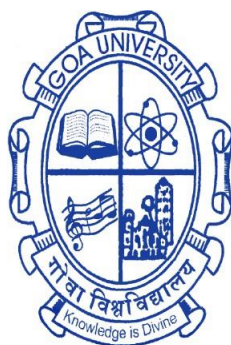


Construction of the Bahujan Samaj: Consciousness, Contestations and Assertions from the nineteenth century to post-Liberation Goa

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

D. D. Kosambi School of Social Sciences and Behavioural Studies,
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By

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June 2022

DECLARATION

I, Parag D. Parobo hereby declare that this thesis represents work which has been carried out by me and that it has not been submitted, either in part or full, to any other University or Institution for the award of any research degree.

Place: Taleigao Plateau.

Date: 24-06-2022

Parag D. Parobo

CERTIFICATE

I Professor Remy Dias hereby certify that the work was carried out under my supervision and may be placed for evaluation.

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Acknowledgments

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The late Alito Siqueira, Dr. Madhavi Sardesai and Nityanand Naik were always supportive of my work, and this study is dedicated to them. Their sustained and profound motivation has played a key role in making this research possible. I cherish their memories and it saddens me greatly that they are not here today to see the work completed.

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Glossary

adani: unlettered individuals.

adivasis: original inhabitants.

agrahara: educational institution.

agrashala: rest house, especially meant for devotees.

asprushya: untouchable.

avatars: incarnations of god Vishnu on earth.

Bahujan Samaj: a loose conglomeration of Hindu non-Brahmin castes.

balutedar: village servants.

beki: movement launched by the Gauda Saraswat Brahmans to counter *eki*.

bhakti: devotion to God.

bhatkar: landlord.

compromisso: temple constitution with private statutes detailing the rights and privileges of *mahajans* and other social groups in a temple.

comunidades: Portuguese word for village community.

cullave: *mahajans* of a temple, based on lineage.

devkarya: a tradition followed by the GSB families in their houses, in honour of their family god.

dharmasabha: religious assembly.

dharmashastras: texts that delineate religious obligations.

Dushera: Hindu festival.

eki: caste unity movement launched by the Gauda Saraswat Brahmans to overcome sectarian differences within the community.

gaunkar: male member of a family that claims to be the original settler or founder of a village community.

gotra: equivalent to lineage.

gramdevata: village deity.

gumpti: grotto-shaped shelters of deities.

guru-shishya: teacher–student.

ijatsar: reputable.

inam: gifted lands.

Ishwar: God.

itihās: history.

jagayaveilo: an area-specific god.

jatis: smaller-scale birth-groups.

kalash: a metal pot with a large base and a small mouth.

khazan: low-lying lands of coastal Goa, reclaimed from the sea and used for paddy cultivation.

kirtan: devotional storytelling, usually accompanied by musical instruments.

kirtankar: an individual who performs *kirtan*.

kuladevata: lineage or clan deity.

kulin: respectable, and refined.

kulkarni: village accountant.

mahajan: literally, the big men, but more importantly, signifying the custodians of a temple.

mahajanshahi: dominance of the *mahajan*.

matha: monastery.

mazania: customarily an organisation comprising temple groups across castes whose aim was to manage temple interests, primarily directed towards maintenance of the deity's properties and carrying out ritual processes.

mokaso: lands originally held for service.

mundkar: tenant.

Novas Conquistas: territories captured by the Portuguese towards the late eighteenth century.

paduka: ceremonial sandals of a *guru*.

palve: *mahajans* of temple, based on support given to the temple.

potti: a general collection or contribution towards the temple.

pathshala: primary school.

purana: influential texts of Hinduism.

rakhandar: guardian deity.

renda: rent paid on a lease.

samaradhana: grand feast at temple.

sampradaya: Hindu religious sect.

Satyanarayan: rituals of god Vishnu.

shastra: Hindu scriptures.

shatakarmi: Brahmins who could perform all six traditional duties, namely, study of the Vedas, performing rites for oneself and giving gifts, accepting gifts, performing rites for others and teaching the Vedas.

shen: ritual ceremony in which a girl was ritually bonded to the temple, through marriage to an object, usually a hibiscus flower or a girl dressed as the groom.

shenoimama: Shenvis who were tutors in the domestic system of education.

shigmo: spring festival celebrated in Goa.

shimayveilo: deities protecting the boundaries of the village or specific areas.

shravana: the fifth month of the Hindu calendar considered an auspicious month.

shuddhi: purification ceremony performed during reconversion of Catholic Gaudas to Hinduism.

smartha: those who worship Lord Shiva; Shaivites.

swami: religious head of the community.

tirth-prasad: consecrated food and water.

trikarmi: A Brahmin who can perform only three duties: study of the Vedas, performing rites for oneself and giving gifts.

upanayan: Hindu ritual of initiation, restricted to the upper-castes.

vangod: original clan of village settlers.

vedokta: rituals laid down in shastras and in accordance with the Vedas.

vido: a roll of betel leaves offered to deities.

zalmi: non-Brahmin priest.

Introduction

Today’s scholarship, focusing on caste in the new setting of colonial institutions—decennial census reports, growth of cities and new employment opportunities—has advanced significantly beyond general insights.¹ In contrast, scholarship examining social life in Goa has perceived caste as an unchanging inheritance of a pre-colonial tradition.² Moreover, with the exception of a few noteworthy studies on Hindu and native Catholic elites, scholars have resisted attempts to use caste as a valid tool of social analysis.³ Such a rejection has characterised the

¹ David Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics: the Madras Presidency 1870–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Rosalind O’Hanlon, “Caste and its Histories in Colonial India: A reappraisal,” *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no. 2 (2017): 432–61; Eugene Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: the Non-Brahman Movement and Tamil Separatism 1916–1929* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Marguerite Ross Barnett, *The Politics of Cultural Nationalism in South India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Christopher Baker, *The Politics of South India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Bernard S. Cohn, “The census, social structure and objectification in South Asia,” in *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays*, ed. Bernard S. Cohn (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 224–54; Arjun Appadurai, “Number in the Colonial Imagination,” in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, eds., C. Breckenridge and P. van der Veer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 314–39; Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Sunit Guha, *Beyond Caste: Identity and Power in South Asia, Past and Present* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

² B. D. Satoskar, *Gomantak Prakriti ani Sanskriti*, vol. I (Pune: Subhda Saraswat, 1988); Manohar Hirba Sardesai, *Gomantakache Ase Te Divas* (Caranzalim: Purogami Prakashan, 1994); K. S. Singh, ed., *People of India: Goa*, vol. XXI (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1993); V. R. Mitragotri, *Socio Cultural History of Goa: From the Bhojas to the Vijayanagar* (Panjim: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999).

³ Jerome Anthony Saldanha, *Indian Caste: Konkani or Goan Castes*, vol. I (Bombay: Anglo-Lusitano Press, 1904); Frank Conlon, *A Caste in a Changing World: The Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmans, 1700–*

historiographical analysis of Portuguese Goa. Consequently, while conceptualising and contextualising Goa as a subject for historical inquiry, caste under Portuguese colonialism, more particularly, an approach to understanding the non-Brahmin castes, has failed to attract scholarly scrutiny.

This is not to say that writing such a history does not face challenges of interpretations, however, these challenges are framed more explicitly by particular articulations of history. Scholarly interpretations of Goa can be located between two hermeneutic extremes: the Goa Dourada, and the Goa Indica.⁴ On the one hand, the framework of Goa Dourada represents a golden Goa—an image of a happy empire—often deployed when Portuguese colonialism foresaw a crisis arising from the local.⁵ On the other hand, the framework of Goa Indica, that saw Goa’s difference with India as irreconcilable, was reinforced by the curious interplay of politics at different levels of the colonial state since the late nineteenth century.⁶ The history of Goa tends to lie more within the purview of Goa Dourada and Goa Indica and the scholarship has contented itself with these frameworks, referring occasionally to caste contexts but rarely engaging with them intensively, leaving much of Goa’s history unconsidered. A major reason for this is the sheer difference between scholarly fields and the sensibilities of researchers who work with them as they put the past to use for diverse ends.

1935 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Frank F. Conlon, “Caste by Association: The Gauda Sarasvata Brahmana Unification Movement,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 33, no. 3 (1974): 351–65; Ângela Barreto Xavier, “Purity of Blood and Caste: Identity Narratives in Goan Elites,” in *Race and Blood in the Iberian World*, eds., Max S. Hering Torres, María Elena Martínez and David Nirenberg, *Race and Blood in the Iberian World* (Berlin & London: LIT Verlag, 2012), 125–49; Cristiana Bastos, “Doctors for the Empire: The Medical School of Goa and its Narratives” *Identities* 8, no. 4 (2001): 517–48.

⁴ Caroline Ifeka, “The Image of Goa,” in *Indo-Portuguese History: Old Issues, New Questions*, ed. T. R. de Souza (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1985), 180–95.

⁵ Rosa Maria Perez, *The Tulsi and the Cross: Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter in Goa* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2012), p. 3.

⁶ A. K. Priolkar, *Goa: Facts and Fiction* (Bombay: Sudha Joshi, 1962); A. K. Priolkar, *Goa Re-discovered* (Bombay: Self-published, 1967); Prabhakar Angle, *Goa: Concepts and Misconcepts* (Bombay: Goa Hindu Association, 1994).

Further scholarship on Goa has been affected by a kind of strategic silence, painfully shaped by untold histories, and has accepted many of the stereotypes that surround the castes, binding them to the social and material reality of their existence. Silence is crucial to our social world; it is not merely an absence of communication, but can be multivocal: ambiguous, haunting, oppressive, and refusing interpretation.⁷ In recent times, there has been a surge of interest in the practice of tracing silence—a trace which Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her discussion of Jacques Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*, suggests ‘is the mark of the absence of a presence, an always already absent present.’⁸ Such traces, then, become crucial moments for the construction of communities and this study approaches them through the lens of the Bahujan Samaj.

Research: Aims and Objectives

This study raises a single question on the Bahujan Samaj (a loose conglomeration of Hindu non-Brahmin castes) as a subject, for which it ventures into two kinds of answers: one, historical, and the other, historiographical. On the one hand, to start with the ‘Bahujan Samaj’ is to express an interest in finding out diverse historical possibilities for caste formation throughout South Asia. Taken in this sense, the question reflects a desire to examine the experiences of what went on to constitute the Bahujan Samaj and the transformations in the activities, experiences and social placements taking place in colonial societies, both in Portuguese Goa and British India. On the other hand, to ask about the Bahujan is to engage with the ‘small voice’ of history that has been ignored so far because of the overwhelming centrality accorded to the upper castes, both Hindu and Catholic, in the studies on Goa. A note of clarification at this point seems essential—my use of the term ‘Bahujan’, at times replaced with ‘non-Brahmin’ or ‘lower-caste,’ is based on the context in which these terms were largely employed, and I have tried to make this as transparent as possible.

⁷ For an analytical approach on silence see Ana Dragojlovic and Annemarie Samuels, “Tracing silences: Towards an anthropology of the unspoken and unspeakable,” *History and Anthropology* 32, no. 4 (2021): 417–25.

⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Translator’s Preface,” in Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), xvii.

The focus of this work on the Hindu non-Brahmin groups is a conscious choice, for they represent the Bahujan and their expectations of the period. It is important to note that in Goa Catholicism maintained caste hierarchy after conversion but offered an upward mobility. The social and political stakes of Catholicism were also enormous. All these were reflected in the policies of the colonial state that privileged Catholicism, thus investing Goan Catholics with a tremendous potential for social and political reorganisation.⁹ This historical relationship framed the hierarchy between Goan Catholics and Hindus and influenced social divides, drawing an inevitable link with Catholicism. Arguably, thus, in a fiercely competitive colonial world, religion became a focal point of community building, from identification to including and excluding. The idea here is not only to claim an agency for the non-Brahmin Hindu groups, but to draw attention to the various groups that have been ignored so far. Colonialism, both British and Portuguese, as will be seen, was a vital instrument for crafting social identities in colonial as well as post-colonial Goa.

The aim of this work is not only to excavate what Ann Laura Stoler calls ‘arrested histories’—those histories which are ‘suspended from received historiography’—but rather to make an intervention in the writing of history of Goa that might shed new light on some of the practices and processes associated with the colonial state, the ways in which social groups negotiated them, and the broader geographical and social connections that they underpinned during the colonial and post-Liberation periods.¹⁰ It seeks to redress an imbalance by constructing a more objective account of the Hindu non-Brahmin communities or the Bahujan Samaj—how it emerged, the nature of its origin, education, employment and mobility, and how its members lived their lives between colonialisms, Portuguese and the British, and subsequently, the post-Liberation period.

⁹ Ângela Barreto Xavier, *A invenção de Goa: Poder imperial e conversões culturais nos séculos XVI e XVII* (Lisbon: Imprensa da Ciências Sociais, 2008); Bastos, “Doctors for the Empire”; Pratima Kamat, *Farar Far: Local Resistance to Colonial Hegemony in Goa 1510–1912* (Panjim: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999); Rochelle Pinto, *Between Empires: Print and Politics in Goa* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007); Rowena Robinson, “Sixteenth Century Conversion to Christianity in Goa,” in *Religious Conversion in India: Modes, Motivations and Meanings*, eds. Rowena Robinson and Sathianathan Clarke (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 291–322.

¹⁰ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Thinking Through Colonial Ontologies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 33.

As non-Brahmin communities do not necessarily see themselves as inferior within the traditional caste system, the need is to consider historical trajectories in locating this agency that confronts situations of oppression. This approach helps to illuminate the social and political locations of the Hindu non-Brahmin castes, their relations with the colonial state, and the power and politics of the Hindu elite.

Conceptual framework

My focus on the concepts of class, resistance and the emergence of public life since the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the colonial state expanded its territorial empire, allows for an analysis of power as it frames the kinds of interactions possible between caste groups and the colonial state. Caste and class have often been regarded as opposite categories of stratification: the former based on a ‘system of birth’ and the latter on the ‘systems of production’. This approach carries an inherent tendency to study caste and class as distinct categories, and moreover, to understand the rise of a class as an economic ascendancy. Historiography of class in colonial India suffers from a reductionist fallacy where class is treated as a mere projection of systems of production, largely determined by economic factors.¹¹ Recent scholarship has shown strikingly different ways in which to think about the relationships between caste and class.¹² Firstly, caste and class are heuristic categories and in reality they are not only interlinked but are also superimposed on each other—there exist classes within a caste and castes within a class.¹³ Secondly, the rise of the GSB middle-class was not just an economic activity but was a cultural and political project of self-fashioning—a way of living.¹⁴

¹¹ B. B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes: Their Growth in Modern Times* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1963).

¹² D. L. Sheth, “Secularisation of Caste and Making of New Middle Class,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 34 no. 34/35 (1999): 2502–510.

¹³ C. J. Fuller and Haripriya Narasimhan, *Tamil Brahmins: The Making of a Middle-Class Caste* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

¹⁴ Sanjay Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

In recent years, scholars have been interested in understanding textual practices and power since the nineteenth century in India by applying Jürgen Habermas's concept of the democratic 'public sphere'.¹⁵ The public sphere is seen as a domain of social life where private people come together as a public, and in contrast to closed or exclusive, affairs are open to all, where rational public opinion can be formed.¹⁶ Although Habermas's concept of the public sphere has become very influential, he has been criticised for a normative claim that the public sphere holds—one set of values constitutes the norm for all and its specific class character.¹⁷ While the public sphere framework is significant to understand the practices of power through the print culture, there could be no public sphere completely free of intrusion or control by the state and the power of local elites. Moreover, the theory breaks down when the lower castes cannot enter openly, or as equals, into the public sphere.¹⁸ This study uses the category of public sphere in a limited sense and the focus here is on public life—webs or networks of spaces—which introduces a level of complexity to the constrained public sphere. Firstly, public life enables us to understand the growth of new institutional structures of colonialism in Goa since the nineteenth century as a site of political practice. Secondly, public life goes beyond the philosophical notions of a public sphere—coercion-free inclusive norms and consensus, pursuing its utilitarian ends in the name of reason. Thirdly, while the public sphere's political aim is to fight against the state, public life is driven towards capturing the patronage of the state. Thus, public life allows us to examine the

¹⁵ Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere, 1920-1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); Veena Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere: Western India under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001); Pinto, *Between Empires*; Shobna Nijhawan, *Women and Girls in the Hindi Public Sphere: Periodical Literature in Colonial North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012); Sandra Ataíde Lobo, "The Languages of the Goan Periodical Press, 1820–1933," in *Media and the Portuguese Empire*, eds. José Luís Garcia, Chandrika Kaul, Filipa Subtil and Alexandra Santos (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 69–86.

¹⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 1991).

¹⁷ Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990): 56–80.

¹⁸ Riya Mukherjee and Smita Jha, "Differential citizenship: questioning the Dalit claim to equal citizenship through a projection of difference," *Social Identities* 23, no. 1 (2016): 29–43.

changing nature of the colonial state, the practical problems and particular interests of individuals and castes, both above and below.

Broadly, and at the risk of over-simplifying things, post-Liberation historiography of Goa has tended to follow the extraordinary levels of violence of the colonial state and the acts of resistance.¹⁹ The range of actions studied include ‘the flight of the deities’, non-payment of taxes, armed resistance, emigration, syncretism, collaboration, feudal uprisings and the revolts due to the state’s policies. The extent of scholarly attention given to the spectacular outbreaks against the Portuguese state has been justified by the magnitude of the colonial force. Through a seemingly simple binary, domination is relatively fixed to the Portuguese as an institutionalised form of power and resistance emerges as the opposition to the power of the colonial state. These histories do not pay due attention to the local dominance of the indigenous elite, and how the non-Brahmin castes responded. As a result, by locating resistance as a form of behaviour against or with the Portuguese, scholarship has marginalised other forms of behaviour that challenged the indigenous elites. In doing so, social domination of the indigenous elites gets misrecognised and any attempt on the part of the Bahujan to undermine this dominance not only fails to qualify as resistance but is seen as an opportunistic pattern of behaviour.²⁰

This binary needs to be questioned by drawing attention to less institutionalised, more pervasive, and more everyday forms of power.²¹ Despite the strong evidence of non-Brahmin caste agency

¹⁹ Paul Axelrod and Michelle A. Fuerch, “The Flight of the Deities: Hindu Resistance in Portuguese,” *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (1996): 387–421; Kamat, *Farar Far*; T. R. de Souza, “Colonial Exploitation of Native Exploitation: The Case of Cuncolim,” in *Socio-Economic Aspects of Portuguese Colonialism in Goa, 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. B. S. Shastry (Belgaum: Yarbhal Offset Printers, 1991), 154–64; Charles Borges, “Foreign Jesuits and Native Resistance in Goa 1542-1759,” in *Essays in Goan History*, ed. T. R. de Souza (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1989), 69–79; B. Sheikh Ali, ed, *Goa Wins Freedom: Reflections and Reminiscences* (Bambolim: Goa University, 1986).

²⁰ Vaman Ragnath Varde Valavalikar, *Goenkarachi Goyabhayli Vosnuk* (Mumbai: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1927), 27–8.

²¹ Since the 1980s scholars have drawn attention to less institutionalised forms of power and forms of resistance. See James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Veena Talwar Oldenburg, “Lifestyle as Resistance: The Case of the

and resistance, the analytical framing of resistance reminds us of the disciplinary intent and constitution of the archive. The Gaud Saraswat Brahmins (henceforth GSBs), the dominant elite, were deeply involved in colonial political institutions and were caught up in the pursuit of power. Deploying cultural resources has been one of the strategies of resistance. The struggle against the humiliation of the non-Brahmin castes and a tradition of questioning and contesting caste hierarchy and caste oppression has continued from the nineteenth century. Many intellectuals were actually engaged in caste contests with much longer histories, and social dignity, political leverage, and material livelihoods were all at stake in these conflicts. The construction of new caste identities as an agency of subversion represented a startling new departure from older social and cultural forms which might have been used to alter the relations of power within Goan society, or which might have been directed at the local elite. Apart from the non-confrontational forms of resistance seen through the socio-cultural practices and the ways in which the social world is constrained, modified and conditioned by power relations, the temple and rituals are also crucial sites of struggle: an arena for the display of power by the more powerful groups, and for the achievement of power by the less powerful groups.²²

Methodology

In attempting to historically situate the Bahujan within the diverse dimensions of the group's colonial experience and its social aspirations of the period, certain methodological assumptions are at work. The study engages with Bahujan life critically, with both, existing historiography and upper-caste morality, and relies extensively on the colonial and local archives—government records, newspaper reports, memoirs and other sources that might more creatively illuminate the Bahujan. One of the premises on which this study is based is that continuous efforts to create identity not only play a vital role in pinning down the self-perception of social groups, but also help us to understand culture. More significantly, it straddles boundaries of a disciplinary sort

Courtesans of Lucknow, India,” *Feminist Studies* 16, no. 2 (1990): 259–87; Sherry B. Ortner, “Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 1 (1995): 173–93; Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash, eds., *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991).

²² Nicholas B. Dirks, “Ritual and Resistance: Subversion as a Social Fact,” in *Autobiography of an Archive: A Scholar's Passage to India*, Nicholas B. Dirks (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 109–31.

and stands at the borderlands where history and anthropology intersect—ethnohistory.²³ And what makes it ethnohistory is its link to the present that entails the analysis of written records along with all other cultural traces such as myths, memory and ritual tradition about the past.

Primary to any consideration of the cultural impact of colonialism are questions about the archive's cultural construction and a practice of reading the archive differently.²⁴ Even though the archive is not quite as voluble about the Bahujan, it nevertheless provides us with some sense of the material conditions of these groups that we would otherwise not have access to. Furthermore, this work also employs ethnographic sensibilities, and methodologically they pose a challenge to a conventional historical narrative.²⁵

A Review of Literature

Since the second half of the nineteenth century, ethnographical techniques for historical studies were well established in British India. While the British bureaucrat–ethnographers were pushed to produce gazetteers and ethnographic surveys as a result of the revolt of 1857, in the case of Portuguese Goa, ethnography emerged to prominence only towards the end of the nineteenth century. In the second half of the nineteenth century, in the absence of any models for Portuguese Goa, many works published on Goa began to appropriate ethnographic methods laid down by

²³ For ethnohistorical approach in the more specific South Asian context see: Arjun Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule: A South Indian Case* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1983); Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Dirk H. A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market of Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²⁴ A crucial dimension that scholars emphasise is a shift from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject. Ann Laura Stoler has been very influential in promoting this approach in recent times, see Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 87–109; Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*. Also see Nicholas B. Dirks, “Colonial Histories and Native Informants: Biography of an Archive,” in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicaments*, eds., Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 279–313; Antoinette Burton, ed., *Archive Stories: Facts, Fiction and the Writing of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

²⁵ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 33–4.

the British bureaucrat-ethnographers. Some of these works by José Nicolau da Fonseca, António Lopes Mendes, A. B. de Bragança Pereira and Jerome Anthony Saldanha provided modes of understanding Goan society through its social life and were more prominently structured on caste, with the specification on kinds of customs.²⁶ We do find similar ethnographical features in the works of Yeshwant Phondoba Naik Danait and Ramchandra Govind Wagle, Bhavani Vishwanth Kanvinde, Voicunta Camotim and Vaman Raghunath Varde Valavalikar.²⁷ However, much of their efforts were an attempt to find their own identity and reconcile conflicts among the GSBs.²⁸

Scholars have shown that the relationship between the GSB and the Portuguese imperial agents, and colonisers of Portuguese origin was diverse—sometimes amicable, and at other times, conflictive. Scholars like P. S. S. Pissurlencar, M. N. Pearson, T. R. de Souza and G. Scammell have pointed out the ‘indigenous assistance’ in *Estado da Índia*, while others like Pratima Kamat, Rochelle Pinto, Ângela Barreto Xavier, and Ines Županov and Sharmila Pais have stressed their

²⁶ J. N. da Fonseca, *An Historical and Archaeological Sketch of the City of Goa* (Bombay: Thacker and Company Ltd, 1878); A. Lopes Mendes, *A Índia Portuguesa*, vols. 2 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1886); A. B. de Bragança Pereira, “Etnografia da Índia Portuguesa,” *A Índia Portuguesa*, vol. I (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1923); A. B. de Bragança Pereira, *O sistema das castas* (ensaio historico-sociologico) (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1920); Saldanha, *Indian Caste: Konkani or Goan Castes*; Valavalikar, *Goenkarachi Goyabhayli Vosnuk*; Keshav Anant Naik, ed. *Gelaya Pavshatkatil Gomantak* (Silver Jubilee Commemorative volume of Saraswat Brahman Samaj) (Margao: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1937); C. F Saldanha, *A Short History of Goa* (Bombay: Anglo-Lusitano, 1957).

