wish to highlight here is that, although historically the Manava-Dharmashastra and other ancient Hindu texts influenced society in South Asia, the contemporary operation of the varna system in Indian society has a great deal to do with the recent colonization of India.

The members of the thousands of castes that are found in India often make unclear and ambiguous claims about their varna status. Sometimes there is consensus about the hierarchy and other times the caste hierarchy is contested. The social consensus is usually stronger at the extremities of the hierarchy than in the middle. Another important point about caste hierarchy is that for the most part the hierarchy among castes is regional in its operation. The hierarchy found in one region differs from that found in another part of India. Usually a caste that owns or controls most of the land dominates the region.[27] Such

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[25]Rosalind O'Hanlon and Christopher Minkowski, "What Makes People Who They Are? Pandit Networks and the Problem of Livelihoods in Early Modern Western India," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 45, no. 3 (2008): 381-416.

[26]Ibid.

[27]The term ‘dominant caste,’ as argued by Srinivas, has a connotation of being numerically superior vis-à-vis other castes. For the concept of ‘dominant caste,’ see Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas, *The Dominant Caste and Other Essays* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

a caste is often numerically superior to others in its region, and more powerful than they are in electoral politics. The rest of the castes have a patron-client relationship with the caste that controls most of the land. This system is called the Jajmani system with the Dominant caste being the jajman, which means "patron."[28] Outside of a particular geographic region, often a different caste hierarchy is found, loosely mimicking the hierarchy found in other regions of India and structured by the varna classification, but with the specific castes composing the hierarchy differing from region to region.

The social reality of the caste hierarchy can often be best viewed in places where people of different castes interact with each other explicitly as members or representatives of their castes. The main village temple is one such place where this can be observed. Caste is deeply implicated in the temple complex in most rural or urbanizing regions of India.[29] The main temple deity is treated as the sovereign and the social hierarchy is reflected in the temple. But, as Appadurai has shown, these temples are not just mirrors of social reality; instead, the deity can indeed redistribute social and economic capital to different groups.

One's position in a caste hierarchy therefore also has spatial implications. Any association with the deity is a privilege; the place where one can stand in the temple marks one's rank in the village caste hierarchy. Even the right to stand outside the temple during the ritual is a marker of privilege. Similarly, the area where one's home is located

[28]Harold A. Gould, *The Hindu Caste System* (Delhi: Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1987), 203-05.

[29]Arjun Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule: A South Indian Case*, Cambridge South Asian Studies (Cambridge Eng.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

reinforces one's position in the village caste hierarchy. Therefore, temples often become sites of caste conflict. Although any relationship with the deity is privileged, ordinary access to the inner sanctum is considered a marker of distinction and may become a cause of social dispute and conflict.

Postcolonial theorists like Nicholas Dirks have made corrections to Dumontian understanding of caste in that they have highlighted the role of power. Dirks in particular have tried to show how the caste system that Dumont observed was formed as a result of British colonization and processes like census-taking.[30] Dirks' work on the Kallar caste, in particular, showed how the colonial power substantially reduced the real power of the kings. Indian rulers turned into mere figureheads under colonial rule. The inferior status of the castes belonging to the Kshatriya varna, a phenomenon that Dumont witnessed but did not understand historically, was a result of the British conquest of India.[31]

My work addresses the period immediately after the British came to power in India, i.e. the second half of the nineteenth century. I will improve upon Dirks' thesis by showing that Brahmans did get more opportunities to assert themselves in the absence of Indian kings. I will also crucially disagree with Dirks by showing that not all Brahmans were interested in joining the project of British modernity, as it meant diluting their ritual purity and joining the project of secularization.

Another perspective that is relevant here is argued by Indian sociologists of Marxist orientation. They have often argued that caste is a form of social stratification devoid of

[30]Nicholas Dirks, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*, Public Planet Books (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

[31]Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*.

any religious significance. Along this line, caste unification movements, which began during the first half of the twentieth century, have been argued to be part of larger secularization and modernization movements.[32] This is a trend that one can also find in a recent work on Brahmans of Karnataka on the topic of caste associations.[33] Notably, the neglect of the purity-pollution complex can even be seen in the work of Dirks.

Yet another theoretical approach to caste is argued by scholars from a Dalit background. Gopal Guru, for instance, problematizes scholarship that scrutinizes the complexity of caste (kinship, kingship, texts, ritual, tradition and other concepts) by arguing that it is possible to study such complexity only for those who have been on the privileged end of the caste hierarchy. For those who have been at the marginalized end of the hierarchy, like the Dalits, he argues, the possibility of theorizing about caste hierarchy does not exist, since for them the caste hierarchy is a form of slavery that simply must be abandoned as soon as possible.[34] This is a serious argument, challenging the core of knowledge produced by Humanities scholarship.

The GSB Caste

After having discussed the different relevant perspectives on caste, we can now turn to the case of our interest: that is, the Eki-Beki dispute and the unification of the GSB caste. The GSB caste as we know it today was formed on the western coast of India by

[32]Yogendra Singh, *Modernization of Indian Tradition: a Systemic Study of Social Change* (Delhi: Delhi, Thomson Press India, Publication Division, 1973).

[33]T. S. Ramesh Bairy, "Brahmins in the Modern World: Association as Enunciation," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 43, no. 1 (2009).

[34]Gopal Guru, *Humiliation: Claims and Context* (New Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

the unification of several historically related Konkani-speaking Brahman castes during the twentieth century. The western coast of India is culturally and geographically constituted as Konkan (*Koṃkaṇa*). The formation of the GSB caste in this region gained a peculiar dynamic due to the fact that it stretched across the borders of two colonial empires, the Portuguese *Estado da Índia,* based in Goa,[35] and the British Indian Empire, connecting Goa with parts of Maharashtra and South Karnataka. The differing histories of these two empires and their different colonial styles[36] wove the fabric of the GSB caste. For the most part, the process that led to the formation of the GSB caste was set in motion in the late nineteenth century in the British urban center of Bombay, or Mumbai, as the metropolis is known today. In ways that I will elaborate in the fourth chapter, the process of this caste formation is still a continuing project, revealing that caste is not a finished product of tradition but responds to changing socio-political contexts. This study therefore also exhibits the processual nature of caste.

[35]Goa is a state of the Indian federation located on the west coast of India. In 1510, a part of its current land mass was conquered by the Portuguese. This region is called 'Velha Conquista' in Portuguese, i.e. 'Old Conquests.' In the eighteenth century more areas were added to the region to reach Goa's current geographical extent. These regions were called 'Nova Conquista,' i.e. 'New Conquests.' Goa operated as the center of the Portuguese empire in the East. In 1961, Goa was merged into the Indian nation-state through a military action initiated by the Indian government. The second chapter of the dissertation has a detailed discussion about the Portuguese colonization of Goa.

[36]Portuguese colonialism entered in India in the sixteenth century. This early modern colonialism was marked by a mode of hegemony which can be termed Occidentalism. It operated by erasing difference, as against Orientalism, which highlighted difference. See Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Map1. Map of India[37]

Much that we know about the GSB caste is from the works of Conlon. Apart from his article "Caste by Association: The Gauda Sarasvata Brahmana Unification Movement.", on the GSB caste unification, he has also written a book on the Chitrapur Saraswats.[38] Narendra Wagle is another scholar who has written in detail about GSB

[37] See, http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/india_map.html, accessed April 10, 2018.

[38]Frank F. Conlon, *A Caste in a Changing World: The Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmans, 1700-1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

caste, their mathas and their experience in Bombay.[39] Much of my dissertation is based on the foundations set by these two scholars.

Map 2. Map of Goa (Talukas)[40]

The GSB caste of today was formed by the merger of several distinctly named, historically related Konkani-speaking Brahman castes. Some of the influential castes and

[39]N K Wagle, "The History and Social Organization of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmins on the West Coast of India," *Journal of Indian History* 48/1 and 2 (1970). Also see "The Gaud Saraswat Brahmanas of West Coast of India: A Study of Their Matha Institution and Voluntary Associations (1870-1900)," *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay* (1974/26 :). For the History of GSBs in Bombay see N. K. Wagle, "A History of Goan Diaspora: Gaud Saraswata Brahmins of the West Coast," in *Goa: Continuity and Change*, ed. N. K. Wagle and George Coehlo (Toronto: University of Toronto, Centre for South Asian Studies, 1995).

[40]See https://media1.picsearch.com/is?vEfejJTe1Dnksh9Ic4Pd8UtOfC08KQBulXhIP90yyZo&height=341, accessed July 06, 2018. A taluka is an administrative region which is smaller than a district. In India, several talukas make up a district and several districts make a state

caste groupings among these were named Shenvi, Sasastikar, Bardeshkar, Konkani Pednekar, Kudaldeshkar, and Shenvipaiki (Chitrapur Saraswat).[41] There were multiple variables that divided these castes and other factors that unified them, creating a complex web of kinship ties based on religious orientation and geography. There were two major sectarian differences among these castes. The first sect was the Smarta tradition. This tradition believes in the worship of five main deities: Shiva (*Śiva*), Vishnu (*Viṣnu*), Devi (*Devī*), *Surya* and Ganesh (*Gaṇeśa*). The other sectarian tradition followed by some of these castes was the Vaishnav (*Vaiṣṇava)* tradition. In this tradition Vishnu is the principal deity, with other Hindu deities being lower in status. These sectarian groups followed different religious leaders. The leaders were Hindu ascetics who were known as swamis (*svāmī*s), a term that literally means "lord." These ascetics led monastery-like religious institutions called mathas (*maṭha*s). There were at least five different mathas with which these caste groups were associated. Two of these matha institutions were headquartered in Goa, two in Karnataka,[42] and one in Maharashtra. Let me begin by describing the groups that lived in Goa in the late nineteenth century and then move to those that were settled in British India. The members of the most influential caste, the Shenvi caste, mostly lived in the new-conquest regions of Portuguese Goa. Some families from this group were settled in different urban regions of India, such as Bombay. The

[41]See, Conlon, "Caste by Association: The Gauda Sarasvata Brahmana Unification Movement."

[42]One of these mathas from Karnataka had established a branch in Varanasi, a city considered holy by Hindus and referred to as Kashi in religious contexts. This matha institution took its name from the city and is called Kashi matha. Historically, it was prestigious to have a branch matha in the city of Kashi for the devotees of this matha, who mostly lived in Karnataka and Kerala.

Shenvi caste followed the swami from a matha located in the village of Kavle in the Ponda taluka of Goa.

The second group, the Sasastikar caste, was a group of Konkani-speaking Brahmans who, at least in the nineteenth century, lived in the old-conquest region of Salcete taluka, which had come under Portuguese control in the sixteenth century. Hence they were called Sasastikars, Sasasti being the name used by Hindus to refer to Salcete taluka. The caste name Sasastikar implied that they were from Salcete taluka. Many among them were Shenvi by ethnicity and Vaishnav by religious tradition. The Sasastikar caste followed the swami from the matha located in the Partagali village in Canacone taluka. Shenvis and Sasastikars were the two richest castes among Hindus in Goa. Shenvi was the dominant caste in the Ponda taluka. In general, these two castes avoided intermarriage because they differed in their sectarian affiliation. However, there is historical evidence that they did intermarry in the eighteenth century,[43] and I know of at least one case of marriage between these groups in the nineteenth century.[44]

The third caste from Goa was the Bardeshkars. They were associated with the region of Bardesh in Goa. They were Vaishnavs, and followed, like the Sasastikars, the swami of the Partagali matha.

The fourth group from Goa was the Pednekar caste; they were associated with the Pedne taluka of Goa. Most of them followed the Vaishnav religious tradition. They were

[43]*Archivo Portuguez-Oriental*, ed. *J H Da Cunha Rivara*, vol. 6, *Archivo Portuguez-Oriental* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1876; repr., 1992), 371-76.

[44] I was given this information by a respondent.

a Brahman caste with a military tradition. These were the four main castes which lived primarily in Goa.

The Konkani were the fifth caste. They were based in British India, living in and around the cities of Udupi and Mangalore in the current state of Karnataka and the city of Cochin in contemporary Keraa. They were called Konkani by local residents of these regions, implying that they were Konkani-speaking people. Their language-based identifier points to the fact that they were considered as outsiders, in a predominantly Kannada-, Tulu-, and Malayalam-speaking area. They had a historical memory of migration from their homeland in Goa. This Konkani grouping was made up of Shenvis, Sasastikars and Bardeshkars who had out migrated. They were divided on sectarian lines. Most of them followed the Vaishnav sectarian tradition and the rest followed the Smarta tradition. Among the Vaishnavs there were again two groups: one group followed the Partagali matha and the other group followed the Kashi matha. Even thouh there were several divisions among the Konkanis they operated as one caste. In Buchaan's survey of Kannada-speaking areas conducted in 1800, the Konkanis are identified with their occupation as bankers and traders. This situation points to their reduction of social status in Kannada-speaking areas.[45]

The sixth caste was the Kudaldeshkars. They lived in the region of Kudal, which was located directly to the north of Goa in British India. The Kudal region currently falls in the Indian state of Maharashtra. The Kudaldeshkars were Smarta by sectarian tradition and were associated with a matha located in Dabholi village. Historically, this Brahman caste too had a military tradition.

[45]Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, 117.

The seventh caste was the Shenvipaiki caste, which followed the Smarta tradition. They lived in Kannada-speaking areas of British India and followed the matha based in Shirsi village, located in contemporary Karnataka.

The GSB Caste Unification Movement

The major initiative for the unification of these variously related Konkani-speaking Brahman castes came from two segments of these caste groups. The first group was led by members of these castes who had left Goa and neighboring rural areas and had migrated to the nearby urban center of British India, Bombay. They were pulled to the city due to economic opportunities provided by the rapidly urbanizing region. These new urban migrants to Bombay primarily utilized a polemical strategy.

The other segment that took an initiative in this movement were the Konkanis, who had moved out of Goa due to the Portuguese persecution in the sixteenth century and had migrated to Kannada- and Malayalam-speaking areas of today's Karnataka and Kerala. In Karnataka this group was reduced in status vis-a-vis local Kannada-speaking Brahmans. Konkanis who had settled in Kerala possibly faced similar reduced status in relation to local Brahmans from Kerala. Intimately aware of their historically minor status vis-à-vis local Brahmans from Kannada- and Malayalam-speaking regions, this group took the initiative in organizing the GSB caste. The major strategy of the Konkani caste grouping was to form an organization called the "Gaud Saraswat Brahman Parishad" and organize annual conferences starting from the year 1907.[46]

[46]Conlon, "Caste by Association: The Gauda Sarasvata Brahmana Unification Movement," 356.

In this dissertation I am mostly focusing on the initiatives of the Bombay migrants. Just as the Konkani caste had historically suffered a reduction in their status due to their migration, the migrants to Bombay too faced devaluation from Marathi-speaking Brahmans. Trying to consolidate their social status in the urban environment of Bombay, away from their bases of power in Goa and surrounding areas, the urban migrants pressed for the formation of the GSB caste by unifying the variously related Konkani-speaking Brahman castes. The efforts of the urban migrants in Bombay to unify these castes became a contested process. It was resisted in particular by castes like Chitpavans and Karhades living in the cities of Bombay and Pune and in other Marathi-speaking regions of the Deccan. These castes had begun to identify themselves as Maharashtra-Brahmans.[47]

The leaders of the urban migrants were members of the Smarta Shenvi caste. Historically the Marathi-speaking Brahman castes from the Deccan considered the Shenvi caste to be a Brahman caste of a lower status.[48] This lower ritual status was ascribed to the Shenvi caste for several reasons, in particular the fact that their diet consisted of fish.[49] Marathi-speaking Brahman castes considered consumption of fish to be an unbrahmanical practice. British ethnographers and census-takers depended on similar interpretations of allegedly appropriate Brahman diet when categorizing castes into the Brahman varna. Urban migrants like Shenvi men in Bombay, therefore, were

[47]Ramchandra Gunjikar, *Bhramaniras* (Mumbai: Indian Printing, 1885).

[48]I suspect that the Konkanis in Kannada-speaking areas faced similar devaluation.

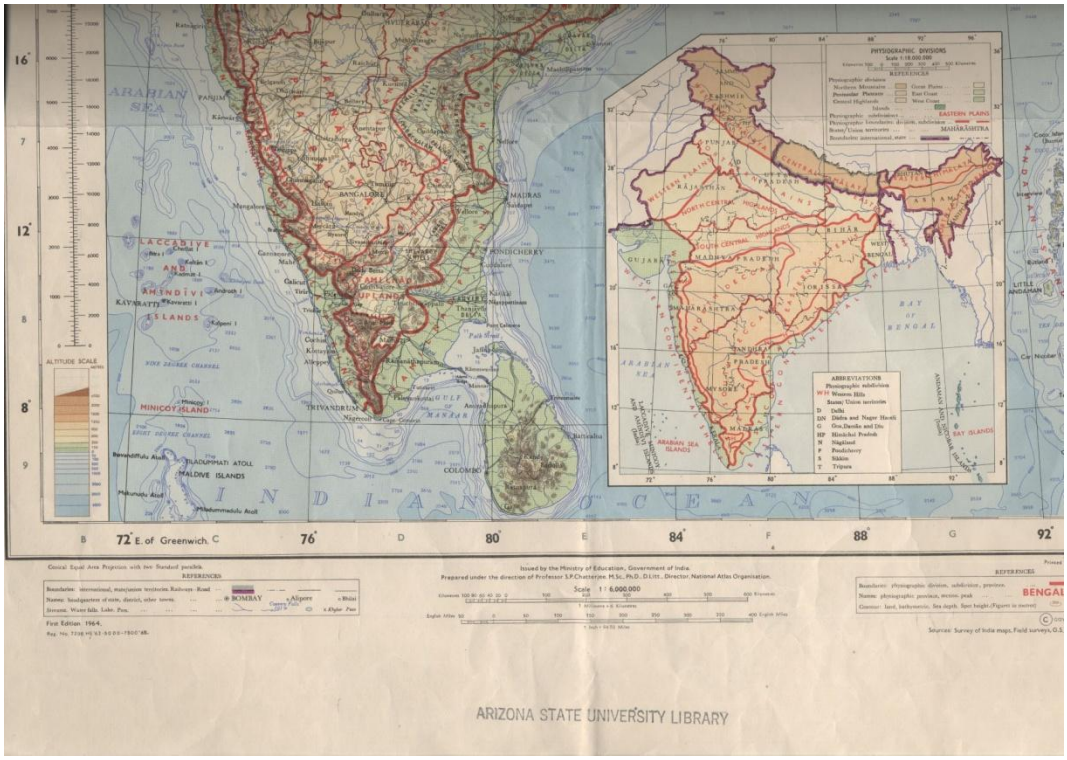
[49]Wagle, "The History and Social Organization of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmins on the West Coast of India," 48, 1: 8-9.

acutely anxious, as they were aware of the possibility of being classified as non-Brahmans in British colonial discourse.[50] It is because of this anxiety that they were interested in garnering the support of similar migrant groups living in the urban centers and of their more numerous kinsmen in Goa and the neighboring areas.[51] They wanted to form one united caste to increase their numerical strength and get official recognition from the British as a Brahman caste. To meet these ends, they started a deliberate movement to unify Konkani-speaking Brahman castes.

[50]Gunjikar, *Bhramaniras*.

[51]Geographically and culturally Goa forms part of the Konkan. However, due to five centuries of Portuguese presence, Goa has emerged as a distinct geographical unit and is commonly mentioned separately from the rest of the Konkan.

Map 3. Map of Indian Peninsula, markedly showing sea-level lying Konkan against the Deccan, separated by the Western Ghats mountain range.[52]



The formation of the GSB caste by the merger of all the above-mentioned Konkani-speaking Brahman castes was opposed by powerful rural members of these castes. For the rural members of these various castes, and especially for those who enjoyed land-holding and ritual precedence in village festivals in their respective areas, the merger of these related castes created a serious problem, as it meant the dilution of their ritual purity. In particular, the merger implied the possibility of marriage between members of these different castes. Marriage meant compromising on sectarian orientation and establishing kinship ties with people who had differing professional orientations. Furthermore, this meant practicing inter-mixing of the varnas, i. e. *varṇa-saṃkara,*

[52] S. P. Chatterjee, "Physiographic Divisions (Indian Peninsula)," (Ministry of Education, Governament of India, 1964).

something considered wrong and polluting according to the varna ideology. From the rural Brahmans' point of view, there was nothing much to gain and everything to lose from this merger. Thus, this norm-breaking social change was not acceptable to the rural Brahmans.

To the urban migrants, however, the changes were a desirable move towards a new social identity, an identity made possible by British rule, an identity which would allow them social and economic opportunities of middle-class success, in a city inhabited by other such migrant groups coming from all over India. This new identity, however, was possible only if they could cooperate with people of similar backgrounds. The urban leaders of the GSB caste unification movement had to develop a consensus on the risky issue of social inclusion and exclusion. Now, this was the proverbial slippery slope, because they had to decide which castes were of similar Brahman status so that a merger would not cause too much loss of ritual purity. The groups had to be of similar ritual and social standing. If they intermarried with people of low ritual and social standing, then there was a real possibility of serious loss of social status. They had to balance numerical strength and state recognition of their Brahman status with the possibility of loss of ritual purity and consequent loss of social status as Brahmans in the eyes of the rest of Hindu society.

The urban migrants in Bombay and other urban centers responded to this challenge with a strategy that included two major projects. One was the polemical strategy of writing in newspapers and publishing texts in Hindu genres such as mahatmyas (*māhātmya*s) and puranas (*purāṇa*s). This strategy, over time, led to the publication of the authoritative GSB caste geography-cum-chronicle, namely the text Konkanakhyan

(*Koṃkaṇākhyāna*), which exhibited the worldview of the GSB caste.[53] The third chapter of this dissertation is dedicated to an analysis of this text. The other strategy was to make deliberate and significant changes to social practices such as dining regulations and marriage patterns that affected long-standing norms of ritual purity and pollution. This strategy will be examined in chapter four of the dissertation.