²⁷ Yeshwant Phondoba Naik Danait and Ramchandra Govind Wagle, *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas* (Mumbai: Asiatic Chapkhana, 1873); Bhavani Vishwanth Kanvinde, *Saraswat Brahman urf Shenvi Kiva Konkani Brahman* (Mumbai: National Chapkhana, 1870); Valavalikar, *Goemkarachi Goyabhayali Vosnuk*; Vaman Raghunath Varde Valavalikar, *Kahi Marathi Lekh* (Mumbai: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1945); Voicunta Camotim, *Os bramanes sarasvatas de Goa* (Nova Goa: Minerva Indiana, 1929).

²⁸ Historically there is no reference to the caste called GSB. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a period when several *jatis* through a unification process consolidated into the GSB—a single caste.

conflictive strategies and internal rivalries.²⁹ There have been studies by T. R. de Souza, B. G. D'Souza, P. D. Xavier and Délio de Mendonça that have studied social change in Goa alongside colonial policies.³⁰ They analyse socio-economic pressures and opportunities presented by the Portuguese rule, and agrarian and social relations in rural and urban settings. Studies by António de Noronha, Manohar Hirba Sardesai and Varsha Kamat, seeking to understand Hindu society and cultural processes occurring during the Portuguese rule, more particularly in the early twentieth century, have been influenced by the 'renaissance' model.³¹ The basic premise is that of a cultural life exclusively shaped by the GSBs. However, the wider problem with this model for understanding contemporary cultural change is that they invariably produce an upper-caste location of Hindu community which is monolithic in its orientation. In fact, the principal analytical framework for studying Hindu society and culture has remained primarily concerned with the GSBs and has attended to questions of other castes only peripherally.

Given the significance of land, we know that colonial rule was able to codify laws and alter norms and networks of patronage. At the centre of this remarkable phenomenon, lay the code of *Vedor da Fazenda da Índia* (Revenue Superintendent of Portuguese India), Afonso Mexia, *Foral*

²⁹ P. S. S. Pissurlencar, *Agentes da Diplomacia Portuguesa na Índia* (Bastora: Tipografia Rangle, 1952); M. N. Pearson, "Indigenous Dominance in a Colonial Economy: The Goa Rendas, 1600–1670," *Mare Luso-Indicum* 2 (1973): 61–73; G Scammell, "The Pillars of Empire: Indigenous Assistance and the Survival of the 'Estado da India' c. 1600–1700," *Modern Asian Studies* 22, no. 3 (1988): 473–89; T. R. de Souza, "Glimpses of Hindu Dominance of the Goan Economy in the 17th century," *Indica* 12, no. 1 (1975): 27–35; Kamat, *Farar Far*; Pinto, *Between Empires*; Ângela Barreto Xavier and Ines Županov, *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese Empire, Indian Knowledge* (16th-18th Centuries) (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015); Carmen Sharmila Pais, "History and Politics of Elections in Goa (1821–1963): A Study," (PhD diss., Goa University, 2017).

³⁰ T. R. de Souza, *Medieval Goa: A Socio-Economic History* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1979); B. G. D'Souza, *Goan Society in Transition: A Study in Social Change* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1975); P. D. Xavier, *Goa: A Social History 1510 -1640* (Panaji: Rajhauns, 1993); Délio de Mendonça, *Conversions and Citizenry: Goa under Portugal, 1510-1610* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2002).

³¹ António de Noronha, "Os Indús de Goa e a República Portuguesa," *A Índia Portuguesa*, vol. II (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1923); Sardesai, *Gomantakache Ase Te Divas*; Varsha Kamat, *Resurgent Goa: Goan Society from 1900–1961* (Panjim: Broadway Publishing House, 2019).

dos usos e costumes dos Gancares e Lavradores da Ilha de Goa e outras annexas a ella of 1526 (the Charter of Customs and Practices of the Gaunkars) that inscribed norms, uses, and customs operating in the Goan villages or the *comunidade* system. In the nineteenth century, scholars such as Filippe Nery Xavier and Joaquim Heliodoro da Cunha Rivara developed a bureaucratic form of rationality that defended *Foral* as an embodiment of a pre-colonial arrangement of the village.³² This helped to place the question of state power within the context of land and social formation. Since the end of the nineteenth century, a sizeable literature has been produced on the *comunidade* system that debated on the questions about the relationship between *Foral*, *comunidades* and state power. On the one hand, Remy Dias has examined the relationship between the colonial legislations on the *comunidade* that impacted the uses of land—the socio-economic changes and contributions from local elites.³³ And on the other hand, Jason Keith Fernandes, Paul Axelrod and Michelle A. Fuerch, Rochelle Pinto and Ângela Barreto Xavier have examined the afterlife of the *Foral* and the manner in which it was adapted to the claims of the local elite to legitimate its assumption through a historical precedent.³⁴

³² Filippe Nery Xavier, *Collecção de bandos, e outras diferentes providencias que servem de leis regulamentares para o governo economico, e judicial das provincias denominadas das Novas Conquistas*, 2 vols (Panjim: Imprensa Nacional, 1840); Filippe Nery Xavier, *Bosquejio Historio das Comunidades Aldeas dos Concelhos das Ilhas, Salsete e Bardez*, 2 vols (Bastora: Typografia Rangle, 1903–1907); Joaquim Heliodoro da Cunha Rivara, ed., “Foral dos usos e costumes dos Gancares e Lavradores da Ilha de Goa e outras annexas a ella,” in *Archivo Portuguez Oriental*, vol. V, doc. 58 (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1857).

³³ Remy Dias, “The Socio-Economic History of Goa with Special Reference to the Comunidade System: 1750–1910,” (PhD diss., Goa University, 2004).

³⁴ Jason Keith Fernandes, “Invoking the Ghost of Mexia: State and Community in Post-Colonial Goa,” *Ler História* 58 (2010): 9–25; Paul Axelrod and Michelle A. Fuerch, “Portuguese Orientalism and the Making of the Village Communities of Goa,” *Ethnohistory* 45, no. 3 (1998): 439–76; Rochelle Pinto, “The Foral in the History of the Comunidades of Goa,” *Journal of World History* 29, no 2 (2018): 185–212; Ângela Barreto Xavier, “Village normativities and the Portuguese Imperial Order: The case of early modern Goa,” in *Norms beyond Empire. Law-making and Local Normativities in Iberian Asia, 1500–1800*, ed. Manuel Bastias Saavedra (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 32–71.

The prominence of the temple in the construction of caste identities has led to many studies since the late nineteenth century.³⁵ However, most of these temple histories are themselves implicated in caste conflicts and they emerge as primary historical sources to legitimise claims about history. In writing the cultural history of Goa, scholars have consistently tended to pick on this elite temple literature to inform their understandings of contemporary society and have ignored the lesser social groups.³⁶ The standard view has been to excessively emphasise the caste, lineage and status, temple management, economics and architecture. The various caste groups and important individuals were the main agents of temple relationship, and their changing relationships to each other, and to the temples, set the direction of the temple. Unlike the studies on the temples of South India, scholarship has shown little attention to temple honours and disputes. The rise to power of the GSBs was also linked directly to temples, rituals and redistributive processes of the material resources of the temple. The claims of founding of deities and the powerful function of honours in the redistributive process of the temple would define a *mahajan*, and depending on whether one was a *mahajan*, the share of other individuals in the temple, as a temple servant or a worshipper, was defined. Further, the role of the colonial state in the affairs of temples and its efforts to arbitrate temple conflicts has largely been ignored. Such questions run counter to one of the favourite tropes of scholarship that has understood the temple as a monolithic institution, centralised under the authority of the *mahajans* who gained legitimacy as founders and protectors of the temples.

³⁵ Of the many texts, for important works see Vishnu Rangaji Sheldekar, *Shree Chandreshwar Mahatmya* (Khanapur: Dhananjay Chapkhana, 1902); Shripad Venkatesh Wagle, *Shree Mangesh Devasthanacha Sanshipta Itihas* (Mumbai: Self-published, 1907); Shripad Venkatesh Wagle, *Gomantakatil Shree Nagesh Maharudra, Shree Mahalaxmi, Shree Ramnath, Shree Mahalasa va Shree Laxmi Narsinha ya Devasthanacha Sansipta Itihas* (Mapuca: Self-published, 1913); Jaywantrao Vinayak Suryarao Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve Yethil Shree Saptakoteswar Devasthanacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas* (Mumbai: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1934).

³⁶ R. S. Pandit, "The temple of Shantadurga," *All India Saraswat* 4, no. 4 (1922): 61–70; Axelrod and Fuerch, "The Flight of the Deities,"; V. Gopala Rao, "Temples of Goa—An Architectural Study," (PhD diss., Goa University, 2003); Pandurang Phaladesai, "A Cultural History of Canacona Taluka of Goa," (PhD diss., Goa University, 2001); Padmaja Kamat, "Ponda: A History of temples," (PhD diss., Goa University, 2011).

There have been anthropological studies by Alexander Henn, Robert Newman and Rosa Maria Perez that have examined colonialism and Hindu–Catholic encounters in Goa and have developed more sophisticated approaches towards understanding religious identity embedded in village temples, rituals and syncretism.³⁷ While they unsettle notions of a monolithic colonial experience, the ways in which caste and identity has been perceived has not been much affected. However, a growing stream of research in anthropology has recently begun reconsidering the relationship between language, caste and religion in the efforts to construct an identity.³⁸ Besides, accounts on the freedom movement range from reminiscences of the freedom fighters to the role of political associations and armed movements against foreign rule.³⁹

There is no dearth of studies on the history of Goa after 1961, however, many such studies only trace the events chronologically and have been concerned with two aspects. On the one hand, there is the constant engagement with the question of Goa’s post–colonial identity that framed the historical relationship between the pre–colonial, colonial and post–Liberation periods.⁴⁰ The contrast between these periods is crucial. On the other hand, the focus is to examine electoral

³⁷ Robert S. Newman, *Of Umbrellas, Goddesses and Dreams: Essays on Goan Society and Culture* (Mapusa: Other India Press, 2001); Rosa Maria Perez, *The Tulsi and the Cross: Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter in Goa* (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan and RCS Publishers, 2011); Alexander Henn, *Hindu-Catholic Encounters in Goa: Religion, Colonialism and Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

³⁸ Jason Keith Fernandes, *Citizenship in a Caste Polity: Religion, Language and Belonging in Goa* (Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, 2020).

³⁹ Sheikh Ali, *Goa Wins Freedom* P. D. Gaitonde, *The Liberation of Goa: A Participants View of History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984); Mohan Ranade, *Struggle Unfinished* (Ribandar: Vimal Publications, 1988); Seema Risbud, “Goa’s Struggle for Freedom 1949–1961: The Contributions of National Congress (Goa) and Azad Gomantak Dal,” (PhD diss., Goa University, 2003); Suresh Kanekar, *Goa’s Liberation and Thereafter: Chronicles of a Fragmented Life* (Saligao, Goa: Goa 1556, 2011); Prabhakar Sinari, *From Darkness to Dawn: A First Person Account of the Militant Struggle to Liberate Goa from Portuguese Colonialism* (Saligao, Goa: Goa 1556, 2017).

⁴⁰ Arthur G. Rubinoff, *The Construction of a Political Community: Integration and Identity in Goa* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998); M. Do Ceu Rodrigue, “Opinion Poll in Goa: An Evaluation of the Method to Settle the Controversy,” (PhD, diss., Goa University, 1996).

politics and political parties.⁴¹ Perusing historical studies, it is not hard to find examples wherein scholars rely on modern notions to interpret historical communities and traditions. There is a tendency to see culture and identity as primordial phenomena, permanently embedded within social or religious groups. Rather, as this study attempts to show, the construction of identity is concerned with aspirations and practices that consequently impact the nature of electoral processes, the competition for political power, economic benefits and social status in post-Liberation Goa.

It is perhaps important to note that while the historiography of Goa has contributed to our understanding of the region, the absence of the non-Brahmin castes suggests important historical processes in the writing of history. Further, indications of this gap that has grown can be seen in the rather direct shift to the subaltern elite in Goan historiography.⁴² More importantly, even with the Subaltern School, the absence of the subaltern had formed one of the principal critiques against it.⁴³ On the other hand, since the 1960s, anthropologists, sociologists, historians and South Asia scholars have all been attentive to the non-Brahmin communities and the construction of identity.⁴⁴ This work pays close attention to the scholarship on South Asia to

⁴¹ Sarto Esteves, *Politics and Political Leadership in Goa* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1986); Vaman Radhakrishna, *Muktinantar Goa* (Panaji: Rajhauns, 1993); Aureliano Fernandes, *Cabinet Government in Goa, 1961-1993: A Chronicled Analysis of 30 Years of Government and Politics in Goa* (Panaji: Maureen & Camvet Publishers, 1997).

⁴² Bastos, "Doctors for the empire"; Cristiana Bastos, "Subaltern Elites and beyond: Why Goa matters for Theory," in *Metahistory: History Questioning History*, eds., Charles J. Borges and M. N. Pearson (Lisbon: Vega, 2007), 129–41.

⁴³ See, Sumit Sarkar, "Decline of the Subaltern in Subaltern Studies," in *Writing Social History*, Sumit Sarkar (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), chapter 3; Ramachandra Guha, "Review: Subaltern and Bhadrakok Studies," *Economic and Political Weekly* 30, no. 33 (1995): 2056–58; Ramachandra Guha, "Beyond Bhadrakok and Bankim Studies," *Economic and Political Weekly* 31, no. 8 (1996): 495–96.

⁴⁴ Eugene Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism 1916-1929* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Owen Lynch, *The Politics of Untouchability: Social mobility and social change in a city of India* (Columbia University Press, 1969); Eleanor Zelliott, "Mahar and Non-Brahmin Movements in Maharashtra," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 7, no. 3 (1970): 397–415; Gail Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society: The Non-*

demonstrate how a competitive colonial environment offered opportunities to the local communities for consolidating power along the axes of castes, and breaks down the simplistic and seemingly self-evident binary between coloniser and colonised. In a major way, it engages with the complex set of contestations and assertions among the non-Brahmin castes since the nineteenth century.

Chapter overview

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter One traces the trajectory of histories written by the GSBs and other printed texts by them which became important since the late nineteenth century. The history of Goa is framed within a recognition of the historiographical significance of the interactions between the GSBs and the wider society, and this provides a ready-made structure for narrating the past. This chapter explores the historiographical possibilities that emerge out of GSB histories and the peculiar relationship between history-writing and history-making. It argues that as the colonialisms, both British and Portuguese, legislated on caste conflicts, GSB histories were used to validate historical claims and were often engaged with argumentation about the fundamental nature of the GSB community and its cultural institutions in the context of extensive debates about their Brahmin caste identity. And the history with which they engaged featured texts such as the *Sahayadri Khanda* and the *Konkanakhyan*, illustrating the fact that historical exploration was almost entirely tied to the effort to justify the GSB settlement of Goa. Furthermore, the biographical accounts of the lives of important GSB individuals—officials, intellectuals, soldiers and the landed elite—embeds them into key events in the construction of caste identity and builds a fascinating picture of colonial life and, at the

Brahmin Movements in Western India 1873 to 1930 (Bombay: Scientific Socialist Education Trust, 1976); Mark Juergensmeyer, *Religion as Social Vision: The Movement against Untouchability in Twentieth Century Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); R. S. Khare, *The Untouchable as Himself: Ideology, Identity and Pragmatism among the Lucknow Chamars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Rosalind O’Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict, and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth-Century Western India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700-1960* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007); Ramnarayan S. Rawat, *Reconsidering Untouchability: Chamars and Dalit History in Northern India* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2012).

same time, opens up new possibilities for the writing of history itself and the collective use of the past.

Historical writing was the pretext for other political and cultural considerations and concerned itself almost exclusively with the GSBs, while treating other communities as backward. This move, naturally, impacted other communities and determined their socio-cultural rights. In many ways, the chapter pays attention to Haitian scholar Michel-Rolph Trouillot's important insights on how power influences the production of history and the interests they serve in the making of sources and archive which in turn influence writing of particular kinds of histories.⁴⁵ The chapter focuses on important Marathi texts of the GSBs since the late nineteenth centuries to probe the large questions of history—how, why and what—and to explore issues around caste, identity and agency. It suggests that these texts are very much primary from the considerations of a historian's craft, and a closer scrutiny of their practices highlights some kinds of events while obscuring others. I ask how these histories imposed a backwardness on other communities, the competitive process by which values are defined and interpretations of a situation successfully imposed, how common sense is rendered about crime and how people know about resistance, and so bring cultural life, salt robberies and strikes into the frame of analysis.

Chapter Two studies the nature of Portuguese colonialism and the transformation of the GSBs. It explores the development of public life and a set of variables that converged to mark the emergence of a GSB middle-class at the end of the nineteenth century. Firstly, the new canvas of public life was the product of the acquisition of neighbouring territories from 1740-1788, collectively known as the New Conquests. More importantly, it spread with the setting up of a provincial administration, municipalities, the system of political representation and electoral politics. These developments led to the formation of political associations, new employment opportunities, a growing demand for education in Marathi and the geographical migration of individuals. Secondly, public life was intimately related to a simultaneous revival and reorganisation of the Hindu cultural and religious life. These developments offered new sources of wealth and power, eroding the bonds of the traditional patron-client relationships and replacing them with a new GSB middle-class.

⁴⁵ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

Much is examined in this chapter to understand the internal contradictions and underlying class tensions: the policies of the Portuguese Crown towards the New Conquests and its populations; the introduction of Devanagari fonts in the 1850s and the founding of a Marathi press; the participation of Hindus in elections to the Portuguese Parliament; the emergence of the GSBs of the New Conquests as the main interlocutors of the Portuguese Crown in those territories, and new employment opportunities for them; the mobility between Old and New Conquests; and the amicable and conflictive strategies of GSBs vis-à-vis the colonial state, high Portuguese officials, Luso-*descendentes* and the Goan Catholics. The chapter focuses, in particular, on the investment in Marathi schools, libraries, lecture series, as well as on the founding of associations like the Goa Hindu Sarvajanic Sabha (for the old elite), a Hindu Club in Panjim (for the new elite), the Republic and the ‘politics of representation’, and the role of the Pragmatic Sangha that enabled the capacity to forge alliances and the construction of a Hindu identity.

Caste is a dynamic process, not an unchanging and static system. One of the striking features of the colonial encounter in Goa was the transformation in the vocabularies of the community and political identity of the Hindu *Bahujan Samaj*—the non-Brahmins. Communities in ‘low’ social positions may not always think of themselves as marginal, providing a remarkably effective basis for political cohesion and the mobilisation of community resources. Chapter Three explores the processes of identity formation among the non-Brahmin communities and recognises the historical reality of changing social identities and the significance of the context—British and Portuguese colonialisms—in shaping status. The focus here is on the non-Brahmin communities, such as Sonar (goldsmiths), Vani (traders), Devadasis, elite Maratha, Bhandari (toddy tappers), Gabit (fisherfolk), Nabhik (Barbers) and Mithgavadas (salt producers) who were engaged in caste contestations and employed much longer social histories in their claims for an upward mobility.

The chapter engages with the complex processes through which the Hindu *Bahujan Samaj* asserted their histories, identities, and legitimate political rights and expectations to advance their social and political claims. As these communities do not necessarily see themselves as inferior within a traditional caste system, the need is to consider historical trajectories in locating this agency that confronts situations of oppression. This agency has intrinsic value as questions about caste and identity were not only about social standing, but affected many key questions of rights—temple privileges, employment, property, marriage, inheritance, and the overall

approach of the colonial state to such matters.⁴⁶ More importantly, these actions were so much a response to opportunities created by the Portuguese after their acquisition of new territories at the end of the eighteenth century, as well as the opportunities thrown up by British rule. In other words, how did the non-Brahmins make efforts to negotiate their lives—the tension between how others viewed them and how they viewed themselves—and construct a sense of a valued life and self between the Portuguese and British empires as supra-regional communities is examined in this chapter.

At another level the chapter examines processes that led to the Marathaisation of non-Brahmin social groups who were seeking to promote a Maratha identity as a strategy of resistance to a Brahminised social structure. Indeed, the public campaign for a Maratha status since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, which found its earliest expression in the Bombay Presidency, opened up debates about caste and became the symbol of many non-Brahmin communities in Goa. Caste and the construction of an identity are located within these complex cross-currents of social conflict.

Chapter Four analyses the role of the village and the temple in the construction of an identity. The question is, how new formulations of territory, temple and identity were forged, and how the development of wider caste identities gave fresh impetus to temples as a key symbol, which, in turn, produced new notions of community. Both, in its history and historiography of Goa, temples appear as institutions of religious resistance orchestrated by the indigenous elite. However, temples are complex, not only in terms of the modes of worship, but also in their ability to create political and economic power, bestow social and ritual status through the deity residing in them and its material resources. The key to this is the claims made over the temple and the complicated system of temple administration. The focus here is on temple conflicts and contests over the management of temples since the nineteenth century. Of particular interest is the transformation of temples from *gramdevatas* into *kuladevatas*; in no other area is the conflict so great.

⁴⁶ Donald R. Davis, *The Spirit of Hindu Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

The chapter interrogates historical evidence on the temples and the creative processes of theological choreography whereby local deities were integrated into the Brahminical pantheon. I contend that it is in this intensely entangled relationship of the local deities with the Brahminical pantheon that we need to first situate claims over ritual, honours and authority in the active life of the temple. This attempt to forge a new identity for the deity was very much a reflection of a new vision of a society. The nature of historical evidence and the making of tradition and its processes is analysed to situate the claims over temples.

Until the eighteenth century, with the exception of rulers who transferred material resources such as land and agrarian produce of specified villages to the temple through the officials, temples had largely been self-regulating. During the nineteenth century, the major evidence concerning temples are the various petitions to the government regarding the mismanagement of material resources of the temples, specifically, landed property and jewels. Such conflicts over temple accounts were not new, but we do not have much of an idea about them in the light of evidence. The role of the colonial state in these processes was critical, but it is important also to place this role within the broader context of power and politics. In the face of a series of complaints, accusations and demands to restore order, the colonial state intervened in the administration of temples. In the first stage, in 1828, norms were introduced regarding the maintenance of the books of accounts and the keys of the temple treasury. Subsequently, various legislations were imposed to bring the temple within the orbit of state power. By examining the temple conflicts since 1846, and the first temple commission of 1851, and subsequently, the temple legislations of 1858, 1866, 1886 and 1933, the focus of the chapter is to understand how the colonial state, under the powerful influence of the GSBs, was underwriting the entire social order in which the temple's institutional structure, its devotees and the *mahajans* had traditionally functioned.

As a consequence, the temple lost most of its autonomy, resulting in the exacerbation of temple conflicts even as the *mahajans* were transformed from temple managers to 'owners' of the temple—the reification of a new socio-political category. With the codification of the *mazania* and compromise emerged a sole model for the Hindu temples whereby material resources of the deity were transferred to and vested with the *mahajans*. How did the temple legislations that sought to bring order in the management of temple resources introduce a new structure, more specifically, the rights of *mahajans*? The cumulative scope of various temple legislations and the drafting of the *compromisso* was considerably influenced by particular ideas of the past that

could be invented or imagined. The outcome of this legislatively stimulated interaction between the temple and the social groups was a complex process and is examined through four temple cases fought between 1846 and 1943, and involves the legal processes for temple control. More importantly, they are far from a random selection. A detailed analysis of these episodes of conflicts—grievances, accusations, counteraccusations, and factional alliances on the part of various groups—enables us to view the interaction between the temple, castes and the colonial state.