The Bombay migrant leaders took these conscious and strategic steps in response to anxious challenges and opportunities provided by British colonial modernity. The leaders utilized their symbolic resources to form a new social identity that suited the power politics of the new colonizer. In taking these steps, they were, on the one side, responding to the British Orientalist proclivity to consider texts as particularly authoritative sources of religion, history etc. On the other side, they were dealing with internal resistance to the change by tinkering with the ritual norms that would one day actualize their worldview and make marriages among the members of these different castes a reality. The problem was, after all, that, while the urban leaders took steps towards modernity and a new social identity, many affected persons living in rural regions of the Konkan experienced these interferences in Hindu social norms as a polluting amalgamation of previously existing distinct castes. The new social formation became especially traumatic to those who had to accept as normal, due to marriage for example, an undesirable and yet unavoidable contact with persons of potentially differing ritual status.

What we witness here are two different understandings of caste. On one side we have urban migrants based in places like Bombay taking distinctly modern viewpoints. To a significant extent they see caste as a social institution that has practical utility as a

[53]Anonymous, *Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*.

community. Rules of ritual purity and sectarian differences matter to them, but at the same time they embrace the modernist argument that norms of ritual purity are "superstitious." These are the men who get involved in progressive movements like widow remarriage, the spread of education and other modernist projects. In part, they have an instrumental approach to caste. They want to form at least a symbolic unity among the historically related Konkani-speaking Brahman castes so as to help them consolidate their social status in the eyes of the British colonizers. On the other side, we have rural men who derive their incomes from their land holdings in villages, especially Goa, where they are already quite well established. Among this group are influential Goan families such as Dempo and Kundaikar who have long-established relationships with the Portuguese state. They do make money from mercantile businesses and landholding, but are still part of a largely rural setup. Caste for these rural men is mainly an embodied religious experience, articulated in practices sensitive to the norms of purity and pollution and deeply embedded with the rest of the rural Hindu society that they lead.

This difference in perspective on caste erupted in a conflict popularly known in this intimate circle of kinsmen as "*Ekī-Bekī vāda,*" i.e. the "unity-disunity dispute." The urban migrants to British India, especially the young men, took the side of unification and argued that the GSB caste was originally a unified Brahman caste that had gotten divided into different sub-castes due to petty conflicts, geographical contingency and historical accidents like the one effected by the Portuguese colonization of Goa. The group that opposed the unification effort argued that the unification was an illegitimate amalgamation of different varnas. While the Eki group argued that the GSB sub-castes

were one historical caste, the Beki group argued that the sub-castes had been distinct castes and that the differences among them should be acknowledged.

In this dissertation, I elucidate the emergence of the GSB caste as a self-conscious strategy by scrutinizing the role played by texts, rituals, and Hindu notions of pollution in the process. I specifically elucidate how the Konkanakhyan and other texts made it possible for the urban migrant men to imagine a new worldview and then implement that worldview through the constitutive practice of ritualized co-dining. In the second chapter, I discuss the nineteenth-century historical context when the caste unification process was instigated. In the third chapter I read the Konkanakhyan and other texts to elucidate the worldview of the GSB caste. In the fourth chapter I elucidate the organizational strategies employed by various groups in the Eki-Beki dispute which led to co-dining and the symbolic unification of the caste.

Through this dissertation I show how this caste unification movement was a precarious and ingenious intertwining of various influential factors. This emergence was precarious in the sense that the whole exercise could have failed. And so the "cunningness" that the British saw in the agency of the leading men of these colonized elite groups must be seen in the light of their being colonized subjects of a foreign power and their consequent social anxieties. I also remain firm on the argument that this is a new formation. There are certain qualifiers that I add to this statement, though. For one thing, the two major groups in this formation, the Smarta Shenvis and the Vaishnav Sasastikars, had long been one ethnic group and had certainly intermarried in the eighteenth century and occasionally in the nineteenth century as well. However, there was no precedent for marriages between other, relatively lower-status castes like the

Bardeshkars, Pednekars and Kudaldeshkars with higher-status groups like Shenvis and Sasastikars in the eighteenth or the nineteenth century. Also, all these Konkani-speaking castes were Brahman castes, despite their differing ritual and social status.

What is also crucial for my argument is that these historically related Brahman castes created a new social identity and set themselves on a new trajectory for the future. This is most evidently a modern happening intimately connected to colonial administration and technologies such as the census and ethnography, as well as the emerging possibility of a modern Indian state. That the two major castes among the group were actually one caste in the eighteenth century and that some marriages might have happened between them in the nineteenth century does not negate the fact that in the early twentieth century this was a new formation. Rather, the possibility that the two castes had indeed had kin-relations in the past gives credence to the argument of the urban migrants who insisted that they were just unifying a pre-existing caste that had gotten divided into sub-castes due to historical accidents and petty conflicts. I can imagine the real possibility that new evidence will come to light that will show that all these castes were indeed part of the same kinship group in a distant past. Even in that situation, my argument about the newness of the caste stands, because I show that the category of caste does not just mean kinship based on one "pure" bloodline but a kinship that is also based on religious conviction, social practice, geographical feasibility, financial status, consensus on the norms about maintaining ritual purity, occupational preferences and self-identification as belonging to a particular group. All these factors differed among these castes in the late nineteenth century. As I will show throughout this dissertation, the group among the GSB castes that argued for unification and those who argued against it exhibited two different

understandings of caste. The people on the side of unification, whose viewpoints were modernist, can be said to have won the argument. And it is their view, which sees caste as a racial group without the "irrational" burden of the purity-pollution complex, that has passed into our dominant modern understanding of caste.

Frank F. Conlon's paper "Caste by Association: The Gauda Sarasvata Brahmana Unification" is seminal to this dissertation. However, Conlon's work has some limitations in that it does not cover the Beki faction, which opposed the formation of the GSB caste. He also argued that there was a unification movement that failed to form a unified caste. My research shows that there was a dispute in which the faction in favor of unification won the argument. This is the significant difference between his analysis and mine. Conlon suggests that there were a number of GSB sub-castes which tried to merge to form a unified GSB caste. My research shows that a number of historically related Brahman castes from Konkan merged to form a new Brahman caste. Moreover, Conlon does not recognize the contribution of the Konkanakhyan and the ritualized practice of co-dining. He does notice that co-dining did take place in the conferences organized by the faction that supported the unification, but his focus on the formation of a corporate middle-class identity has not allowed him to elaborate the co-dining's significance. Finally, he bases his argument exclusively on sources from British India and thereby misses the significant number of marriages taking place between these groups in Goa. It is the fact of these marriages that means that we have a GSB caste today.

I have used a combination of archival research, ethnography, and text-criticism to conduct my research. I have sources in Konkani, Marathi, English, Portuguese and Sanskrit. I am a member of the GSB caste, and as a result I had some knowledge about

this caste formation as consequence of my upbringing. Other than that, prior to this project, I carried out research on issues related to caste and village in Goa as a part of a team of scholars in 2006. My first research trip for this dissertation was in the summer of 2012. I carried out full-time research in India from January 2013 until August 2014 with support from the American Institute of Indian Studies. I did archival research in Lisbon in the summers of 2012 and 2015.

CHAPTER 2

THE PRE-HISTORY OF THE EKI-BEKI DISPUTE

The late-fifteenth-century Portuguese discovery of a sea route to India marked the beginning of the European expansion into India and Asia.[54] The Kingdom of Portugal had above all mercantile interests in the trade of spices and other exotic commodities coming from Asia, which until then had been a trade dominated by Venice from the European side and the Mamelukes in North Africa.[55] There were, however, more than trading interests that motivated the Portuguese expansion into India. The Portuguese expansion into Asia was also a way to fight Muslim political influence in the Middle East and North Africa. This conflict strongly impacted the Iberian Peninsula, influencing the Portuguese expansion into Asia, among other things, as an attempt to look for Christian allies in the regions east of the Muslim world.[56] In fact, it seems that it was the initial drive of the "Reconquista", the Re-Conquest of Iberia from Muslim occupation in their home country that had motivated the Portuguese to venture on sea journeys that ultimately reached up to Macau in China and earned them a mercantile empire as a secondary consequence.[57]

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[54]A Portuguese fleet led by Vasco da Gama reached near Calicut on the southwestern coast of India in May 1498. Today the city is located in the Indian federal state of Kerala. See A. R. Disney, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire: From Beginnings to 1807*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 121.

[55]Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History* (London; New York: Longman, 1993), 50-51.

[56]To understand in detail what motivated the Portuguese to go on seaborne voyages to the East, see C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825*, The History of Human Society (London: Hutchinson, 1969), 15-38.

[57]Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History*, 49.

In 1510, the Portuguese conquered the island of Goa, located at the meeting point of the Mandovi River and the Arabian Sea. The nearby regions of Bardez, Tiswadi, and Salsette were subjugated by 1543.[58] Over time Goa became the headquarters of the Portuguese empire in the East, called *Estado da Índia*. It became the seat of the Viceroy, i.e., the principal Portuguese political authority, and of the Archbishop, the principal Portuguese religious authority in colonial Asia.[59] The Portuguese-Catholic conquest initiated a severe suppression of Hinduism in Goa.[60] The foreign regime destroyed Hindu temples, roadside shrines, and icons of Hindu deities, accusing the Indian population of idol worship.[61] The regime banned the public performance of Hindu rituals and festivals. People were forcibly converted to Christianity, and Indian religious leaders were prohibited from coming to the Portuguese-controlled region. This sixteenth-century Portuguese-Catholic suppression of Hinduism and the forced conversions led to massive migrations of Hindus beyond the region of Portuguese control. In many instances, the fleeing Hindus, however, succeeded in saving the icons of their major village deities from the Portuguese-Catholic iconoclastic attack. They took their deities across the rivers that

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[58]Alexander Henn, *Hindu-Catholic Encounters in Goa: Religion, Colonialism, and Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 2.

[59]Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History*, 129-30.

[60]See Anant Kakba Priolkar, Gabriel Dellon, and Claudius Buchanan, *The Goa Inquisition: Being a Quatercentenary Commemoration Study of the Inquisition in India* (Bombay: Bombay University Press, 1961).

[61]For the motivations behind Portuguese iconoclasm, see Alexander Henn, *Hindu-Catholic Encounters in Goa: Religion, Colonialism, and Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 40-64.

marked the boundaries of the Portuguese-controlled regions and established them in the villages to which they migrated for refuge.[62] The event of the migration to villages outside of Portuguese control by crossing the rivers is re-enacted today in the newly built temples by a particular yearly ritual called Sāṃgoḍa. While some Hindus settled in the immediate borders of the Portuguese borders, in regions like Ponda, Kudal and North Kanara, others moved further south as far as the city of Cochin.

Meanwhile, in the area under Portuguese control, churches were built on the locations where temples had once stood, and crosses and chapels replaced the shrines of minor tutelary beings.[63] This region is called the Old Conquest. This period of iconoclastic destruction and militant conversion is locally known today as *Bātā-bātī*: i.e., the time of pollution. The Portuguese-Catholic attack on and suppression of Hinduism led to many radical changes in the local culture (food habits, dress, language etc.). It is the attack on the Hindu norms of ritual purity that played the most important role in the dispersal of Hindus from Goa to neighboring regions out of Portuguese control.

Beyond the violence against so-called idolatry, the Portuguese also pursued a project of cultural hegemony. Walter Mignolo,[64] writing about comparable circumstances in the Spanish colonization of America, referred to this hegemony as "Occidentalism," describing it as a system of colonial knowledge and cultural dominance that was based on

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[62]See Paul Axelrod and Michelle A. Fuerch, "Flight of the Deities: Hindu Resistance in Portuguese Goa," *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (1996).

[63]Ibid., 393.

[64]Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*.

Christianity. Occidentalism in Goa dictated that cultural differences that the Portuguese encountered in the territories they controlled were to be erased, and the colonized culture and society were to be made to look like the Occident. In other words, the erasure of markers of Hindu culture, architecture, ritual, songs, etc. became a goal of this project of hegemony. Notably, however, while Portuguese-Catholic rulers converted the Indian people to Catholicism and tried to erase Hindu religion in the regions under their control, they did continue the social institution of caste, and they integrated it into the newly formed colonial society.

The Portuguese state and colonial empire underwent a marked change in the eighteenth century, personified by the figure of the Portuguese head of state at the time, the Marquis de Pombal (1755-1825). Pombal initiated a series of political reforms that aimed above all at the secularization and modernization of state affairs, marking a sea change in Portuguese politics.[65]

In the eighteenth century, another major change was effected when the Portuguese expanded their colonial territory in western India by treaties with the neighboring Muslim kingdom ruled by the Adil Shah. Portuguese dominion was extended to include the regions of Pedne, Bicholim, Sattari, Ponda, Sanguem, Quepem and Canacona.[66] These territories were given to the Portuguese under the condition that they would not violate the religious life of the inhabitants. In the period of these two centuries, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth, the Enlightenment had set in in Europe. The areas

[65]Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825*.

[66]Henn, *Hindu-Catholic Encounters in Goa: Religion, Colonialism, and Modernity*, 2.

surrounding Goa were also witnessing the rise of a Hindu (Maratha) confederacy. These changed circumstances ensured that the temples in these newly acquired regions were spared from destruction and that Goans in the eighteenth century did not face forcible conversion to Catholicism as had happened in the sixteenth century.[67] These newly conquered regions came to be known as the "New Conquests," while, as we have seen, the regions conquered in the sixteenth century were called the "Old Conquests" in Portuguese colonial discourse. Many temples whose deities had been shifted out of Portuguese control also became part of the New Conquest region. The rest, est however, remained outside of Portuguese control, and they became part of the British Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Brahmans associated with these temples from Goa spoke the Konkani language. Thomas Stephens (1549-1619), the English Jesuit who wrote the grammar of Konkani, referred to Konkani as the language of Brahmans.[68] The Konkani language has remained one of the most important identity markers of this group of Goan Brahmans. These Brahmans also claimed to have arrived in Goa from North India. The sixteenth-century Portuguese compendium "*Oriente Conquistada*" has the earliest evidence of this claim. In this book Shenvis are said to have claimed that they have arrived in Salcete from the land of Bengal.[69] Bengal in this context refers to North

[67]Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825*, 84.

[68] This most certainly had to do with the fact that he came into contacts with Konkani speaking Brahmans, as we will see later in the chapter; the west coast of India was also populated by Marathi-speaking Brahmans. See J. A. Saldanha, "Kanarian-Konkani Castes and Communities in Bombay. Some Remarkable Features in Their Ethnography.," *Anthropological Society of Bombay* vol. X (1915): 508.

[69] F. de Sousa, *Oriente Conquistado a Jesu Christo Pelos Padres Da Companhia De Jesus Da Provincia De Goa: Segunda Parte, Na Qual Se Contèm O Que Se Obrou Desdo*

India. Kosambi supports the claim of North Indian descent, while Moraes argues that the local priests converted themselves into Brahmans.[70] These Konkani-speaking Brahmans are the main agents of the events discussed in this dissertation. Apart from sectarian difference, language and regional ancestry are crucial for these Brahmans' identity. To clarify the role of religious sect, language and regional ancestry in Brahman identity, I will discuss how the Brahmans of India are categorized and then introduce the Konkani-speaking Brahman castes. I will also briefly introduce the Marathi-speaking Brahmans who contested the Brahman status of the Konkani-speaking Brahmans.

The Pancha-Gauda and Panch-Dravida divide

Hindu religious texts categorized Brahmans into two broad groups: North Indian Brahmans, who were called Gauda Brahmans, and South Indian Brahmans, who were called Dravida Brahmans.[71] The term Gauda is an ancient name for the region of Bengal, and the term Dravida often refers to the land south of the Vindhya mountain range. The Vindhya mountain range is located approximately in the center of India; culturally it divides India into North and South. The Gauda and Dravida categories of Brahmans are further divided into five sub-categories each. The five types of Gauda Brahmans are Saraswata, Kanyakubja, Gauda, Maithile, and Utkala. Together they are referred to as Pancha-Gaudas, which means the five Gaudas. Similarly, Gurjara, Maharashtra, Andhra,

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Anno De 1564 Atè O Anno De 1585 Lisboa: (na officina de Valentim da Costa Deslandes, 1710), 21.

[70] D. D. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality* (Bombay: Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1962), 166.

[71]Madhav M. Deshpande, "Panca Gauda and Panca Dravida: Contested Borders of a Traditional Classification," *Studia Orientalia* 108 (2010).

Karnataka and Dravida constitute the Pancha-Dravidas.[72] The Konkani-speaking Brahman castes, the main agents of my dissertation, identified themselves as being part of the Gauda category of Brahmans. Marathi-speaking Brahmans identified themselves with the Dravida category.

By the late nineteenth century, the Western coast of India was populated by several Konkani-speaking Brahman castes. In urban places like Bombay, these historically related castes identified themselves as Gauda Saraswat Brahmans. The more prominent castes among these were Shenvi, Sasastikar, Bardeshkar, Konkani, Pednekar, Kudaldeshkar, and Shenvipaiki (Saraswat). There were several other smaller Konkani-speaking Brahman castes, namely, Bhalavalkar, Divadkar, Kajule, Khadape, Kirloskar, Lotlikar, Narvankar and Rajarurkar.[73]

The Shenvis were the most successful among these castes. Shenvis were operating as the dominant caste in the new conquest region of Ponda.[74] They were associated with the two major shifted temples: the temple of Sri Mangesh, which was originally located in the village of Kushasthali in the Old Conquest region,and the temple of Sri

[72]N. K. Wagle, "The Gaud Saraswat Brahmans of West Coast of India: A Study of Their Matha Institution and Voluntary Associations (1870-1900)," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay*, no. 26 (1974).

[73]R. E. Enthoven, "The Tribes and Castes of Bombay," (Bombay: Government Central Press 1920), 251-52.

[74]According to M. N. Srinivas, Dominant caste is the caste which controls most of the land and has numerical superiority. Shenvis were never superior in numbers, but dominated in land ownership. See Srinivas, *The Dominant Caste and Other Essays*.

Shantadurga, originally located in the village of Keloshi.[75] Shenvis were highly mobile and successful. Some Shenvis were priests and recipients of religious grants. Most had financial interests in farming. Throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they worked as scribes for various colonial and Indian states.[76] These administrative jobs took them from Goa to the Marathi-speaking areas of the Deccan plateau. Shenvis followed the Smarta religious tradition of Hinduism. This meant that they worshipped five major Hindu deities -- namely, Shiva, Vishnu, Devi, Ganesh and Surya -- as different forms of one ultimate deity. They were found in substantial number in cities like Bombay Gwalior, Manglore, and Indore. They were followers of a matha that they claim was started by Sri Gaudapada.[77] The matha was located in Kavale village in Goa. No matter where Shenvis lived, they identified Goa as their homeland.

Shenvis were closely related to Sasastikars, the second most powerful group among these Brahman castes from Goa. Sasastikars identified themselves with the Old Conquest taluka of Salcete. As their name suggests, they were originally from Salcete, Sasasti being the Hindu name for Salcete taluka; hence they were called Sasastikars, which meant people from Sasasti. The sixteenth-century Portuguese conquest of Salcete had caused them to migrate. Some of them had later returned to Salcete as merchants, while others had settled in the new conquest region of Portuguese empire and

[75]Wagle, "The History and Social Organization of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmins on the West Coast of India,"

[76]Conlon, "Caste by Association: The Gauda Sarasvata Brahmana Unification Movement," 354.

[77]O'Hanlon and Minkowski, "What Makes People Who They Are? Pandit Networks and the Problem of Livelihoods in Early Modern Western India," 389.

contemporary Karnataka and Kerala. The Sastikars followed the religious tradition started by Sri Madhavacharya in the twelfth century. They self-identified as Vaishnavs, which meant that they worshiped Hindu god Vishnu as the supreme deity. They followed the matha located in Partagali village in Canacone taluka.[78]

The Smarta Shenvis and the Vaishnav Sasastikars were the two richest castes among Hindus in Goa. In general, these two castes avoided intermarriage because they differed in their sectarian affiliation. In the eighteenth century, they presented their sectarian dispute in the court of the Portuguese king. The details of the case give evidence that marriages were happening between the two groups.[79] I also know of at least one case of marriage between these groups in the nineteenth century.[80]

The third important group from Goa was the Bardeskars. They identified themselves as descendants of Brahmans of the Bardez region. Many had out-migrated due to Portuguese persecution in the sixteenth century and were living in Kannada-speaking areas. They were Vaishnavs and followed the Partagali Matha.

The Shenvis, Sasastikars, and Bardeskars who had migrated to Kannada- and Malayalam-speaking areas were referred to as Konkanis by the people of those areas.[81]

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[78]N K Wagle, "The Gaud Saraswat Brahmanas of West Coast of India: A Study of Their Matha Institution and Voluntary Associations (1870-1900)," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bombay* 26 (1974): 235.

[79]*Archivo Portuguez-Oriental*, 6, 371-76.

[80]I was given this information by a respondent.

[81]N K Wagle, "The History and Social Organisation of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmans of the West Coast of India," *Journal of Indian History* 48, no. 1 (1970): 25.

This situation points to the fact that their language had become their identifier. Over time they had intermarried with each other and were operating as a caste in North and South Kanara districts of Karnataka. Some of them were Smartas and others were Vaishnavas. Those who were Smartas followed the Kavale matha, and the Vaishnavs followed the Partagali Matha. Konkanis who lived in primarily in and around Cochin city in the Malayalam-speaking areas had established another Vaishnav matha named Kashi matha. A significant number of Konkanis followed the Kashi matha.

The fifth important caste among Konkani-speaking Brahmans was the Pednekar caste. They inhabited the Pedne region of Goa. They had a long military tradition and had a fiefdom in the Pedne region. They identified themselves as belonging to the Gauda sub-category of the Guada Brahmans. They were led by a prominent family, the Deshprabhus, who had received the inheritable title of *Viscount de Pernem* from the Portuguese state. Pednekars were followers of the Smarta religious tradition.