Bridging the colonial developments to the present, Chapter Five attempts to historically situate Bahujan ideology and the political competition after the Liberation of Goa. It examines the claims of the Hindu tribal communities towards a Maratha identity. A central question that has been posed throughout the chapter has been: how was the idea of the Bahujan Samaj gradually fashioned through a range of processes, such as Maratha identity, language, Maharashtrawad, religious life, the teachings of the *gurus* and electoral politics? In particular, this chapter takes into account all these changes and demonstrates how these processes provided platforms for the articulation of new forms of consciousness. At the same time, we should not lose sight of the obvious significance of political parties in representing the Bahujan. Concomitantly, there were tensions and power plays that were produced in a variety of social and political contexts that informed cultural symbols and ritual performances.

It is important to note that while the study has explored the construction of identity as an important site of struggle between different social groups, it deals with the *asprushya*, a term repeatedly mentioned in the Marathi print, meaning untouchables, rather briefly. This is not to suggest that they were passive subjects and no efforts were made by them towards a collective transformative political action. However, given their numerical weakness—forming just over one percent of Goa’s population—the movements launched by the untouchables derived their substance from the politics of concessions that liberal politics tends to offer to them.⁴⁷ Since the 1920s we find the liberal GSBs encouraging ritual performances such as *kirtans* and *poojas* among the untouchables. While these were the crucial platforms from which the untouchables

⁴⁷ For a brief analysis of these initiatives among the untouchables see Parag D. Parobo, *India’s First Democratic Revolution: Dayanand Bandodkar and the rise of Bahujan in Goa* (Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2015), 82.

launched their resistance, ironically these movements were not only self-limiting, but the liberals largely failed to stand by the untouchables and evolved an ambivalent politics. As a result, the demand for the temple entry of the untouchables gained momentum only after the Liberation of Goa, and that too, on the grounds of constitutional and legal approaches.

Similarly, the Dhangars, who were socially marginalized and economically impoverished, constituting over one percent of the population, were never passive subjects, however they have a rather negligible archival trace. Even though the Dhangars appeared as active agents of historical change, they did not fit rather well into settled life of the village.⁴⁸ As a result, they remained outside the village community, and thus, remained invisible, and their voices were excluded from every sphere. This lacuna leads to an exclusion of the Dhangars in the study. Moreover, the recent demand by the Dhangars to re-classify them from a backward caste to a tribe has compelled the government to investigate their roots.

The stereotype of a self-contained and homogenous Bahujan Samaj is broken up in the study to reveal the tensions and struggles among competing social groups that played out in the social and political arenas. The construction of a caste identity, therefore, forms a major theme, and the relevance of the Bahujan in constructing the social history of Goa is strongly underlined in the study.

⁴⁸ D. D. Kosambi made a major breakthrough in highlighting the historical significance of the Dhangars in western India. See D. D. Kosambi, *Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).

Chapter 1

Writing Caste: Historiography and Archive

Although ethnographic studies were well established in British India after 1857, they began to gain momentum in Portuguese Goa at the end of the nineteenth century. New textual practices such as writing of histories, grammars and dictionaries in Marathi, and subsequently Konkani, characterised this period. This process of history–writing and history–making shaped a framework for laying claims to history for explaining the ‘ancient’ past and the colonial present. These histories were utilised not just to frame self–representation in historical terms, but also employed to validate historical claims.¹ Moreover, they would not only describe people, but control information as well. We need to make efforts to understand this peculiar relationship between history–writing and history–making. Why were the GSBs so concerned about history? How did the GSBs write histories? What kinds of histories were written? In what forms do the GSB histories conceptualise their authority? And, what do the processes of history–writing and archiving tell us about other communities and the practices of domination?

Anthropologist Michel–Rolph Trouillot, in his book *Silencing the Past*, has interrogated how power operates, often invisibly, in the production of historical narratives to silence certain voices.² Trouillot analyses the role of unequal power structures that produce historical accounts and contain “bundles of silences”, to find ways of listening. Moreover, these silences demand special attention; they are found not just in historical works but sources and archives as well, and more broadly in how societies recall the past and history, communicate stories and establish historical importance. Even though sacralisation of the GSB culture is the major aim of writing

¹ Ângela Barreto Xavier and Ines G. Županov, *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese Empire, Indian Knowledge (16th–18th centuries)* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 248.

² Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

and archiving history, the challenge is not to contest their representations, but to rather conceive of them as analytical objects. These accounts should be viewed as a process that sought to gain control over diverse pasts. By introducing the GSB framework of history-writing and archiving the past, this chapter provides a context. It explores the main arenas in which histories came to be produced, transmitted and consumed. Simultaneously, how the GSBs were archiving it, erasing it and affirming a particular idea of the past.

1.1 Demand for a Past

Yeshwant Phondoba Naik Danait and Ramchandra Govind Wagle are particularly important figures who made an early and forceful contribution to the study of the history of Goa. In 1873 they co-authored *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas*, one of the first comprehensive works on the history of Goa in Marathi print, from ancient to contemporary times. When they embarked on their study, they were influenced by the histories written in British India. However, the central objective of their efforts was to open the possibilities for historical research on Goa and it gave a call to Goans to write their own histories.³ Besides, Naik Danait was educated in British Bombay and was deeply familiar with the caste struggles taking place there and with the issues at stake in them.⁴ In this respect, it is crucial to note the important tensions that brought about the unification of the GSB caste. The alleged superior Brahmin castes from Maharashtra, who were socially and culturally dominant, looked down upon the GSBs and questioned their Brahminical status on the basis of their mode of life.⁵ While, this debate reached further back into the early modern period, the question became more important in the nineteenth century on account of the employment opportunities in the Bombay Presidency, and it received more publicity because of the press.⁶ The challenge was not only social but economic as well; it speaks of the complex and latent tensions of political legitimisation.

³ Yeshwant Phondoba Naik Danait and Ramchandra Govind Wagle, *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas* (Mumbai: Asiatic Chapkhana, 1873), preface.

⁴ *Subodh*, August–September, 1932, 352–53.

⁵ Bhavani Vishwanth Kanvinde, *Saraswat Brahman urf Shenvi Kiva Konkani Brahman* (Mumbai: National Chapkhana, 1870).

⁶ Frank Conlon, *A Caste in a Changing World: The Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmins, 1700–1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Rosalind O’Hanlon and Christopher Minkowski. “What Makes

With the GSBs readily taking to the study of English, they made the most of these employment opportunities. The period saw the GSBs gain a prominent presence in local administration, as well as in the commercial and banking professions. One doubts whether without their Brahmin identity, which brought new confidence and political advantage, the GSBs would have been able to establish themselves as powerful sources of influence.⁷ Moreover, these processes point towards significant intersections between the domains of their identity and political authority. In Bombay Presidency alone, in the nineteenth century three prominent GSBs—Bhau Daji Lad, Kashinath Trimbak Telang and Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar—were seen as modern intellectuals, and their competent knowledge of Sanskrit was held as a mark of intellectual advantage.⁸ Telang was appointed as a judge at the Bombay High Court in 1889 and was highly respected by Indians and the English alike. In all matters of Hindu law, Telang was acknowledged as the *facile princeps* of the Bombay Bar, and subsequently he achieved fame for championing social reform.⁹ This would not have been possible without his Brahmin caste which conferred him the legitimacy to engage with scriptures in Sanskrit.

People Who They Are: Pandit Networks and the Problems of Livelihood in Early Modern Western India,” *Indian Economic Social History Review* 45, no. 3 (2008): 381–416; Madhav M. Deshpande, “Pancha Gauda and Pancha Dravida: Contested Borders of a Traditional Classification,” in *Anantam Sastram: Indological and Linguistic Studies in Honour of Bertil Tikkanen*, ed. Klaus Karttunen (Helsinki, Finnish Oriental Society, 2010), 29–58.

⁷ Jason Keith Fernandes, *Citizenship in a Caste Polity: Religion, Language and Belonging in Goa* (Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan, 2020), 110.

⁸ For an autobiographical account, see: Shrinivas Narayan Karnataki, *Guruvarya Dr. Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar Yanche Charitra* (Mumbai: Shreelaxmi Narayan Press, 1930); Shrinivas Narayan Karnataki, *Namdar Nayamurthi Kashinath Trimbak Telang Yanche Charitra* (Mumbai: Mangesh Narayan Kulkarni, 1929); Shrinivas Narayan Karnataki, *Doctor Bhau Daji Lad Yanche Charitra* (Mumbai: Mangesh Narayan Kulkarni, 1931); Dhananjay Keer, *Tina Mahana Sarasvata* (Bombay: Swastik, 1979); Ramchandra Bhikaji Gunjekar, *Saraswati mandal athava Maharashtra deshatil Brahman jatiche varnan* (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1884), 40–1.

⁹ P. M. Lad, “Biographical Sketch,” in *Kashinath Trimbak Telang, 1850–1893: A Memoir*, ed. P. M. Lad (Bombay: Telang Centenary Celebration Committee, 1951), 1–17.

Similarly, Bhandarkar was appointed as a professor of Sanskrit at the Deccan College in 1882 and later was the vice-chancellor of the University of Bombay in 1894.¹⁰ Aside from these instances, Meera Kosambi further underscores the weight of the argument when she highlights that her grandfather Dharmanand Kosambi's learning of Sanskrit was made possible only through his Brahmin identity.¹¹ Repeatedly identified as the 'Aryan language', Sanskrit held the key to the Brahmin identity of the GSBs. Accordingly, a commentary of its literary accomplishments since the sixteenth century gave the GSBs a Sanskrit literature of its own that could lay claims to an antiquity, thus combining the most privileged aspects of these identities that could establish their timeless distinctiveness and a claim of existence of a unique GSB community. Besides, a Brahmin caste identity also enabled the GSBs to consolidate their control over prosperous temples such as Buleshwar and Walkeshwar in Bombay and prevent the inroads being made on them by Maharashtrian Brahmins.¹²

Whilst Naik Danait and Wagle worked within the caste categories of *dharmashastras*, their treatise provided greater detail on the GSBs, their occupations, their ritual entitlements and their proper place in the hierarchy of caste. Such questions about descent were a key element to understand caste struggles, and they showed a sharp awareness of the role that texts of different kinds could play in those struggles. There were curious ways in which they chose to explain history. Naik Danait and Wagle's analysis proceeded in three broad stages. First, myth occupies an interesting place in their account. The text recounts the mythical narratives of the creation of Goa by the god Parshuram, the sixth incarnation of lord Vishnu, and arrival of the GSBs from Tirhut in north-eastern India to this region. This is the beginning point, where the ocean yields new coastal lands to the arrow of god Parshuram, and they extend this reasoning to explain the etymology of Gomantak. Naik Danait and Wagle quoted extensively from the *Sahayadri Khanda* not only to describe the GSBs and the transgressive origins of their Brahmin opponents but also to explain about geographic regions. On these grounds they proclaimed that the region was without any human settlement and that they were the earliest settlers of Goa. Not only that, they

¹⁰ Veena Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere: Western India under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 49.

¹¹ Meera Kosambi, "Introduction," in *Dharmanand Kosambi: The Essential Writings*, trans. and ed. Meera Kosambi (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010), 17.

¹² Gunjekar, *Saraswati mandal athava Maharashtra deshatil Brahman jatiche varnan*, 28, 82.

also made exclusive claims to local gods and villages. These were crucial elements in the construction of a continuous narrative from the origin of the GSBs to their present.

Second, in addressing castes, Naik Danait and Wagle invoked the *Shudrakamlakara*, a seventeenth century text, as a possible reference point, and attempted to describe castes in keeping with the prescriptions of the *dharmashastras*. Written by Kamlakara, the famous son of the Banaras Bhatta family, and uncle of the widely influential Gaga Bhatta, the *Shudrakamlakara* was an influential text primarily concerned with the appropriate daily ritual life of the Shudras.¹³ More importantly, although the text was written in the early seventeenth century, it became the most well-known and authoritative work on the duties and religious observances of the Shudras. It was often deployed to make decisions about Shudra ritual lives, their professions, their customs and practices, and against the rising claims of mobility. Moreover, Naik Danait and Wagle placed contemporary actions within a wider framework of evolutionary scale from barbaric to civilised and drew generalisations on the character of the population as a whole.

The Marathi print, since the late nineteenth century, was marked by overriding concerns of the GSBs with their purity of origin and fixity of meaning of the lower castes. The lower castes are defined solely in reference to their occupations through which a persistence of primitivism is constituted to represent their lived reality and to show them as normatively disappointing. Prevailing assumptions about the lower castes have played a powerful role in the framing of existing historiography on lower castes. Many lower castes were performing a range of services, yet they were represented only in the context of a particular occupation. In addition, it was

¹³ *Shudrakamlakara*, a Sanskrit text has been translated into Marathi, see Javaji Dadaji, ed., *Shudrakamlakara* (Mumbai: Nirnayasagara Press, 1880). For the best examination of *Shudrakamlakara*, see Sheldon Pollock, “New Intellectuals in Seventeenth-Century India,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 38, no. 1 (2001): 3–31; Theodore Benke, “The Śūdrācāraśiromani of Kṛṣṇa Śeṣa: A 16th Century Manual of Dharma for Śūdras,” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2010); Rosalind O’Hanlon, Gergely Hidas and Csaba Kiss, “Discourses of caste over the longue durée: Gopīnātha and social classification in India, ca. 1400–1900,” *South Asian History and Culture* 6, no. 1 (2015): 115; Madhav Deshpande, “Ksatriyas in the Kali Age? Gāgābhata & His Opponents,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 53, no. 2 (2010): 101.

deemed that the lower castes were predisposed to drink and assigned particular characteristics.¹⁴ The lower castes were unruly, it was argued, due to their unregulated love for liquor, and this presentation was increasingly applied to them. Significantly, in making the case for alcoholism among the lower castes, the important and longstanding role that alcohol played in local rituals was overlooked. These assumptions and narratives formed an important dimension that produced the lower castes, and established the permissible and the legitimate in the realm of everyday life that, at once, both reinforced and undermined them.

Backed by implicit observations, the impact of stereotypical characteristics of the lower castes was obvious and noticeable in everyday life. Not surprisingly, assumptions such as the following, made in this case by Dharmanand Kosambi—the reputed Buddhist scholar who taught at Harvard for several years—is intimately connected to this project. Describing his interaction with the Bhandaris as a teenager, Kosambi says that one night, being alone at the family-held coconut orchard, he was scared to go back home and felt a compulsion to return in the company of Bhandaris that naturally had a bad influence on him.¹⁵ It was not that he started to drink alcohol and indulged in immorality, but their vulgar conversation had undesirably affected his mind.

Thirdly, they laid a claim to the Konkani language. At that time, the GSBs regarded Gomantaki—the other term often used for Konkani in Marathi print, and considered as a local dialect of standard ‘Maharashtra bhasa’ Marathi—as a public language. Its status as a language of print and administration gave Marathi this position. However, in this Marathi setting a detailed attempt was made for the first time by Naik Danait and Wagle to analyse the fall of Konkani language. Moreover, it raises important questions about the way in which the GSBs viewed their identity with Konkani language. This was particularly evident in two ways. At one level, Konkani was summoned into existence through the power of imagination and the politics of narration. This claim asserts the language’s autonomy and the recognisability of Konkani as an independent language of the GSBs called Saraswati, or Sanskrit Balabhasha, that once bridged them to antique

¹⁴ *Prabhat*, 7 March 1912, 3; *Bharat*, 13 August 1913, 3; *Prachi Prabha*, 10 December 1925, 3; *Hindu*, 26 September 1924, 4; *Bharat*, 18 October 1934, 2.

¹⁵ Dharmanand’s father had rented this land on a ninety-year lease, see Dharmanand Kosambi, *Nivedan* (Mumbai: Manoranjan Granthprasarak Mandali, 1924), 9.

times.¹⁶ Gradually, under the various political dynasties that ruled over Goa, it lost some of its potency. In making this point, they went on to highlight the impact of colonial rule and underlined the idea of loss. The language was dying. However, the rise of new GSB writers in Konkani, contributed to its revival and development. The text provides details about the production of literature by the GSBs and represents one dimension of the shift towards Konkani. Describing the local peculiarities of language to their respective communities, Naik Danait and Wagle explained that the Konkani of GSBs, with a highly Sanskritised idiom, was pure, while the speech of the Catholics with its Portuguese influence was seen as defiled. In other words, the mixture of Portuguese words had caused the fall of Konkani from its glorious Aryan beginnings.¹⁷ This argument took on greater weight in the light of rising nationalism.

Delving further into the recesses of an indefinite past, many scholars emphasised the Aryan and GSB roots of Konkani. The earliest work with a more direct link with the framework of Naik Danait and Wagle came from the pen of José Gerson da Cunha, a young Catholic GSB in Bombay. It is important to note that Naik Danait, Wagle and Cunha shared a cordial relationship and collaborated in intellectual exercises, especially with regard to issues of their Brahminical status. While Naik Danait and Wagle dedicated their text to Cunha, five years later Cunha edited *Sahayadri Khanda* from the fourteen manuscripts that he had ‘discovered’ from various parts of British India and Goa, with Naik Danait’s assistance. Consequently, it is not surprising to find similar sentiments in their works that would inform their “scientific” efforts. Cunha’s other important work, *The Konkani Language and Literature*, examined the GSB’s claim of the settlement of Goa, and Konkani language, in greater detail.¹⁸ More importantly, it was published in the *Bombay Gazetteer*, a space for colonially approved ethnographic knowledge.¹⁹ These ideas apparently entered school textbooks with relative ease and became part of a pedagogical process that every student at the private Marathi schools had to undergo.

¹⁶ Naik Danait and Wagle, *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas*, 77–81.

¹⁷ Naik Danait and Wagle, *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas*, 78–81.

¹⁸ José Gerson da Cunha, *The Konkani Language and Literature* (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1881).

¹⁹ Fernandes, *Citizenship in a Caste Polity*, 111.

Circulation of new history books and ideas was one of the most striking aspects of the colonial education policy. For instance, *Goa Prantatil Todkyat Mahiti*, one of the earliest textbooks on Goa's geography, written by Tatyaji Sitaram Patkar of the GSB caste, emphasises the GSB settlement of Goa and the closeness of Konkani to Sanskrit.²⁰ Similarly, G. A. Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India*, considered one of the important sources on South Asian languages, highlights the comparisons made to ancient Saraswati Balabhasha of Tirhut.²¹ The GSB influence was thus important in the formation of Konkani, and the effects ran much deeper, and amounted to more than mere individual perceptions. By the 1920s, Konkani had come to be indelibly identified with the GSB's antiquity and distant past. Santan Rodrigues, told his audience, in a paper he read out at the seventeenth International Congress of Orientalists held in Oxford in 1928, that the purest form of Konkani was the speech of the GSBs and it is a corruption in the speech of the Catholics.²²

Such speculations generated an evolutionary theory of language. Konkani was made to take on new meanings in relationship to the past of the GSBs and abandon some old ones. It is important to note that Konkani written in the Roman script gained a new impetus in Bombay and remained an important vehicle of literary production and Catholic identity.²³ Given the importance that Konkani had already assumed in the lives of the Catholic Goans in Bombay, it is perhaps not surprising that in the later decades of the nineteenth century, and sporadically in the early decades of the twentieth as well, Konkani came to be seen as a language of the labouring classes, later increasingly being envisioned as a problem.²⁴ This was the 'moment of departure', whereby the GSBs picked up Konkani as a 'great unifier'—the means through which to define their cultural

²⁰ Tatyaji Sitaram Patkar, *Goa Prantatil Todkyat Mahiti* (Mumbai: Telgumitra Chapkhana, 1890).

²¹ G. A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. VII: Indo-Aryan Family, Southern Group: Specimens of the Marathi Language* (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1905), 164.

²² Santan Rodrigues, *The Origin of Konkani Language* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1929), 9.

²³ Rochelle Pinto, "At Home in Bombay: Housing Konkani print," in *Founts of Knowledge: Book History in India*, vol. III, eds., Abhijit Gupta and Swapan Chakravorty (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2015), 74–105.

²⁴ B. D. Satorkar, "The Goa Hindu Association: Ek Samajik Krutharth Jivanache Smaran," *Sagar*, (Diwali Issue 1970), 57–8.

identity, as well as to assert the superiority over other communities. Subsequently, this attribution had seemingly irreversible consequences on the Konkani speech of other communities.

Naik Danait and Wagle's work formed part of the longer-term process by which the history of Goa emerged as a more elaborated field of enquiry. More importantly, their work introduced a framework that other GSBs frequently employed. All historical accounts written by the GSBs start with their arrival, lineages and settlement patterns in Goa.²⁵ The Aryan racial theory also found a ready audience among the GSBs.²⁶ Articles such as 'Aryakalin Gomantak' introduced a new form of periodising history.²⁷ Arrival of the Aryans and the spread of civilisation fit rather well in the GSB story. Next, they claim gods, village communities and Konkani—more prominently from the 1920s, and reduce the other caste communities only to their occupations. History provided the base from which the GSBs addressed the pressing political and caste questions of their own times. Although not acknowledged, many later intellectuals followed their historical assumptions and thus came to occupy a pivotal place in the changing pasts. Besides, these accounts entered the archive as an authoritative source of knowledge for caste and the temple. This kind of writing about the past has sustained the conceptual framework and has actually worked to obscure and erase the presence of other communities. Moreover, it tends to concentrate too much on GSB agency alone.

1.2 Biographical mode

Alongside historical writings, long historical introductions with biographical notes and detailed biographies received momentum at the end of the nineteenth century.²⁸ Studying the life story of an individual was seen as akin to studying the history of the GSBs and a way of understanding

²⁵ Jerome Anthony Saldanha, *Indian Caste: Konkani or Goan Castes*, vol. I (Bombay: Anglo-Lusitano Press, 1904); V. P. Chavan, *The Konkani and the Konkani language* (Bombay: Self-published, 1924); Balkrishna Vaman Sawardekar, *Gomantak Parichay* (Mumbai: Tukaram Mukund Sawardekar, 1930); Ganesh Ramchandra Sharma, *Saraswat Bhushan* (Mumbai: Ganesh Ramrao Bhatkal, 1950).

²⁶ Vaman Rangunath Varde Valavalikar, *Goemkarachi Goyabhayali Vosnuk* (Bombay: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1928), 1; N. B. Nayak, *Gomantak Itihas Digdarshan* (Margao: Tipografia Borcar, 1957), 1.

²⁷ *Prabhat*, May 1934, 21–5.

²⁸ Gunjekar, *Saraswati Mandal Athava Maharashtra Deshatil Brahman jatiche varnan*.

broad social and cultural phenomena. With the intent of inserting GSB individuals into history, the GSBs embedded individuals into key events and extraordinary circumstances. As Lambert and Lester have shown, biography is a powerful way of narrating the past and is an extremely useful tool for attracting interest towards historical processes.²⁹ In this respect, a biographical approach to writing history not only produced historical memory, but also archived the GSBs in particular ways. This enables us to explore critical questions of power and identity and their profound impacts on social, economic and cultural life.

The centrality of the GSBs in political developments was important in shaping the self-perceptions of the community, and this found reflection in their biographies. A careful reading of the biographies brings out important facets in the community's self-definition. Firstly, there was an emphatic adherence to the notion of lineage, temple and village that amounted to a kind of property right which had to be scrupulously safeguarded. In the process of writing about individual lives that were embedded in lineage, temple and village, the GSB writers discovered and revealed the ways in which their subjects constituted the caste. Secondly, part of the attraction of biographical notes and biography is that they allow the GSBs to represent their own group interests. There were several considerations at work here. On the one hand, they legitimised GSB distinctiveness: a kind of aristocratic presence that deserved to be privileged. The celebrated historical figures included prominent officials, writers and landlords placed in a remote historical past and up to recent times, mainly as a way of assuming a superiority that the Maharashtrian Brahmins seemed to deny. With the development of Marathi periodicals, it was a regular feature to emphasise the names of prominent individuals such as Jivbadada Kerkar, the general of Scindia state.³⁰

A historiography that aspired to address the significance of the GSBs needed more than this. In 1899, Narahar Vyankaji Rajadhyaksha, alias Nana Havaladar, edited and published a *povada*, a

²⁹ David Lambert and Alan Lester, "Introduction: Imperial Spaces, Imperial Subjects," in *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds., David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1–31.