The Kudaldeshkars constituted the sixth important caste. They inhabited the Kudal region of contemporary Maharashtra and were never a part of the Portuguese empire. Historically they had a military tradition. They had a small fiefdom in the Kudal region which was liquidated by the Maratha leader Lakham Savant in 1682. Lakham Savant employed Shenvis as his administrators.[82] In the sixteenth century, when the Shenvis had migrated out of Portuguese-controlled territory, the Kudaldeshkars provided them refuge. However, after the Kudaldeshkars lost their fiefdom, Shenvis used their position in the state to harass them. This caused a great deal of resentment among the

[82]O'Hanlon and Minkowski, "What Makes People Who They Are? Pandit Networks and the Problem of Livelihoods in Early Modern Western India," 391.

Kudaldeshkars. Kudaldeshkars were followers of the Smarta tradition and had a matha that was located in Dabholi village in Maharashtra. Kudaldeshkars had a long history of military co-operation with the Pednekars, and they too identified themselves with the Gauda sub-category of Gauda Brahmans. Even today they maintain their partial separateness from the GSB caste.

The seventh Konkani-speaking Brahman caste group was the Shenvipaikis, who were also called Saraswats. Today they are commonly known as the Chitrapur Saraswats. They were mainly settled in Kannada-speaking areas. Historically they were part of the Shenvi group and prospered as administrators of several Indian states. They were Smartas and had established a matha in Shirali village in Karnataka after a conflict with the Kavale matha in the eighteenth century.[83]

Marathi-speaking Brahman castes also inhabited Western India. Historically, the Marathi-speaking Brahman castes considered the Konkani-speaking Gauda Brahmans to be Brahmans of lower ritual status than themselves. Throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Konkani-speaking Brahmans, especially the Smarta Shenvis, worked as scribes for various colonial and Indian states. These administrative jobs took them from Goa to the Marathi-speaking areas of the Deccan plateau, where they faced resistance from Brahman castes who lived there.[84] In cities like Pune, which was the capital of Maratha Empire led by a Chitpavan Brahman family, they were considered ritually inferior Brahmans by the major Maharashtra Brahman castes, such as

[83]See Conlon, *A Caste in a Changing World: The Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmans, 1700-1935*.
[84]It is very likely that the Shenvis who worked as scribes, translators, administrators etc. were followers of the Smarta tradition of Hinduism.

the Chitpavans, the Deshasthas and the Karhades. Nevertheless, Shenvis were highly mobile and successful. Shenvis practiced an unusually diverse set of professions. Some Shenvis were priests and recipients of religious grants. Many had financial interests in farming. The disagreement between the Konkani-speaking Brahmans and the Marathi-speaking Brahmans was not linguistic but had its basis in religion. The inferior status ascribed to the Shenvis was mainly due to the inclusion of fish in their diet, their financial interests in farming, and their occupation as scribes, which brought them in close contact with the ruling classes.[85] The Marathi-speaking Brahmans considered these activities to be unsuitable for a Brahman. In the next section we will see different contours of this status dispute.

The conflict between the Gauda and Dravida Brahmans

In 1631, the issue of the social status of Shenvis was discussed in the city of Banaras. Banaras was the center of Hindu religion and was home to many religious leaders from all over India. The Portuguese had destroyed the Smarta matha in Goa, and the head of the matha had migrated to Banaras as the possibility of restarting the matha in Goa seemed remote. A Shenvi man named Vithal traveled from Goa to Benaras to take permission to restart the matha. He wanted to become a Sanyasi and lead the Kavle matha; for this he needed the permission of the religious experts in Banaras. These religious experts allowed him to become a Sanyasi, but only after deliberating on the issue of the consumption of fish among the Shenvis. They decreed that Panca-Gauda

[85]It must be noted that many families belonging to the Shenvi caste were vegetarian. This was especially the case for those that were living in Kannada-speaking areas, those that were Vaishnav and those that were involved in the priestly professions.

Brahmans have the permission of Parshuram to consume fish, and therefore they granted him a “letter of agreement” to become the head of the Kavle matha.

The diet of fish was not the only concern for the Pancha-Dravid Brahmans. In 1660 a meeting was called by the Hindu King Shivaji on the Konkan coast to decide the status of the Shenvis. This time around, the concern was that Shenvis were involved in farming. Since farming caused harm to living beings, Dravida Brahmans argued that such a profession was unsuitable for Brahmans. The representatives of the Brahman community of Banaras, as well as experts from other important cities in western India such as Paithan, attended the meeting. The Dravida Brahmans objected that Shenvis were involved in farming, which caused harm to living creatures, and hence Shenvis could not be considered to be Brahmans. The assembly decided that farming was indeed an unsuitable profession for a Brahman. They, however, allowed Shenvis the option to return to proper Brahman professions within seven generations.[86]There was also an element of jealousy in this issue. Shenvis were quite successful professionally as scribes and some Marathi-speaking Dravid Brahmans, including some Karhades, disliked them for their success.[87]

This conflict between Konkani-speaking-Brahmans and Marathi-speaking Brahmans got a new impetus with the establishment of British rule in India. I will now discuss how this long-standing conflict between two classes of Brahmans taking place

[86]O'Hanlon and Minkowski, "What Makes People Who They Are? Pandit Networks and the Problem of Livelihoods in Early Modern Western India," 392-98.

[87]Ibid., 392.

under the British colonial gaze instigated the Eki-Beki dispute among the Konkani-speaking Brahmans.

In the year 1858, the British put down a mass uprising of Indian soldiers working for the British East India Company. The uprising had started the previous year. Mostly a North Indian affair, the uprising was known in colonial discourse as "The Sepoy Mutiny." Many feudal lords, the erstwhile rulers of India, supported the uprising.[88] The overwhelming display of military superiority that crushed the uprising firmly established the British as the paramount colonial power in South Asia. One consequence of this epoch-changing incident was that the administration of India was transferred from the hands of the British East India Company, a commercial undertaking at least in name, to the direct control of the British crown.[89]

In part, what triggered the uprising was the fear of ritual pollution and consequent loss of social status among the Indian soldiery. The British had supplied greased ammunition cartridges to their Indian soldiers. These had to be torn open by mouth in order to load gunpowder and pellets into the barrel of the rifle. There were rumors among the Indian soldiers that the British had deliberately greased these cartridges with the tallow of cows and pigs, so that they would pollute Hindu soldiers and defile Muslims, so that the soldiers could then be converted to Christianity. If Hindu soldiers, and most certainly Brahman soldiers, of whom there were many among the troops of the company, were to use their mouth to tear open the cartridges, then they would be facing the life-

[88]Jill C. Bender, *The 1857 Indian Uprising and the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1.

[89]Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 25.

changing consequence of ritual pollution and consequent loss of social status, as they would lose membership in their caste. This was so because the fat of a cow or pig would pollute a Brahman upon contact.[90] It seems that the first shots fired in the uprising were triggered by anguish over being victimized by such a deceit.[91]

The British, who had for a long time taken an interest in the Indian institution of caste, became aware after the uprising that they had committed a grave error by not being sensitive to Indian religious concerns. In the proclamation following the curbing of this violent episode, the British sovereign, Queen Victoria, who was the figurehead of the British Parliamentary monarchy, promised that the British Indian Empire would not interfere with the religious matters of the Indians.[92]

This episode renewed the British anthropological interest in the Indian institution of caste. The British were interested in knowing the people they were ruling. This interest was both scholarly and instrumental.[93] Historically, up to this time, British interest in the study of India had utilized two broad methods. The first was the philological investigation of Indian texts, a method which had been employed in Biblical studies. Philologists took ancient texts as authoritative sources of tradition and often translated these texts into English. In India, they had translated Hindu legal codes such as the Manava-Dharmashastra already in the late eighteenth century. British administrators

[90]The pig is also a polluted animal for Muslim, and so there was anger among the Muslim soldiers as well.

[91]Bender, *The 1857 Indian Uprising and the British Empire*, 6.

[92]Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, 38.
[93]Ibid., 198.

considered it appropriate to refer to Indian legal codes to administer justice, but they distrusted depending on Indian experts like Pundits, as they considered these individuals to be biased and therefore preferred to rely on texts instead of persons.[94]

Besides philology, the second method employed by the British to study Indian society was empirical and intelligence research that collected vast amounts of data about the society.[95] There was already a consensus by the mid-nineteenth century that philological investigation was to be used to categorize and analyze various forms of data collected, such as maps, caste histories, and census material.[96] By the time of the Indian uprising in 1857, the British had conducted some systematic empirical investigation of Indian society by taking a census in major cities. In the year 1864, they conducted a census in one such major city, the city of Bombay: the urban center on India's west coast and the headquarters of the major colonial administrative region on the west coast known as the Bombay Presidency. This administrative region stretched from Sindh in the north to Konkan in the south.[97]

The British crown had received the port of Bombay and the adjoining areas as part of a dowry when the marriage of Charles II of England was arranged with a Portuguese princess in 1661. The property was then transferred to the British East India

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[94]Ibid., 33-38.

[95]Ibid., 43-52.

[96]Ibid., 81-95.

[97]Meera Kosambi, *Bombay in Transition: The Growth and Social Ecology of a Colonial City, 1880-1980* (Stockholm, Sweden: Stockholm, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1986), 27.

Company in 1667.[98] At that time the port of Surat, located slightly to the north of Bombay, was a major trading center on the western coast of India. The British already had a trading establishment, referred to as a "factory," in Surat. Surat provided all the necessary facilities for conducting business, but the British merchants there were still under Indian administrative and military control.[99] They had to compete with companies from other Europeans nations, such as the Dutch and Portuguese, for trade. This situation was not considered desirable, and so the British started developing Bombay as a naval base. Bombay's proximity to Surat meant that trade in Surat could continue without much hindrance. Surat retained its position as the major port on the west coast till the mid-eighteenth century, and then began to decline. The British fortified Bombay and made deliberate efforts to attract enterprising Indian merchant groups like Parsis and Baniyas to the city. The development of Bombay thus took place through a cooperative effort of British and Indian capital.[100] The British defeat of the Maratha Confederacy in 1818 finally connected Bombay with the immediate geographical hinterland of the Marathi-speaking Deccan plateau, attracting more labor and industry to the city. The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the rapid rise of the city of Bombay, transforming the place into a major urban center. By 1864 the city was established as an independent

[98]Ibid.

[99]Douglas E. Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India: The Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City, 1852-1928,* ed. Societies American Council of Learned (Berkeley: Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

[100] Preeti Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

municipality.[101] The 1864 census of Bombay was conducted in response to the heavy influx of population. By this time the city had become famous for its multi-ethnic Population and bustling urbanity. The situation facilitated the intermingling of diverse ethnic and religious groups from all over South Asia and neighboring regions. Muslims from various parts of the Indian subcontinent and the Persian Gulf region settled in the city.[102] The city also attracted a steady flow of Roman Catholics from Portuguese Goa.[103]

The city that provided opportunities for Indian entrepreneurial groups like Parsis and Baniyas also attracted Brahman castes from western India. Members of these Brahman castes were attracted to the city due to some factors, including business opportunities, English education, and employment with the British colonial administration. Marathi-speaking Brahman castes like Karhade, Chitpavan, and Deshastha were already well established in the city.[104] During this period they started to identify themselves as "Maharashtra-Brahman."[105] There were several smaller Marathi-speaking Brahman castes like Devrukhe and Kirvants which identified with the Dravida category. The city also attracted a number of Konkani-speaking Brahman castes from Goa and neighbouring regions, and these castes started identifying themselves as Gaud

[101] Kosambi, *Bombay in Transition: The Growth and Social Ecology of a Colonial City, 1880-1980*.

[102] Nile Green, *Bombay Islam* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[103] Rochelle Pinto, *Between Empires: Print and Politics of Goa* (New York: New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[104] Gunjikar, *Bhramaniras*.

[105]Ibid.

Saraswat Brahmans (GSBs).[106] Individually these castes were numerically inferior of each of the above mentioned Maharashtra-Brahman castes, but collectively as GSBs they were in majority among the Brahmans.

GSBs claimed to be descendants of the sage Saraswat, who lived on the banks of the river Saraswati. During a severe famine, Saraswat survived by consuming fish. He caught one fish per day and cut it into three parts. He consumed the middle portion and joined the head and the tail of the fish and made it alive again. He would then release the fish in the water. GSBs gave this myth as an explanation for their diet of fish. Maharashtra-Brahmans pointed to this same myth to explain the inferior status of GSBs due to this original sin of consumption of flesh committed by sage Saraswat.[107]

The identities of these Brahmans, whether Maharashtra-Brahmans or GSBs, were to be found originating in a text called Sahyadrikhand. Madhav M. Deshpande, a noted scholar on these textual identities of Brahmans, has shown that both the Maharashtra-Brahmans and GSBs appear in the Sahyadrikhand. In his article "Panca Gauda and Panca Dravid: Contested Borders of Traditional Classification," he discusses these identities in detail. He shows that historically the Brahmans of India were categorized into two broad groups: North Indian Brahmans, who were called Gauda Brahmans, and South Indian Brahmans, who were called Dravid Brahmans.[108] Deshpande shows that the Maharashtra-

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[106]Bhavani Vishwanath Kanvinde, *Saraswat Brahman Urf Shenavi Kinva Konkane Brahman* (Mumbai: National Chapkhana, 1870).

[107]Wagle, "The History and Social Organization of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmins on the West Coast of India," 8.

[108] Deshpande, "Panca Gauda and Panca Dravida: Contested Borders of a Traditional Classification".

Brahman, a sub-category of Brahmans belonging to the Dravid group, was a recent replacement of an earlier category, Madhyadeshiya (*Madhyadeshiya)* Brahmans. He suggests that the term Madhyadeshiya more appropriately applies to the Deshastha Brahmans, whose name implies that they lived in the Desh, i.e., central India. According to Deshpande, the Brahman group treated most favorably in the Sahyadrikhand is the Gaud Saraswat Brahmans. The Sahyadrikhand details the myth of the GSBs' arrival in Goa. According to this myth, Parshuram, the sixth avatar of Vishnu, brought GSBs to this newly created land of Konkan. He gifted them land and asked them to perform religious rituals in this newly established land.[109]

Deshpande also shows that, even though the Saraswat Brahmans belonged to an old sub-category of Gauda Brahmans, a caste of Brahmans – i.e., the Shenvis – identifying themselves with the category is a relatively recent phenomenon. This brings us to another major realization: the Brahmans who were identifying themselves with these ancient and textual categories were doing so under the gaze of the British colonial power, which, as we have seen, took ancient texts as authoritative.

British Colonialism

In order to understand the nature of British colonialism, it is important to note that it was marked by a mode of knowledge formation and political culture made famous by Edward Said as "Orientalism" that was in distinct contrast to the Occidentalizing style of

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[109] Wagle, "The History and Social Organization of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmins on the West Coast of India," 48,1: 9-10.

Portuguese colonialism.[110] Orientalism is a manner of viewing a colonized society and culture in Asia as the inferior "Other" of Europe. This view was produced and articulated in art, literature, and scholarship. Indian institutions like village and caste and Indian forms of religion were seen as traditional and irrational institutions and contrasted to British and Continental European institutions that were presented as modern, rational and progressive. This Orientalist view also led to the British taking a more patronizing attitude towards Indians and Indian institutions, aiming to educate the Indians and transform their institutions to conform to rational modernity.

The critical criteria of this modernity were race, the assessment of race, and the ranking of a hierarchy of races. With the most advanced race being allegedly constituted by white people from northern Europe, and Africans being considered to constitute the lowest rank, Asians –including Indians– were placed somewhere in between these two racial poles. This theory informed the interpretation of Indian society. The issue of caste provides the best example: British colonial anthropology argued that caste was a product of racial mixing between white-colored Aryans and dark-skinned Dravidians. Empirical technologies and practices such as anthropometry, census-taking and ethnography became an integral part of this aspect of Orientalist knowledge formation.[111] The Brahmans who were debating over each other's status were doing so under the gaze of colonizers driven by empiricist ideas.

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[110] Said, *Orientalism*.

[111]Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 1-12.

Debates among Brahmans in the late-nineteenth century Bombay

Even while late nineteenth-century Bombay was a throbbing mixture of ethnicities, the distinction between the ruling British and the colonized Indians was maintained through various techniques such as city planning and architecture.[112] It is probably due to multiple factors like the distinction between the colonizers and the multi-ethnic migrant population of Bombay, the availability of print media, and the relative freedom of the press, that Bombay became an environment conducive for the concretization of such social identities as 'Indian nationalist' and 'Maharashtra Brahman.' The Gauda Saraswat Brahman caste, which is the subject of this dissertation, was one such identity that was partly formed in the city.[113]

Konkani-speaking Brahmans from Bombay were acutely aware of the possibility of being classified as non-Brahmans by the British state, as British ethnographers utilized similar interpretations regarding the proper Brahman diet and occupations when categorizing the caste hierarchies as asserted by the Maharashtra Brahmans.[114] This becomes evident from a note in the book *Brahmaniras*,[115] published in the late nineteenth-century. I will discuss the book in detail later in the present chapter. The note

[112]Chopra, *A Joint Enterprise*, xxi.

[113]In part the process of GSB caste formation was taking place in the city of Mangalore. The city is located on the Konkan coast south of Goa and is in the contemporary state of Karnataka.

[114]For the evidence that Maharashtra-Brahmans did not accept GSBs as Brahmans, see, Wagle, "The Gaud Saraswat Brahmanas of West Coast of India: A Study of Their Matha Institution and Voluntary Associations (1870-1900)," 240.

[115]Gunjikar, *Bhramaniras*.

indicates that there were attempts by 'Maharashtra Brahmans' during the census of 1864 to delegitimize the Brahman status of the Shenvis.[116]

In late–nineteenth-century Bombay, the availability of printing led to a profusion of printed material in the form of books, booklets, periodicals, and newspapers. The owners of presses and newspapers often ran them as mouthpieces of their particular caste. The books and newspapers they produced also became a site of conflict over who could be considered a Brahman. Most of the printing presses of Bombay that produced dailies were in the control of Karhades or Chitpavans. It is clear that the newspapers had caste affiliations: *Induprakash* and *Native Opinion,* for instance, were run by Chitpavan Brahmans. The newspaper *Native Opinion* went as far as to deny the Shenvis Brahman caste status.[117] Maharashtra Brahmans claimed that they themselves were *shatkarmi* Brahmans, i.e., Brahmans who have rights to perform all six ritual actions prescribed for Brahmans: learning and teaching the Vedas, performing ritual sacrifices for oneself and officiating at such rituals for others, and giving and receiving of gifts as a part of the religious performance. The Maharashtra Brahmans considered GSBs to be *trikarmi*[118] Brahmans, i.e. Brahmans who have rights to perform only three ritual actions, namely, learning but not teaching the Vedas, performing ritual sacrifices for oneself but not for others, and giving but not receiving religious gifts.

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[116]Ibid., 156.

[117]Ibid., 1-5.

[118]Kanvinde, *Saraswat Brahman Urf Shenavi Kinva Konkane Brahman*, 102.

For the urban leaders of the GSB caste formation, this provided a particular problem because they did not have access to publishing in the newspapers and they were not strong enough in the city to sustain a newspaper of their own. There is evidence that some of these leaders tried to respond to such offensive allegations, but their letters were not published in the newspapers.[119] In response to such clear attempts to delegitimize their status, the GSBs developed a strategy in which they formed several caste associations. Several GSB voluntary organizations were formed between 1870 and 1900. In 1870, they formed an organization named Saraswat Brahmansamuha. Most of these organizations were led by Shenvis; other Konkani-speaking Brahmans are conspicuous by their absence. Other organizations formed by GSBs were Arya Brahma Samsad (1888), and Saraswat Brahman Samaja.[120] Apart from organizing themselves through voluntary association they also started to react to allegations against their status by publishing books. These books provide insight into the nature of the conflicts among the Brahman castes and show the anxieties of the leaders of the GSB formation at the moment of the beginning of the process of unification of these historically-related Brahman castes.

I will discuss two such books here, both of them written in Marathi. The first one, published by Bhavani Shankar Kanvinde in 1870, is entitled *Saraswat Brahman urf Shenavi kimva Konkane Brahman*. The title of the other book is *Bhramaninaras*. Ramchandra Gunjikar wrote it in 1885. These books are publications of debates between

[119]Ibid., 5-6.

[120]Wagle, "The Gaud Saraswat Brahmanas of West Coast of India: A Study of Their Matha Institution and Voluntary Associations (1870-1900)," 240-46.

GSBS and Maharashtra Brahmans. The books targeted Marathi-reading publics. An analysis of these polemical discussions gives an insight into the nature of the conflict that took place between Maharashtra Brahmans and GSBs. Over time this textual response developed into a full-fledged textual strategy entailing the publication of books, pamphlets, written temple histories and other sources. The most important book in this strategy was the text *Konkanakhyan*. This book was published in 1909. *Konkanakhyan* articulated the worldview of this emerging GSB caste unification movement. The unknown author of the *Konkanakhyan* claims legitimacy for it by stating that it is based on the *Sahyadrikhand*. The *Sahyadrikhand* which it is based on was the one published in the nineteenth century. In the next chapter, I will show the textual politics of the *Konkanakhyan*. Here we are looking at the early stages of the GSB unification movement.

The first book we are discussing is the one published by Kanvinde. It contains the criticism leveled against the GSB caste by Maharashtra Brahman castes like Chitpavans and Karhades. The book also contains a GSB response to these criticisms. The book reveals that Chitpavan and Karhade Brahmans were the main opponents of the GSBs. The book includes a response to these criticisms by Kanvinde and other leaders of the emerging GSB unification movement. Here I will discuss some cases from this book.

The major focus of the book is a conflict that arose between one Mr. Ganesha Bapuji Malvankar and Mr. Bala Mangesh Wagle.[121] This conflict gets mentioned in the

[121]Kanvinde, *Saraswat Brahman Urf Shenavi Kinva Konkane Brahman*, 1-11.

other book, *Bhramaniras*, too. The conflict was initiated when a widow[122] from the Chitpavan caste, Venubai, married a man named Pandurang Vinayak Karmarkar from the same caste on 15th June 1869. Since there was a taboo on widow remarriage, this caused a great deal of resistance. In June 1869 a meeting was called to discuss the matter. The meeting was attended by Bala Mangesh Wagle. Wagle was a barrister by profession. A Chitpavan man, Malavankar, who was the leader of the group opposing the widow remarriage, filed a case in the court of the police magistrate Jon Kanan. Ganesh Bapu stated that Mr. Wagle had tried to sign a document which he was not allowed to sign because he was not a Brahman but a Shenvi by caste. The magistrate decided that there was no problem with Wagle attending the meeting, as Wagle was a Brahman himself and the meeting was meant for Brahmans. This further led to discussions in newspapers. The Chitpavans, led by Malvankar, opposed ascribing Brahman status to Shenvis, arguing that they were not full Brahmans.

The second book, *Brahmaniras*, published in 1885, is much more detailed in the sense that it is a compilation of conflicts between the Maharashtra Brahmans and the GSBs. It was published in 1885 by Rambhau Gunjikar. The book itself was written in support of another book, the *Saraswatimandal* (*Sarasvatīmaṃḍala*), written by the same author. Karhade and Chitpavan Brahmans criticized the *Saraswatimandal* in Marathi-language newspapers such as *Induprakash*. Gunjikar responded to the criticisms, but his

[122]During this period in history a Brahman bride had to be a pre-pubescent girl. The marriage was consummated only after the girl reached the age of puberty. Even when the husband of the girl died before the marriage was consummated the girl would become a widow. Social reformers who supported widow remarriage usually supported the marriage of widows whose marriage was never consummated. It is very likely that in this case the widow might have been a woman whose marriage was never consummated.

responses were not published in the newspapers.[123] Still, the newspapers continued to critique *Saraswatimandal,* labeling it a "barking dog," and so Gunjikar decided to defend *Saraswatimandal* by publishing *Bhramaniras*.

Saraswatimandal had also received criticism from other newspapers, such as *Vartahar* and *Subodhapatrika*. What irritated Gunjikar the most was the writings of a Karhade man who published a booklet called *Jashastase*,[124] which means "A fitting reply." On the other hand, there were several Brahman castes and newspapers which were not critical of the *Saraswatimandal*. Gunjikar mentions that he did not receive criticism from other Marathi-speaking Brahman castes, such as the Deshasthas, Devrukhes, and Kirvants. Newspapers which remained positively inclined toward the *Saraswatimandal* included the *Dinbandhu* and *Shetkaryanca Kaivari*. [125]

Much of the criticism of the GSBs centered around the allegation that they were *trikarmi* Brahmans, because fish was an integral part of their diet. Gunjikar challenges these assertions by providing several arguments. First, he states that what is challenged is the status of GSBs among Brahmans, but there is no challenge to the fact that GSBs are Brahmans. He further argues that since no ancient Hindu text makes any distinctions between *trikarmi* and *shatkarmi* Brahmans, there is no value in these distinctions.[126] The second way in which Gunjikar responds to the criticism that the Shenvis are fish-eaters is

[123]Gunjikar, *Bhramaniras*.

[124]I have not been able to locate a copy of this booklet. See ibid., 2-5.

[125]Ibid., 1-7.

[126] Ibid.

by showing that only some members of the caste consume fish and that many among them are lacto-vegetarians.[127] My ethnographic interviews have confirmed that castes like Shenvipaiki and Konkanes were indeed lacto-vegetarians. He also defends the Brahman status of the GSBs by citing documents from the Peshwa's archive and by showing letters from erudite Hindu scholars from Kashi that he takes to be evidence for the Brahman status of the GSBs. He then provides references to the locations where these archival documents can be seen. Gunjikar provides another major piece of evidence in the form of colonial court's judgment which permits the GSBs to perform purification rites in the Walkeshwar temple in Mumbai. He shows this evidence because some Karhades had challenged the right of GSBs to perform these purification rites. He also shows how Karhades consistently challenged the right of GSBs to perform temple worship, in the past as well as at the current times. He goes on to mention different places where Karhades and Chitpavans perform rituals in a subordinate position to GSBs. Gunjikar launches an offensive argument against the Karhades by citing the *Sahyadrikhand*, which mentions Karhades as sinners and people of loose moral character.[128]

One allegation which was often leveled against the GSB caste is that they influenced the Gerson Da Cunha version of the *Sahyadrikhand*. This allegation had some basis in reality, as two prominent GSBs had worked as assistants to Da Cunha in preparing the book for publication. Gunjikar counters this claim by showing that an assistant from the Chitpavan caste also participated in the publication of the

[127] Ibid., 101-02.

[128]For use of Sahyadrikhand to justify the status of GSBs, see, Wagle, "The History and Social Organisation of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmans of the West Coast of India," 8-13.

Sahyadrikhand. He also sees professional rivalry as being the reason behind the Karhade rivalry with the Shenvis, as, unlike other Brahmans, the Karhades did not get jobs in the princely courts. Gunjikar's book further asserts that during the census of 1864 Maharashtra Brahmans tried to prevent GSBs from being put under the category of Brahman and that *Kesari* and other newspapers took part in this conspiracy.[129]

This debate about who can be called a Brahman and the devaluation faced by GSBs in Bombay was one major reason why members of the Konkani-speaking Brahman castes from Bombay pushed for unification of Konkani-speaking Brahman castes. The aim was to increase their numerical strength in Mumbai by unifying all the Konkani-speaking Brahman castes, to get support from their more numerous kinsmen from Goa and Kannada-speaking areas and to get British official recognition of GSB as an identifier. The books I have introduced here thus give us an idea of the situation in late-nineteenth-century western India. The military power of the Indian kings was nullified and they were left as symbolic figureheads. The colonial power, the British Indian Empire, had firmly established itself as the dominant power in South Asia. British colonialism was collecting knowledge about India through the census and ethnography. The process of concretization of social identities was initiated by the colonial state. Urban leaders of the Konkani-speaking Brahman castes living in Bombay were aware of the possibility of being miscategorized as non-Brahmans by the British colonial state.

This late-nineteenth-century scenario described by me advances the "Hollow Crown" thesis of Dirks by showing that in the absence of Indian kingship; the Brahmans got more public space to be the sole Indian arbiters of the caste. Apart from the Bombay

[129]Gunjikar, *Bhramaniras*, 156.

migrants, the other segment among the GSBs which took an initiative in the unification and concretization of GSB identity were the Konkanes, who had been pushed out of Goa due to the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century and had migrated to Kannada- and Malayalam-speaking areas of today's Karnataka and Kerala. This group was reduced in status vis-a-vis local Kannada-speaking Brahmans. Konkane who had settled in Kerala faced a similar reduced status, as being migrants, at the hands of local Brahmans from Kerala. Intimately aware of their historically minor status vis-à-vis local Brahmans from Kannada- and Malayalam-speaking regions, this group too became involved in organizing the GSB caste. The major strategy of the Konkane caste grouping was to form an organization called the "Gaud Saraswat Brahman Parishad," which organized yearly conferences starting in 1907.

In the next chapter I will elucidate the *Konkanakhyan*, which imagined the new worldview that underlay the unification of the GSBs. *Konkanakhyan expanded* the textual polemics employed by GSB unification leaders like Gunjikar and Kanvinde in the late nineteenth-century. Then, in the fourth chapter, I will show how the Eki-Beki dispute unfolded over time.

CHAPTER 3

KONKANAKHYAN: THE GSB WORLDVIEW

In the preceding chapter I have discussed the historical circumstances that created conditions suitable for the instigation of the GSB caste unification movement. I will now discuss the modernizing worldview of the young urban Brahman men who led the unification propagated by the Eki-faction. This worldview of the Eki-faction was most expressively articulated through the publication of the text Konkanakhyan (*Koṃkaṇākhyāna*).[130] Konkanakhyan was published in the context of the first GSB unification conference (1909). Two versions of this Marathi-language text were circulated by the Eki-faction in 1909. The first version was published in 1909 by Shripad Vyankatesh Wagle. Its full title is *Koṃkaṇākhyāna Ūrfa Dākṣiṇātya Sārasvata Brāhmaṇākhyāna,* which can be translated as "The *Legend of the Konkan,* alias *t*he Legend of the Southern Saraswat Brahmans*"*. "Konkanakhyan" literally means "The Story of the Konkan." The place of publication of this book is not mentioned. The second version of the Konkanakhyan was published in the same year by Hari Bhikaji Samant. It was circulated under the title *Śrī Koṃkaṇa Mahātmya,* which can be translated as "The Greatness of the Konkan" and was printed by the Belgaum Samachar (*Beḷagāṃva Samācāra*) printing press, located in Belgaum.[131] There are some differences between the two versions of the text. . Their contents and the narratives are basically the same, except that the Samant version has four verses more than the Wagle version. Both versions were published in the same year by men identifying with the Eki-faction. Both

[130] Anonymous, *Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*.
[131]*Sri Konkan Mahatmya* (Belgaum: Belgavn Samachar, 1909).

versions claim to be based on an ancient Hindu text, that is, the Sahyadrikhand (*Sahyādrikhaṇḍa*). Since I received a copy of the Samant version much later in my dissertation process, I have selected the Wagle version for my analysis. My purpose is to understand the narrative of the Konkanakhyan and to assess its role in the Eki-Beki dispute.

The narrative of the Konkanakhyans published by the Eki-faction was challenged through the publication of counter-texts. The Konkanakhyan is therefore to be seen as a contested text project in the unification process of the GSB caste., I will discuss two of these counter-texts. and also a temple history which supports the narrative of the Konkanakhyan..

The first counter-text to the Konkanakhyan was published in 1915 by Ganesh Mukund Parulekar, a member of the Kudaldeshkar caste. It is a book titled *Kuḍāḷadeśakara: Dakṣiṇetīla Ādhya Gauḍa Brahmaṇa*, which means "Kudaldeshkars: The Original Gaud Brahmans of South India" It is written in prose form and gives a nuanced response to the Konkanakhyan published by Wagle. In 2001, Madhukar Samant, published a second edition of this book.[132]

The second counter-text that I will discuss was published by Raghunath Sitaram Desai. This text can be seen as another version of the Konkanakhyan. It was titled *Sahyādrikhaṇḍa—Purvārdha—Uttarārdha Arthat Koṃkaṇākhyāna,* and was published in

[132]G. M. Parulekar, *Kudaldeshkar: Dakshinetil Adhya Gauda Brahman*, vol. Improved second edition (Madhukar Samanta, 2001).

1947.[133] Desai was at that time the secretary of the Pednekar caste association, the *Peḍaṇekara Gauḍa Brāhmaṇa Sabhā*. His book was published in response to the first two Konkanakhyans published in the context of the Eki-faction. It holds the differences between the two Konkanakhyans published by the Eki-faction to be significant, something that I will discuss later in this chapter. In the last part of the chapter I will discuss a text that supported the Konkanakhyan and the unification agenda of the Eki-faction. This book was published by a leader of the Eki-faction named Shripad Vyankatesh Wagle. It is entitled *Śrimaṃgeśa Devasthanācā Sacitra Saṃkṣipta Itihāsa*, "A Brief Illustrated History of the Sri Mangesh Temple." Wagle published this book in 1927 as the second edition of an alleged original edition claimed to have been published in 1907 .[134] Just like the Konkanakhyan, this book claims to be based on the ancient text called Sahyadrikhand.

In order to understand the complex interaction of all these texts, it is important to note that Brahmans have had a long tradition of composing religious texts. These are organized in a hierarchical fashion. The Brahmanical tradition recognizes two major categories of texts. The first category is called Shruti (*Śruti*) texts. Shruti means hearing or "that which is heard." These texts are believed to have been spiritually received by ancient sages known as *Ṛṣis*. They are also called the *Veda*s and constitute the most prestigious revealed knowledge of the Hindu tradition. Their genre is further divided into the following categories: *Saṃhitā*s, *Brāhmaṇa*s, *Āraṇyaka*s, and *Upaniṣad*s. Some of

[133]Anonymous, *Shayadrikhand-Purvardha-Uttarardh Arthat Konkanakhyan*.

[134]Shripad Vyankatesh Wagle, *Srimangesha Devasthanacha Sacitra Sankshipta Itihas.*, Second ed. (Mapusa-Goa: Wagle, Shripad Vyankatesh, 1927).

these texts are said to be the oldest texts known to humanity and are likely to have been composed between 1500 and 500 BCE.[135] The second category of texts is called Smruti (*Smṛti*) texts. The Hindu tradition attributes these texts to human authors. Smruti means remembrance, or "that which is remembered." These texts have a slightly lower status than the Shruti texts. They are often of the following types: *Dharmaśāstra*s, *Itihāsa*s and *Purāṇa*s. The famous Hindu epics *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* belong to this category of texts. Smruti texts can be ancient, but many are of recent origin.[136] The tradition acknowledges that these texts can be edited, with omissions and additions and other changes of various types. There are also some shorter texts called *Mahātmya*s and *Ākhyāna*s that belong to this category. Such texts eulogize a deity for performing certain deeds or highlight the importance of a place because of certain incidents that happened there.

The Konkanakhyan is part of a genre of Hindu texts called *Sthaḷa-Ākhyāna,* or more commonly *Sthān-Pothī,* which means, a book of places.[137] These texts are found in Sanskrit and in various regional languages in India. Their main narrative is about place: How did a place come to be? Who were its original settlers? Which deity inhabits a place? The objective of such texts is to show the importance of place. In the first chapter of the Konkanakhyan, one finds the claim that the text is based on the ancient Hindu

[135]Embree, Hay, and De Bary, *Sources of Indian Tradition,* 1, 5.

[136]Ibid., 206-10.

[137]Anne Feldhaus, *Connected Places: Region, Pilgrimage, and Geographical Imagination in India* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 186.

religious text Sahyadrikhand.[138] This statement points to the fact that the Sahyadrikhand is considered a text of great authority.

The Sahyadrikhand is a Sanskrit Puranic[139] text that discusses the religious geography and myth of settlement of the Western coast of India. It is supposed to be part of a larger text, the Skandapurana, and played a major role in the politics of the GSB caste unification movement. The Skandapurana is a large compilation of ancient manuscripts that was organized, edited and, for the first time in the modern era, published in 1877 by the Portuguese Orientalist Gerson Da Cunha with the help of experts from the Shenvi caste.[140]Wagle notes that historians of the GSB caste have based their claim of GSB migration from Tihurat in Bengal to Goa and the justification of inclusion of fish in their diet on the Sahyadrikhand.[141] According to the myth in this text, Parshuram brought 66 families belonging to ten gotras, that is, Brahmanical clans, to Goa and settled them in various villages in Goa.[142] O'Hanlon and Minkowski also note the importance of the Sahyadrikhand in the negotiations of the identities and histories of the Brahmans of the Western coast of India.

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[138]Anonymous, *Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*, p.2, v.9.

[139]Purana is a high status Hindu text. This category of texts are lower in status than the Vedas.

[140]J. Gerson da Cunha, "The Sahyâdri-Khanda of the Skanda Purâma a Mythological, Historical, and Geographical Account of Western India; First Edition of the Sanskrit Texts with Various Readings," Bombay 1877: Thacker, Vining, http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/32060327.html.

[141]Wagle, "The Gaud Saraswat Brahmanas of West Coast of India: A Study of Their Matha Institution and Voluntary Associations (1870-1900)," 228-29.

[142] "The History and Social Organisation of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmans of the West Coast of India," 48,1: 9.

The most celebrated group in the Sahyadrikhand are the GSBs. Chitpavans and Karhades, the major opponents of the GSBs, are considered much inferior in Sahyadrikhand.[143] The archaeologist Mitragotri too recognizes the importance of the Sahyadrikhand for the Brahmans of the Western coast of India.[144] It must be noted that these scholars refer to the Sahyadrikhand published by Gerson da Cunha. Levitt has published a dissertation on the several manuscripts of the Sahyadrikhand. He states that parts of the Sahyadrikhand published by Da Cunha are composed of recent additions to the text.[145] Despite Levitt's clear discrediting of Da Cunha's Sahyadrikhand, the work of the Portuguese Orientalist has remained popular with the scholars. The Sahyadrikhand is a very important text for the discussion of the historical settlement of the western coast of India. It is therefore not much surprising that the authors of the Konkanakhyan, which literally means "The Story of Konkan", seek to ground its authority on the Sahyadrikhand.

The analysis and interpretation of the alleged original version of the Konkanakhyan, unfortunately, face a number of technical difficulties. I have not managed to get hold of any old manuscript of the Konkanakhyan. According to Parulekar, the earliest reference to the Konkanakhyan is from 1884. It comes from

[143]Rosalind Hanlon and Christopher Minkowski, "What Makes People Who They Are? Pandit Networks and the Problem of Livelihoods in Early Modern Western India," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 45, no. 3 (2008): 387-89.

[144]V. R. Mitragotri, "A Socio Cultural History of Goa from the Bhojas to the Vijayanagara" (Goa University, 1992), 15-16.

[145]Stephan Hillyer Levitt, "The PātityagrāManirṇaya: A Puranic History of Degraded Brahman Villages" (University of Pennsylvania, 1973).

Ramchandra Gunjikar, the author of the *Saraswatimandal and Bhramaniras*, who is cited to have seen and worked with an older manuscript of the Konkanakhyan.[146]

Most of the scholars who have studied the GSB caste have taken the Konkanakhyan to be based on a manuscript from the eighteenth century. Axelrod and Fuerch consider the Konkanakhyan to be an eighteenth-century "caste chronicle." They base their conclusion on the Samant version of the Konkanakhyan and consider that the manuscript was published in 1721.[147] A recent dissertation on Brahmans of Western India assumes the same .[148] Conlon noticed that a text named Konkanakhyan was published during the GSB unification movement, but his investigation of the GSB caste as an attempt to generate a corporate identity focused on middle class success and made him ignore the importance of the text itself in the process of GSB caste unification. He too considers it to be an eighteenth-century text.[149]

It is possible that the text is an eighteenth-century manuscript. In my understanding, the unification narrative of Konkanakhyan displays a modern outlook. The stories of the second half of the Konkanakhyan must also have circulated within these castes, but the interpretation of those stories to justify unification seems to be the

[146]See Parulekar, *Kudaldeshkar: Dakshinetil Adhya Gauda Brahman*, Improved second edition, 18. I have confirmed that Gunjikar indeed mentions the Konkanakhyan through a telephonic conversation with my respondent, Manohar Pai Dhungat, a senior member of The Goa Hindu Association, Mumbai. See, Gunjikar Ramchandra, Saraswati Mandal (Mumbai: Nirnaysagar Chapkhana, 1884), 32.

[147]Axelrod and Fuerch, "Flight of the Deities: Hindu Resistance in Portuguese Goa," 392.

[148] Patil Urmila, "Conflict, Identity and Narratives: The Brahman Communities of Western India from the Seventeenth through the Nineteenth Century." (2010), 177.

[149]Conlon, "Caste by Association: The Gauda Sarasvata Brahmana Unification Movement," 363.

contribution of the Eki-faction. This is the reason why I refer to the Konkanakhyan as the *worldview* of the Eki-faction.

The Wagle Konkanakhyan has three parts, the preface, the first half of the book and a second half of the book. I analyze these three sections of the book to show how it matches the narrative of the Eki-faction. The preface of the book was written by Ramachandra Vaman Nayak Karande. Karande declares himself to be the editor of the book. He claims to have published the book based on a 188-year old manuscript by an anonymous author. Specifically, the text being an eighteenth century text is a claim made in its preface.[150] The book has a title page, a ten-page-long preface, an index page, and a ninety-page-long main body. The text proper is divided in two halves. The first half, which is called *pūrvārdha*, has eight chapters and describes what the author characterizes as earlier events and the original geography. This part is claimed to be based on the Sahyadrikhand, according to Karande. The second half, called *uttarārdha*, also has eight chapters. It is claimed to be based on copper-plate inscriptions, folktales, Maratha documents and history. The second half narrates events that led to the formation of different "sub-castes" of the GSB caste. This description also accounts for the change in the original geography of the caste.

The text is in the form of a dialogue between the speaker, who is the alleged author of the text, and a listener who poses queries to the speaker. The text unfolds through this question-and-answer session. This dialogue is composed of 1176 verses. Each verse is called an *ovī,* that is a quatrain, a classic meter in Marathi poetry. The sixth chapter of the second half is an exception, as it is written in prose form.

[150] I will discuss this issue later in the chapter.

The Konkanakhyan is a caste chronicle, in the form of a human geography presented as the road map for the GSB caste. It is about the uniqueness and particularity of the GSBs, their ancestral place, i.e. Goa, and the glory of their family deities. The Konkanakhyan also refers to other, non-GSB Brahman castes, but only in a minor way. The text doesn't discuss the rest of the population of Goa to any serious extent. The Konkanakhyan divides the geography of Konkan at three levels of scale. The smallest level is the village. The Indian term for village is *gaun* (*gāṃva*). Several villages combine to form the intermediate region of a *taluka*. Usually a *taluka* is separated from other *talukas* by a natural boundary like a river. The largest region is called *desh* (*deśa*). Goa is the central d*esh* of the Konkan. The deities that are mentioned in the Konkanakhyan are mostly high Sanskritic deities, usually one or another form of the deities Shiva, Vishnu, or the supreme female deity Devi. Local deities are rarely mentioned in the text.[151] The Konkanakhyan is also a well-articulated assertion of Brahman ethos and perspective on place and time. It is a book that irons out anomalies and sets a path for the future. It is in this sense that I call the Konkanakhyan a worldview. It invites members of the GSB caste to view the world from a favorable vantage point.

The Konkanakhyan most certainly contains history and it presents a very good interpretation of historical events from an emic perspective. Nevertheless, the Konkanakhyan is not a history book: history is only incidental to the Konkanakhyan. The Konkanakhyan rather starts from a mythical ideal geography. Due to historical events this

[151]Mitragotri mentions numerous deities from Goa and suggests that the even the high deities of Hinduism could be local deities in their origin. See, V. R. Mitragotri, *A Socio-Cultural History of Goa from the Bhojas to the Vijayanagara* (Panaji Goa: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999), 175-248.

geography is expanded to become the current cultural geography of the GSB caste. History is useful to explain the change from the original to the current geography.