³⁰ *Dexassudharanetxo*, 1 May 1878, 1; *O Goa Panch*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1886, 3.

form of the heroic ballad, meant to commemorate the exploits of Kerkar on the battlefield.³¹ While, Jivaji Ballal Sansgiri was his original name, his village identity Kerkar features prominently in the literature. The GSBs were aware of the need to register their presence and influence in order to claim villages and suffixing village to surname was a strategy to the act of naming and writing out things. In 1907, Narahar Vyankaji Rajadhyaksha wrote a detailed history of the Scindia state and appended other GSB generals to the achievements of Kerkar and his attempts to claim a ‘true’ past seem to have been authenticated through the availability of an archive in the form of a *bakhar*, a historical narrative written in Marathi prose.³² Moreover, while the Maharashtrian writers had downplayed the role of GSBs, *bakhars* were written as a consequence, and Rajadhyaksha’s account was integrated into the broader narrative of the claims to rights and prestige on the Maratha political stage.³³ The magnitude of change signified by this project was also reflected in the writing of textbooks—a primary medium to instil the feelings of identity. In the 1920s, Waman Narayan Palekar wrote a history of Goa for Marathi schools.³⁴ While the textbook highlighted the importance of the GSBs to the history of Goa, its elaborate cover page depicting Kerkar sitting on a horse illustrates the deep impression of cultural logics and represents the expectations of the age. Later, Ramkrishna Anant Shenvi Kakodkar, who was known for *Saraswat–Champu*, a play in Marathi, wrote detailed biographies of Jivbadada Kerkar and Ramchandra Malhar Sukhtankar.³⁵ Importantly, the celebration of birth anniversaries of

³¹ Narahar Vyankaji Rajadhyaksha urf Nana Havaldar, ed., *Shree Mahapratapi Junzarveer Bhakshi Bahadar Jivabadada urf Jivaji Ballal Kerkar Yavaril Powada* (Belgaum: Saraswat Bhushan, 1899).

³² Narhar Vyankajee Rajyadhyaksha, *True history of the Scindias containing the life of Bakshi Bahadur Mujafardaul Jiwajee Ballal alias Jivabadada Kerkar Bahadar Fattejang and other generals who had made the Marathas rulers of India, such as Lakhabadada Lad, Jagoba Bapu and other personages* (Bombay: Nirnayasagar Press, 1907), 311–31.

³³ Vishnu R. Natu, *The Life and Times of Madhavrao Alias Mahadajee Sindia* (Belgaum: Belgaum Samachar Press, 1894); Chintaman Gangadhar Bhanu, *Nana ani Mahadaji yanchi Tulana* (Pune: Aryabhushan Press, 1895).

³⁴ Waman Narayan Palekar, *Gomantakacha Itihas*, 2nd ed. (Bicholim: Self-published, 1930).

³⁵ I have not been able to locate these biographies. However, they find a mention in Ramkrishna Anant Shenvi Kakodkar, ed., *Saraswat–Champu* (Margao: Hindu Chapkhana, 1934).

prominent individuals such as Jivbadada Kerkar by the GSBs in Goa became an occasion where the divisions within the community could be overcome.³⁶

In emerging as a major caste, the GSBs claimed a key role in the expansion of the Maratha state. In 1930, the sixteenth Maharashtra Sahitya Sammelan, the first major cultural conference that brought Maharashtrians and Goans together, was held at Margao.³⁷ One of the striking features of the conference was the dominance of the GSBs in staging this event, to such an extent that it was critiqued as Saraswat Sammelan.³⁸ Understanding the pan-Indian context of the conference, it was decided to publish a text on Goa that would introduce Goa to the arriving participants. Accordingly, Balkrishna Vaman Sawardekar wrote *Gomantak Parichay* and declared that ‘there can be neither history of Shinde state or Marathas in Northern India without Bakshi Bahaddar Jivabadada Kerkar’.³⁹ In addition, the text also highlighted other prominent GSBs. More importantly, Y. V. Nayak in his presidential address of the Welcome Committee emphasised that the Marathas had lost their power in the battle of Panipat; however, its fortunes were revived by the Scindias of Gwalior who were supported by Jivabadada Kerkar and other GSBs.⁴⁰

Of significance, too, in the development of biographies was *Satsang*, a prominent Marathi periodical during 1902–1907. It published a biographical series on prominent GSBs whose fragmentary archival trace was substantial enough to manoeuvre them into the heart of histories of Goa. The series engaged with broader issues concerning GSB identity and had prominent personalities from the nineteenth century, such as Purshottam Shenvi Kenkre and Suryaji Anandrao Deshpande (Suriagy Anand Rau), and more importantly, the GSBs since the sixteenth centuries who were hardly more than a name in western India.⁴¹ At times their texts, which had run out of existence, were compiled and produced in *Satsang*, thereby making them available to

³⁶ *Chittakarshan*, January 1908, 15–6.

³⁷ This was the sixteenth conference; however, the report states it as the fifteenth. See *Pandravaya Maharashtra Sahitya Sammelan, 1930–Margao: Report* (Margao: Gomantak Sahityasevak Mandal, 1932).

³⁸ *Hindu*, 14 January 1930, 4.

³⁹ Sawardekar, *Gomantak Parichay*, 17–20.

⁴⁰ *Pandravaya Maharashtra Sahitya Sammelan, 1930–Margao: Report*, 25.

⁴¹ The Portuguese records mention the name as Suriagy Anand Rau.

the public. The GSBs' fascination with life-narratives was also the product of local tensions. At the end of the nineteenth century, the GSBs were profoundly drawn to personalities such as Mai Sinai Wagle, a Vijayanagar official in the early fifteenth century, Naroram Mantri and Ramchandra Malhar Sukhtankar, prominent GSB officials at the Peshwa court, against the claims made by other communities over temples. This trend of GSB lineages extending patronage to popular village deities was taken further back into the remote past and was emphasised vigorously, to the extent that their act of patronage was employed to redefine the changing conceptions of the *mahajan*, custodianship of temple, and in shaping legal conceptions.⁴²

Similar processes were at work in British Bombay as well. One such survey was Ram Kamattee's biography written by Vaman Rangunath Varde Valavalikar. At the opening of the eighteenth century, Kamattee was a person of considerable importance in Bombay whom Valavalikar termed a 'noble soul' with a tragic end.⁴³ The biography examines the rise and fall of Rama Kamattee and was aimed at introducing the prominent ancestor who lived at the mid-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and had worked for the English East India Company in Bombay. Kamattee is introduced as the foremost company servant who not just dealt with the company's treasury and revenue collection but also procured and headed local troops. Besides, he was a rich businessman who had contributed for Bombay's growth, probably the most notable of all his contributions were the donations to temples, and he is compared with Jivbadada Kerkar. Subsequently, Kamattee was accused by the British of supporting their enemy Kanhoji Angria and was convicted on the charges of treachery, condemned to life imprisonment and had all his property confiscated.⁴⁴ In this wider context, Valavalikar's aim was to fight the charges levelled against Rama Kamattee, and legitimise his contributions to the establishment of Bombay and its flourishing.

⁴² This aspect has been examined in Chapter Four.

⁴³ Vaman Rangunath Varde Valavalikar, *Punyatmo Ram Kamattee: Ek Dukesth Itihasik Jeen* (Mumbai: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1939).

⁴⁴ Charles Rathbone Low, *History of the Indian navy (1613-1863)*, vol I (London: R. Bentley and son, 1877), 98-9.

Besides the life sketch, temples in Bombay form the major part of the discussion. What is interesting, however, is that Valavalikar credits the setting up of temples in Bombay to the GSBs in the twelfth century, and subsequently, after the destruction that followed at the hands of the Portuguese, their restoration to Rama Kamattee. The construction of the Walkeshwar temple by Rama Kamattee was highlighted in *Mumbaiche Varnan*, a prominent text on life in Bombay written by a GSB, Govind Narayan Maadgaonkar, and later reproduced in the *Bombay Gazette* and *Bombay City and Island Gazetteer*.⁴⁵ Indeed, these narratives formed an important part of the process of contestation over temple control, and throughout the text, therefore, we find references to them. Moreover, in the 1920s, when there was a contest over the temples controlled by the GSBs in Bombay, and petitions were filed from contending groups for a share in the temple, the British court gave a judgement in favour of the GSBs stating that the temples were founded by Rama Kamattee.⁴⁶ Yet, while noting the daily worship of the images, S. M. Edwards observes that it was performed by a Gujarati Brahmin and a Shenvi Brahmin, who together with a Gurav, constituted the temple staff.⁴⁷ Similar was the case with the Bhuleshwar temple which had various accounts of its founding, from fisherfolk to Banias.⁴⁸ Subsequently, the GSBs played an important role in the construction of the temple, which would establish their claim.⁴⁹ Recently, a historical novel, *The Merchant of Bombay*, a life sketch of Rama Kamattee has been published to highlight the contribution of the GSBs in shaping Bombay.⁵⁰

With the GSBs readily taking to the study of individuals, the making of them, it would appear, was far from seamless. Rather, it was a contested process through which we glimpse some of the tensions. For instance, when Ramchandra Bhikaji Gunjekar wrote a description of Brahmin

⁴⁵ *Bombay Gazette*, 22 September 1883; S. M. Edwards, *Bombay City and Island Gazetteer*, vol. III (Bombay: Times Press, 1910), 361; Murali Ranganathan, "Govind Narayan: A Preliminary Bio-Bibliography," in *Govind Narayan's Mumbai: An Urban Biography from 1863*, trans. and ed. Murali Ranganathan (London: Anthem Press, 2008), 80.

⁴⁶ Varde Valavalikar, *Punyatmo Ram Kamattee*, 102.

⁴⁷ Edwards, *Bombay City and Island Gazetteer*, 362.

⁴⁸ Edwards, *Bombay City and Island Gazetteer*, 354.

⁴⁹ Edwards, *Bombay City and Island Gazetteer*, 355.

⁵⁰ K. G. Mallya, *The Merchant of Bombay* (Mumbai: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1997).

castes from Maharashtra, Bhattoji Dikshita was claimed as a GSB.⁵¹ Bhattoji Dikshita's career ranges from 1560 to 1620, and he is more widely known for his text *Siddhanta-Kaumudi*, contributions to Sanskrit grammar and commentaries on *Dharmashastra*. He wrote numerous works on various systems that made him one of the most influential intellectuals of early-modern India.⁵² Subsequently, Vasudev Anant Bambardekar wrote a detailed account on Bhattoji Dikshita, primarily concerned with his caste and contested Gunjkar's claim.⁵³ Bambardekar claimed that Bhattoji Dikshita was a Maharashtrian Brahmin. However, there are major controversies about his sub-caste, and the majority of scholars accept that he was a Telanga Brahmin.⁵⁴

Another individual whose biographies succeeded in capturing the attention of readers was Govind Narayan Maadgaonkar, who, between 1849 and 1865, had written a number of essays and books on topics such as literature, reform, botany and the natural sciences.⁵⁵ Although many of his works went into multiple editions during his lifetime and were translated into Gujarati and Hindi, he was best known for his work *Mumbaiche Varnan*, a detailed ethno-historical account of Bombay. In 1922, Valavalikar serialised the biography of Govind Narayan Maadgaonkar in *Swayamsevak*, a Marathi periodical published in Goa.⁵⁶ This account was the product of two necessities. Firstly, Valavalikar was compelled to write a detailed account after finding shortcomings in B. N. Deo's biography of Maadgaonkar.⁵⁷ While Deo talked about Maadgaonkar's literary contributions, he had not mentioned his caste, a move that Valavalikar considered was a strategy to deny significance to the GSBs. Secondly, although Maadgaonkar

⁵¹ Gunjkar, *Saraswati mandal athava Maharashtra deshatil Brahman jatiche varnan*, 41.

⁵² Jonathan R. Peterson, "The Language of Legitimacy and Decline: Grammar and the Recovery of Vedanta in Bhattoji Dikshita's Tattvakaustubha," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 48, no. 1 (2020): 23–47.

⁵³ Vasudev Anant Bambardekar, *Bhattoji Dikshita-Jativivek* (Mumbai: Self-published, 1939).

⁵⁴ Madhav M. Deshpande, transl. and annotated, *The Meaning of Nouns: Semantic Theory in Classical and Medieval India, Namaratha-nirnaya Of Kaundabhatta* (Dordrecht: Springer, 1992), 73–4.

⁵⁵ A. K. Priolkar and S. G. Malshe, eds., *Madgaonkaranche Sankalit Vanmay*, vol. I (Mumbai: Marathi Sanshodan Mandal, 1968).

⁵⁶ Vaman Raghunath Varde Valavalikar, "Govind Narayan Maadgaonkar", *Swayamsevak*, August–December, 1922.

⁵⁷ B. N. Deo, "Govind Narayan Maadgaonkar," *Vividh Dnyan Vistaar* 49, no. 5 (1918): 109–21.

had used the surname Shenvi for his first book *Suchibhurtpana* in 1849 and its second edition in 1853, he showed no particular obligation to the caste. Subsequently, he himself used the name Govind Narayan, and Govindji, for his works. However, with the establishment of the University at Bombay in 1857, use of surnames became important, and accordingly, Govind Narayan chose Maadgaonkar. Although the surname was to denote his origin from Madgaon in Goa, the way it was spelt was confusing for the GSBs in Goa. This huge cultural unfamiliarity was pragmatically ironed out at the very first moment by Valavalikar's explanatory title "Govind Narayan Shenai Madgaonkar", making a departure from the original name.⁵⁸

It is important to note that Valavalikar invested himself in the debates on GSB caste identity that received more publicity in the press. Unlike the other scholars, such as Kanvinde, Gunjekar and Sohani, who made efforts to defend GSB identity, Valavalikar was perhaps the only individual from Goa settled in Bombay for most of his life.⁵⁹ Valavalikar was well known for his equally sharp treatment of opponents through articles in the Marathi press. In 1920s, a prominent instance was the controversy over the new editions of *Eknathi Bhagwat* by the Maharashtrian Brahmins where they claimed a low origin for the GSBs.⁶⁰ Valavalikar published 'Eknathswami and Saraswat' and declared that demeaning words on Saraswats were inserted later.⁶¹ Moreover, although he wrote of the GSB caste in approving, sometimes even glowing terms, he made no secret of his revulsion to the term Saraswat or Gaud Saraswat as a caste. He made a distinction between their Brahmin identity and the GSB term. He argued that historically they were known as Brahmin, while the term GSB was taken-up recently in order to unify the *jatis*, yet these

⁵⁸ Shenvi Goembab [Vaman Raghunath Varde Valavalikar], *Kahi Marathi Lekh* (Mumbai: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1945), 100–39.

⁵⁹ Kanvinde, *Saraswat Brahman urf Shenvi Kiva Konkani Brahman*; Gunjekar, *Saraswati Mandal Athava Maharashtra Deshatil Brahman Jatiche Varnan*; Ramchandra N. Sohani, *Gaud Saraswat Brahman Itihas* (Khanapur: D. J. Sadekar, 1937).

⁶⁰ Krishnaji Narayan Athavale, ed., *Eknathi Bhagwat* (Mumbai: nm, 1926), 789; Visnu Vaman Bapatshastri, ed., *Eknathi Bhagwat* (Pune: Indira Chapkhana, 1927), 212.

⁶¹ Vaman Raghunath Varde Valavalikar, "Eknath Swami and Saraswat," *Vividh Dnyan Vistaar* 62, no. 2 (February 1931): 62–70.

efforts to impose new adjectives have been futile.⁶² Thus, Valavalikar saw himself as a defender of Brahmin identity, a decision propelled by the realisation that their political position was no longer entirely contingent upon their local influence. Rather, it was backed by historical claims and was attentive to the political importance of history and language.

Even though he was based in Bombay, Valavalikar's work was motivated by the caste battles being fought simultaneously, both within his GSB caste and against other Maharashtrian castes.⁶³ He advocated the Konkani language and constructed Marathi as the language of the Maharashtrian Brahmins, against whom the GSBs were in contest.⁶⁴ This step marked a distinct shift, and Valavalikar's writings attained extraordinary authority, not only because he defended his Brahmin identity, but for a number of other reasons as well. Importantly, he made Goa into a central object of investigation and his passionate and lengthy series of four lectures, *Goemkarachi Goyabhayali Vosnuk*, delivered at the Saraswat Brahmin Samaj, Mumbai, in 1927, not just revealed his claim over the past but made him a figure of central importance. Soon after, the lectures were published from Bombay in 1928.⁶⁵ The book was received with great enthusiasm because of its theme and meticulous recording of footnotes. Moreover, the book was promoted as an indispensable text for understanding Goa. An advertisement in the *Hindu* stated: *Goemkarachi Goyabhayali Vosnuk* is the history of Goa written in hard historical sources that every Goan must read.⁶⁶

While the theme of the text was the settlement of Goans outside Goa, it largely takes the biographical form, not only to celebrate the achievements of the GSBs but also for fixing a territorial homeland. This was an account of comparison in which assessments of differential capabilities of individuals, castes and their character were key features of the homeland. What

⁶² Vaman Raghunath Varde Valavalikar, "Govindshenai Madgaonkar," *Swayamsevak* (September 1922): 182–188; Valavalikar, *Kahi Marathi Lekh*, 109–10.

⁶³ Jason Keith Fernandes, "Bridging the Centuries: A Brief Biography of Wamanrao Varde Valavalikar," *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais* 115 (2018): 183–204.

⁶⁴ Narayan B. Desai, "Politics of Script: The Case of Konkani (1961-1992)," (PhD diss., Goa University 2002), 93–4.

⁶⁵ Vaman Raghunath Varde Valavalikar, *Goemkarachi Goyabhayali Vosnuk*.

⁶⁶ *Hindu*, 18 December 1928, 3.

marks this work are the new conversations between Valavalikar and the past about documentary evidence, record keeping, what features of archival form and content can be retrieved, and how decisions are made about historical significance. He tracks down obscure manuscripts, includes abstracts from books and periodicals, and makes notes providing explanations. His brief biographical sketches of leading individuals are all men, and include mostly GSBs. As such, lower castes and women are largely absent.

There were curious ways in which Valavalikar chose to explain migration. Punna has been discussed in detail as the first Goan to go out and then to introduce Buddhism to Goa. Rashtrakutas are highlighted as indigenous Kshatriyas who ruled large parts of the Indian subcontinent between sixth and tenth centuries, and were second to leave. Next come the GSBs who cover a major part of the text with fleeting references to other communities. Attending to the relationships of evidence, he also sought out ways of demonstrating motive in the historical sources. Nowhere was this process more evident than when Valavalikar declares *Shenvijatinirnaya*, a text that had placed the GSBs in an inferior position to the Maharashtrian Brahmins, a forged document.⁶⁷ Besides, he also analyses epigraphs related to other Brahmin communities and concludes that they were forged by them in order to make their claims to land.⁶⁸ Subsequently, *Goemkarachi Goyabhayali Vosnuk* emerged as the principal authoritative text without which any history of Goa was incomplete.⁶⁹ It is perhaps important to note that while some of his historical claims are doubted, the narratives regarding the GSB past were readily accepted.

Moreover, by examining the course of individual lives in relation to the social and political worlds they inhabited, these biographies gave meaning to the GSB identity. Their larger objective was never simply to tell a life story but to deploy the individual towards forging a caste identity. Besides, they offered an easy education in history through rendering the past more

⁶⁷ Valavalikar, *Kahi Marathi Lekh*, 116.

⁶⁸ Varde Valavalikar, *Goemkarachi Goyabhayali Vosnuk*, 104–6; B. D. Satoskar, *Gomatak Sanskruti ani Prakriti*, vol. I (Pune: Subhda Saraswat, 1978), 167.

⁶⁹ Dattatriya Venkatesh Pai, *Musalmani Amlatil Gomantak* (Panjim: União Académica, 1937), 7.

accessible.⁷⁰ Certainly, one of the achievements of these biographies is their construction of the GSBs as extraordinarily brave and honourable. This historiographic practice involved drawing on historical memory which was fed by written narratives towards generating cultural capital that was then employed in contested battlegrounds over identity, and to demand a greater share in administration. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, with the acquisition of New Conquests the Portuguese administration was looking for clerical and minor administrative personnel from castes that had a considerable experience of record keeping. Thus, narratives of the precolonial past, structured around lineages and official administrative positions, were used to make claims over public employment.

Studies by Veena Naregal and Prachi Deshpande show up similar processes at work elsewhere in western India, more or less during the same time.⁷¹ In fact, far from being a continuation of Brahmin dominance since precolonial times, their power was consolidated in the nineteenth century within the new institutional structures of colonialism, such as administration and print.⁷² Moreover, as printer–publishers, editors, educators, critics, poets, playwrights, novelists, and short story writers, they came to control the content and its dissemination, thus gaining an unequal advantage over other caste groups to shape new public discourses over society, culture, and politics. Further, once these accounts were formalised and became ‘permanent’ with print, they acquired the authenticity of historical evidence.

1.3 A kind of backwardness

A significant feature of the emergence of these new practices of historiography was that history, with its reliable research methods, was used to dismiss others. Venkatesh V. Vaidhya writes in *Bharat* on how ‘Itihas’ is written to glorify one’s caste and denigrate others.⁷³ Since the late nineteenth century, the Marathi print formulated the primitiveness of the lower castes and this

⁷⁰ David Nasaw, “Historians and Biography: Introduction,” *American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (2009), 573–78.

⁷¹ Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere*; Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700-1960* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007).

⁷² Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere*, 162–66.

⁷³ *Bharat*, 13 August 1931, 4.

was foundational to the GSB imagination of itself. In this process, however, the GSB histories represent themselves as modern, acting for the future, and others as anthropological—‘primitive’ and the backward—being reified as “timeless,” or frozen in time. The idea of backwardness that was formulated went beyond the occupational level and encompassed village community, festivals and rituals. More importantly, it represents the most self-conscious aspect of GSB self-representation as well as anxious policing of cultural frontiers.

In the nineteenth century, texts such as *Konkanakhyan* and *Sahayadri Khanda* were employed to claim that the settled site of the villages was an ‘original’ Aryan achievement. The villages in Old Conquests that were claimed as first settled by the GSBs were thus turned into a metaphor of permanence, in contrast to the life in the New Conquests that was seen as violent and nomadic.⁷⁴ Thus differences were sought in diverse histories. Moreover, the region was equated with Africa, where people continued for centuries to live in a ‘primitive’ condition.⁷⁵ The narrative of the backwardness of the New Conquests employed by the GSB writers reflected an elitist view of the territories that were explicitly viewed in colonial policies as backward and in need of improvement.⁷⁶

It must be noted that much has been happening since the mid-nineteenth century when the tribal community of Gaudas started claiming a history of being more ‘original’ to this land than the GSBs, making them increasingly visible as subjects.⁷⁷ Their assertion was aimed at contesting the GSB dominance over temples, especially in temples where the Gaudas still enjoyed the honours of first worship. For the GSBs, this obviously required a reconfiguration of the past and a way to assuage this fear. Hence, during the early twentieth century, the Gaudas were transformed into people from the Gaud region who were brought to Goa by the GSBs as their

⁷⁴ *O Goatmá*, 7 May 1888, 2.

⁷⁵ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 7 May 1882, 3.

⁷⁶ José Miguel Moura Ferreira, ‘Rugged Hills’, ‘Dense Forests’ and ‘Backward People’: Imagining Landscapes in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Goa,” *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* 7, no. 1 (2019), 142–70.