In technical terms, I will begin the reading of this text, which is written in an old form of the Marathi language, from the preface, which sets the stage. . Next I will discuss the first part of the Konkanakhyan, which discusses the GSB myth of origin and GSB geography. After that, I will discuss the geography of Goa, then the elaboration of issues of Brahmanical ethics discussed in the Konkanakhya I will paraphrase important text passages and not engage in literal translations.

The preface of the Konkanakhyan highlights what the reader must not miss while reading the text. This is crucial, because the text may give the impression that it is merely a history and geography, concerned only with the statement of facts. The text, however, is much more than that. The book is most crucially about the GSB caste and what it should be doing. It must be noted that the audience for this book were people of the GSB caste. The book is written in such a way as to invite GSB people to place themselves in a particular geography and, from that favorable vantage point, to view the past as well as future possibilities. The desirable actions necessary for the unification are expected to flow spontaneously from this reflection. The preface maintains the focus on this central theme, lest someone I would call an unrefined reader gets lost in the detail. The preface has an overtly exaggerated tone of respect towards its audience, which it is trying to woo in joining what looks like a project of social engineering.

In order to elaborate on the politics of the publication of the book, I will analyze its preface in some detail. At the beginning of this preface the editor , Ramachandra Vaman Nayak Karande, makes explicit the intention behind the publication of the book:

> A lot of movement is currently going on with the good intention of unification of internal divisions amongst the Gauḍa Sārasvata Brāhmaṇa caste group. It is seen that many have a contrary opinion to this idea. Are these small internal divisions, internal divisions in reality; or are they independent castes? Senseless doubts like this are also raised. A lot of desirable outcomes will be achieved if, at this moment, the opinion of the wise people of older times on these divisions is brought to the sight of people; having thought this, I considered bringing this 188-year-old book named Konkanakhyan to publication.[152]

Karande states that the book is based on only one manuscript. It was possible for him to get other manuscripts of the text, he says, but that would have unduly delayed the main objective of contributing to the debate. So he claims to have sent the book for publication after having copyedited the manuscript to remove accidental errors. After stating this, he discusses selected verses from the main body of the book to highlight its main points; he responds to counterpoints that are expected, suggests corrective action and puts thinly veiled pressure on the Swami of the Kavle matha to support the unification movement.[153]

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[152] Anonymous, *Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*, 1.

[153]Ibid., 9-10.

Karande is certain that the book will face derision, so he employs a strategy of pre-empting the issues in the preface. The lack of information about the name of the author and such other details as the author's village are such issues. Karande addresses them by highlighting the verses from the text that give a hint about the markers of the author's identity. These markers are his *gotra,*[154] his village, and the deity to which he is devoted. As we proceed in this analysis of the book, we will see that these are the three markers that become the crucial identifiers of a GSB person. I read this as an intelligent move by Karande. The move masquerades as an apologetics in defense of the author, but in reality what Karande does is to assert the markers of *gotra,* village, and deity as traditional and historical markers, and therefore the truly legitimate markers, of GSB identity.[155] Throughout the text, we will see these markers being held to be important, while other markers, those that highlight sectarian affiliation and regional identity, are seen as unfortunate and incidental and are delegitimized as being divisive.

Karande interprets some verses from the main text in order to make informed guesses about the author. He states that the author was from the village Keloshi in the Salcete taluka. Karande also derives from these verses that the author was a devotee of Rama. He declares that the book was completed in a place called Shivpur, but at the same time he acknowledges that he cannot locate that village in or around Goa or Karnataka. Every time Karande draws an insight from the text, he takes care to cite the relevant verses.

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[154]Gotra literary means a cow stead. Gotras derives their names from ancient sages, and Brahmans belonging to a gotra are believed to be descendents of the particular sage the gotra is named for.

[155]Anonymous, *Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*.

Karande writes a short hagiography of the author by appreciating his inquisitiveness and the encyclopedic knowledge that he gained through travel. He states that one should appreciate the courage of the author for fearlessly asserting his point. Karande moves on to appreciate the author's courage, imagining that he must have faced stiff resistance some two hundred years ago, since even in current times (i.e. 1909-10) the majority is still against change in traditions. Karande concludes that this must have been the reason why the author has given only the names of his gotra and his village, and not his own name.

Nevertheless, Karande takes the opportunity to show his own intelligence when he states that he deduces that the author must be of the name Raghunath, because in the 129th verse of the eighth chapter the author states "that the book has been written by Raghunath himself." Karande interprets this verse as alluding to the Hindu god Rama, but also says that in reality Raghunath must be the name of the author. This is an old writing style called *mudrā,* through which authors insert their names in a text without giving a clear indication that they are doing so, Karande explains. Karande shows how the author of the Konkanakhyan has views similar to those shared by the people who want to unify the GSB caste, unlike the majority, which opposes the unification for "silly reasons."[156]

In the preface, Karande also makes a classificatory argument about the main body of the text. He states that the first half is called *purāṇokta*; i.e., it is based on texts like the Sahyadrikhand (*Sahyadrikhaṇḍa),* which "can be considered to be part of" a Purana. The Marathi phrase he uses to express the idea "can be considered to be a part of" is "*khapūna jāṇāryā,"* which means that the Sahyadrikhand can be sold as being part of a

[156]Ibid., 1-5.

Purana. This phrase can be taken as internal evidence that there was a lack of consensus on whether the Sahyadrikhand could be considered a Purana or not.[157] The second half of the Konkankhyan, according to Karande, is based on copper-plate inscriptions, folktales and sometimes history. The sixth chapter of the second half, according to him, is based on Maratha documents called *Bakhara*s, as it is in ordinary prose form.

Karande makes statements that show his knowledge of historical conflicts between Smarta and Vaishnav groups. He says that the fact that the major Smarta and Vaishnav groups are now united is itself a fortunate achievement. He says that since the issue came to a violent confrontation in the past it should not be surprising that one finds residues of the conflict even today. He also states that at the time (i.e.1909-10) the issue was being presented to Swamis for their opinions. He ends the preface by stating that he did not want to suggest how the Swamis should decide the case, but that he was happy with stating his opinions through the preface.

The preface thus introduces us to the intentions of the people who were interested in unifying the historically related Konkani-speaking Brahman castes at the time the text was published. These leaders of the Eki-faction clearly saw themselves as simply unifying a pre-existing caste which had gotten divided due to unfortunate incidents. Their intention was unification and the two marginally different versions of the Konkanakhyan that got published during this time were both intended to assist in this project. Reading the narrative of this text will help us understand the role it played in the formation of the GSB caste.

[157]Ibid., 7.

The Narrative of the Konkanakhyan

The first chapter of the Konkanakhyan is entitled *Prācīnakathan*, i.e., "The Narration of Ancient Times." This chapter does several things. First, it makes clear that the Konkanakhyan is based on the Sahyadrikhand. It describes appropriate and inappropriate actions for Brahmans (i.e. the Brahmanical ethos) and gives the reasons for writing the book. It also describes in detail what is to follow in the remaining chapters and how the author will proceed with his narration. Most importantly, the chapter details the myth of the origin of the Konkan.

This myth of origin of Konkan can be summarized as follows:

> Originally, Bhargavram (*Bhārgavarāma*), who is more popularly known as *Paraṣurāma*, the axe-brandishing avatar of the Hindu god[158]Viṣṇu, created the land of the Konkan. He created the Konkan by shooting fourteen arrows in the sea and making the waters slip and yield new land. Therefore the land is called "the fourteen slippages of the sea." The land was one hundred *yojana*s in length.[159] In the center of the Konkan was the land of Goa.[160]

[158]I use the word "god" here to identify a non-human, powerful, and benevolent being. If the non-human is female then I refer to the being as a goddess. I sometimes use the word deity to refer to beings of this category. I do not capitalize the letter g in the word god to mark the distinction from the all powerful non-human being, God, known to Christians.

[159]A *yojana*, or *yojan*, is a measure of length. One yojan is approximately 9 miles in length. The measure is often used in old in Hindu religious texts.

[160]Anonymous, *Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*, p. 4, v. 41-44.

Bhargavram wanted to perform a ritual sacrifice in this new land, but the ritual specialists, the Saraswats (*Sārasvata*s), were not to be found in South India. That very moment, he went to North India and brought the Saraswat caste, along with their family deities. Honoring them with a minor compensation, he brought them to Goa, which is like the door of South India, to perform the ritual sacrifice. He also brought other Brahmans. In the land of Kerala, he placed Kerala Brahmans, in the land of *Tuḷava* he placed *Tuliṅga* Brahmans, and in the *Gokarṇa* region he placed *Havīya* Brahmans. To the north of these three areas, in the land of *Barbara*, he established *Karhāḍe* and *Citpāvana* Brahmans. In the center of the Konkan, in the sixteen-yojan-long Goa, he settled his own people, the Saraswat Brahmans, after honoring them. In this way, he gave the hundred-yojan-long Konkan to Brahmans and left to perform austerities.[161]

Through his austerities he, gained the good disposition of lord Shankar (*Śaṃkara*) and asked for the following boons. Let there be in the Konkan a hundred and eight auspicious places called *tīrtha*s, twelve *lingam*s of light, and different types of plants. Let there be divine creepers, coconut palms, banana plants, betel-nut palms, sandalwood trees and different types of flowering trees. May necessities be abundant and cheap at all times. Let the trees be always fruitful, the grains and rain perfect in this place.

[161]Ibid., p. 5, v. 45-55.

Whatsoever the Bhargav asked, Shankar granted it all.[162]

This myth presents several interesting insights regarding the Konkan as a place. To begin with, the Konkan is presented as a non-place. It is a shapeless and unbounded sea. Parshuram creates the new land by firing arrows into the sea. The land at first is empty and devoid of any human or terrestrial life. It has no owner other that the creator of the land, Parshuram.

Several devices establish the centrality and importance of the GSB caste in this region. Firstly, Parshuram himself belongs to the GSB caste. This is established when he is referred to as *Svakīya* which means one's own in Marathi. GSBs thus claim a direct kinship relationship with the creator of the land. Secondly, Parshuram chooses them over all other Brahmans to consecrate the place because of their expertise in ritual sacrifice. He even makes a special journey to North India to bring the GSBs to the South. Thirdly, GSBs are given the most central land, Goa, whereas other Brahmans get only peripheral lands.

This part of the myth also establishes many other relevant assertions. It asserts that the GSBs are from Northern Brahman stock – i.e., they belong to the Gaud category of Brahmans. The very fact that Parshuram has to go to North India to fetch GSBs because of their expertise in Vedic rituals establishes their superiority over the Southern Brahmans, who are categorized as Dravid (*Draviḍa*) Brahmans. Karhade and Chitpavan Brahmans, the rivals of the GSBs, belong to the Dravid, i.e., the Southern Brahmans. The myth makes it clear that the GSBs brought their family deities from their Northern

[162] Ibid., p. 8-9, v. 9-14.

homeland. This is an important point; it makes clear that the deities that are worshiped by GSBs are not deities that were pre-existing in the Konkan but ones that the GSBs brought with them.[163] This myth thus establishes a direct relationship between the GSBs, the land of Goa and the deities found in Goa. No outsider mediates the connection among these three entities. The connection established this way is as intimate and permanent as allowed by family-kinship structure and ownership of ancestral property.

The myth acknowledges that other Brahmans too have received a gift of land from Parshuram, but these Brahmans are secondary to the GSBs, as they are given land to the south and the north of Goa. This is the GSB myth of origin. It establishes GSBs as the first among the Brahmans of the Konkan. The focus of the Konkanakhyan being the GSB caste, the narrative moves on to describe the cultural geography of the caste.

The myth of Parshuram creating the Konkan coast, listing of plants and animals and his settlement of Brahmans is mentioned in the Sahyadrikhand.[164]The land of Goa gifted to the GSBs by Parshuram gets detailed attention in the text. It is described at the level of major constitutive regions and also at the level of the village. As we have seen, Goa is described as a sixteen-yojan-long area located in the center of the Konkan. Its boundaries are marked by two rivers, one in the north and the other in the south. It is assumed that the eastern and western boundaries, the Sahyādri mountain range and the Arabian sea, respectively, are known to the reader. Goa is further divided into the

[163]Mitragotri has argued in his thesis that several deities from Goa are of local origin. See, Mitragotri, "A Socio Cultural History of Goa from the Bhojas to the Vijayanagara," 175-248.

[164]Levitt, "The Pātityagrāmanirṇaya: A Puranic History of Degraded Brahman Villages," 102. Also see, Wagle, "The Gaud Saraswat Brahmanas of West Coast of India: A Study of Their Matha Institution and Voluntary Associations (1870-1900)," 228.

following regions: Sasasti (*Sāsaṣṭī)*, Tiswadi (*Tisavāḍī*), Bardesh (*Bāradeśa*), Pedne (*Peḍaṇeṃ*) and Kudal (Kuḍavāḷa).

Of these five regions, the regions of Salcette and Tiswadi get a chapter each describing their geography, whereas the remaining three regions are described in one chapter. I will describe this geography in detail to show how it is imagined by connecting people, places, and deities. The second chapter is on the Salcette region of Goa, which is referred to as Sasasti in Marathi. Today Sasasti is classified as a taluka and is part of South Goa district. The chapter is entitled *Sāsaṣṭī Mahimāna*, which means "The Greatness of Salcette." It is not any accident that Salcette is the first region to be described in this geography. The precedence of this region in the geography indicates the precedence of the Brahmans who inhabit the region. The chapter is written in the style of a report on the GSBs who settled in Salcette. It describes a total of sixteen villages. I give here descriptions of two villages as an example:

> The region of Salcette is located in south Goa. The village Johāra is a major center of administration in the region. The god inhabiting the village is Śrī Dāmodara. Endless is his glory. Recitation of religious narratives goes on continuously in the village and one can feel a flow of spiritual energy in the place. Religious festivities are celebrated continuously in this place and one can hear the sounds of conch and large kettledrums. Brahmans of five *gotras* live in this place: Kauśika, Bhāradvāja and three

more. In Sanskrit, the place is called Maṭhagrāma. In the common language, it is called Mhādagrāma.[165]

In this description, one can see the pattern of linking the deity, the village and the gotra. Sometimes events that happened in a particular place are also narrated. Here is an example:

> The sixth village is Rāyacura or Rāya. The dwelling temple of Śrī Kāmākṣā is in this village. Brahmans of the Atri and Kauśika *gotra*s live here. A devotee from the village of Loṭalī [which is the seventh village in Salcette], while travelling around the world, won the good will of Aṃbā in the country of Kauraṃja. He brought her to his own country. He reached the village of Rāyacura by nightfall and stayed in the village for the night. In the morning he wished to go to his own village, Loṭalī, but the goddess remained stuck in the ground, accepting the place. It is for this reason that Kāmākṣī is the goddess of both the villages of Rāya and Loṭalī. The temple is in an awakened [j*āgruta* in Marathi] state and energetic celebrations go on here.[166]

Apart from linking the deity to the village and its Brahmans, this story gives additional information as to why devotees from the neighboring village of Lotali also worship her.

Other villages mentioned in this chapter include the second village, Veraṇe, which is the supposed to be the original place of Śrī Mhāḷasā. The third village is

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[165]Anonymous, *Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*, p. 9, v. 18-23.

[166]Ibid., p. 11-12, v. 57-62.

Kuḍatarī and is the place of the deity Durgā Sānterī. The rest of the villages in Sasasti are Bāṇāvalī, Śaṃkhāvaḷī, Loṭalī, Vetī, Kuśasthaḷi, Keḷośī, Giraḍolī, Mahākhājana, Vāḍeṃ, Ākhe, Chikhalī and Nāgaveṃ .[167] The Villages of Kushasthali and Kelosi get special mention as these are considered the main two villages granted to GSB caste. The local name of Kushasthali is Kuḍathaḷe and is the place of god Maṅgeśa. The village of Kelosi is the dwelling place of Śāntā Durgā. The author of the text clarifies that this is the original geography and the situation has changed currently and that he will describe the new geography in the second half of the book.

The third chapter is titled *Tīsavāḍīvṛttānta*, which means "Tisvadi report." As with the previous chapters in the book, this one too starts with an invocation to Ganesh. It imagines the geography of Tisvadi as a grouping of thirty villages located on two islands. "Tisvadi" literally means a collection of thirty villages. The main island is the island of Goa, whose center is the Mountain Gomāñcala. Surrounding this mountain is a group of twenty-five villages, and one of these villages is the city of Goa. The remaining five villages are located on the other island, named Dīpavāḍī.

The chapter follows the trend set by the previous chapter in that it establishes a connection among the village, the ancestral lineage of the Brahmans inhabiting the village and the deity that they worship there. Take, for example, verse five on page fourteen. It states that in Tisvadi the first village is Yeḷem. Brahmans of the Bhāradvāja and Vatsa lineages inhabit the village, and they worship Ganesh. In this way, the chapter proceeds to describe a total of six villages and states that there are two more villages in the vicinity, but the chapter does not give details about them. It marks these eight villages

[167]Ibid., 9-14.

as one subgroup within the group of thirty, and moves on to describe villages on the other island, Dipavadi. The text describes only four villages there, taking the total number of villages in the geography to twelve.

Then a total of eleven villages are described which form part of this community of thirty villages but do not fall in the physical geography of this region. These villages are spread across nearby regions, such as Antruj, which is an older name for the Ponda *taluka*. In all, the enumeration accounts for only twenty-three villages, and the chapter remains silent about the unaccounted-for seven villages.[168]

This third chapter has only one story, about the Brahmans of the village of Pañcavāḍī and why their progeny was not growing. The village of Pañcavāḍī is one of the villages that are part of the Tisvadi community but lie outside of the two islands, in this case near the region of Antruj. The story mentions a land conflict between two Brahmans, one from the village of Mahākhajana and the other from Girdolī. To resolve this conflict, they went to the village of Kuḍatarī. The leaders of the Kuḍatarī Brahmans bribed the Brahmans of Pañcavāḍī who were called there to be witnesses. These Brahmans gave false testimony, saying that the land belonged to the leaders of Kuḍatarī village and not to the Brahmans who were quarreling over the land. Since the land was grabbed through a lie, the text says, itis barren – not even grass grows there. Brahmans of Pañcavāḍī committed this crime, and because of this crime, their progeny is unable to reproduce.[169]

[168]Ibid., 14-18.

[169]Ibid., 17-18.

The regions of Bardesh, Pedne and Kudal are described in the fifth chapter, named *Deśatrayavarṇana*, which means "description of three regions." It must be noted here that the regions of Salcete and Tisvadi got a chapter for themselves, indicating their importance. This hierarchy indicates the importance of these two regions and therefore the importance of Brahmans who live there in comparison to the Brahmans living in the regions of Bardesh, Pedne, and Kudal. This point was not lost on the Brahmans of these regions, especially the Pednekars and Kudaldeshkars. Later in this chapter, we will see the counter-narratives generated by these groups that challenged the domination of Smarta Shenvis and the Sasastikars who are associated with Tisvadi and Salcete. For the time being, we should focus on the geography of these three regions in the Konkanakhyan.

Bardesh has twelve villages, namely Shirodeṃ, Haḷadoṇeṃ, Poṃmaburapeṃ, Āsāgāṃva, Mohideṃ, Haṇajuṇa, Kāṃdoḷī, Nācanoḷeṃ, Ukasai, Punāḷeṃ and Moīḍe. This is a rare occasion in this book that it mentions all the names of the villages in a region. The description of the regions is on lines similar to that of the previous regions, Salcete and Tisvadi. A village is mentioned, the names of the Brahman lineages that stay there are stated, and deities that are found in the place are identified. What distinguishes Bardesh from the two previous regions is that Brahmans living in this region only marry among themselves. This is so, says the text, because the GSB caste has excommunicated them due to pointless hatred. The author mentions that he will explain the events that led to the excommunication in the second part of the book. This is a novel move, in which the author acknowledges that the Brahmans of Bardesh, who are now called Bardeshkars, are operating as a different caste as indicated by the practice of endogamy. At the same

time the move opens the way for integration, as the text says that the GSB caste has excommunicated them without any valid reason.[170]

Regarding the region of Pedne, it is stated that it has five villages. Three of them lie in the physical geography of Pedne, one village falls in the geography of Kudal and another in Bardesh. But the Brahmans living in all these geographies are called Pednekars. There are two more villages where one can find Pendnekar Brahmans, but in those villages they were made to stay by the village deities when these people visited the places for a marriage ceremony. Despite the fact that one finds Pednekar Brahmans in seven villages, one is supposed to call them a collection of five villages and not seven.[171]

The third region described in this chapter is Kuḍavāḷa (today's Kudal). The description of this region follows the same pattern as before, but with a marked difference. Brahmans who are living in the Kudal region are migrants from Goa. This will be the point that was countered later by people from the Kudaldeshkar caste who opposed the GSB formation.[172]

None of these three regions gets as much attention from the author as Salcete and Tisvadi. The fourth chapter of the text is dedicated to showing connections between these five regions that form the core of the Saraswat home territory. The sixth chapter discusses the extended region due to growth and expansion. It addresses the issue of why there exists a mismatch between the original villages which were given to GSBs, which come

[170]Ibid., p. 22-23, v. 20.

[171]Ibid., 23-24.

[172]Parulekar, *Kudaldeshkar: Dakshinetil Adhya Gauda Brahman*, Improved second edition, 13.

to a total of sixty-seven, and the fact that GSBs are settled in many more villages. The chapter is entitled *Vṛudhdivistāra,* which means, "Growth and Spread." This argument helps to incorporate the villages that have not been counted as original villages.

A typical story from this chapter is the story of the son of a Prabhu from *Mhāḍagāṃva* who leaves his village in anger. He finds his occupation as the manager of some low-lying fertile paddy fields and forms a link with the god *Ravaḷanātha* of that village.[173]

The new geography of the GSB caste was created not only for reasons like the expansion of the colony and the migration to other regions, but also due to the arrival of the Portuguese in Goa, which forced GSBs to migrate. This incident is described in Chapter eight, which is entitled "*Daivata Sthalāṃtara*," which means "The Changing of Places of the Deities." It has the following description of the arrival of the Portuguese:

> When the situation was like this, a great problem arose. The hat-wearing dirty white people arrived in the city of Goa. The city of Goa was the main village and extremely pure. In that place the polluted arrived. They harassed us a lot. They started harassment in different ways and caused extreme havoc. Then the deities moved outside the region by crossing the rivers.[174]

This narrative gives an historical account of the sixteenth-century event of shifting of icons of deities out of regions of Portuguese control. This story highlights that the GSBs out-migrated to avoid ritual pollution. The author then gives a list of deities that were

[173]Anonymous, *Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*, 27-30.

[174]Ibid., p. 33, v. 1-3.

moved from one village to another. Shantadurga of Keḷoshī was moved to the village of Kavaḷe, Kamakshi was moved to Shiroda, and so and so forth.[175]

So far I have discussed the first part of the Konkanakhyan, which describes the mythical origins of the Konkan, the settlement of Brahmans in Konkan, the five major regions of Goa where the GSBs were settled and the extended geography. The second half of the book focuses on why the original GSB caste split into different castes. I describe here some important stories of separation.

Chapter one of the second half, for example, focuses on the separation of the Pednekars and Kudaldeshkars from each other. The chapter is titled *Jnatibhedakathana* , "The Narration of the Divisions in the Caste." It begins by discussing a petty fight that happened during a wedding ceremony. The incident eventually led to the splitting of the main caste body and the formation of Pednekar caste.

> A GSB man from the Pedne region organized a wedding. Relatives and many other GSB people from regions like Sasashti, Chodne, Tisvadi, Bardesh and Kudal arrived for the wedding. The celebrations were going on, the groom was being led to the main pavilion, dancers were dancing, musicians were playing, and the wedding rituals were being performed. Now, while the couple was circumambulating the ritual sacrificial fire, someone advised the bride to take care of her dress so that it should not come into contact with the fire. The bride said that she knew. Some guests at the wedding ceremony raised an objection to this statement. They said,

[175]Ibid., 33.

> "The girl must have been married before. How otherwise could she say that she knew what to do?" In this way, the haters started giving opinions in a despicable manner. Others stated that the girl was just eight years old: how would it be possible that this was her second marriage? Whatever she said, they argued, was said out of arrogance, and she said it being a child and unthinkingly. The friends and relatives who were there stood firm with the family and the wedding rituals were completed. From this incident, a division in the caste took place. The haters demanded from the family that they repent, but the family and their supporters refused. They said, why should they repent when they had not done anything wrong? If anything wrong had been done, then it had been done by the people who had falsely accused them. It is these people who should repent. Then the family gave land and support to the relatives and friends who had come to the wedding and settled them in Pedne.[176]

After this, the chapter describes some of the characteristics of the Pednekars. Pednekars are settled in five villages. They do not hate others; they are brave and practice the duty of Kshatriyas, which is fine in the Kaliyuga. And while they do this they also do the duties of a Brahman. They remain vigilant regarding the Dharma.[177]

This is another story that highlights the importance of pre-puberty marriage in the Brahmanical world view. The practice was a key facet of Brahmanical patriarchy. The

[176]Ibid., p. 36-37, v. 3-21.

[177]Ibid., 37.

ending of the practice of pre-puberty marriage was a significant step towards modernity. I will pursue this argument further in Chapter four on practice and in the Conclusion.

Chapter one of the second half of the Konkanakhyan also discusses how the Kudaldeshkars got separated. Their story of separation goes as follows:

> There was a man named Vetam, who was the head of the army of the king of Vijaynagar. Vetam was a Mang , that is, "untouchable," by caste. The expenses of the army of Vetam were being paid by the revenue generated by the village of Parule. A Saraswat man named Mainkar was one important person from that village. He was excommunicated by the leaders of the caste from the village. What happened was that there was a wedding ceremony going on in the village. Mainkar insisted that, as a marker of his significance in the village, his feet should be worshipped prior to the worship of the bride and the groom. People tried to explain to him that his behavior was unacceptable, as the bride and groom should be worshipped first, according to the traditions of the religion. But the man did not listen to the argument, so the caste excommunicated him. People stopped visiting his home and participating in his religious rituals. When his daughter reached marriageable age, nobody offered a match for her. Although people spread rumors that his daughter had reached puberty, nobody would side with Mainkar because of his earlier bad behavior.
>
> When this news reached Vetam, he told Mainkar that he should give his daughter to him as she was polluted, literally "a spoilt vessel"

(*vāḷileṃ pātra*). Vetam, being a Mang, felt he had the right to demand and get a "polluted vessel". Mainkar tried to explain to Vetam that he could not wed his daughter to him because Mainkar was a Brahman by caste and the people of his own caste were harassing him. Mainkar tried to plead that Vetam, being the leader of the army, should protect Mainkar from the harassment by the people of his own caste. Vetam declared that he would not let Mainkar go unless he handed over his daughter, who was rumored to have reached puberty. If Mainkar did not hand her over peacefully, Vetam threatened, he would drag her off forcibly. Vetam then put guards at the home of Mainkar.

Mainkar had a friend named Devlikar. Mainkar pleaded with Devlikar, requesting help. Devlikar gave him an idea. He asked Mainkar to go ahead with preparations for the wedding and to invite Vetam to the wedding as the groom. Devlikar then promised that he would come to the wedding function with an army and that they would kill Vetam there. So Mainkar went to Vetam and told him that he was ready to hand over his daughter to him as a bride and that he should come to his home as a bridegroom. On the day of the wedding, Devlikar could not arrive on time because he missed the boat. But Vetam arrived on time and insisted that the wedding ceremony be started right away. So the bride had to be brought into the wedding hall. At that very moment, Devlikar arrived with his army and the fight started. The bride got caught in the fight and was killed. Vetam was also killed. Many from Vetam's party ran from the

> place. Everybody supported Devlikar and blamed Mainkar for the unfortunate series of events. The honor of being the main villager of the village of Parule was then transferred to Devlikar.
>
> Devlikar pitied Mainkar. He got the community together from the surrounding eighteen villages and got them to consent to allow Mainkar to perform a ritual of repentance for his earlier arrogant behavior. Devlikar, however, did not take the opinion of the rest of the GSB community, and so his and Mainkar's community got separated from the main caste body and became the Kudaldeshkars. This incident happened 300 years ago; even now the place where it happened is called "Vetamacha chala."[178]

Other stories of separations of castes are of a similar nature. The second chapter of the second half of the text describes how the Bardeshkars and the Shenvipaikis got separated from the main GSB caste. The case of the separation of the Bardeshkars shows the importance of norms regarding cooking and consumption of food. It tells about a conspiracy hatched by one Suryarao Desai, who was in power in Bhatgram. Bardesh is separated from Bhratagram by a river, across which Bardeshkars were farming . In this a situation somebody complained to the king that Bardeshkars were carrying food by boat across the river and were consuming it in their fields, something that was argued to lead to the ritual pollution of the food. The king ordered thereupon that the people should refrain from consuming food with the Bardeshkars. The Bardeshkars rejected the accusation and refused to perform ritual repentance to rectify it. Meanwhile the king died

[178]Anonymous, *Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*, p. 38, v. 27.

and the administration of the Konkan came into the hands of Anant Shenvi Sukhathankar. This administrator ordered that Bardeshkars be separated from the rest of the caste. Due to this event , Bardeshkars inhabiting the twelve villages separated from the caste.[179]Interestingly, the author of the Konkanakhya blames the Bardeshkars for this eventuality. He states that nothing much would have been lost if they had surrendered to the caste. But they refused, and as a consequence they were degraded to a lower status due to their separation from the caste. So, this infighting caused self-imposed harm to the caste.

The next story I cite here narrates how the Shenvipaikis got separated. The author explains that the Shenvipaikis were originally from Salcete but were now settled in Karnataka: They are good in scribal professions and work in the service of the kings. They used to criticize the dualist philosophy adhered to by some among the GSBs. Slowly the hatred against them increased and one day the Sastikars got caught t worshipping in the manner of the Shakta sect. This means they were seen worshipping the Goddess as a supreme deity, something that was looked down upon by Smartas, as well as by the followers of the Vaishnav tradition. The case went to the king's court and finally these groups got separated.[180] In this case too we see that the author argues for the separated group's reintegration in the caste, suggesting that there is no reason to exclude Shenvipaikis, since the worship of Shakti -- i.e., the feminine principle -- is an acceptable form of worship according to the Vedas. Most of the members of the

[179]Ibid., p. 42-43, v. 2-14.

[180]Anonymous, *Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*, p. 44, v. 31-38.

Shenvipaiki caste were GSB people from the villages of Kudthale, Keloshi, and Sakhvali, and some others were from Panandi. The author further states that some of them accepted their fault and performed ritual repentance and rejoined the caste, but others did not, were excluded and came to be called Shenvipaiki. The passage implies that the author's acceptance of the Shakta sect was only a gracious concession in the interest of unity and that he did believe Shakta practice to be wrong.[181]

Other Brahmans in the Geography

Despite the fact that this book is primarily a geography of the GSB caste, it also recognizes the presence of other Brahman caste groups in Goa. These others are not so important for the author, though, and do not get mentioned much in the book. They are discussed only in the end, in chapter seven of the second part of the book, as an afterthought. The author states that there are four types of Brahmans in the Konkan besides the Pancha Gauda Brahmans. These are the Paddhe Brahmans, Kramavaṃta Brahmans, Prabhu Brahmans and Jyotishis. The Paddhe Brahmans are based in the villages of Kavale, Priola, Keri, Khandole and Verem. Their family deities are Mhāḷasā, Lakṣmī, and Vijaydurgā. The Padheys, who stayed outside of Goa, have mixed with the Karāḍe Brahmans, who stay in their own place, i.e. the above-mentioned villages in Goa known as Paddhes. Their livelihood is based on areca-nut plantations.[182]

The primary focus of the chapter is to explain the relationship between the GSB Brahmans, who belong to the Pancha Gauda Brahmans, and the other Brahmans who

[181]Ibid., 44-45.

[182] Ibid., 72.

inhabit the region . This explanation is required because Parshuram is said to have given the land of Goa to the GSB caste only, and thus the presence of Brahmans of the Panca-Dravid fold is an anomaly . The reasons given for the presence of each of these four types of Brahmans are quite similar to one another. Here is a typical story. It describes the relationship between the Paddhe Brahmans and the GSBs:

> There was this one Paddhe Brahman from the village of Kavle. He accepted the daughter of a GSB Brahman from the village of Saṃkavāḷa. His descendants joined the mother's side of the family and took their last name, which was Ṣaiṇavai. The ancestors of both the parties are now located in the village of Kavaḷeṃ.[183]

All the remaining stories tell about ties that were established through marriage. The point that should be noted here is that it is the Dravid Brahmans who receive the daughters in the stories from the GSB side, something that implies the superiority of the Dravid Brahmans.

Another important aspect of the Konkanakhyan are stories about major historical figures such as Sri Gaudapadacharya and Sri Shankaracharya, who are celebrated for reestablishing Hinduism in India. Chapter eight is entitled *Saṃta Mahimāna*"The Greatness of the Saint/s") and tells the story e of Sri Gaudpadacharya, who is believed by the Smarta Shenvis to be the founder of the Kavle matha.[184] The rest of the chapter tells in detail about the origins of the current Hindu religious tradition in

[183] Ibid., p. 72, v. 14-17.

[184] Ibid., 81-90.

India and the conflict with Buddhism. A major summary of this chapter is paraphrased in appendix two .

Konkanakhyan — Conclusions

The Konkanakhyan clearly has a particular structure. It begins with what is represented as a non-place, the vast sea. The sixth avatar of Vishnu creates the new land of Konkan by firing fourteen arrows into the sea. He then populates the land with Brahmans. He also pleases lord Shiva with his austerities and gets Shiva to bless the land with all the natural resources required for a good life. The first part thus shows the perfect structure of an ideal geography. It places the GSBs in the center of this land in Goa. The geography is described as a relationship between village deities, GSB families, and particular villages. The GSBs thus are highlighted as the rightful owners of the land of Goa. This structure of people, deities and villages is destabilized due to the arrival of the Portuguese, which causes many GSBs to migrate to different regions of South India and effects a split in the caste. The second half of the book details how different "sub-castes" were created. Apart from forced migration due to the arrival of the Portuese, other reasons for the splitting of the caste are issues of ritual pollution and petty disagreements. The book thus points towards the irrationality of notions of ritual pollution and dismisses the petty disagreements, thereby justifying the unification of the caste. This narrative of the Konkanakhyan matches exactly the perspective of the Eki-faction, which attempted to unify the caste as a modern community, thereby undermining religious differences and the notions of ritual pollution.

I will now discuss the second part of the book to show how the Konkanakhyan delegitimizes certain Brahmanical ethics, morality, sectarian and social decorum in order to justify the unification of the GSB caste. My analysis will show that food consumption and marriage are intimately related. This is a crucial point as it will help us to understand why the Eki-faction insisted on co-dining and the Beki-faction opposed the ritual. The story of the separation of the Bardeshkars provides an important example. It states that the Bardeshkars were separated because they were carrying cooked food across the rivers consuming it in the fields. Though the Bardeshkars denied this allegation and refused to perform ritual penance, they were forced to separate from the GSB caste. The story thus reveals the long-standing Brahmanical norm that one is supposed to cook and eat food at one and the same place. If cooked food is taken from one place to another, especially across a river, it becomes polluted and is unfit for consumption by a Brahman. Any Brahman who consumes such food thereby becomes polluted. However, this sort of pollution can be overcome by performing a ritual repentance that is called *prāyaścitah*.

The norm about eating only freshly cooked food and avoiding stale food is a fairly well known Brahmanical norm. It may have something to do with hygienic food consumption. However, it should be noted that this pollution can be overcome by performing a ritual. Therefore the concern is not entirely in relation to harm due to food poisoning, but also has to do with maintaining social norms that bind the community as one group.

Another point that is brought to light by this story is that excommunication is called Panktibhed (*paṃktibheda*). The Bardeshkars were not allowed to co-dine with the other groups, which would have led in the end to the arranging of marriages between

Bardeshkars and the rest of the GSB caste. This story therefore also highlights the close relation between co-dining and marriage. To refuse to co-dine with someone is to declare that the other person is of inferior status, not worthy of being engaged with in serious social relationships like marriage. This story thus enlightens us as to why the movement to unify the GSB castes focused so much on performing the ritual of co-dining and why the ritual attracted serious opposition.

In the Konkanakhyan we find several passages where co-dining is insisted upon. Co-dining is not just an instrumental declaration of unification, but it actually enacts the unification. It is an acceptance of social equality. What can be noticed here is that the notions of purity and pollution are significant. A person is in a precarious position while ingesting food, as food becomes part of the person's body. To avoid such pollution, the person would not like to be with someone of unequal status. Even though this notion looks irrational, it is quite a successful instrument for maintaining social hierarchy and order.

The purity-pollution complex also plays a role in maintaining Brahmanical patriarchy. The stories of the separation of the Pednekars and of the separation of Kudaldeshkars highlight this point. The Pednekars were separated because a person attending a wedding alleged that this might be the second wedding of the eight-year-old bride. This was of course a false allegation, but one thing led to another and the Pednekars were compelled to separate from the rest of the caste due to this irresponsible allegation. Apart from the obvious intention of the Konkanakhyan to show that the GSB caste split due to trivial reasons, the story also highlights what is an appropriate Brahman marriage.

The separation of the Kudaldeshkars also highlights points about Brahmanical marriage. In the story, the GSB caste enforces a social boycott on an important leader of the village of Parule, the headman Mainkar. Mainkar misbehaves in a wedding, insisting on being honoured before the bride and the groom. Members of the GSB caste therefore stop visiting his home for rituals and stop accepting food from his household. When his daughter reaches marriageable age, no one approaches him with a marriage proposal. People spread rumours that his daughter has reached puberty. Only a military leader, Veṭama, who is of the Mang (Dalit) caste, pressurizes him to marry his daughter to himself. Vetam insists that, since the daughter has reached puberty, she is a "polluted vessel", and that all that is polluted rightly belongs to him, as he belongs to the "untouchable" caste. These two stories, about the Pednekars and the Kudaldeshkars, make it clear that, for a valid Brahman marriage, the bride must be a pre-puberty girl. The Kudaldeshkar story also highlights a long-standing Brahmanical metaphor declaring that a woman is a "vessel", in which a man plants his seed. The ritual of marriage is called *Kanyādāna,* the gift (*dāna*) of a pre-puberty daughter (*kanyā*) from father to son-in-law.

Counter-Texts to the Konkanakhyan

There were many voices that opposed the unification narrative of the Eki-faction. Counter narratives emerged from different sections of society who held closely to earlier notions of caste. I will discuss counter-narratives coming from two groups of people who opposed unification. The first is from the leading members of Pednekar caste and another one is from the Kudaldeshkar caste. It must be noted that even within these castes there were people who wanted unification, but I am specially analyzing here the narratives of the people who did not wanted to join the unified GSB identity. These may

be called the traditionalists from both these castes, who identified themselves as Gauda and strived to keep their distance from the term Saraswata as a caste identifier.

A first example of counter-narrative, the book *Sahyādrikhaṇḍa—Purvārdha—Uttarārdha Arthat Koṃkaṇākhyāna,* was published by Raghunath Sitaram Desai in 1947.[185] Desai was at that time the secretary of the Pednekar caste association, the *Peḍaṇekara Gauḍa Brāhmaṇa Sabhā*. His book claims to be yet another version of the alleged original Konkanakhyan. It has a sixty-three-page editorial section or preface, which itself is divided into a first-half and a second-half. Desai uses this preface to make comments on the Eki-Beki dispute and the Konkankhyans published by the Eki-faction. He counters the narrative of the Konkanakhyan published by the Eki-faction on several levels. In the first section of the book, the *purvārdha*, Desai develops a polemic that validates the maintaining of the social institutions of caste and varna. He points to the arguments of various European and Indian scholars to justify his position .[186] He also notes that even in other Indic religions, like Jainism and Sikhism, the trading of image worship and caste norms have continued. Towards the end of this preface he argues that he and the readers should now focus on the Konkanakhyan published by the Eki-faction, that is, the one published by Karande and Wagle.[187]

In the second part of the preface, the *uttarārdha*, Desai critiques the authenticity of the Karande-Wagle Konkanakhyan, stating that his is an older version of the text, which he references as being a part of the Sahyadrikhand. The aim of this publication,

[185]*Sahyadrikhand-Purvardha-Uttarardh Arthat Konkanakhyan*.

[186]Ibid., 1-3.preface

[187]*Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*, 1-9.

he declares, is to expose why the Karande-Wagle Konkanakhyan should not be taken seriously. He also argues that this text was published in a particular context and for the purpose of forming the GSB caste. He asserts that engaging in the task of showing faults in the Konkanakhyan is not a pleasurable activity for him, but that he feels he has to do it, so that the truth can be shown to people.[188]

Desai criticizes in the preface of his Konkanakhyan also the Sahyadrikhand that was published by Da Cunha. He points out that Da Cunha himself recognized that the manuscripts he had used show signs of alteration. Desai also argues that Da Cunha was an expert in neither Marathi nor Sanskrit, and was manipulated by three Shenvi men, Laksmana Keni Shastri, Yashvanta Phondba Danayat, and Ganesh Ananta Shastri, who were his assistants. He suggests that these three men must have added to the Sahyadrikhand the verses which are now used to legitimize the Saraswat caste.[189] By attacking the Sahyadrikhand, he thus attempts to discredit the root of the Konkanakhyan, which claims its legitimacy from being based on the Sahyadrikhand.

However, Desai's attack is not just restricted to the personalities associated with the publication of the Sahyadrikhand. He also claims that, before claiming Saraswat as their identifier, the leaders of the GSB formation tried to associate themselves with the region of Tirhut in Northern India as their homeland. This attempt did not succeed, but it points to the importance of the region as the claimed homeland of the Gaud Brahmans. Desai's most powerful criticism resides in the fact that there is no way to associate the Shenvi caste, from which came most of the leaders of the GSB movement, with the term

[188]Ibid., 11.

[189]Ibid., 12-13.

"Saraswat." He notes that the term "Saraswat" itself is mentioned only thrice in the Sahyadrikhand[190] and he also points out that the word "Saraswat" is not mentioned once in the copy of the Konkanakhyan that he is prefacing and publishing.

After discussing the Karande-Wagle Konkanakhyan, Desai launches an attack on the Shenvi caste. The focus of this attack are the Smarta Shenvis, whom he sees as leading the GSB formation. Kanvinde and Gunjikar, the two main polemicist leaders of the GSB formation, both Smarta Shenvi by caste, also face criticism for hanging onto the untenable claim of Tirhut as the GSB homeland. Desai argues that, after the claim to Tirhut became untenable, these men switched to the word Saraswat as the primary identifier for the caste. He also points out that, historically, doubts were always raised about the origins of the Shenvi caste. Finally, he criticizes the Konkanakhyan by challenging its overall validity. He argues that it is full of unbelievable stories about miracles, so that it simply cannot be accepted as a document that should be taken seriously.

The second book which countered the Eki-faction's argument was published by a member of the Kudaldeshkar caste. The Kudaldeshkars' resistance to the GSB unification movement was measured and successful. Their desire to maintain their caste distinction from the GSB was so successful that the members of the Kudaldeshkar caste maintain an independent caste identity till today. Their relative separateness from the GSB caste can be seen from the fact that they regularly organize caste conferences and have a separate caste association.

[190]Ibid., 14.

In line with this position, Madhukar Samant, a member of the Kudaldeshkar caste, published a book entitled *Kuḍāḷadeśakara: Dakṣiṇetīla Ādhya Gauḍa Brahmaṇa* in 2001. This book claims to be the second edition of an original edition published by Ganesh Mukund Parulekar in 1915.[191] . It gives a nuanced response to the Konkanakhyan published by Karande-Wagle. Its publication date in 2001, i.e. when high-status GSB groups like Smarta Shenvis and Sastikars had started marrying their daughters to Kudaldeshkar grooms, indicates that the GSB caste unification process remains incomplete, with the Kudaldeshkar caste still maintaining its distinct identity.