⁷⁷ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 48, 14 October 1846, 313.

servants.⁷⁸ By introducing them into the main narrative of GSB history, they are described as clean, who wash their legs on entering the house, follow menstrual pollution and death impurity norms, and eschew the consumption of alcohol.⁷⁹ However, what differentiated the Gaudas from the GSBs, as Shripad Venkatesh Wagle remarked, is the lack of intelligence.⁸⁰ Unlike the GSBs, they are termed as ‘adani’ who remained primitive, unchanging, isolated and undifferentiated, and failed to make progress.

In 1912, when a Marathi school and library was set up at Karmali, a village largely inhabited by the Gaudas, people were unwilling to lend support.⁸¹ As Gaudas sought education and organised themselves, there was criticism that it would lead to the shortage of cheap labour to work in the fields and coconut plantations. There was also apprehension that they would dress like the GSBs and aspire for public employment and that would fundamentally challenge the principles of hierarchical difference. Moreover, they survived with casual wage labour and it was not easy to persuade them to send their boys to the school. Ironically, this notion of the past that brought them together with the GSBs—although on unequal terms—found the most enthusiastic support among the Gaudas themselves who felt compelled to classify themselves as higher in a social hierarchy.⁸²

If the GSBs hoped to retain their cultural legitimacy, they would have to demonstrate the ‘backwardness’ of the Gaudas in everyday events and festivals. One such festival was Shigmo, a spring festival prominent among the non-Brahmins. The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a tremendous anxiety among the GSBs who tried to fix the festival to the immediate context of backwardness. While each village or community held Shigmo on a separate day, it was the festival that brought communities together to sing songs, dance and perform dramas. It

⁷⁸ Shripad Venkatesh Wagle, *Shree Mangesh Devasthancha Sanshipta Itihas* (Mumbai: Self-published, 1907), 4; S. S. Talmaki, *Saraswat Families*, part II (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1939), 12.

⁷⁹ Wagle, *Shree Mangesh Devasthancha Sanshipta Itihas*, 4; *Patitpavan Mala*, May 1931, 39.

⁸⁰ Wagle, *Shree Mangesh Devasthancha Itihas*, 4.

⁸¹ *Vidiaprassar*, 28 February 1917, 4.

⁸² Laximikant Venkatesh Prabhu Bhembre, “Goyatil Gauda Samaj,” *Mandavi* (June 1963): 14; Sunil Palkar, ed., *Goyche Adivashi: Batabai ani Shuddhikaran* (Panaji: Gomantak Adivashi Sangatana, 2016), 17.

is perhaps important to note that in the early decades of the twentieth century, when the non-Brahmin communities began to consolidate, it was the Shigmo festivities that enabled the various communities to forge a unity among themselves. When the non-Brahmins sang songs during Shigmo they denounced upper-caste dominance through a stroke of poetic justice. And this was precisely why it was framed as an immoral act, and the festival was transmuted into an event of ‘bad words’.⁸³

A characteristic element in the discourse was the virulent attack on its nature and celebrations. Firstly, devoid of Vedic religious rites, the legitimacy of Shigmo was attacked and the festivities were treated as a waste of time.⁸⁴ Moreover, it was formulated as a festival of the uncivilised and illiterate lot, celebrated in characteristic alcoholic ‘frenzy’.⁸⁵ Given this excessive and sinful behaviour, in 1925, *Bharat* carried a typical editorial ‘Gulamacha San! Shigma’, calling it the ‘Festival of Slaves’, and formulated the absurdity of the festival.⁸⁶ To that critique was added another: that the non-Brahmins were self-indulgent who wanted holidays for Shigmo celebrations in different villages. Often Marathi periodicals carried a news item related to the Shigmo holiday, and at times periodicals were not published as scheduled.⁸⁷

In addition, the lower caste rituals were formulated as backward. They were transformed and systematised in ways unknown to the lower castes. The sacrifice of animals, such as cocks and goats, a ritual performed through a non-Brahmin priest largely during the *dushera* festival, had comprised a pivotal aspect of religious practice. When devotees brought animals to offer gods, a non-Brahmin priest guided them without any Sanskrit mantras.⁸⁸ However, that situation changed in the nineteenth century when the GSBs introduced new critiques of the practice. They frequently wrote in Marathi periodicals about the backwardness of the practice and often viewed the form of sacrifice as non-Vedic.⁸⁹ It is perhaps important to note that for those who were

⁸³ *O Goatmá*, 8 March 1886, 4.

⁸⁴ *O Goatmá*, 1 March 1886, 5.

⁸⁵ *Prabhat*, 7 March 1912, 3; *Swayamsevak (O Voluntário)*, 20 August, 1930, 6.

⁸⁶ *Bharat*, 5 March 1925, 2.

⁸⁷ *Pragati*, 21 March 1921, 2.

⁸⁸ *Pragati*, 14 March 1921, 2.

⁸⁹ *Bharat*, 20 November 1912, 3–4; *Bharat*, 6 October 1921, 2; *Hindu*, 29 August 1924, 2.

engaged in sacrifice, blood constituted a powerful and auspicious substance, but for those who opposed it, blood constituted an impurity. In other words, in trying to deal with the question—what should be the appropriate practices for a temple?—GSB discourses ended up arguing that the only valid practice was through Vedic rituals. In the early decades of the twentieth century, as the GSBs were establishing their control over the temples, critiques of animal sacrifice became increasingly strident.

In the 1920s, Marathi periodicals, more prominently *Bharat* and *Hindu*, launched a campaign against animal sacrifices that had failed to have any legitimacy in the *shastras*. Even public lectures attacked this as being both backward and unnecessary.⁹⁰ The argument of the *shastra* employed to ban the practice is important, as under the colonial law this was held to be authoritative, such that if the practice was not approved by the *shastra*, the state would consider the practice unnecessary.⁹¹ Apart from the presence of animal sacrifice at the temple, the presence of non-Brahmin priests was also made secondary to the Brahmin priests, unveiling their new doctrines in the guise of higher forms of Vedic ritual. It was due to this pressure of backwardness that animal sacrifices were stopped in many temples at the turn of the mid-twentieth century.⁹² In other temples where it still continues, the ritual was not just tolerated, but was fully incorporated into Brahmanical systems of thought. The form of sacrifice was transformed from animals into sacrificial offerings of cucumbers, the latter was in this way made to appear entirely bloodless and performed under the guidance of the Brahmin priest that represents a new relationship between divinity, the priest and sacrificer.⁹³ Moreover, this process that sought to produce an idea of backwardness through a series of units changes the experience of everyday life.

⁹⁰ *Vidiaprassar*, 14 May 1921, 4.

⁹¹ Luis Cunha Gonçalves, *Direito hindú e mahometano* (Coimbra: Coimbra Editora, 1923).

⁹² *Bharat*, 24 October 1935, 4; J. S. Sukhtankar and R. V. Nayak, eds., *Aajcha Va Kalcha Gomantak* (Bombay: Goa Hindu Association, 1954), 113.

⁹³ Vishnu Rangaji Sheldekar, *Gomantakatil GSB ani Tanchye Kuldev: khand I* (Mumbai: Gopal Narayan Patkar, 1938), 138.

Even crime, such as robberies, that were reported in Marathi periodicals were seen as performed without any agency and more as a function of backwardness—habit or usage.⁹⁴ In the process, these narratives tend to plot lower caste actions onto public memory and take them much further in their implications of social marginalisation. However, they have not been subjected to careful analysis. To do so, it is important to reflect on the context and not the action per se. In order to identify what kind of relationship exists in robberies, let us examine the salt robberies that were reported prominently in Marathi periodicals in the 1880s. Using these salt robberies as a source of information about the past is challenging, especially if one is trying to learn about the lower castes who are subjects of those accounts.

In 1878, an Anglo–Portuguese treaty regulated the manufacture and sale of salt in Goa. Salt was a heavily taxed commodity in British India and efforts were made to control the supply of cheap Goan salt. Accordingly, the treaty brought salt production in Goa under the British government through a complicated system of farming.⁹⁵ The proprietors of saltpans had to manufacture salt under the control of British agents.⁹⁶ At the same time, saltpans could be placed under the administration of contractors who worked on behalf of the British government and received compensation determined by the Mixed Commission.⁹⁷ Besides, the treaty introduced salt quotas for domestic consumption and regulated the prices.⁹⁸ The Portuguese also tended, by and large, to issue orders regulating local salt production.⁹⁹ Saltpan proprietors were expected to obey the orders of the British agents and any manufacture and supply of salt without their consent could lead to seizure of the salt produced and severe flooding of saltpans.¹⁰⁰ In addition, there was a

⁹⁴ This relationship between crime and agency has been examined by Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁹⁵ *Boletim Official do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 2, 3 January 1883, 6–7.

⁹⁶ *Boletim Official do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 13, 17 January 1883, 51.

⁹⁷ Celsa Pinto, *Goa: Images and Perceptions* (Panjim: Rajhauns, 1996), 118–19.

⁹⁸ Harischandra Nagvenkar, “Salt and the Goan Economy: A study of Goa’s Salt industry and Salt trade in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries during the Portuguese rule,” (PhD. diss., Goa University, 1999), 216–18.

⁹⁹ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 21 January 1883, 4.

¹⁰⁰ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 15 July 1883, 3.

discernible effort to extend the punitive responsibility, especially to the British agents.¹⁰¹ In other words, for a period of twelve years, from 1880 onwards, salt was a British monopoly and they exercised control over its manufacture and distribution.

Salt was much cheaper, abundantly produced and was the third major commodity to be exported from Goa.¹⁰² In the 1840s, almost forty per cent of the salt produced in Goa was exported.¹⁰³ However, in the 1880s, salt was in shorter supply. It is perhaps important to note that although many owners of saltpans had signed an agreement with the British agents and were to be compensated for loss of earnings, there was no money to carry out the deal. Besides, the Portuguese government had also failed in making the British pay for the losses.¹⁰⁴ Subsequently, the saltpan owners constituted a committee to negotiate their terms of agreement with the British for the remaining nine years and did manage to minimise their losses.¹⁰⁵ It looks like not all the saltpan owners suffered, and it is not surprising to find *Vengurla Vrutta* reporting that the landlords of saltpans were doing well.¹⁰⁶

In response to the treaty, the Portuguese government made efforts to harmonise regulations over the quantity of salt produced and introduced various measures to monitor its supply. Attempts to create a rationalised system of distribution encouraged the government to assume powers. The key administrative position at the local level was of *regidore*, and most of the *regidores* were Brahmins—Catholic or Hindu. The supply of salt came under the supervision of the *regidores*. As the average quota of salt for an individual was prescribed, *regidores* had to provide details on the family size to the government.¹⁰⁷ Rations of salt were fixed and supposed to be bought

¹⁰¹ *O Goatmá*, 26 November 1888, 4.

¹⁰² Francisco Xavier Ernesto Fernandes, *Índia Portuguesa: Estudos Económico-Sociais* (Bastorá: Typografia Rangel, 1905); Kashinath Damodar Nayak, *Amchya Niryatiche Bhavitavya* (Margao: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1938), 12–3.

¹⁰³ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 39, 4 September 1846, 263.

¹⁰⁴ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 12 August 1883, 3.

¹⁰⁵ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 21 January 1883, 3.

¹⁰⁶ *Vengural Vritta*, 25 October 1888; *O Goatmá*, 26 November 1888, 3–4.

¹⁰⁷ *Boletim Oficial do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 124, 7 June 1883, 493–94; *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 3 June 1883, 3.

every month. *Regidores* would issue letters on a monthly basis to individuals stating a family's entitlement of salt quantity. These letters were like an official recognition and were to be mainly implemented by the British agents. Rations were an explosive issue and people were not shy about demanding their rightful share. From the beginning, one of the main problems was the dominance of the *regidores* who were ultimately interested in enforcing monopolistic control over salt supply locally. Moreover, they exploited people who lacked basic skills to read and write. At times, while issuing salt letters they sought money, demanded gifts and forced the applicants to work as domestic servants.¹⁰⁸ Subsequently, printed forms were made available to obtain salt, yet a *regidore*'s decision came to form a crucial aspect of the way in which salt was to be acquired.¹⁰⁹ There were other problems too. The British officials in-charge of selling salt used various tricks to weigh less than they actually dispensed.¹¹⁰

Salt was an everyday necessity and control over its manufacture and distribution resulted in prices shooting up. In addition, shortage of salt led to short rations. Consequently, it led to a reduction of dietary salt intake, which, in turn, had serious health implications.¹¹¹ Further, a shortfall in availability of salt locally affected the drying and salting of fish, and agriculture. It is in this context that there were an increasing number of salt robberies in the 1880s. Absolute proof as to what occurred is unlikely to be forthcoming, but it seems clear that those who were unable to obtain any salt took to robberies. Moreover, they were not acts of habit, but were part of the subversion of the British monopoly and the power of the *regidores*. At the same time, it is important to note that the British officials who were appointed to supervise saltpans were themselves involved in robbing salt. However, denunciations levelled against the lower castes for an increase in crime led to the arrest of many innocent individuals.¹¹²

It is just this collectivised view that the archive commonly presents to us, and the limitations of the records underscore the point that salt robberies were performed by the most backward groups in colonial society. For instance, the biographical account of Jano Rama Redkar, however

¹⁰⁸ *O Goatmá*, 17 January 1887, 3.

¹⁰⁹ *O Goatmá*, 9 April 1888, 6.

¹¹⁰ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 2 December 1883, 3.

¹¹¹ Nagvenkar, "Salt and the Goan Economy," 257.

¹¹² *O Goatmá*, 26 November 1888, 4.

limited, is an important reminder of this contention that crime was a significant element of lower caste histories. Redkar was born in a Gomantak Maratha Samaj family in Reddi village in Vengurla.¹¹³ During his childhood he worked in a drama company. In the late nineteenth century, Redkar accompanied his father to Goa, where, for almost seventeen years, he worked for a prominent salt trader. Later his employer suffered losses and Redkar was left unemployed. Undeterred by this setback, Redkar sold salt and gradually emerged as one of the prominent salt traders of Goa. In the 1920s, he actively participated in reform movements and was a member of the Gomantakiya Hindu Sabha, Pragatik Maratha Samaj and Gomantak Maratha Samaj.¹¹⁴ Further, he made donations to many institutions, especially the Maruti temple at Panaji.¹¹⁵ It is important to note that the non-Saraswat communities had constructed the Maruti temple as a fallout of the protest over the Mahalaxmi temple at Panaji which was dominated by the GSBs.¹¹⁶ Redkar died in 1945 and two years later, when Govind Pundalik Hegdo Dessai serialised his autobiography in *Bharat*, he cast aspersions on Redkar's success as a salt trader.¹¹⁷ It is hardly surprising that he accused Redkar of robbing his master to become rich. Such perceptions also indicate a greater ambition towards describing a certain way of life. There are deeper issues at work in the production of the archive, and these narratives enable us to unpack its features, thus rendering them inferior.

1.4 The content of the past

At the end of the nineteenth century, the influence of a nationalist politics in British India added yet another dimension to GSB history. The GSB histories were claiming a past of victimhood, of being repeatedly persecuted by outside powers, of whom the Portuguese were the latest. Religious persecution of the GSBs by the Portuguese occupies a prominent place in the history of Goa and one can recognise two ways of their action. The harsh proselytising policies had driven many members of the community away from Goa in defence of their religion, while others

¹¹³ Rajaram Rangaji Paiginkar, "Shri Jano Rama Redkar," *Samaj Sudharak* (June 1940): 111–13.

¹¹⁴ *Hindu*, 5 February 1929, 2.

¹¹⁵ *Bharat*, 12 July 1945, 2.

¹¹⁶ Parag D. Parobo, "Histories, Identities and the Subaltern Resistance in Goa," *Journal of Human Values* 26, no. 2 (2020): 177–85.

¹¹⁷ *Bharat*, 17 April 1947, 2.

who stayed back continued to live with their religion left intact.¹¹⁸ This had two major implications. Firstly, it would portray them as the protectors of the gods who were shifted to areas outside the Portuguese jurisdiction. As the protector of gods, a role earlier performed by the rulers, the GSBs would enjoy enormous latitude and were able to tightly control the policy-making environment in the temples. Moreover, it would cast them as defenders of the Hindu religion, allowing them to demand rights by taking to their religious identity. In fact, demands such as voting rights, setting up of Marathi schools and public employment were couched in a Hindu identity. Secondly, the period under the Portuguese was presented as a time of suffering and misery. From the late nineteenth century onwards, the two narratives moved closer and this tradition of commentary acquired new salience in the Marathi print during the first half of the twentieth century. Among the important instances was Laxman Sardesai's work on conversions.¹¹⁹ It pointed out that the Hindu culture, being the product of the Brahmins, was their responsibility to protect. Specifically, the Brahmins were commended for protecting the Hindu religion.¹²⁰

It is perhaps important to note that the GSBs were well represented in the colonial state and serious questions were raised about their hegemony. Within this overall trend of GSB dominance, two interesting patterns showed their responses. On the one side, in their attempts to rebut this aspect, the GSBs projected themselves as the victims of Portuguese colonialism. Moreover, Valavalikar takes the theme of GSB persecution all the way into the precolonial past to state that they were first persecuted by the Kadambas who are claimed to be Jains, and subsequently by the Muslim rulers.¹²¹ Despite serious contradictions, on the other side it was emphasised that having failed to defeat the Portuguese, they had joined the administration, but only to protect people.¹²² While evaluating the injustice and inequities that marked Portuguese rule, they were further affirmed by the emerging nationalist imaginations. Moreover, they

¹¹⁸ Here the emphasis is on the claim of the GSBs that they moved out to protect religion, and at the same time, stayed back without going through religious conversion. However, it is important to note that many Brahmins were converted to Catholicism, thus leading to the Catholic Bamon caste.

¹¹⁹ Laxman Sardesai, *Christi Dharmaguruche Akraman* (Maragao: Hindu–Dharma Samiti, 1944).

¹²⁰ Sardesai, *Christi Dharmaguruche Akraman*, 11.

¹²¹ Varde Valavalikar, *Goemkarachi Goyabhayali Vosnuk*, 40, 105–07.

¹²² *Bharat*, 22 October 1913, 2.

employed their Hindu identity, economic power and familiarity with colonial administrative structure to exert a greater influence. Thus, by projecting themselves as victims of Portuguese colonialism, the GSBs were able to misrecognise their dominance. Consequently, when a non-Brahmin movement began to gain momentum, they upheld their Hindu identity and caste divisions were papered over through cultural mechanisms, such as the protection of the cow.

In the early half of the twentieth century, the cow was seen as the medium to unite the Hindus and was emerging as a political symbol of considerable significance.¹²³ While the Hindu identity was formulated in veneration of the cow, even the origin of the term ‘Gomantak’ was now attributed for the term ‘go’, meaning cow.¹²⁴ At the beginning, the cow protection movement was launched as a non-sectarian issue. In 1913, an editorial in *Bharat* justified a ban on cow slaughter with reference to the economic value of the cow.¹²⁵ For a region with low agrarian productivity and a lack of employment opportunities, the cow was a vital resource of the village economy. In 1921, *Bharat* carried an article ‘Gorakshan Kara Va Pushta Bana! Gomantaki Jay!’, emphasising the centrality of the cow to agriculture and of milk to the human diet, and stressed the need to protect cattle.¹²⁶ Cow slaughter meant fewer cows, and a consequent reduction in cow dung for manure, leading to a fall in agrarian production of rice. This argument on the economic benefits of the cow grew more prominent at the fifth *Congresso Provincial* in 1923 and drew some support from the Catholics as well.¹²⁷

Cow protection gained momentum after Gandhi blessed it and presided over the cow protection conference held at Belgaum in 1924.¹²⁸ Whatever the extent of cow protection was, Gandhi’s connection with the movement was certainly significant. The issue of cow slaughter was now

¹²³ Ek Hindu, *Gomatecha Hambarda* (Murmugao: Govind Vinayak Barve, 1925), 7.

¹²⁴ Valavalikar, *Kahi Marathi Lekh*, 282.

¹²⁵ *Bharat*, 16 July 1913, 2–3.

¹²⁶ *Bharat*, 7 April 1921, 3.

¹²⁷ *Prachi Prabha*, 28 March 1923, 3; António Maria da Cunha, *Congresso Provincial da India Portuguesa-Subsídios para sua História*, vol. III (Nova Goa: Casa Luso Francesa, 1928); 83–8.

¹²⁸ Ross Bassett, *The Technological Indian* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 94.

recast as Gandhi's programme and appeals were made to garner support.¹²⁹ It is worth noting that the Hindu lower castes actively participated in this project and made proposals to ban cow slaughter. A ban on cow slaughter posed a serious threat to an important source of tax revenue, especially for municipalities. Accordingly, Nabhubai Katkar, from the Gomantak Maratha community, made efforts to persuade the Ponda municipality to ban cow slaughter and offered full compensation for the loss of revenue.¹³⁰ In 1923, when a cow protection society was established, two of its prominent members were Bablo Masno Naik Volvoikar, who was a Bhandari by caste, and Nanu Tarkar Pednekar, a Nabhik.¹³¹ It is perhaps important to note that they were among the prominent public personalities who strove hard to lead the non-Brahmin movement in Goa. Further, in 1928, when the Catholic Gaudas were reconverted to Hinduism, one of the rituals that confirmed their entry was the performance of cow worship.¹³²

1.5 Power and Resistance

The most radical point of departure from earlier conceptions of history lay in the application of the concept of resistance. One needs to understand the processes, both discursive and material, through which resistance is constituted. The range of actions made visible as resistance through the Marathi print since the late nineteenth century includes the protection of the gods—defending the Hindu religion and spectacular outbreaks against the colonial state. What binds these actions together was the force and violence of the colonial state and how the dominant castes fought. In other words, resistance was imagined as a site of colonial dominance. If some elements of actions, such as different degrees of co-operation or collaboration, failed to make sense of resistance that did not necessarily discredit them. After all, collaborations were also recast as everyday resistance—attempts made to protect the interests of the Hindu community.¹³³

¹²⁹ *Hindu*, 23 May, 1925, 2; *Hindu*, 21 October 1929, 5; *Hindu*, 21 October 1930, 5.

¹³⁰ *Swayamsevak (O Voluntário)*, October 1923, 70.

¹³¹ *Prachi Prabha*, 8 September 1923, 3.

¹³² Shankar Dhondo Shirsagar, *Gomantak Shuddicha Itihas* (Satara: Self-published, 1930), *pratyasha shuddhikarya* 5.

¹³³ *Bharat*, 22 October 1913, 2; Pratima Kamat, *Farar Far: Local Resistance to Colonial Hegemony in Goa 1510–1912* (Panjim: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999), 73–80.

It is perhaps important to note that while the resistance of ordinary people exists and has genuine effects, it is seldom recognised as an act of resistance. Why should this be the case? There are perhaps a number of reasons that might explain these historiographical limitations. Firstly, the inventory of resistance comprises of rare moments of actions exclusively against the colonial state and conveys a strong sense of that power. Resistance is what threatens power, yet, fixing it against the colonial state injects into it a potential resource for power itself. In other words, resistance becomes entrapped in the colonial state and the dominance of powerful castes such as the GSBs is misrecognised.

Secondly, in contrast, while there is a wide variety of actions observable against the colonial state, the dynamic of this process holds only in those actions in which there is recognition. Visibility is an issue and is a prerequisite for the recognition of resistance.¹³⁴ Moreover, the Marathi periodicals lay down how or why one should struggle, and present a range of actions overwhelming other actions that are deemed pointless. Recognition of the act also depends, in part, on the goals of the resisters and the ideological rhetoric of actions that result in social change. Often, it was argued that protest qualifies as a resistance when there were substantial grounds or reasons to take a certain action for a ‘good’ cause.¹³⁵ In other words, protest actions, regardless of their scope or outcome, must be recognised by others to count as resistance, and the Marathi periodicals illustrate the ways in which acts of resistance vary in their visibility. While the archive is not quite as voluble about other kinds of oppositional action, large-scale protest movements, such as strikes, do nevertheless provide us with some sense of the material conditions of communities that we would otherwise not have access to. This compels us to examine the nature of the Bhandari strikes since the 1920s and their relationship with the colonial state and local society. Understanding these protests is extremely important for making sense of the life of the Bhandaris, as well as for drawing out some of the social and political elements of archiving the past.

¹³⁴ The question of the visibility of the resistant act is perhaps the most contentious issue in scholarly discussions of resistance. For a detailed analysis of the question of recognition, please see, Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner, “Conceptualizing Resistance,” *Sociological Forum* 19, no. 4 (2004): 533–54.

¹³⁵ *Bharat*, 29 December 1932 (Romi supplement), 3.

In 1921, 1928 and 1933 the Bhandaris declared strikes, protesting against the government policies on tapping toddy from coconut trees. It is perhaps important to note that this was not the only occasion when the Bhandaris took to a strike. Besides, there were many occasions when other communities such as the fisherfolk and barbers were involved in similar actions. What makes these strikes from 1921 distinct is that they possessed a different tenor in their reach and duration, disrupting much of Goa. In the 1921 strike, the Bhandaris participated in increasing numbers and came out on the streets which forced the government to deploy the military at various places.¹³⁶ These strikes were widely covered in the Marathi press, and the manner in which their causes were reported varied across periodicals and carried with it a complex and often contradictory set of moral, political and financial aspects. My reading of the Bhandari strikes, and the inability of historiography to fully account for it, rests precisely on such an understanding of rebellious practices.

In 1921, *Vidiaprassar* reported that it is strange that Bhandaris have gone on strike without giving any notice, and that too, when the government has not increased taxes on toddy tapping. Though the government had plans to raise taxes on drawing toddy, the periodical claimed that the main cause of the strike was the introduction of new procedures to manufacture alcohol. In earlier days, under the Anglo–Portuguese treaty of 1878, the manufacture, sale and consumption of alcohol in Goa was brought under the Bombay Abkari regulations.¹³⁷ This had forced the Portuguese to increase the taxes on toddy tapping, distillation and licence fees on local taverns. Subsequently, with the end of the Anglo–Portuguese treaty, the Abkari department was abolished and merged with the Guarda Fiscal. It is important to note that Guarda Fiscal was established in 1885 and was a special military force. In peace times it was assigned responsibilities in the fields of customs and taxation that included intoxicating spirits. As a result, Bhandaris had to report the number of coconut trees reserved for collection of sap to the Guarda Fiscal and pay a tax on each coconut tree.¹³⁸ Furthermore, it was also tasked with law enforcement and, at times, had to constitute a force in war. It became clear, nevertheless, that the Guarda Fiscal was not only short-staffed but was entrusted with too many responsibilities and this gave the Bhandaris a great advantage. Those involved in the illicit production of liquor fell foul of local regulations by

¹³⁶ *Bharat*, 6 January 1921, 3.

¹³⁷ Celsa Pinto, *Goa: Images and Perceptions*, 117–18.

¹³⁸ *Vidiaprassar*, 8 January 1921, 3.

reporting lesser number of coconut trees and caused financial losses to the government.¹³⁹ Accordingly, new regulations were introduced in 1920. Now landlords were required to report the number of coconut trees reserved for drawing sap to the Guarda Fiscal.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, this was to be submitted in writing in the presence of two witnesses who could attest to details.¹⁴¹ Overall, *Vidiaprassar* dismissed the strike as one based on personal motives of those involved and appealed to the government not to support alcoholism by succumbing to Bhandari pressure.

In some despair, *Bharat* carried an editorial, 'Bhandari Vijay', and concluded that the 1921 strike was driven by self-interest. The main objective was not only to force the government to reduce taxes on coconut trees reserved for drawing sap, but also to see that no new taxes were imposed. The strike was seen as affecting productivity, yet, *Bharat* appealed to the government not to consider the demands of the Bhandaris.¹⁴² It is not that *Bharat* was entirely unimpressed by the strike; it did acknowledge the mass mobilisation and compared it with the *satyagraha* of Gandhi, but attributed to it a wrong intent. And so, for better or for worse, perhaps the most speculative suggestion to this problem was to consider the literacy level and character of individuals and to grant licenses in the hope that it would lead to better compliance of the law.¹⁴³

This was the period when drinking alcohol attracted the most pitched commentary in Marathi periodicals. To be clear, concerns about alcohol indulgence were primarily focussed on the drinking habits of the upper castes, fervently lamenting the spread of this poison. The most that the periodicals did to discourage the consumption, in addition to expressing their moral disapproval, was to warn that it was a dangerous practice, completely foreign to local society. Moreover, the drinks themselves were assigned a western identity, and the drinking of alcohol by the Hindu upper castes was imputed to the influence of the Catholics.¹⁴⁴ Drinking now threatened to alter the previously abstemious behaviour of the Hindu upper castes. For example,

¹³⁹ *Vidiaprassar*, 15 January 1921, 3.

¹⁴⁰ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 98, 7 December 1920, 1141.

¹⁴¹ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 2, 7 January 1921, 11; *Vidiaprassar*, 8 January 1921, 3.

¹⁴² *Bharat*, 20 January 1921, 3.

¹⁴³ *Bharat*, 15 December 1921, 2–3.

¹⁴⁴ Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai, *Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai (Bhai Desai): Smarak Granth* (Mumbai: Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai Smarak, Samiti, 1965), 215.

in 1923, when Shrinivas Dempo served alcohol during the marriage and *upanayan* ceremonies, it led to a major controversy that divided society.¹⁴⁵ While this controversy raged, some applauded Dempo for hosting Catholic guests and serving alcohol which was considered central to their life.¹⁴⁶ Yet, Dempo had to undergo penance that was administered by the swami of Partagal matha.¹⁴⁷ The issue of alcoholism was regularly discussed at most provincial congresses that were held from 1916 to 1931. While there were nine congress provincial from 1916 to 1931, the second and the seventh *Congresso Provincial*, held in 1917 and 1927, respectively, were more focused on alcoholism and deliberated on its causes and remedies.¹⁴⁸

In 1928 and 1933, when the Bhandaris protested against declining profits, they were held responsible for the damage they inflicted on themselves. Always very careful to distinguish, the discussion over classification of the problem revolved around the question of production and not taxes. During the early decades of the twentieth century, a growing demand for alcohol resulted in an increase in the number of Bhandaris involved in the manufacture of alcohol. Given this situation, Marathi periodicals were frequently pointing out that the increased production of alcohol had led to a fall in its prices.¹⁴⁹ It is true that there was an increase in production. For instance, in 1914, there were around 43,614 coconut trees reserved for removing sap and 1,916 licenced distillation units, and increased to 59,623 and 2,776 in 1923.¹⁵⁰ However, taxes and the higher fees claimed by the landlords on coconut trees, and not production, had largely contributed

¹⁴⁵ In a column, “Madhyapan aani Madhyadaan”, published in *Bharat*, 15 March 1923, there was criticism of Dempo for serving alcohol.

¹⁴⁶ *Prachi Prabha*, 2 May 1923, 2–4.

¹⁴⁷ *Bharat*, 15 May 1924, 3–4.

¹⁴⁸ António Maria da Cunha, *Congresso Provincial da Índia Portuguesa—Subsídios para sua História*, vol. I (Nova Goa: Casa Luso Francesa, 1924); António Maria da Cunha, *Congresso Provincial da Índia Portuguesa—Subsídios para sua História*, vol. IV (Nova Goa: Casa Luso Francesa, 1929); Balcrisna Dattarama Sinai Sacardandó, *Sétimo Congresso Provincial da Índia: Comissão de estados Relatorio* (Nova Goa: R. M. Rau and Irmãos, 1927); *Segundo Congresso Provincial da Índia Portuguesa* (Nova Goa: Casa Luso-Francesa: 1917); *Sétimo congresso Provincial da Índia Portuguesa* (Nova Goa: Tipografia Bragança, 1927).

¹⁴⁹ *Bharat*, 5 January 1933, 3.

¹⁵⁰ *Hindu*, 19 September 1924, 4.

to the falling profits. The revenue demands of the colonial state and the emphasis on the morality of drinking precipitated a changed approach to alcohol. Apart from the revenue department, municipalities also gained the responsibility for taxing coconut trees and utilised alcohol as a means of generating revenue.

It is perhaps important to note that it was, in fact, widely accepted that the rising consumption of alcohol could be controlled by increasing taxes. Not just Marathi periodicals, but the second *Congresso Provincial* made similar arguments.¹⁵¹ However, alcohol was a hugely important revenue stream and a consistent demand to raise taxes in order to discourage alcohol consumption made it easy for the government to secure a reliable revenue source. Indeed, as T. B. Cunha has shown, the revenue from liquor was so great that it represented the second largest source of income for the government and had led the colonial state to form a dependency upon it.¹⁵² Further, moving drinkers out of the fields and into licensed shops was not only important for the government's coffers but also opened up the possibility of selling alcohol to other communities. As a result, the Bhandaris found themselves priced out of selling alcohol in the cities. For instance, in the 1920s, there are references to the Brahmins selling local and foreign liquor, largely in the prominent cities of Goa.¹⁵³

There were other concerns as well. On the one hand, the Bhandaris involved in the production and selling of alcohol had gained economic mobility. On the other, so serious was this threat thought to be that it was said that alcoholic landlords were forced to sustain their lifestyle, including their drinking habits, by selling their properties.¹⁵⁴ More importantly, increasing alcohol production and rising taxes had other implications. At the turn of the twentieth century, the lack of employment opportunities in Goa had a profound impact on labour migration; many were leaving Goa for better prospects, and a substantial number of those who stayed back were employed as labourers in the production and selling of alcohol.¹⁵⁵ At the same time, it was argued

¹⁵¹ *Segundo Congresso Provincial da Índia Portuguesa*; Cunha, *Congresso Provincial da Índia Portuguesa*, vol. I.

¹⁵² T. B. Cunha, *Goa's Freedom Struggle* (Bombay: T. B. Cunha Memorial Committee, 1961), 18–9.

¹⁵³ *Bharat*, 19 January 1922, 2–3.

¹⁵⁴ *Sétimo Congresso Provincial da Índia Portuguesa* (Nova Goa: Tipografia Bragança, 1927).

¹⁵⁵ *Hindu*, 19 September 1924, 4.

that rising alcohol prices were driving wages. In a similar manner, the *Hindu* raised questions and pointed out that the rising alcohol prices had no direct effect on the consumer but impacted others who were forced to pay higher wages.¹⁵⁶ Thus, the discomfort felt, and the interventions over alcohol, were very much concerned with securing a stable labour supply. It is, of course, ironic that while the Bhandaris were charged for promoting alcoholism, the landlords and temples who benefitted by leasing out coconut trees were seldom held accountable for their actions. In other words, one can perhaps say that this campaign against alcoholism was also a way to deny mobility to the Bhandaris.

Since the late 1960s, resistance has become a major preoccupation of anthropologists and historians. As scholars increasingly started studying relations of colonial power, the need arose to characterise resistance. Consequently, the idea of resistance has been heavily influenced by the context of the emergence of nationalism since the 1880s, and the Marathi periodicals played an important role in defining it through a totalising focus on colonial power. The claim that political awareness about the Portuguese rule emerged from the upper caste political negotiations and agitations provided the initial framework for anthropological or historical studies. While domination was relatively fixed and institutionalised, the conceptual framework of resistance consisted of a simple dichotomy: colonial power and opposing dominant castes. For instance, Paul Axelrod and Michelle A. Fuerch who studied the ‘fight of the deities’ during the conversions concluded that: ‘The resistance described here has largely been that of the dominant caste of Goa, the GSB.’¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, ethnographic evidence undermines this exclusivity.¹⁵⁸

Much of research has explored the resistance of the GSBs, thus enabling them in redefining and reshaping their identities. Despite the fact that the oppressed castes are frequently forced to voice their protest (violently and non-violently) against the colonial regime as well as the dominance of the local elites, their struggles and strength are often devalued on the grounds of law-and-order problems, usage or habit and ascribed personal motives. Thus, the understanding of resistance is relatively narrow. This has led to a romanticising of the GSBs as engaging in

¹⁵⁶ *Hindu*, 2 January 1926, 5.

¹⁵⁷ Paul Axelrod and Michelle A. Fuerch, “Flight of the deities: Hindu resistance in Portuguese Goa,” *Modern Asian Studies* 30, vol. 2 (1996): 420.

¹⁵⁸ These details are discussed in chapter 4.

resistance and to an inadequate analysis of resistance itself, resulting in a failure to properly understand the involvement of other groups.¹⁵⁹ However, unexpectedly, the archive itself, when read in different ways, does help us to understand the ways in which non-Brahmins were negotiating with the colonial state, and also with the local elites.

The relationship between the GSBs and non-Brahmins was the pivot of domination. The weight of the GSB power was inscribed into everyday life in an impressive way. The GSBs were major landlords, entrepreneurs and educated professionals who would get themselves elected into various government institutions and exercised an excessive influence over Goa's intellectual life. The administration of the prominent temples passed into their hands. Further, they were directly and indirectly concerned with the government and constituted a strong but thinly spread caste. Resistance also needs to be seen as actions by non-Brahmins against existing structures of GSB domination, and the pursuit of emancipatory possibilities. While their actions may have had varying degrees of success, the non-Brahmins acted as rational agents with sufficient intention and purpose, at times fully aware of all the implications. A key point of departure for our analysis is the focus on a constant strategic alertness that places a lot of weight on agency.¹⁶⁰ To ground this argument, let us examine Rajaram Paiginkar's protest of 1921. What kind of event it was has been called upon by the scholars who have sought to write about the protest.¹⁶¹

In 1921, Rajaram Paiginkar and a few youths from his community of the Gayak samaj, a subgrouping within the devadasi, organised a public *Satyanarayan* pooja at Paigunim—a stronghold of the GSB. This was a large public event and hundreds of pamphlets in Marathi calling for a rejection of caste hierarchies were distributed.¹⁶² It is no surprise that many GSBs boycotted the event and warned the village priest, Karhade Brahmin, against officiating at the

¹⁵⁹ For details on this aspect see Sherry B. Ortner, "Resistance and the problem of ethnographic refusal," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 1 (1995): 173–93.

¹⁶⁰ K. Sivaramakrishnan, "Some Intellectual Genealogies for the Concept of Everyday Resistance," *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 3 (2005): 350.

¹⁶¹ Anjali Arondekar, "In the Absence of Reliable Ghosts: Sexuality, Historiography, South Asia," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 25, no. 3 (2015): 98–121.

¹⁶² *Pragati*, 13 June 1921, 1–2.

pooja.¹⁶³ The pooja required elaborate rituals to be performed under the supervision of a Brahmin priest, in the absence of whom it could not be performed. This forced Paiginkar to address the public, who not only denounced the treatment of non-Brahmins but also firmly rejected the notion that caste had anything to do with a high or low status.¹⁶⁴ At various points, and in different ways, he attacked the whole Brahminic ideology of privilege, scriptural authority in general, and appealed to the prominent members from Daivadnya, Vaishya and Kshatriya Maratha castes to perform rituals—thus opening the way for persons of all castes to be eligible for priesthood. As no one came forward, Paiginkar agitated against the compromises, increasingly advocated education of the non-Brahmins as the means to challenge the hegemony of the GSBs.

On the very next day, Paiginkar was summoned by the GSBs in the neighbouring village of Loliem, another stronghold of the GSBs. He was castigated for his attempt to organise the pooja, and more importantly, for his speech that critiqued GSB dominance and his demand for education. They sought an apology, but Paiginkar continued to press for the right of education for non-Brahmins. Subsequently, the GSBs proceeded to terrorise his family by boycotting their services, levying fines, appropriating their customary shares and benefits, seizing their agrarian produce and refusing access to all basic services.¹⁶⁵ Besides, there was news of a night attack on Paiginkar's house, which was of particular concern, where the GSBs, though making up only a fraction of the population, were taking to open violence. Under the circumstances, Paiginkar states that he had four options: submission to GSB pressure, fighting with weapons, fleeing his home to emigrate to Bombay—a response that had emerged as the general pattern—or taking up a legal recourse, a time consuming lengthy process and an extremely expensive undertaking.¹⁶⁶ Although opting for a legal mechanism was bold, and an astonishingly simple alternative, there was manifest concern about the level of everyday oppression, especially heightened by the unwillingness or inability of local officials to act.

¹⁶³ *Pragati*, 13 June 1921, 2.

¹⁶⁴ Rajaram Rangaji Paiginkar, *Mee Kon?*, vol. I (Margao: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1969), 70.

¹⁶⁵ Rajaram Rangaji Paiginkar, *Mee Kon?*, vol. II (Margao: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1971), 4.

¹⁶⁶ Paiginkar, *Mee Kon?*, vol. I, 80.

On the contrary, Painginkar premeditated a different course and staged a night attack on his house, all in hopes of getting attention and sympathy. Subsequently, Painginkar and his family left the village and petitioned to the Governor General, Jaime Alberto de Castro Morais, and demanded damages and compensation from the GSBs. Further, Painginkar also made a strategic appeal for the government's support for education as an effective vehicle to achieve social reform. The family returned home with the governor's considerable support and was able to access all basic services, get back their lands and other resources. The family even filed a suit against prominent GSBs that sent shockwaves through the GSB community and subsequently forced them to seek a compromise with the support of local officials and through the mediation of the GSB swami of Partagal matha.¹⁶⁷ As Painginkar's political rhetoric evolved over the years, constantly engaging in the issues of the day, he continued to press for educational access for non-Brahmins. Subsequently, in 1933, he succeeded in establishing a Marathi school at Paigunim that was boycotted by the GSBs.¹⁶⁸ It is perhaps important to note that although Painginkar was one of the prominent leaders of the non-Brahmin movement in Goa, yet, his historical framework is mainly derived from GSB histories. In particular, while discussing his views on GSB history, Painginkar emphasised their arrival in Goa from the banks of the Saraswati river, founding of villages, religious persecution and protection of temples and Hindu religion, and prominent individuals such as Jivbadada Kerkar.¹⁶⁹

Everyday exercise of power, and the myriad contexts of everyday life, show that resistance cannot operate by a single master conception of power. Acts, such as strikes, robberies, migration, rumour, staging acts, claiming new identities, contests over temple and land, ritual and other resources highlight the complex processes through which power and resistance are constantly enmeshed.

¹⁶⁷ *Pragati*, 11 July 1921, 2; *Pragati*, 24 October 1921, 2.

¹⁶⁸ Painginkar, *Mee Kon?*, vol. I, 135.

¹⁶⁹ Painginkar, *Mee Kon?*, vol. II, 96–108.

Chapter 2

The Colonial State, Power and Politics

The dominant narrative surrounding Portuguese colonialism is that of a historical event made possible and sustained by the forceful extension of its rule. Histories written to situate this colonial force make a grand sweep, covering a timespan from the sixteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. This has had a significant impact on the narration of histories in two ways: one, a lot of attention has been focused on the Portuguese; and second, the local social groups are located within the instrumentalist view of politics where they are treated as a mere projection of the political system. The role of the social groups, especially the Hindus, during the colonial period is probably the most misunderstood dimension of their lives, and in order to understand this we need to situate history in the local context, embedded in the struggle for power and position.

The nineteenth century was a crucial turning point that witnessed the development of a new dimension of public life, emerging from the assemblage of government and private schools, public employment, elections, government councils, the press, and the extension of the *Novas Conquistas* within the Portuguese administrative network. All of this invited competition from social groups, both below and above.¹ Scholars have recently been attentive to Goans at the local level who sought connections with the Portuguese for their own interests.² But the nature of the colonial state, the power configurations and the politics among the Hindus, both below and

¹ Rochelle Pinto, Sidh Losa Mendiratta and Walter Rossa, “Reframing the Nineteenth Century,” *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais* 115 (2018): 93–112.

² Pratima Kamat, *Farar Far: Local Resistance to Colonial Hegemony in Goa 1510–1912* (Panjim: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999); Ângela Barreto Xavier, *A invenção de Goa: Poder imperial e conversoes culturais nos séculos XVI e XVII* (Lisbon: Imprensa da Ciências Sociais, 2008); Rochelle Pinto, *Between Empires: Print and Politics in Goa* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007); Remy A. D. Dias, “The Socio-Economic History of Goa with Special Reference to the Comunidade System: 1750-1910,” (PhD diss., Goa University, 2004).

above, have received little attention from historians who have chosen instead to concentrate largely on upper-caste Catholics.³ Further, historians of the nationalist movement in Goa, seeking to create a monolithic Hindu community, have been slow to realise the importance of contradictions and tensions among the Hindus and the complexities of the cultural matrix within which they operated.⁴ As different Hindu social groups competed among themselves, they increasingly sought to manipulate the colonial rule to their own uses. This chapter seeks to analyse the dynamics of this relationship between the colonial state and the power and the politics of the Hindu upper castes in Goa.

2.1 The making of the middle-class

The rise of the GSB middle-class in Goa, that saw itself as a harbinger of modernity, consequently led to the unification movement among the GSB *jatis* seeking to unite into a single caste—a process begun around the early eighteenth century and accelerated towards the mid-nineteenth century.⁵ Although traditional scholarship has focused on the GSB caste as a monolithic community, in recent years, scholars have been interested in knowing how this caste fashioned itself.⁶ However, these works tend to believe that the rise of the GSBs and their new urban elite was largely driven by the significance of British rule, in terms of providing them access to education and government employment and through the effects of the competitive urban settings of the Bombay and Madras presidencies.⁷ These approaches, though significant

³ Cristiana Bastos, “Doctors for the Empire: The Medical School of Goa and its Narratives,” *Identities* 8, no. 4 (2001): 517–48; Carmen Sharmila Pais, “History and Politics of Elections in Goa (1821–1963): A Study,” (PhD diss., Goa University, 2017).

⁴ Varsha Kamat, “Socio–Political and Religious life in Goa,” (PhD diss., Goa University, 1996).

⁵ *Konkanakyan*, a text claimed to have been written by an anonymous GSB in 1721, was one of the earliest efforts to unite the *jatis*.

⁶ N. K. Wagle, “The History and Social Organisation of the Gauda Sarasvata Brahmins of the West Coast of India,” *Journal of Indian History* 48, no. 1 (1970): 8–25; N. K. Wagle, “The History and Social Organization of the Gauda Sarasvata Brahmanas of the West Coast of India,” *Journal of Indian History* 48, no. 2 (1970): 295–333; Frank Conlon, *A Caste in a Changing World: The Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmins, 1700–1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

⁷ Frank F. Conlon, “Caste by Association: The Gauda Sarasvata Brahmana Unification Movement,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 33, no. 3 (1974): 351–65.

in their own right, do not focus much on the emergence of a middle–class in Goa and its cultural and political project, ignoring how the GSBs have reinvented themselves and built their dominance in the midst of wide-ranging societal transformations.

Often, the dominant position of the GSBs is expressed in secular values of education and the ability of the caste to bend with the changing world. Rather, the dominance of the GSB caste and its making as the GSB middle–class are not only an outcome of sociological transformation, but also a product of its caste privilege. A close reading of the Marathi periodicals published in Goa by the GSBs provides us with different insights into contemporary events, aspirations, values, anxieties, and the new notions of honour and prestige that owe a great deal to their caste consolidation. The GSBs, and their making of the middle–class, are the product of a historical process begun since the nineteenth century, which itself was a result of a project of self–fashioning predicated on the creation of new forms of cultural politics and re-thinking the world around them that allowed the GSBs to articulate a new set of beliefs and values. This was also a period whereby the GSBs used their newly-earned privileges to their advantage. Further, their new dominance was also the product of transcoding caste and caste relations into a Hindu identity. An examination of the deeper dynamics of the rise of a new middle class helps us to better understand configurations of power in the past and in our present.