Samant's book's initial publication in 1915 may in fact have been an immediate response to the Karande-Wagle Konkanakhyan. This suggestion is based on the observation that the book's style of Marathi is clearly dated. Also, the concerns of the book are contemporary to the period and are not related to the concerns articulated by the people of the Kudaldeshkar caste today. ,. The book is an authoritative representation of Kudaldeshkars' resistance to the Konkanakhyan and has possibly played a role in maintaining their relative separation from the GSB caste.

Samant's book challenges the narrative of the Konkanakhyan with respect to the Kudaldeshkar and Pednekar castes. It does not reject the narrative of the Konkanakhyan in its entirety, but questions the place that the Konknakhyan attributes to the Kudaldeshkar caste within the GSB hierarchy. The Konkanakhyan argues that the Kudaldeshkars were excommunicated[192] , thereby suggesting that the Smarta Shenvis and

[191]Parulekar, *Kudaldeshkar: Dakshinetil Adhya Gauda Brahman,* Improved second edition, 9.

[192] Anonymous, *Konkanakhyan Urf Dakshinatya Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*, P. 37, v. 28.

Sasastikars were the principal group of the main caste body, which had excommunicated the Kudaldeshkars and Pednekars, who are now being re-integrated into the caste. The Kudaldeshkar narrative challenges this argument of the Konkanakhyan, as it implies the inferiority of the Kudaldeshkars. According to the narrative of their book, there were two main migrations of Gaud Brahmans, i.e. north-Indian Brahmans, to South India.[193] The first wave brought two groups, namely the Gauda sub-group and the Saraswat sub-group, to the South. The Gaudas settled in the region of Kudal and were called Kudaldeshkars or, more appropriately, Adya Gauda Brahmans, i.e., the original Gauda Brahmans, according to the Kudaldeshkars. The Saraswats, who also came south with this wave of migration, settled in Goa and were called Konkandeshi or Konkane.

During the second wave of the migration, it is argued, a small group of the Gauda class of Brahmans, the Kanyākubja Brahmans, came to Goa and settled in the villages of Keloshi and Kushastali. Hence, Parulekar cites the Orientalists Gerson Da Cunha and Bhau Daji Lad to suggest that the Kankyakubja Brahmans arrived in Goa as later migrants. In stating this, his book attributes the position of later migrants to the Smarta Shenvi sub-caste. While the book thus allows a superior position to the Vaishnavs over the Smarta Shenvis as an earlier group of migrants, the Vaishnavs too are reduced in position by having to settle down further south. By this move, the Kudadeshkars establish themselves at the top of the GSB caste hierarchy.[194]

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[193] Parulekar, *Kudaldeshkar: Dakshinetil Adhya Gauda Brahman*, Improved second edition, 32-37.

[194] Ibid.

The claim that the Kudaldeshkars are the most ancient group and are settled in a relatively northern region is the first rhetorical device employed by the Kudaldeshkar Brahman caste to establish themselves as the topmost among the GSB sub-castes. The Smarta Shenvis who identify themselves as being from the villages of Kuthale and Keloshi were the prime targets of this attack. The book points out that

> They have called themselves with several names, like Kanyakubj; sometime they have used the title Saraswats; they have also referred to themselves as the Aadya Gauda and now they have settled for the title Gaud Saraswats.[195]

The author contests the discourse of the Smarta Shenvis again by pointing to the multiplicity of their narratives regarding their arrival in the South. The first narrative is the one where they say they have arrived from the region of Kanyakubja. The second narrative is that they have come from a place called Kushashali near Dwarka, which is located in the Gujarat region of India, and the third narrative is that they were invited by a king from Ahicchatr. The author argues that this shifting story shows them to be frauds who should not be taken seriously.

Parulekar does not contest the authenticity of the Konkanakhyan in general. He agrees that the Konkanakhyan was indeed written in the eighteenth century. What he contests are the statements in the Konkanakhyan to the effect that Kudaldeshkars were not originally from Kudal but had migrated there from Goa , and also that their deities did not originate from Kudal, but from Goa. He especially contests the claim that Kudaldeshkars are an excommunicated group of GSBs from Goa. Instead, he notes that

[195]Ibid., 9-10.

Ramchandra Bhikaji Gunjikar, who published *Saraswatimandal* in 1870, supports the claim of the Konkanakhyan that the Kudaldeshkars were originally from Goa.

To assert the Bengali origin of the Kudaldeshkar caste, Parulekar presents a table showing the phonetic similarity of the language spoken in Kudal with Bengali and Hindi, thereby indicating its relationship to Bengal[196] and North India, regions considered to be the homeland of the Gaud (Bengal) Brahmans.[197] The author also questions the superiority claimed by the Smarta Shenvis, by pointing out that their numbers in the villages of Kushastali and Keloshi were much smaller than the numbers of the Kudaldeshkars, who get their name from the entire region of Kudal. He questions, in other words, the claim that a small group can excommunicate a far larger group, and he considers Kudaldeshkars and Sasastikars to be the majority. The preface finally asserts that the author of the Konkanakhyan was a person who hated the Kudaldeshkar caste.

Parulekar's main thesis is thus that there were three main divisions among the southern Gauda Brahmans. These divisions were brought about by the Portuguese entry into Goa. He says that the author of the Konkanakhyan deliberately used this situation to argue that, initially, there was only one Saraswat group, which got divided into different sub-groups. In making this claim, Parulekar opposes not only the author of the Konkanakhyan, but also Gunjikar, for stating that the Sasastikars, the Tiswadikars, and the Bardeshkars excommunicated the Kudaldeshkars and continued on this path until finally only the Smarta Shenvis and Sasastikars remained pure. Everyone else was

[196]This Bengal includes the region of Bihar and Jharkhand.

[197]Parulekar, *Kudaldeshkar: Dakshinetil Adhya Gauda Brahman*, Improved second edition, 21-23.

rejected as being polluted. This is the argument which Parulekar opposes. He questions how it was possible for this minor group of Brahmans, the Smarta Shenvis, to excommunicate the Kudaldeshkars, who were the kings of the region of Kudal.[198]

He further argues that Kudaldeshkars are not only related to the Gaudas but also related to the Dravid Brahmans, such as the Karhades and the Deshasthas. Thereby he implies that Kudaldeshkars do not have to accept an inferior status among the Gaudas, but are related to the Dravid Brahmans. He shows this by showing common last names among the Kudaldeshkars and Karhades. He also shows a similarity of name with one Deshastha family.[199]

Parulekar's other claim is that the Kudaldeshkars were the kings of Kudal from seventh to the eighteenth century. He also challenges Gunjikar for saying that the GSBs have only four mathas and not recognizing the matha run by theKudaldeshkars. Instead, he argues, that faced forced migration during the sixteenth century, due to the arrival of the Portuguese in Goa, and had to depend on the Kudaldeshkars for refuge. It was the Kudaldeshkar caste who gave them employment, but the Kudaldeshkars probably treated them with suspicion, thinking that they might have been polluted. Because the Kudaldeshkars did not dine with them, Parulekar says, the Shenvis developed hatred for the Kudaldeshkars.[200]

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[198]Ibid., 62.

[199]Ibid., 63-66.

[200]Ibid., 99.

So far I have discussed the Konkanakhyan and two counter-texts which contested its narrative . Now I will discuss a text that supported the story of the Konkanakhyan. Leaders of the GSB caste, like Shripad Vyankatesh Wagle, published several other polemical materials. They characterized them as histories, such as *Śrimaṃgeśa Devasthanācā Sacitra Saṃkṣipta Itihāsa*, that is, "A Brief Illustrated History of the Sri Mangesh Temple." According to Wagle, this book was originally published in 1907 and he is presenting now a second edition in 1927. If indeed the first edition was published in 1907, it came out just two years before the publication of Konkanakhyan. Just like the Konkanakhyan, it claims to be based on Gerson Da Cunha's Sahyadrikhand. The book has several sections and, as the title suggests, several paintings and photographs of the god Mangesh. The first section relates the myth of the origin of the temple.

> The story starts in the Tretā Yuga with the massacre of Kṣatriyas at the hand of Parshuram. As a penance for this massacre, Parshuram decided to perform a ritual sacrifice. He created pure sacrificial land by driving back the sea. To accomplish this sacrifice, he brought ten clans of Brahmans from Tirahūta in North India. After this ritual sacrifice, he gifted the land to the ten clans of Brahmans. These Brahmans then established their family deities in different regions where they settled. Out of these ten clans, two -- namely, those of the Vatsa Gotra and the Kauṃḍiṇya Gotra -- settled on the banks of the river Zuvari in the village of Kushastali. The leaders of these clans were Lomasharma and Shivasharma. Their family deity was Shiva. Shiva was pleased by the austerities performed by these two, so he showed his presence to them by manifesting himself in a small valley in the village in his iconic form as a lingam.

> This manifestation was miraculous. A lactating cow belonging to Shivasharma started releasing milk on a stone. The cowherd who tended the cows of Shivasharma noticed that the cow was releasing its milk every day on a stone even though she did not even have a calf with her. He informed his master about the incident. At around the same time, Shivasharma had a vision in which Shiva informed him that he was pleased by Shivasharma's devotion and so would stay near to him. This made the Brahman realize that the cow must be releasing milk on his family deity, Shiva, and so he started worshipping that lingam.[201]

Another story relates how the lingam came to be known as Maṃgeśa or Māṃgīśa:

> A Brahman named Devsharma belonging to the Vatsa gotra used to stay in the village of Keloshi. This village was adjacent to the village of Kushastali. Devsharma was related to Lomsharma, from the village of Kushastali. The relationship between them was that of maternal uncle and nephew. Devsharma worshiped the goddess *Jagadaṃbā Durgādevī*. At around the time when the lingam appeared in the village of Kushastali, the goddess Jagadamba was also there awaiting a vision of Shiva. At that moment, Shiva appeared there in the form of a tiger to scare the goddess. She got scared and cried out, "Māṃ Girīśa Trāhi." In Sanskrit this means, "Save me, Girish," Girish being another name of Shiva. But she was so scared that instead of saying "Māṃ Girīśa," she said Maṃgīśa

[201] Incidentally a brief version of this story is recorded in Oriente Conquistado. See de e Sousa, *Oriente Conquistado a Jesu Christo Pelos Padres Da Companhia De Jesus Da Provincia De Goa: Segunda Parte, Na Qual Se Contèm O Que Se Obrou Desdo Anno De 1564 Atè O Anno De 1585*, 21.

(Mangisha). When Shiva finally showed his real form to her, Jagdamba requested that Shiva's name at the place be Mangisha.[202]

Because the book is supposed to be a history, the author provides an interpretation of this myth. He says that if one is to bring the myth into congruence with the history, then Manga (*Maṃgā*) or Māṃgā must be the name of the descendant of Shivasharma and Lomsharma who spent his resources on building the place. The title *-īśa*, which means "master" and generally refers to the god Shiva, must have been joined to the name Manga as he invested in the place, and the same name was applied to the lingam. Thus, the lingam came to be known as Mangesh.

Wagle continues with this speculative historiography and states that the myth of Parshuram bringing ten Brahman clans to the south must be referring to the migration of Aryans to South India. As Aryans changed from the worship of formless deities that represented forces of nature to image worship, new deities must have become popular. Parulekar, for his part, suggests that the time of migration must be the time when the land was reclaimed and the region became conducive for settlement. As the population of these Brahmans increased, he argues, they must have settled in regions as far south as Malabar. He further guesses that since the myth of Parshuram is also prevalent in Malabar, it must also be suggesting this settlement of Brahmans. He finally ends his

[202]Wagle, *Srimangesha Devasthanacha Sacitra Sankshipta Itihas.*, 1-3.

speculation about the Brahman settlement in the Konkan by stating that this is a topic for a historians and any further discussion of the issue is not possible.[203]

Through this chapter I have shown how the narrative of the Konkanakhyan shows GSBs as people rooted in the land of Goa. This claim , however, did not go uncontested. Leading members of castes like the Pednekars and the Kudaldeshkars contested it. But, even while they contested it, they still resorted to the story of the Konkanakhyan. Hence, Parulekar did not challenge the narrative of the Konkanakhyan regarding the migration of Gauda Brahmans to South India in general, but only reversed its hierarchy, putting the Kudaldeshkars at the top. Similarly, Desai, the representative of the Pednekar caste, claimed to publish another version of the Konkanakhyan.[204] These circumstances show that the Konkanakhyan had an enormous impact on all debates about GSB history and identity in the early twentieth century and could not be ignored. Even while the Konkanakhyan was contested, its narrative, therefore, became embedded in the discourse of the people. It was invoked and repeated in historical texts like the *Mangirish Mahatmya*, several of which can be found. In sum, one can conclude therefore that the Eki-faction succeeded in insisting on the need for unification. It articulated the view that the various Konkani-speaking Brahman castes were historically one caste that got divided due to the Portuguese arrival in Goa and because of petty fights and notions of purity and pollution that are to be considered irrational. In the next chapter, I will now show how

[203]Parulekar, *Kudaldeshkar: Dakshinetil Adhya Gauda Brahman,* Improved second edition, 3.

[204]Anonymous, *Shayadrikhand-Purvardha-Uttarardh Arthat Konkanakhyan*.

the worldview of the Eki-faction articulated through the Konkanakhyan was put into practice

CHAPTER 4

RITUAL CO-DINING AND THE UNIFICATION OF THE GSB CASTE

The urban leaders of the Eki-faction argued for unification of the various historically related Konkani-speaking Brahman castes. This argument was put forward through the publication of the Konkanakhyan. However, it was not adequate to engage in polemics alone. There was the need to act out their speech. The urban, young and educated had to bring about social changes in order to realize their dream of forming a unified GSB caste. This unity could not just remain at the level of narrative and polemical speech alone. There had to be the performance of practices that mark a group as one caste. A caste, after all, at its crucial minimum, is an endogamous kinship group. Without the practice of endogamy it was difficult to sustain the idea that GSBs were one caste. The social conditions, however, were not such that these modernist ideas would easily resonate with the majority of the people of these castes, who lived in mostly rural areas. For the mostly rural people of these castes, the issue of unification was a matter of engaging in polemics alone. They had no intention of engaging in the practice of co-dining or marriage. The unification as envisioned by the urban migrants entailed serious social consequences for their rural counterparts. Unification for them meant endangering their caste purity, violating religious beliefs and reducing their social status through establishing kinship ties with people that they held as inferior. The young urban men leading the unification movement therefore came up with a distinct strategy of staging a co-dining session for all the castes that they wished to unite.

According to Hindu norms, co-dining publicly marks equality of social status and establishes men participating in the dining session as a group of potential affines.

Accordingly , the status of inferior groups can be raised, if superior groups ritually co-dine with them. Co-dining with people from inferior groups, on the other hand, entails a reduction of ritual purity for the participating high-status group. It is the ritual of co-dining that changes the social status. This is a long-established ritual authorized in the Manava-Dharmashastra.[205] .

In the ritual of co-dining among Brahmans, men sit down in a row with other men and vegetarian food is served to them on separate plates. Prior to sitting together, the men are supposed to have purified themselves by taking a ritual bath. If there is no option to take a full bath, the participants are expected to wash their hands and feet. The torso is supposed to be bare while consuming the meal. A Sanskrit verse or a religious couplet is recited before the men start eating. The meal is supposed to be cooked by persons of the same or higher caste status than the people consuming the food. Purity restrictions are especially critical with regard to food because people are prone to pollution while eating food, as the food is seen to become part of their body's constitution. Any contamination by taking food from people of a lower caste status is therefore considered dangerous. The row of men sitting down to ritually co-dine in a meal is called *pangat* (*paṃgata*). When a man sits in a p*angat* he accepts that all the participants are of the same ritual status and therefore kinship ties can be established between them. This ritual thus implies that a man can marry only women of those families with whose men folks he accepts to share a meal. It clearly marks the participants as affines. It is clear that the urban Brahman

[205]Olivelle and Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra,* 118.

leaders of the GSB unification movement were aware of the meaning of these ancient and complex norms and rules.

Consuming food in a ritually appropriate way, therefore, was a serious normative social practice among higher castes in early-twentieth-century India. The direct link between the co-dining ritual and kinship ties has a lot to do with the Hindu notion that each *varna* is made up of an innate materiality composed of a "magico-biological substance." A caste too, which is a derivative of a *varna*, is composed of this innate substance. That means that each caste remains prone to pollution by the "substance" of other castes. This is especially so if the other caste in question is inferior.[206] Pollution is caused not only by food, but also by contact with bodily substances like sweat, semen, blood, saliva, urine, feces etc. Physical contact becomes inevitable in the process of food production and consumption. If one is to consume food cooked by a person of a lower caste, this food is considered to weaken one. Hence, the general taboo on consuming food cooked by people of lower ritual status. Conversely, when a person willingly consumes food cooked by another person, then the eater acknowledges through this action that the cook is of the same or of a higher caste as him or herself. Therefore, when two people of different social status consume food in one p*angat*, there is an adjustment where there is weakening of the magical substance of the superior and enhancement of substance for the inferior.

The direct relationship between co-dining and kinship ties is clear from the terms often used in the rhetoric of the unification movement. The leaders of the unification often argued that the GSBs should practice *roṭī-beṭī vyavahār*, i.e., they should engage in

[206]Marriott M, "Caste Ranking and Food Transactions," (1968).

"the exchange of bread and daughter," through the practice of co-dining and marriage. The phrase "roṭī-beṭī", is a pointer to the two ritual practices of co-dining and marriage, which are capable of establishing a caste as one group. This serious nature of co-dining underlines the significance of its ritual staging in the GSB conferences.

The GSB conferences

Some leading members of the Konkane caste from Mangalore formally established the GSB caste association that began to meet on a yearly basis. The association was called "Gauda Saraswat Brahman Parisad," which can be translated as the Gaud Saraswat Brahman Conference. The first conference was held in 1907 in the port city Mangalore, located in the South Canara district of the then Madras Presidency of British India. Today this city has been renamed Mangaluru.[207] It is the administrative centre of the District Dakshin Kannada of Karanataka state. The association was formed mainly through the efforts of GSB leaders from Mangalore. One Mr. Subarāo took leadership in organizing the first conference. The second conference was held in the same city in December 1908.[208] This conference passed ten organizational rules. The first rule declared the name of the conference to be "Gaudasarawatbrahmanparisad."

> The second rule defined who could be a part of the conference. This rule gives a clear indication that there were some issues regarding the inclusion and exclusion of certain castes in the conference. It states: "Let only those sections of the Gaud-Saraswat Brahman community be part of the conference, among which

[207]Conlon, "Caste by Association: The Gauda Sarasvata Brahmana Unification Movement."

[208]*"Gaudsaraswat Brahmanparishadeche Niyam," (1908).*

there is a customary practice of co-dining and endogamous marriage, and this state of affairs being famous by the presence of the Swamis of the Kavle, Gokarna and Kashi mathas accepting these sections as their followers."

Much is conveyed in this statement. The rule conveniently excluded castes like Bardeshkars, Pednekars, Kudaldeshkars and Chitrapur Sarasvats from being part of the conference, but at the same time, it accepted the possibility that they were part of the GSB community. The reason for excluding these groups was that there was no precedent of kinship ties between them. The statement also makes it clear that, even if any other interaction between these groups had been going on, it was not acceptable to the three swamis and as such not within the norm. The rule gives an impression that marriages were common among the followers of the three *mathas*, but this was not the case in 1908. I am aware of only one marriage between the groom from a family that were followers of the Kavle math and a bride from a family that followed the Gokarna matha. But this was a rarity. Marriages were not even happening between the Sasastikars and Bardeshkars, who followed the same Gokarna matha.

Rule number three declared that "The spiritual, intellectual and material improvement of our community is the aim of the conference."The remaining seven rules regulated the management of the conference.

The third conference was organized in December 1909 in the twin cities of Belgaum and Shahapur that are today located in the state of Karnataka. Making the best use of this urban venue, the young urban leaders of the unification movement took over the organization of the conference. They had support from many leaders of the

unification movement from Bombay. The organizers of the Belgaum-Shahapur conference brought some major changes by extending the membership of the conference to all the castes that had been excluded until then. They also changed the name of the conference to "Samyukta Gauda Saravata Brahmana Parisad," i.e., the United GSB conference.[209] The Samyukta conference accepted members of all the GSB castes as its participants. In particular, members of such castes as Bardeshkars, Kudaldeshkars, Pednekars and Chitrapur Sarasvats could participate in the conference. The conference also organized a co-dining session in which members of the various GSB castes participated. This was clearly a violation of the second rule passed in the Mangalore conference of 1908. The act of eating together by people of different ritual status was a major transgression that violated the norms of caste. The members of the united GSB conference had not only argued for the unity of all GSB castes, but also put it into action t. Thereby, they established all participants as equals in ritual status. If any one moment can be taken as the moment of the successful unification of the GSB caste, it was this moment of co-dining. The GSB caste as we know it today was thus unified in December 1909. However, the legitimate practice of eating together, which for the leaders of the unification movement formed the different "sub-castes" into one unique GSB caste, was for the vast majority of the rural members of these castes a deliberate ritual transgression. This ritual therefore led to a split in the novel caste association.

On 27th April 1910, the traditional members of the GSB association, i.e. the faction that came to be known as the Beki group, met in Bombay. Among them, the GSB

[209]Conlon, "Caste by Association: The Gauda Sarasvata Brahmana Unification Movement."

caste leaders decided to organize a conference in Margao, Goa. However, this city was hit by a plague some eight or ten days before the projected day of the conference. The Portuguese administration in Goa, therefore, suggested that the conference should not be held. Also, one leading member in Margao, Mr. Govindrav Shenvi Shirvaikar, who was active in the organization of the conference, died unexpectedly. He was an insider to the Portuguese government in Goa, as he held the post of district administrator, a position that he was the first Hindu person to hold. Moreover, many people left the city due to the plague, and it thus became impossible to hold the conference in Margao. However, wealthy GSB families from Goa, namely the Dempes (Deṃpes) and the Kundaikars (Kuṃḍaīkaras), assisted the executive members from Margao, so that the conference was held on the appointed day in the village of Kavale (Kavaḷe) located some distance from Margao in the vicinity of the temple of Shantadurga (Śāṃtādurgā).[210]

Despite the extra efforts necessary for organizing the event at a different location in short notice, the conference was held from 29th to 31st December 1910. The report states that three to four thousand people attended the meeting, all of them representatives of GSB communities from central and south India. The details mentioned in the report of the conference give some idea as to how much these people were interested in following modern parliamentary organizational procedures. This was indicated by the formal procedures of the conference. It had a welcoming committee led by people who financially supported the conference. The committee had a president, V. G. Dhempe; a vice- president, S. G. Kundaikar; and two secretaries. There was an

[210]*Gaudsaraswatbrahman Parishadechi Samkhipata Hakigat*, ed. Krushnarav Sakharam Masurekar (1910), 1-2.

executive group which organized the conference schedule on aday-to-day basis. There were some 100-125 volunteers who were led by three captains.[211]

The conference started at 3PM on 29th December when the members of the welcoming party walked to the place where the president of the conference was residing and accompanied him personally to the main pavilion where the gathering was being held. The opening ceremony itself was attended by around 2000 to 2500 members. The conference sessions followed the modes of modern parliamentary democracy by establishing subject committees, passing different motions, organizing various votes, etc. At the same time it remained a meeting of Brahmans, with due importance given to the invocation of deities and the recitation of Vedic hymns.

The most prominent and urgent purpose of the conference was to denounce the "unity conference" that had been held in Belgaum-Shahpur in 1907. The conference in Kavale thus passed a motion with respect to the issue, stating that some men from the caste had co-dined with people with whom co-dining was not a traditional practice. The conference also established a committee to bring the issue to the notice of the swamis of the *mathas* of Kavle, Partagal, and Kashi. Apart from this important issue, the conference focused on issues that can be characterized as the "upliftment of the caste."[212] Different motions were passed that supported the creation of funds supporting the education of the children of the caste from primary to professional education, the publication of literature from languages like Sanskrit and English into Konkani and Marathi, the writing the history of the caste, the establishment of hospitals etc.

[211]Ibid., 2-3.

[212] Ibid., 1-13.

It is clear that the majority of the participants of the Kavale conference e were not interested in the unification, especially not with the castes of the Kudaldeshkars and Pednekars. Nevertheless, as time passed, marriages started happening in between these groups. My respondents tell me that, in particular, marriages between the Smarta Shenvis and Sasastikars became quite prevalent in Goa in the 1970's. This is remarkable because even in the 1950's, marriages between these two groups were not yet common. Hypergamous marriages, that is, marriages between women from groups claimed to be of lower status, like the Kudaldeshkars, and those of alleged higher status , like the Smarta Shenvis, started happening from the mid-1980's. Today, marriages freely happen between all these GSB groups without much consideration to the differences.

Difference and Unity: Ethnographic Observations

Nevertheless, differences between the groups were a serious issue at an earlier time, as ethnography conducted in Goa revealed to me. I have conducted interviews with mostly Smarta Shenvi, Kudaldeshkar, and Sasastikar respondents from Goa. Despite my best efforts, I could not get an opportunity to interview anyone who identified as Bardeshkar. I have interviewed only a few people from the Konkane and the Shenvipaiki caste groupings, as members of these groups mostly reside in Karnataka and thus were not the focus of my ethnographic research.

The split between the two closely related high-status castes of Shenvis and Sasastikars was marked by intense rivalries. The differences between these two groups certainly mattered a great deal to their members, even though they may not have been much noticed by people of non-GSB castes. The local population in general called

members of both these castes Bāmaṇa, which means Brahman in Konkani. Differences were created through rhetoric and deliberate behavioral choices This practice of highlighting differences and claiming superiority over others was especially prevalent between these two major GSB castes from Goa.

As mentioned before, Shenvis were followers of the Smarta sectarian tradition. They were often called Aadve (āḍave) in the Konkani language, which meant "horizontals" because they are supposed to mark their foreheads with three horizontal lines of ash.[213] This signified their identity as followers of the Smarta sectarian tradition. Goan Smarta Shenvis included fish in their diet and sometimes also consumed hunted meats such as wild boar, deer, porcupine and hare. None of these GSB castes consumed chicken, as chicken was considered a polluted animal.[214]

The Sasastikars, who followed the Vaishnav religious tradition, marked their foreheads with vertical marks. A U- shaped mark would be painted on the forehead in the morning. In the afternoon, this mark was complemented by a line and a dot, similar to the exclamatory mark, integrated in the middle. This mark was called "Angar-Akshat." Because of these vertical marks, the Vaishnavs were commonly called "Ubhe," which means "verticals" in Konkani. Many among the Vaishnavs were vegetarians, especially those in Canacona taluka. Vegetarianism was also practiced by a few people in these castes who followed the priestly profession. These two castes, i.e. the Smarta Shenvis and the Sasastikars, had been one kinship group in the eighteenth century, but avoided

[213]Not all men from the caste wore these symbolic marks. Social identity, however, was strongly denoted by these markings on the forehead.

[214]I think this has to do with the fact that domesticated chicken consumes food thrown away after human consumption.

marriage with each other due to religious differences (Smarta vs. Vaishnav affiliation). This issue of religious difference was so serious that it was even mentioned in a case presented before the King of Portugal in the first half of the eighteenth century.[215] While both groups were absolutely aware that they had the same ethnicity and were one caste historically, their religious beliefs had led them to split into two different castes.

Socio-economically and geographically there were differences too. Sasastikars often preferred mercantile professions and many were settled in the Salcete region (hence their alternative name Salcettekars), where the villages were dominated by Goan Christians, whose ancestors had converted to Catholicism in the sixteenth century. The Smarta Shenvis, on the other hand, often sought employment in the government and were settled in Ponda *taluka*, where they operated as the dominant caste in Hindu villages. So, even when these two groups had the same ethnicity, they maintained different identities due to differences in sectarian beliefs, geography of residence, and their preferred professions. Though the regions of Salcete and Ponda are relatively close, the distance between them was still significant in the first half of the twentieth century, as the modes of transportation were primitive. In addition, the area in which one stayed implied other things, as was told to me by a Smarta Shenvi from Ponda *taluka*. The man was in his 80's when he made the following statement to me :

> See, they lived in Salcete, their cows would graze on public lands; when confiscated, and these cows could be auctioned by the village and then slaughtered. Why would a good Brahman settle in a Christian village?

[215]See *Archivo Portuguez-Oriental,* 6 .

Another Smarta Shenvi man, this one in his 70's, told me another significant story about the marking of differences that happened to him once in his childhood when he had gone to the home of his friend to convey a message given by his father:

> When I reached that person's home, I inquired with the woman of the household whether the man was at home. She said no, but moved her head vertically. I was confused, because usually when people say no, they move their heads horizontally, but this woman was moving her head vertically while saying no. I returned home confused and reported the incident to my mother. She said, those people are silly Ubhes and so they nod their heads vertically even when they say no.

This story gives an insight into how difference between these groups was maintained even through bodily gestures.

Differences were expressed in other ways as well. Sasastikar men were famed for treating their women in a more civilized manner than Smarta Shenvi men treated theirs. This is what a woman from a Sasastikar family, who had married into a Smarta Shenvi family, told me about conditions some 50 years ago:

> If you watch an Ubhe family going out somewhere, then you will notice that the men will be shabbily dressed, carrying the bags, and the women will be walking empty-handed, all decked out in gold ornaments. But in an Aadve family you will find that the men are all walking in front, well dressed, and the women are following them, carrying all the bags.

Among my informants there was a general consensus that, some two generations ago, Smarta Shenvi men used to be dressed in clean and ironed clothes, whereas Sasastikars dressed shabbily. Some reasoned that this had to do with their profession of being shopkeepers and merchants. One man from the Sasastikar caste reasoned that they were quite conscious about spending money: “It caused us lot of pain to spend money on frills like clothes. But, spending on gold etc. was not a problem, as it was a savings.”

I noticed the strong confirmation of the stereotype in one family when the wife of a Sasastikar shopkeeper saw to it that her husband always wore clean and well ironed clothes when he left for work every morning. She also took every opportunity to mock the children of her Smarta Shenvi relatives when they did not dress properly. Another Smarta Shenvi respondent told me that, in his childhood, if somebody from the family did not dress properly, then some elder from the family would make a comment such as, “Why have you dressed shabbily like the Ubhes?”

These observations lead me to believe that the stereotypes about the Smarta Shenvis and the Vaishnav Sasastikars have at least some basis in reality.

Smarta Shenvis would call Sasastikars ‘Bakāla,’ which meant “shopkeeper” in Marathi. The word has a negative implication, as it downgrades a Brahman person to the Vaishya varna, as being a person of the Vāṇī, that is, shopkeeper caste. In return, Sasastikars would call Smarta Shenvis “Bhasmasur.” This is the name of a demon in Hindu mythology who could turn anyone into ashes by putting his hand on the person’s head. When Sasastikars referred to Smarta Shenvis as Bhasmasur, they were pointing to

the Smarta Shenvis' use of ash to mark their foreheads. There was also a suggestion that Smarta Shenvis were prone to anger, a quality deemed demonic and undesirable.

In general, I found a fair bit of consensus among my respondents from both the groups about the character traits of the men of these two groups. The Smarta Shenvis were considered to be intellectually oriented, looking for professional careers in fields like law and government; they were thought to show sophistication in language and dress. By contrast, Sasastikars were supposed to be lacking in sophistication but they were seen as being successful in business. Financially, these two castes were on a par with each other.

Even with these apprehensions and differences, both these castes recognized each other as Brahmans. Together they looked down on Bardeshkars, Kudaldeshkars and Pednekars. Even the Vaishnav Sasastikars, who belonged to the same Vaishnav sect as the Bardeshkars and associated with the same *matha in* Partagal, held Bardeshkars to be inferior to themselves and to the Smarta Shenvis. These two castes had no intention of accepting equality of status with the remaining three castes. The difference and inferiority expressed by respondents was not religious, but social and ethnic. It must be noted that Bardeshkars were most certainly Brahmans and some members of the above-mentioned two castes observed that Bardeshkars were stricter in their Brahmanism than they themselves were. Bardeshkars, however, were generally poorer than most Shenvis and most Sasastikars.

The perceived differences among these castes were also due to diet. Most of these Brahman castes from Goa included fish in their diet; some families practiced lacto-

vegetarianism. This was especially true for people following Vaishnav religious traditions. Take, for example, the Vaishnav people living in Canacona *taluka*, who were followers of the Partagal *matha* and strict vegetarians, whereas Sasastikars, who followed the same *matha*, consumed fish. Even though the two groups intermarried and did not conceive of each other as different castes, there were still difficulties in arranging marriages due to differences in diet. Some families practiced priesthood and therefore did not consume fish. These families had some interesting ways of coping with the problem. The vegetarian parents would allow – or many a time insist – that their daughters eat fish, so that, at the time of their arranged marriage, they should not have difficulty if they were to be married into a family that consumed fish. Here is what a woman in her eighties told me about the fish in her vegetarian family's diet:

> My father would insist that I consume fish. He would say, "Where would I find you a priest as a husband for you?" He would ask my mother to cook food outside the home in a covered area. Dishes would be cleaned and kept only outside. He was concerned that not a single scale of a fish should enter the house. He gave strict orders to our mother not to serve fish to people who came to work at our place, as it would bring disrepute to him if people gossiped in the village that they had had fish at the priest's house.

All these differences had to be managed, as the GSB caste got more integrated. Since these differences were not significant for people outside the formation, there was not much public discourse on these matters. I am sure that there must be some traces of discussions on these issues in print; I have not yet, however, been able to locate any such

traces. Print does not seem to be the favored medium to discuss these issues. As we have already seen in the previous chapter, print was used to address a national-level, educated, external, and typically male audience. The discourse on practices, however, mostly happened in the privacy of the household, on the front porch of the house and, most crucially, in the kitchen. The practices were managed by ignoring them, other times they were curbed, sometimes the differences were trivialized. These strategies worked in a direction that made it possible for there to be a unified GSB caste today. However, there was a price to be paid, usually by the weakest party in the relationships, in particular the daughters-in-law of the households.

The formation of the GSB caste was a process of secularization and modernization. It meant undermining the sectarian difference between the Smarta and Vaishnav traditions and embracing a more generic Hindu identity. The dilution of strict ritual behavior is seen in particular with regard to diet. Until the mid-twentieth century, none of these castes consumed chicken or other domestic fowls. Many of them started consuming chicken in the 1970's and 80's. Here is an episode narrated to me by a Smarta Shenvi woman about the consumption of chicken. I met her at the Saraswat Food Festival during my field-work, and we had this conversation in Konkani:.

> This was after my marriage. I had married in the 1960's, I had returned to my father's place. We had lot of space in our back yard. Our servant had gotten a chicken. She said that she herself would kill, clean and cook the chicken in the back yard. When my father returned home, my younger brother told him out of joy that they had brought a chicken and they would

be cooking the chicken. Father turned furious and so the plans were dropped.

Another family told me about how they tried eating chicken for the first time. They got another woman, not a family member, but someone from their own caste, to cook the chicken. And everyone ate it, as if they were consuming something disgusting.

An analysis of these and other ethnographic vignettes leads me to conclude that it was the inter-caste co-dining that led to the splitting of the caste association into two groups. The Eki-faction eventually succeeded, since people got convinced with modernity and started marrying across what had previously been seen as different castes. The change also came at the price of secularization, as the difference between the two sectarian traditions was no longer considered a serious difference.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

I started this dissertation with the aim of disproving Orientalist notions stating that caste is a traditional, rigid, fossilized, and irrational form of social hierarchy. My dissertation has contested this claim by showing that caste is not just a byproduct of tradition, but is responsive to power and is processual in nature. I have made this point by elucidating the process of the GSB caste formation. The GSB caste unification process was triggered in the late nineteenth century in the city of Bombay. At that time, Bombay was a flourishing port town that attracted migrants from all over India. Among these migrants was a group of historically related Brahman castes from other parts of the west coast of India. My research shows that the interaction between British colonial modernity and these colonized elites instigated the process of the GSB caste formation.

The process took on a peculiar dynamic, as the members of these Brahman castes lived across the borders of the Portuguese and the British colonial empires. Early colonial modernity in the form of the Portuguese-Catholic mercantile state arrived on the West coast of India (in Goa) in the sixteenth century. The Portuguese-Catholic state made militant efforts to convert people to Catholicism. This led to the migration of Hindus outside the region of Portuguese control.[216] The migrant groups scattered all over the west coast of India. In the subsequent centuries some of these regions on the west coast remained under Portuguese control, but most fell under the dominion of the British.

[216]This dissertation has focused on Brahmans, so I have only mentioned about the migration of Brahmans. In fact, people from other castes too migrated out of Portuguese control.

The migrant Brahman men, from the hinterlands of the west coast, converging in the urban metropolis of Bombay in the nineteenth century deemed the sixteenth century migrations as the cause of the splitting up of an originally unified GSB caste. Many people had historically experienced ritual devaluation at the hands of local Brahmans, in whose areas of dominance they had to migrate in the sixteenth century. These experiences were reinforced in Bombay, as Maharashtrian Brahmans contested the social status of immigrating Brahmans in public meetings and through the new medium of print. As a consequence, there was a real possibility for the migrants of being categorized as non-Brahmans in the British census reports. Under these circumstances, immigrating Brahmans started a movement to unify their caste, which they argued had been split up into several sub-castes (*poṭjātī*) in the distant past.

British colonial modernity also provided several factors that acted as pulls for this unification drive. The rise of British power in the second half of the nineteenth century created a stable law-and-order situation. The capitalist growth, employment in government offices, education, and other avenues for middle class success attracted these Brahman men to the centers of the British colonial state. They realized that their interest would be better served by creating a numerically stronger group through unification.

Theoretically, the interaction between the British Raj and the Brahman castes from the Konkan can be seen as an interaction between the King and the Brahman. Ideally, religion -- i.e., interaction with Hindu deities -- was the domain of the Brahman. The King controlled the material world. The domain of religion was considered independent of and superior to the material world. The Brahman's power remained in the ritual

control of this domain. Kingship was legitimized by this sacrality bestowed by the Brahman; in the exchange, the King provided protection to Brahmans.[217]

This dynamic relationship experienced a significant change due to the replacement of the figurehead of the King by British colonial modernity. The pushes and pulls of British colonial modernity and factors contributed by various Maharashtrian Brahman castes led a number of urban migrant Brahman men hailing from Goa and neighboring regions in the Konkan to start a movement to unify their historically related castes into the GSB caste. To deal with this new situation, these urban men, first, proposed a new worldview through the publication of the Konkanakhyan and, second, tweaked ritual norms relating to co-dining and marriage.

Members of these Konkani-speaking Brahman castes from rural regions of the Konkan coast, distant geographically from the pushes and pulls of modernity, overwhelmingly opposed these move that violated their religious beliefs and their ritual and ethnic purity. Nevertheless, those with modernist views succeeded and effected the formation of a unified GSB caste. Ultimately, one must say, ideas of modernity and the overwhelming power of the British Raj caused these Brahman castes to merge and to form the unified GSB caste along with a new worldview and lifestyle. This Brahman

[217] This independence of Brahman in the realm of religion survived even when the King did not derive legitimacy from the Brahman, like in the situations when the King followed Islam and Christianity. Brahmanical norms of purity and pollution maintained the distance from the material power even when the Kingship was hostile, as in the case of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. Threatened with ritual pollution, Brahmans could in theory and in practice, as is seen in sixteenth-century Goa, at least migrate to a place where the Kingship would allow them to practice religion. See Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*, 72-79.

caste emerged more entrenched in the material world. The material success came at the cost of a dilution of their control over the domain of religion.

Groups that previously did not co-dine with each other are today merged into one another. Many GSB people today are the product of marriages across the older caste lines. Most of the youngsters – i.e., people who have been born since 1990 -- are usually not aware of the differences. Those who are aware of the differences do not take them seriously. They simply self-identify as GSBs. My Shenvi and Sasastikar respondents who are in their 70's, 80's and 90's often assert the point of the Beki-faction, stating that the Bardeshkars, Pednekars and Kudaldeshkars used to be different castes. The younger generation, by contrast, considers these groups as sub-castes, and this too only if they are vaguely informed about the matter. The GSB identity has become quite firmly entrenched, with the earlier separate castes operating as sub-castes.

Caste therefore is a process and not just a product of tradition. Caste has remained responsive to a changing political climate. The formation of the GSB caste is still an ongoing process, as the "sub-castes" Shenvipaki (or Chitrapur Saraswats) and Kudaldeshkars have maintained their relative independence. This independence can be seen from the fact that both the Chitrapur Saraswats and the Kudaldeshkars have maintained their separate caste associations, even though marriages are fairly common between these groups. The rest of the major GSB castes – namely, the Shenvis, Sasastikars, Bardeshkars, Pednekars and Konkanes – usually identify themselves as GSBs.

A controversy erupted on 9th November 2014. On that day, Rajdeep Sardesai, a leading Indian TV journalist, posted the following message on the social networking website Twitter:[218] "Big day for my Goa. Two GSBs, both talented politicians become full cabinet ministers. Saraswat pride!! @manoharparrikar and Suresh Prabhu." The journalist was identifying himself with two politicians, Manohar Parrikar from Goa and Suresh Prabhu from Mumbai, as GSBs. He was also linking all three of them to the geography of Goa.

Rajdeep Sardesai is a secular journalist known for his modern and liberal views. But in this post he was identifying with his caste. It is very unlikely that Rajdeep Sardesai is aware of the fact that the text Konkanakhyan articulated GSB identity and linked it to the geography of Goa. Nevertheless, it was the GSB caste unification process made it possible for him to imagine a connection between himself, a self-professed secular journalist, two politicians from two different Hindu nationalist political parties, and Goa as a place.

Another example of the success of the unification movement was revealed to me while I was doing ethnography in Goa. Many Catholics who identify themselves as descendants of Brahmans who were converted to Catholicism in the sixteenth century identified themselves to me as "Catholic GSBs." The group is usually called "*Kirīstāva Bāmaṇa*" which means Christian-Brahman in Goa. It is clear that many have picked up GSB as their identity.

[218] https://twitter.com/sardesairajdeep/status/531366530584305664?lang=en, accessed on 15th April, 2018.

These two examples show that GSB identity as articulated in the Konkanakhyan and constituted through the co-dining ritual of 1909 has become part of general public discourse. Members of castes from rural regions of the Konkan coast overwhelmingly opposed the unification movement that violated their religious beliefs, ritual purity and ethnic purity. Nevertheless, those with modernist views succeeded in forming the GSB caste. In the ultimate sense, one must therefore say that ideas of modernity and the overwhelming power of the British Raj caused these Brahman castes to merge and form the GSB caste by changing their worldview and lifestyle. This change was accompanied by a dilution of their ritual practices, a fact that was acknowledged by all of the respondents with whom I spoke.

Dirks has argued that contemporary caste is not very ancient, but a product of interaction between British colonizers and their Brahman interlocutors. I have shown that not all Brahmans were eager to join the project of modernity. Many Brahmans from rural settings opposed the modernization. This problematizes the argument of Dirks that Brahmans in general joined the project of British modernity. At the same time as I am thus contesting part of of Dirks' theory, , I am also supporting his argument in *The Hollow Crown* by stating that the public space did open up for Brahmans, as the British came to power. In addition, I show that caste operated more according to the theory of Dumont and Marriot than according to that of Dirks. Dirks' argument that contemporary caste has more to do with British colonial rule thus becomes problematic. I have shown here that not only did change happen in caste, but change happened at the very top of the social hierarchy. The change happened through textual articulation and then the articulation was implemented through ritual.

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