In many ways, if the question of politics, power and the role of the GSB caste is to be approached meaningfully, one cannot ignore the striking differences with respect to the traditional caste order in relation to the making of a middle–class. The traditional caste order comprised of the Shenvis and a number of other *jatis* recognised through geographic locations—Bardezkaras, Bhanavlikars, Pednekars, Kudaldeshkaras and Sasthikars.⁸ Apart from regional divisions, there were sectarian divisions, such as *smartha* (Shaivites), who worshipped the primeval god Shiva and his family, and the Vaishnavites, worshipping the god Visnu and his avatars. Further, both these sects were defined through the allegiance to a *swami* and the *matha*: the Shaivite *matha* was located at Kavale, and the Vaishnavite at Partagal. In addition, there were prohibitions on physical mixing, such as by inter–dining and intermarriage. Most Shenvis and Kudaldeshkaras were *smartha*, while the other *jatis* were Vaishnavities.

⁸ Further migration outside Goa has produced new *jatis*, such as Chitrapur and Cochin Gaud Brahmin Saraswats.

One of the earliest references to the GSBs comes as a caste-name, ‘Shenvi’, from a land grant of the Goa Shilahara ruler Rattaraja, issued in 1010 C.E.⁹ Over the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries they appear frequently in the inscriptional record, named as governors and scribes—an administrative elite with allied interests in revenue farming and landholdings.¹⁰ Moreover, the emergence of the successor states to the Bahmani and Vijayanagar kingdoms from the sixteenth century meant a proliferation of political patronage.¹¹ These states demanded skilled communities of scribes and employed Shenvis for their well-developed scribal skills. It looks like around the fifteenth century many of the GSB *jatis* moved their affiliation to Vaishnava teachings.¹² It is important to note that while Shenvis, the most influential *jati*, was associated with political power as scribes and diplomats, the other GSB *jatis* were overwhelmingly into trade.¹³ Partly as a result of this context, these *jatis* developed along an idiosyncratic path that diverged from each other; for example, in terms of kinship or social practices of caste. In all likelihood, the shift towards Vaishnavism was a move, perhaps, to earn greater social value. Such developments conform with other trading communities on the western coast of India. In a direct reflection of western India’s orientation towards the sea, historical evidence shows that a considerable number of Hindu merchant communities on the western coast of India were predominantly Vaishnava.¹⁴

⁹ V. T. Gune, ed., *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, vol. I (Panaji: Gazetteer Department, 1979), 88.

¹⁰ P. K. Gode, “The Antiquity of the Caste-name ‘Shenvi’,” *Journal of the University of Bombay* 5, no. 6 (1937): 152–55; V. R. Mitragotri, *Socio Cultural History of Goa: From Bhojas to Vijayanagar* (Panaji: Institute Menezes Braganca, 1999), 142.

¹¹ Richard M. Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan, 1300-1761: Eight Indian Lives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Rosalind O’Hanlon, “Letters Home: Banaras pandits and the Maratha regions in early modern India,” *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 2 (2010): 201–40.

¹² V. P. Chavan, *Vaishnavism of the Gowd Saraswat Brahmins and a Few Konkani Folklore Tales* (Bombay: Ramchandra Govind and Sons, 1928), 1–32.

¹³ Balkrishna Vaman Sawardekar, *Gomantak Parichay* (Mumbai: Tukaram Mukund Sawardekar, 1930), 13; Conlon, *A Caste in a Changing World*, 33.

¹⁴ N. A. Thoothi, *The Vaishnavas of Gujarat: Being a Study in Methods of Investigation of Social Phenomena* (Calcutta: Longmans, Green and Company, 1935); C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 389.

With the rapid expansion of Portuguese power, and the capture of *Velhas Conquistas* (Old Conquests) in the sixteenth century, it appears that the GSBs assumed a controlling position of the maritime economy of the western Indian littoral and diversified as owners of agency houses, insurers, traders and moneylenders.¹⁵ As a new political age had dawned, the Shenvis—the administrative elite—were now leaning towards trade and emerging as a mercantile community; more importantly, they were seen as synonymous with traders.¹⁶ They invested the capital accumulated from land and revenue farming into coastal trade, maximising profits and strengthening their position. The Portuguese state continued with the revenue collection system of their predecessors in Goa and the GSBs benefitted from these arrangements.¹⁷ Further, the transition from a pre-colonial to a colonial political system was largely mediated by the Shenvis as the scribes, and *dubashis* (official translators and interpreters, at times acting as intermediaries or negotiators) who had a grasp of court languages in western India. Hence the Portuguese had to come to terms with them. Scholars like Pissurlecar, Pearson, Souza and Scammell have pointed out that, from the beginning, the Portuguese did not just tolerate the GSBs, but employed them, rewarded them with revenue rights and sought their aid in coastal trade.¹⁸ In the seventeenth century we find the GSBs settling down in Old Goa—the capital of *Estado da Índia*—to take up tax farming, banking businesses and contracts to collect customs duties on tobacco, silk and cotton.¹⁹ Even when religious intolerance and the Inquisition was in full swing, sixty-two per cent of the listed tax farmers among the Hindus were GSBs.²⁰

¹⁵ Kamat, *Farar Far*, 66.

¹⁶ Govind Narayan Maadgaonkar, *Mumbaichi Varnan*, trans. and ed. Murali Ranganathan (London: Anthem Press, 2007), 81.

¹⁷ M. N. Pearson, “Indigenous Dominance in a Colonial Economy: The Goa Rendas, 1600–1670,” *Mare Luso-Indicum* 2 (1973): 61–73; T. R. de Souza, *Medieval Goa: A Socio-Economic History* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1979), 51–90.

¹⁸ P. S. S. Pissurlencar, *Agentes da Diplomacia Portuguesa na Índia (Hindus, Muçulmanos, Judeus e Parses)* (Bastora: Tipografia Rangle, 1952); Pearson, “Indigenous Dominance in a Colonial Economy,”; T. R. de Souza, “Glimpses of Hindu Dominance of the Goan Economy in the 17th century,” *Indica* 12, no. 1 (1975): 27–35; G. V. Scammell, “The Pillars of Empire: Indigenous Assistance and the Survival of the ‘Estado da India’ c. 1600–1700,” *Modern Asian Studies* 22, no. 3 (1988): 473–89.

¹⁹ Pius Malekandathil, “City in Space and Metaphor: A Study on the Port-city of Goa, 1510–1700,” *Studies in History* 25, no. 1 (2009): 30–1.

²⁰ M. N. Pearson, *Coastal Western India* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1981), 98.

Apart from their political and economic networks, we do not know much about the GSB caste until the eighteenth century. However, what we have is two main, and somewhat similar, sources for the early history of the GSBs. The first is the *Sahayadri–Khanda*, a caste purana as a section of the *Skanda Purana*, dated to the ninth century, but discovered in the form of fourteen manuscripts towards the second half of the nineteenth century.²¹ The second text is the *Konkanakhyan* that draws from the *Sahayadri–Khanda*. We have three conflicting editions of *Konkanakhyan*. The first two editions of *Konkanakhyan* were published from Goa and Belgaum in 1909.²² Although these two editions are somewhat similar, centred on a narrative of unity of the GSBs, they trace their sources to two different manuscripts. While we do not know much about the author of *Konkanakhyan*, the Belgaum edition locates its source to a manuscript produced in 1667 C.E and the Goa edition of Shripad Vyankatesh Wagle traces its source to a manuscript written in 1721 C.E.²³ Interestingly, the Goa edition appears incomplete—it does not mention fish-eating by the GSBs, one of the important reasons why their Brahminical status was under question.

The third edition by Ragunath S. Desai was published from Pernem, Goa, in 1947, and is different from the other two.²⁴ Ragunath S. Desai was the Secretary of Pednekar Gaud Brahmin Sabha that considered itself to be an independent caste from the GSBs, and seeks to redress prejudicial imbalance created by the 1909 version of *Konkanakhyan* by constructing a more objective account. Firstly, the 1947 edition claims to be a text reproduced entirely from the original manuscript of 1667 C.E. And secondly, we are informed that the editor’s commitment to facts made him examine the earlier two editions of *Konkanakhyan*, but more deeply the popular Wagle’s Goa edition. Later, the editor affirms the other editions as overly corrupt due to

²¹ José Gerson da Cunha, ed., *The Sahyadri-khanda of the Skanda Purana: A Mythological, Historical and Geographical Survey of Western India* (Bombay: Thacker Vining and Company, 1877).

²² Shripad Vyankatesh Wagle, ed., *Konkanakhyan urf Dakshinathy Saraswat Brahmanakhyan* (Mapusa: Shripad Vyankatesh Wagle, 1909); Hari Bhikaji Samant, ed., *Sri Konkan Mahatmay* (Belgaum: Belgaum Samachar, 1909).

²³ Ragunath S. Desai, ed., *Konkanakhyan* (Shivkalin Pothivarun) (Pernem: Self-published, 1947), 35. For details on Goa edition of *Konkanakhyan* see Vinayak Shenvi Khandeparkar, “The Eki-Beki dispute and the unification of the Gauda Saraswat Brahman caste,” (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2018).

²⁴ Desai, *Konkanakhyan*.

the efforts made by them to negate the independent caste status of Shenvis, and to construct a new identity of the GSB as a single caste. This possibility of interpolation has also been recognised by other scholars, such as Vaman Raghunath Varde Valavalikar, who states that the *Konkanakhyan* could have undergone interpolations when the GSB caste unity movement was at its peak between 1908–1909.²⁵

In the early eighteenth century, it seems that the first serious attempts were made to unite the GSB *jatis* into a single caste. This is not only evident from the Goa edition of *Konkanakhyan*, but also on account of a conflict referred to the king of Portugal. In 1725, a petition was sent to the king of Portugal by Vaishnavites, who accused the Smarthas from Cortalim and the Keloshi of creating trouble against their caste's political rites.²⁶ On the other hand, the Smarthas, in their counter-petition, blamed Rama Shenvi, a leading merchant, for the trouble and argued for the unity of Brahmins. However, the conflicts over the rites and precedence were not resolved. In 1727, these groups again wrote petitions to the Portuguese king, accusing each other by underlining their sectarian differences.²⁷

Among the GSB *jatis*, Shenvis were the most prominent, and various attempts were made to examine questions about their social being and social identity. Importantly, in the early medieval period, the Shenvis were seen as comprising a separate caste.²⁸ In the seventeenth century a *dharmasabha* was convened by the Maratha ruler Shivaji to examine the social identity of the Shenvis.²⁹ Later, in the nineteenth century, the Shenvis, who had been in Bombay for nearly two

²⁵ Shenoi Goembab [Vaman Raghunath Varde Valavalikar], *Kahi Marathi Lekh* (Mumbai: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1945), 233.

²⁶ J. H. da Cunha Rivara, ed., *Arquivo Portugues Oriental* fascículo-6, supplement 2 (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1875), 371–76. Also see Angela Barreto Xavier and Ines G. Županov, *Catholic Orientalism: Portuguese Empire, Indian Knowledge (16th-18th Centuries)* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 282–83.

²⁷ Rivara, *Arquivo Portugues Oriental* fascículo-6, supplement 2, 376.

²⁸ *Census of India, 1921. Vol. VIII, Bombay Presidency, Part I: Report* (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1922), 183–84; Gode, “Antiquity of the Caste-name ‘Shenvi,’” 152–55.

²⁹ *Shenviyajatidharmanirnaya* in Bharat Itihas Sansodhak Mandal Granthamala, Book 7 (Pune: Bharat Itihas Sansodhak Mandal, 1914), 295–305.

centuries, considered themselves as the true GSBs.³⁰ They had built Bhuleshwar, Balaji and Walkeshwar temples in Bombay and would not allow the other GSB *jatis* to participate in the temples' management.³¹ More importantly, prominent individuals, such as R. G. Bhandarkar, Bhau Daji Lad and his brother Narayan Daji, and Anant Chandroba Dukle were particular about their caste name Shenvi.³² Subsequently, in 1896 a lawsuit was filed over the rights over temple management, to which Justice Badruddin Tyabji made all GSBs eligible to participate.³³ This remarkable judgement laid the ground for the unity of the GSBs as a single caste.³⁴

The social position of the GSBs as Brahmins was historically insecure, owing to their mercantile mode of life and eating of fish.³⁵ The formation of a corporate GSB identity was a product of twin processes of identity formation in British India and in Portuguese Goa. In the first place, during the nineteenth century, as Bombay grew into a leading commercial centre, numerous educated GSB individuals settled there and seized the opportunities that the urban setting offered. Subsequently, the competitive pressures, along with the denial of their Brahminical status by the Maharashtrian Brahmin communities, forced the GSB *jatis* to consolidate as a single caste and set up a variety of organisations to serve their interests.³⁶ This had two important features. First, by laying an emphasis on the *Sahayadri–Khanda* they made a strong case for their Brahminical identity. On the other hand, efforts were made to erase sectarian differences and produce new meanings of the Shenvi to forge a GSB identity.

³⁰ Conlon, "Caste by Association," 355.

³¹ Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai, *Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai (Bhai Desai): Smarak Granth* (Mumbai: Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai Smarak, Samiti, 1965), 630.

³² Goembab, *Kahi Marathi Lekh*, 108.

³³ Conlon, *A Caste in a Changing World*, 128–29.

³⁴ Sardesai, *Smarak Granth*, 631.

³⁵ Rosalind O'Hanlon and Christopher Minkowski, "What Makes People Who They Are? Pandit Networks and the Problem of Livelihoods in Early Modern Western India," *Indian Economic Social History Review* 45, no. 3 (2008): 381–416.

³⁶ Conlon, "Caste by Association," 351–365.

What we see here is two tendencies working in opposite directions. Initially, the effort was to write histories and portray the Shenvis as synonymous with the GSBs.³⁷ When Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade was making his introductory notes on the Peshwa Daftar, he was requested by young clerical employees at the Royal Asiatic Society to change his references from Shenvi to Gaud Saraswat.³⁸ Ranade acceded their request by using ‘Goud Saraswat’ as parentheses around Shenvi.³⁹ Further, in 1891, R. G. Bhandarkar’s widowed daughter was remarried to a Panandiker from British India.⁴⁰ Meetings were held by the people from his Shenvi *jati*, first to deter the remarriage, and later to reject it. However, Bhandarkar received support from young reformers from Maharashtrian Brahmins and other GSB *jatis*.⁴¹ These developments, possibly, explain why Bhandarkar began to use the term Saraswat along with Shenvi. In 1902, the Bombay Provincial Social Conference was held at Sholapur. In his presidential speech, Bhandarkar, to a question on ‘social reform and where we are going’, says: “There are separate clubs of Brahmins, Saraswats or Shenvis, Chandraseniya Kayasthas and Daivajnas...Where we are going is the question that constantly troubles my heart”.⁴² Later, however, the move was to reject the historicity of Shenvi as a caste or a *jati*. For instance, Vaman Ragnath Varde Valavalikar argued that Shenvi is an honorific title taken by families as a mark of intellectual qualities, and is not a caste identity.⁴³ More importantly, he began to use this honorific title and styled himself as ‘Shenoi Goembab’ around the 1920s. In contrast, José Gerson da Cunha connected it etymologically to *shannav*—

³⁷ Bhavani Vishwanth Kanvinde, *Saraswat Brahman urf Shenvi Kiva Konkani Brahman* (Mumbai: National Chapkhana, 1870).

³⁸ Conlon, “Caste by Association,” 355.

³⁹ M. G. Ranade, *Introduction to Peishwa’s Diaries: A Paper read before the Bombay branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Poona: Civil Military Orphanage Press, 1900), 9.

⁴⁰ *O Goa Panch*, July 1891, 3.

⁴¹ Meera Kosambi, “Life After Widowhood: Two Radical Reformist Options in Maharashtra,” in *Intersections: Socio-cultural Trends in Maharashtra*, ed. Meera Kosambi (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2000), 101.

⁴² R. G. Bhandarkar, *Collected Works of Shri R. G. Bhandarkar*, vol. 2, ed. Narayan Bapuji Utgikar (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1928), 522.

⁴³ Vaman Ragnath Shenvi Varde Valavalikar, “Shenai,” in *Shree Shantadurga Chaturshatabdi Mahotsav Granth*, ed. P. S. S. Pissurlencar (Mumbai: Shree Shantadurga Seva Samiti, 1966), 79–90.

the first ninety–six GSB families who came and settled in Goa in the remote past.⁴⁴ With such developments, by the early half of the twentieth century, the term Shenvi was secularised when placed in a new context of its formation—wealth, power and education.⁴⁵

Since the nineteenth century, with the growing opportunities for various kinds of secular employment, both in British India and Portuguese Goa, the interaction of the GSB *jatis* was remarkably different. In part, this may be explained with the rise of a new middle–class that expressed itself in many distinctive ways. At first, they attacked sectarian differences of the GSB *jatis* while questioning the independent caste identity of the Shenvis. For instance, Shenvi, once considered a prominent *jati*, was now reduced to an honorific title that was open to all GSB individuals who had influential skills such as wealth, power and education. Not all GSBs formed the dominant elite; while most of them appear to have been poor, it is their corporate caste identity that made it possible for them to exploit new opportunities. Second, is the effect of setting up of schools, libraries, political associations, credit societies, caste and literary conferences, literary production and print culture. Although we know that the making of this corporate GSB caste identity, led by the middle–class, emerged from city life in Bombay, scholarly attention has not been paid yet to the rise of the middle–class and its GSB identity produced in Goa by way of a new public life.

2.2 A new public life

Colonialism consists of two–way relations between the coloniser and the colonised. Importantly, the characteristics of the former, as well as those of the latter, are relevant for understanding the effect of colonialism at the local level.⁴⁶ During the nineteenth century, two major developments led to the growth of a new public life, and with it, the rise of a middle–class. The first is the different levels of Portuguese colonialism in the ‘Old Conquests’ and *Novas Conquistas* (New

⁴⁴ José Gerson da Cunha, *The Konkani Language and Literature* (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1881), 8, 11.

⁴⁵ *Swayamsevak*, August 1923, 55; *Swayamsevak*, November 1923, 97.

⁴⁶ Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 1–58.

Conquests). A very large proportion of what present-day Goa comprises—around seventy-six per cent of the total geographical area—is part of the ‘New Conquests’.⁴⁷ The Portuguese acquisition of these neighbouring territories from 1740-1788, collectively known as the New Conquests, accounted for around ninety percent of Hindu population, and brought about a change in policies of the colonial state towards the Hindus.⁴⁸ The second important development was the introduction of Devanagiri fonts from Bombay in 1853, leading to the setting up of local Marathi printing presses.⁴⁹

More importantly, this transformation was made possible with several factors linked to the New Conquests. Firstly, they were forested areas, inhospitable and sparsely populated, and posed a threat of infectious diseases.⁵⁰ This was the feature of life at least up to the mid-twentieth century.⁵¹ Indeed, this clearly discouraged the Portuguese administrative elite, as well as the native Catholics, from taking up administrative positions in these areas. Apart from the new employment opportunities that were opened up for the Hindu elite, these territories, which were economically less prosperous, offered vast tracts of un-surveyed land that could be acquired through different means.

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, efforts were made by the colonial state to define forests and regulate their exploitation. However, the incipient state of agricultural and forestry education in Portugal meant that until the end of the 1880s the administration of the forests remained exclusively in the hands of the military which did not have the necessary knowledge to carry out the mapping of land.⁵² Further, even though technicians began to replace

⁴⁷ *Statistical Handbook of Goa, 2018–2019* (Panaji: Directorate of Planning, Statistics and Evaluation, 2020), 4.

⁴⁸ Paulo Teodoro de Matos, “The Population of Portuguese Estado da Índia, 1750–1820: Sources and Demographic Trends,” in *The making of the Luso-Asian world: Intricacies of Engagement*, vol. I, ed. Laura Jarnagin (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2011), 155–77.

⁴⁹ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 21, 27 May 1853, 166.

⁵⁰ *O Goetmá*, 10 May 1886, 3; *Vidiaprassar*, 12 February 1921, 2.

⁵¹ *The Goa Mail*, 6 February 1932, 5; *Bharat*, 25 February 1932, 2.

⁵² José Ferreira, “‘Goa is a Paradise’: florestas, colonialismo e modernidade na Índia Portuguesa (1851–1910),” *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 115 (2018): 137–58.

the military, until the late 1910s the forests represented an important source of wealth, and their negligence continued to be a cause of anxiety for colonial authorities. On the other hand, land rights could be acquired through government policies that were formulated to encourage agrarian production. For instance, in 1841 the *Sociedade Patriótica dos Baldios das Novas Conquistas* (Patriotic Association for the Wastelands of the New Conquests) was established for the purpose of agricultural exploration of ‘wastelands’ in the New Conquests.⁵³ In 1843, its statutes were approved.⁵⁴ The *Sociedade* owned extensive tracts of land in the New Conquests and leased both, cultivated and fallow lands, distributing the dividends among its members.⁵⁵

Often, complaints were made of land-grabbing—using muscle and money power in collusion with the officials.⁵⁶ At times, land was acquired by a variety of conflicts around land, ranging from disputes within families to displacement of cultivators and pastoralists from lands under their possession.⁵⁷ Lopes Mendes suggests that many land-related disputes in the nineteenth century were manoeuvred by the administrators and their GBS *dubashis* in which the latter derived advantages and considerable profits.⁵⁸ In other words, the Catholic and Hindu elite manipulated formal, legal and administrative mechanisms to accumulate and hold on to large area of lands. Against the backdrop of this complex relationship, there were many armed rebellions in the New Conquests, popularly termed as the Rane revolts—they were directed more against the dominance of the GSBs who were employed in the administrative offices and had usurped lands at the stroke of a pen.⁵⁹ In addition, the Ranes—erstwhile ‘feudal lords’ of

⁵³ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 19, 26 April 1841, 130.

⁵⁴ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 2, 13 January 1844, 1–2; *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 3, 20 January 1844, 1–2.

⁵⁵ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 13, 14 February 1865, 80; *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 9, 21 January 1892, 44; *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 43, 28 May 1929, 834–38; *Bharat*, 24 June 1924, 3; Aquino Furtado, *An Illustrated Guide to Goa* (Merces: Self-published, 1922), 166.

⁵⁶ *Bharat*, 24 June 1924, 3

⁵⁷ *Bharat*, 5 July 1923, 3; *Bharat*, 12 July 1923, 3; *Bharat*, 19 July 1923, 3.

⁵⁸ António Lopes Mendes, *A Índia Portuguesa*, vol. II (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1886), 3.

⁵⁹ *O Povo Goano*, 5 October 1895, 3; Kamat, *Farar Far*, 171–208.

Sattari—also exploited peasants that led to conflicts between them.⁶⁰ Secondly, as the colonial state was expanding its administrative network in this region through the installation of a whole new administration, it had to maintain local power holders, such as Sardesais and Desais, who functioned as the arbiters of the economic, religious, and social life of the New Conquests.⁶¹

New government offices and institutions such as *administradores de conselhos* (administrators), headquarters of *conselhos* (now *taluka*), courts and municipalities were established. With the setting up of the Constitutional Monarchy in 1821, a system of political representation was introduced in Portuguese Goa. During this period, between 1834 and 1910, there were as many as forty-three parliamentary elections.⁶² The Goans had a right to elect their *deputados*—representatives to *Côrtes*, the Portuguese parliament in Lisbon. While suffrage was extended to all adult males, it was restricted—centred on the qualifications of annual income, taxation and literacy in Portuguese.⁶³ Thirdly, it allowed people to migrate within Goa: Old Conquests to New Conquests, and the other way around. Added to this are the complexities of competition and cooperation among social groups, and the construction of new identities. Further, when the deities were shifted in the sixteenth century to the neighbouring territories, the New Conquests housed most of the deities at safer places, and subsequently these temples were crucial sites for generating status and power.

Regionally, these developments offer a fascinating contrast between the Old Conquests and the New Conquests in terms of religious and economic lives. The Old Conquests were more urban, densely populated, prominently by native Catholics, and consisted of 124 *comunidades* out of 226 in the early 1960s.⁶⁴ The colonial state had, from very early in the sixteenth century, pursued

⁶⁰ *Bharat*, 16 April 1925, 5; *Bharatmitra*, July 1957, 186.

⁶¹ Filipe Nery Xavier, *Desenvolvimento da Natureza dos Bens dos Desaidos das Novas Conquistas* (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1845); Dias, “The Socio-Economic History of Goa with Special Reference to the Comunidade System,” 187–89.

⁶² Douglas L. Wheeler, *Republican Portugal: A Political History, 1910–1926* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 26.

⁶³ Pais, “History and Politics of Elections in Goa (1821–1963),” 36–8.

⁶⁴ José C. Almeida, *Aspects of Agricultural Activity in Goa, Daman and Diu* (Panaji: Government Printing Press, 1967), 55.

a series of institutional and legislative means to regulate the sphere of Hindu social relations and ritual practice. However, in the nineteenth century, the colonial state guaranteed the Hindus of the New Conquests non-interference in their religion and withdrew from the adjudication of caste and religious disputes—it insisted that these matters would be adjudicated by the Hindus themselves, based on Hindu customs and usages. In 1824, efforts were made towards the codification of Hindu customs and usages in Ponda, Bicholim and Pernem, if required caste by caste.⁶⁵ In 1844, the customs and usages of Hindus in these *conselhos* were guaranteed. Subsequently, in 1853, through the *Código de Usos e Costumes Habitantes das Novas-Conquistas* (Code of Customs and Usages of Habitants from New Conquests) a Hindu tradition was defined in caste terms for all Hindus of the New Conquests, making it the basis of colonial legislation.⁶⁶ In 1880, the code was revised and extended to all Hindus in Goa.⁶⁷

What are the characteristics of this new public life for the Hindus? Firstly, the new dimension of public life spread by various means: new employment opportunities, electoral politics and emergent institutional contexts—setting up of provincial administration, municipalities, political associations, private Marathi schools, increasing transactions of the Marathi press, claims around Marathi as the mother tongue and the compacting of identity around it, and geographical migration of individuals. Secondly, it was intimately related to a simultaneous revival and reorganisation of the Hindu cultural and religious life. These developments offered new sources of wealth and power, eroding the bonds of the traditional patron-client relationships and replacing them with a new GSB middle-class. Until then, sharp differences and disagreements seem to figure very prominently—this GSB middle-class competed for jobs, began to hold policy-making positions within the administration, participated in electoral politics and increasingly sought to turn the colonial state to its own uses. More importantly, social groups

⁶⁵ Filippe Nery Xavier, *Collecção de bandos, e outras diferentes providencias que servem de leis regulamentares para o governo economico, e judicial das provincias denominadas das Novas Conquistas*, vol. I (Panjim: Imprensa Nacional, 1840), 73–7.

⁶⁶ The code also included all Muslims settled in the ‘New Conquests’, see *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 41, 14 October 1853, 311–18; Filippe Nery Xavier, *Código de Usos e Costumes de Hindus Gentios de Goa, em Portuguez e Maratha* (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1861).

⁶⁷ Siurama Bolvonta Rau, *Notas A’ Margem do Projecto do Código de Usos e Costumes de Goa* (Bastora: Tipografia Rangle, 1926).

made efforts to advance their positions by capturing the patronage of the Portuguese administration.

2.3 Patronage and traditional GSB elite

Traditionally, the dominant GSB elite have always been concerned with wealth and caste status. From its very inception, they were directly associated with the colonial enterprise, more prominently during the absolutist monarchy (1510–1820) and the constitutional monarchy (1821–1910). At times they financed it, acquiring considerable material advantages, including decorations and European titles of nobility, such as Baron and Viscount. Some of the leading Hindu families were: Kenkre, Dempo, Kundaikar, Porobo Desai Desporobo, Sardesai and Desai. They built palatial residences and lived opulent lifestyles. The government recognised and consulted them on important matters, thus providing patronage and protection to their caste members. By and large, their relationships with the Portuguese, including high Portuguese officials and Luso–*descendentes*—Eurasians who regarded themselves more as a nobility of the local society, right next to high-ranking government officials—were always most cordial and mutually sympathetic.

In the nineteenth century, Purushottam Baba Shenvi Kenkre was able to exert power at all levels of the government, both in Goa and Portugal.⁶⁸ Kenkre was, in the words of ethnographer Lopes Mendes, a capitalist and a friend of the Europeans.⁶⁹ Although the Hindu elite were voting in the parliamentary elections since 1836, the contest for power between the native Catholic and Hindu elites led to difficulty and confusion in exercising the right to vote.⁷⁰ Soon thereafter, in the 1840s, a commission was constituted by the governor general Conde de Antas to look into the voting rights of Hindus. Kenkre was a member of the commission and is credited for getting

⁶⁸ Christovam Pinto, Pinto, Christovam. “A Colonização Portuguesa da Índia,” *A Índia Portuguesa*, vol. I (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1923), 160.

⁶⁹ António Lopes Mendes, *A Índia Portuguesa*, vol. I (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1886), 171.

⁷⁰ Pais, “History and Politics of Elections in Goa (1821–1963),” 194.

voting rights for Hindus by investing his personal resources and sending memorandums to the king of Portugal.⁷¹

More importantly, frequent complaints of maladministration, abuse and frauds in reference to temple properties prompted the government to appoint a two-member temple commission in 1851, headed by Kenkre, to recommend measures for the control and better administration of the temples.⁷² More impressive was his financial contribution to the government during the Rane revolt of 1852. In 1853, the government rewarded him with the title of Cavalier, and later Baron, perhaps as a reward for contributing to suppress the revolt.⁷³ In the 1870s, when Dom Augusto—the Duke of Coimbra and brother of the Portuguese king—visited Goa to sign a peace accord with the Ranes in arms, Kenkre hosted a royal banquet at his residence—an event prided for its lavish hospitality.⁷⁴ Further, it was not unusual for Kenkre to get government favours for others.⁷⁵ In addition, Kenkre had also made efforts to resolve differences among the Shenvis, who were divided into Barghare, Naravane, Pagdiwle and Phetewale.⁷⁶ Subsequently, in 1873, he was made Viscount, but died before the order could reach him.⁷⁷

In 1869, Giri Shenvi Dempo was ordained with the title of ‘Cavalheiro da Ordem da Torre e Espada do Valor, Lealdade e Merito’ (The Military Order of the Tower and of the Sword, of Valour, Loyalty and Merit), for helping the colonial state to stave off a crisis of rice shortage by standing security to the *Banco Ultramarino* (Overseas Bank) for the Portuguese government in Goa.⁷⁸ Later, he was bestowed with the title of Baron of Dempo. Further, in 1873, his brother

⁷¹ *Satsang* 5, no. 4 (1906), 63; Teresa Albuquerque, *Santa Cruz (Calapor): Profile of a Village in Goa* (Panjim: Fernandes Publication, 1989), 20.

⁷² *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 23, 6 June 1851, 181–82.

⁷³ Pais, “History and Politics of Elections in Goa (1821–1963),” 64–5.

⁷⁴ Manohar Hirba Sardesai, *Gomantakache Ase Te Divas* (Caranzalim: Purogami Prakashan, 1994), 94; Albuquerque, *Santa Cruz*, 32.

⁷⁵ *Gomontoc*, 1 March 1891, 4.

⁷⁶ *Satsang* 4, no. 1 (1905), 27–9; *Satsang* 5, no. 4 (1906), 63.

⁷⁷ Mendes, *A India Portuguesa*, 171; V. N. Kudva, *History of Dakshinatya Saraswats* (Madras: Samyukta Gaud Saraswat Sabha, 1972), 232.

⁷⁸ Albuquerque, *Santa Cruz*, 35.

Rayu Shenvi Dempo was also conferred the title Baron of Dempo.⁷⁹ In 1924, Vishnu Shenvi Dempo was given the title of ‘Commendador de Ordem de Cristo’ (Commander of the Order of Christ) for lavishly offering loans to the Portuguese government in Goa.⁸⁰ Givagy Shenvi Kundaikar, who would spend money to do the government’s work was awarded the title of ‘Cavaleiro da Antiga e Muito Nobre Ordem da Torre e Espada do Valor Lealdade e Mérito’ (Knight of the Ancient and very Noble Order of Tower and Sword, of Value, Loyalty and Merit).⁸¹ In addition, prominent individuals of the Porobo Desai Desporobo family from Pernem, similarly known for their loans to the government, were rewarded with the European titles of nobility. In 1878, Vassudeva Rogonata Porobo Desai Desporobo was made Baron of Pernem. Subsequently his son, Atmarama Vassudev Porobo Dessai Desporobo was first conferred with the title of Baron, and later, Viscount of Pernem in 1893.⁸²

By the end of the nineteenth century, the traditional GSB elite, whose power lay predominantly in the control of capital and credit, began to lose their influence to a new GSB middle–class. While the local dominance of the traditional elites continued, the primary characteristic of this GSB middle–class was that they acquired prestige and power, not through wealth, but through education which furthered the growth of professional classes and fostered a direct association with the administration. The traditional GSB elite, who had once been the defenders of orthodoxy, had been displaced by a new class of individuals. In the rapidly changing times, the views of the traditional GSB elite on the division of the GSB *jatis* had proved totally inadequate to the changing political and cultural climate. Further, they were reluctant to support the consolidation of the GBS *jatis*, being more concerned about protecting the high-ranking status of their Shenvi *jati*.

More fundamentally, the making of the GSB middle–class was aligned with a demand to do away with sectarian differences among the GSBs and to seek out alliances with other Brahmin communities. At the same time, the threat of the loss of prominence forced the traditionally dominant Shenvis to counter the efforts made to unite the GSB *jatis* into a single caste—a move

⁷⁹ *O Nyaya Chacxu*, 15 September, 1890, 2.

⁸⁰ Albuquerque, *Santa Cruz*, 35.

⁸¹ Suriagy Ananda Rau, *Diccionario Maratha–Portuguez* (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1879), 6.

⁸² *O Goatma*, 18 June 1890, 4; *O Luso–Concanim*, 14 June 1893, 1.

that failed.⁸³ Besides, some of the families actively involved in the process of unifying GSB *jatis*, subsequently identified themselves as Pednekar Gaud Brahmin, claiming to be an independent caste.⁸⁴ Thus, the making of the GSB middle-class in colonial Goa was less a direct product of economic standing and more the result of the endeavours to overcome cultural and political uncertainty. Further, this also signifies the shift in power from the traditionally dominant elites to the GSB caste which was further extending and consolidating its sway over society.

How are we to understand this as a process—its role in bringing about social change, and its implications for the forms of power available to different social groups? To answer these questions, one has to examine the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's cultural formations—efforts made by the GSBs, along with other Goan Brahmin communities, to establish public institutions such as schools, libraries and conferences in order to empower themselves. This constituted a shared experience in the making of the GSB middle-class with their community members, which revolved around education, libraries, periodicals, elections, and ultimately, public employment.

2.4 Castes and public institutions

We do not have much detail about the nature of education among the Hindus in the medieval period, except for the fact that *brahmapuris* and *agraharas* were educational institutions.⁸⁵ What we do know is that by the early nineteenth century, and probably much earlier, education was a private affair, with Marathi as the medium of learning.⁸⁶ During this period, among the upper-caste Hindus, investment on education was a privilege of the wealthy, whereby a family teacher commonly called *shenoimama* was appointed for in-house teaching in Marathi.⁸⁷ One of the

⁸³ Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai states that the caste unity movement among the GSBs was a revolt against the leadership of big landed families. Sardesai, *Smarak Granth*, 633–35.

⁸⁴ *Bharat*, 10 November 1938, 2.

⁸⁵ Mitragotri, *Socio Cultural History of Goa*, 264–65.

⁸⁶ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 25 June 1882, 4; *Gomontoc*, March 1890, 3; António Anastácio Bruto da Costa, *Goa sob a Dominação Portuguesa* (Margao: Typografia Ultramar, 1897), 225.

⁸⁷ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 25 June 1882, 4; Panduranga Pissurlencar, *Goa Pré-Portuguesa através dos Escritores Lusitanos dos Seculos XVI e XVII* (Bastora: Tipografia Rangel, 1962), 46.

significant limitations of in-house schooling was its casual nature. Here, curriculum was largely informal and changed with every teacher. Apart from irregular teaching, a *shenoimama* had to make frequent visits to his patron's farm. When coconuts were plucked, he was bound to attend, to see that the accounts were maintained properly.⁸⁸ Furthermore, in the absence of servants, or on a need basis, some light household tasks were also usually assigned. Even though formal education for girls still had a long way to go, the home tutoring of upper-caste girls proved effective. In 1890, the *Arya Bhagini*, a women's magazine established in Bombay by a GSB lady, Manakbai, had an anonymous letter written by a woman from Boma, a village in the New Conquests, that reflected on the lack of encouragement for girls' formal education in Goa.⁸⁹ Further, the *Arya Bhagini* had a section of questions to which written answers were sought from readers. On one such occasion, in 1891, the *Arya Bhagini* announced the names of six GSB women from Goa on its cover page for sending correct answers.⁹⁰

Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the colonial state in Goa had already produced dominant Hindu elites speaking Portuguese or Marathi through which it administered its territory.⁹¹ Subsequent to the New Conquests, the Portuguese sought to employ individuals with literary skills in Marathi and Portuguese. At the end of the eighteenth century, the colonial administration in the New Conquests was largely dominated by the traditional GSB elite. Further, the colonial state formalised their feudal privileges, and their land-revenue assignments were transformed into personal property.⁹² Subsequently, as the government was establishing its administrative control over the New Conquests in the nineteenth century, it enhanced the importance of the skills of paper management and accountancy.

The new arrangements that were aimed at creating a new social base for Portuguese rule profoundly altered the social order, throwing open employment opportunities for the Hindus in the New Conquests. While family connections were still critical to secure a government service,

⁸⁸ *Gomontoc*, March 1890, 3.

⁸⁹ *Arya Bhagini*, March 1890, 32.

⁹⁰ *Arya Bhagini*, January 1891.

⁹¹ Pinto, *Between Empires*, 86.

⁹² Dias, "The Socio-Economic History of Goa with Special Reference to the Comunidade System," 183–93.

increasing demands to consider education for public employment forced the colonial state to appoint candidates through a written examination. It is perhaps important to state that these demands were made by those GSB *jatis* who by no means had the same position in the political arenas as the traditional GSB elite, and had to wait for the new conditions of public employment to be implemented to consolidate their own political power. For instance, in the 1880s, aware of the networks of political patronage and power, there was a demand to appoint indispensable officials, such as clerks and *regidores* (officer at the level of the village), through a written examination. These positions were largely dominated by the traditional GSB elite—the Shenvis—whose considerable hold over them extended several generations.⁹³ Moreover, in these areas the Shenvis had attained their dominance in western Maharashtra as well. In 1880, for example, the *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency* states that the Shenvis were the village accountants in almost every village of the Ratnagiri district.⁹⁴

In 1888, written exams were announced for the posts of *regidores* in the villages of Ponda, Sanguem, Quepem and Pernem.⁹⁵ However, there were certain conditions under which the applications could be made. Anyone who had the knowledge of Portuguese and Marathi could apply, but it was mandatory to submit certificates of birth, education and character. Additionally, it was important that the individual had not been booked by the police for any offences, had not been a party to the practice of land-grabbing which was seen as a defining feature of life in the New Conquests, and had not defaulted on his payments to the *comunidade* from his village.⁹⁶ However, the traditional GSB elite did use their political power to circumvent the competitive examinations. In some villages, the *regidores* were appointed before the examination was conducted. More prominently, Waman Shenvi Kenkre was accused of avoiding the examination and using his influence to get appointed as the *regidore* of Cumbarjua.⁹⁷ As the colonial state was opening out employment opportunities, individuals from the other GSB *jatis* found their

⁹³ *Dexassudharanetxo*, 10 October 1877, 1.

⁹⁴ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Vol. X: Ratnagiri and Savantwadi*, (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1880), 411.

⁹⁵ *O Goamá*, 7 May 1888, 6–7, *O Goamá*, 21 May 1888, 3.

⁹⁶ *O Goamá*, 7 May 1888, 7; *O Goamá*, 11 June 1888, 4.

⁹⁷ *O Goamá*, 9 July 1888, 5.

way into the administration, which subsequently became idealised in the stories of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁹⁸

For the new GSB middle-class something as simple as pen-and-paper guaranteed proximity to the colonial administration. This, in turn, led to a demand for formal education and produced the conditions that made possible the opening of private Marathi schools. In 1843, one of the first government Marathi schools was set up at Panjim and Sakharam Narayan Kamat Wagh, a *dubashi* of the government, was appointed as a teacher.⁹⁹ It was established by the governor general Joaquim Mourão Garcêz Palha, a Luso-*descendente*. From now onwards, the Luso-*descendentes* made efforts to widen their base of political support by reaching out to Hindu elites. In 1847, Suriagy Anand Rau was appointed to teach Marathi at Lyceu in Panjim on Wagh's recommendation.¹⁰⁰ During his thirty-eight years of teaching, Rau also served the government in various positions. In the 1850s he was appointed as the *dubashi*, and subsequently, in 1885, a *reitor* (dean) of Lyceu. More importantly, apart from his teaching and administrative responsibilities, Rau headed panels to select teachers at the newly established state-run Portuguese schools.¹⁰¹

As the colonial state was trying to deal with the vexing problem of Hindu customs and usages, Rau was not merely involved with the technical process of translating the Portuguese versions of Hindu customs, usages and temple laws into Marathi, but to a certain extent was an authority with powers to use and determine interpretation.¹⁰² Moreover, it involved a legal

⁹⁸ V. S. Sukhthankar, *Tales and Tellers of Goa* (Bangalore: Atelier Sukathanika, 1974), 49–58.

⁹⁹ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 53, 12 August 1843, 1; *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 62, 14 October 1843, 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 56, 31 December 1847, 459; *Satsang*, October 1904, 82–3.

¹⁰¹ *Boletim Oficial do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 84, 16 April 1886, 333.

¹⁰² Suriagy Anand Rau translated important legislations, such as *Código de Usos e Costumes de Hindus Gentios de Goa* and *Regulamento Para o Governo Administrativo E Economico das Mazanias dos Pagodes, das Novas e Velhas Conquistas*. See, Xavier, *Código de Usos e Costumes de Hindus Gentios de Goa, em Portuguez e Maratha; Regulamento Para o Governo Administrativo E Economico das Mazanias dos Pagodes, das Novas e Velhas Conquistas* (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1878).

consciousness—understanding the ways in which social life could be regulated by legal categories and legal interpretations. In 1875, Rau wrote the grammar of the Marathi language in Portuguese.¹⁰³ Subsequently, even though his Marathi grammar was questioned, it was to be an official reference point.¹⁰⁴ Further, his *Diccionario Maratha–Portuguez*, completed in 1867, was published by the government on the recommendation of a review committee consisting of Joaquim Heliodoro da Cunha Rivara, who headed the administrative establishment in Goa, Constancio do Rozario e Miranda and Givagy Shenvi Kundaikar.¹⁰⁵ With all the advantages of an official authority, Rau’s dictionary not only contain the vocabulary used by his caste, but he often imposed his opinions to explain words primarily as a Goan phenomenon. For instance, the word *ijatasar* is explained as ‘honoured’ by citing the example of Ramchandra Naik Prataprau Sardesai from Ponda.¹⁰⁶ Above all, in 1878, when the government constituted a committee to reform the Code of Customs and Usages, Rau was its only Hindu member.¹⁰⁷ Subsequently, in 1881 the code was extended to all Hindus across Goa.¹⁰⁸

The Luso–*descendentes* were a vital elite, at least until the mid–nineteenth century.¹⁰⁹ While they occupied important positions in the administration—at times as governor generals and *administradores* of *conselhos*—they had formalised their power through their regular high appointments in the Portuguese army. In 1871, the disbanding of the Portuguese army in Goa

¹⁰³ Suriagy Ananda Rau, *Grammatica da lingua Maratha em Lingoa Portugueza: Ordenada Segundo as Melhores Grammaticas* (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1875).

¹⁰⁴ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 28 October 1883, 4.

¹⁰⁵ Joaquim Heliodoro da Cunha Rivara was Secretary to the Portuguese Governor General of India from 1855–1877. Rau’s dictionary was based on James Thomas Molesworth, *A dictionary, Marathi and English*. 2nd ed. (Bombay: Bombay Education Society’s Press, 1857).

¹⁰⁶ Suriagy Ananda Rau, *Diccionario Maratha–Portuguez*, 114.

¹⁰⁷ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 53, 12 July 1878, 315–16; Purxotoma Sinay Bobó e Caculó, *Decreto de 16 Dezembro de 1880: Regulando os Usos e Costumes dos Hindus Gentios de Goa* (Margão: Goatma, 1887), 1–2.

¹⁰⁸ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 10, 27 January 1881, 63–4; Caculó, *Decreto de 16 Dezembro de 1880*.

¹⁰⁹ Frederico Diniz d’Ayalla, *Goa, Antiga e Moderna* (Lisboa: Tipografia do Jornal do Comércio, 1888).

impacted the status of the Luso-*descendentes* in the colonial social order.¹¹⁰ They were forced to compete with the native Catholics (Brahmin and Chardo castes)—the secondary elite—in the elections, and to secure administrative posts. During this period of uncertainty regarding their future, we notice, an exemplary collaboration between the political life of the Luso-*descendentes* and the cultural life of the GSBs.

In the early 1870s, Thomás de Aquino Mourão Garcêz Palha—a leading Luso-*descendente*, and the second Baron of Cumbarjua—got a Marathi printing press from Bombay to his residence in Ribandar. In 1872, with his support, the second Marathi newspaper *Dexassudharanetxo* was started by Atmaram Purshottam Shenvi Shuktankar.¹¹¹ Although it survived for barely three months, it was re-started in 1877 by Yeshwant Phondoba Naik Danait, who was educated in Bombay, yet again with the assistance of Thomás de Aquino Mourão Garcêz Palha.¹¹² A year later, Naik Daniat and Ramchandra Govind Wagle wrote the first history of Goa in Marathi, from its earliest times to the present.¹¹³ Further, Thomás de Aquino Mourão Garcêz Palha was not only the first to patronise Marathi print culture, but as the inspector of schools in Goa he also supported Marathi schools, to such an extent that he would print *Methodo de Leitura da Lingua Maratha* (Method of reading Marathi), a textbook for Marathi-Portuguese schools and *Ramavijaya*, a Marathi edition of Ramayana.¹¹⁴

Besides, one of his major contributions was the setting up of four Marathi public schools at Bicholim, Canacona, Ponda and Quepem.¹¹⁵ Subsequently, in 1896–97, a Marathi-Portuguese

¹¹⁰ Visconde de Villa Nova d'Ourem, *A Revoltas dos Marathas em 1895* (Lisboa: Typographia Mattos Moreira e Pinheiro, 1900), 34–8; Sardesai, *Smarak Granth*, 581.

¹¹¹ The first Marathi periodical was *Anand Lahari*, published in 1870. However, *Dexassudharanetxo* was popular to such an extent that it is often credited to be the first Marathi periodical of Goa.

¹¹² *Subodh*, August–September, 1932, 352–53.

¹¹³ Yeshwant Phondoba Naik Danait and Ramchandra Govind Wagle, *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas* (Mumbai: Asiatic Chapkhana, 1873).

¹¹⁴ *Dexassudharanetxo*, 27 June 1877, 2.

¹¹⁵ *Satsang*, November 1904, 110–12.

school was established at Valpoi.¹¹⁶ These manoeuvres considerably improved his position among the Hindus. More importantly, he was contesting elections to the Portuguese parliament from constituencies in Goa and was elected as the *deputado* in 1879 and 1887.¹¹⁷ In fact, in 1887, *O Goatmá* was first to propose Thomás de Aquino Mourão Garcêz's candidature to contest the election on the grounds of his support for Hindus, by which, in this context was meant Marathi culture and *mahajans* of temples.¹¹⁸ What is more, the traditional GSB elite hosted parties and celebrations for him, expressing their admiration.¹¹⁹

The Portuguese government, besides offering Marathi as a subject at a few government schools in the Old Conquests, was not interested in setting up public Marathi schools. Until the early decades of the twentieth century there were merely seven state-run Marathi schools. In 1886, Vithal Shenvi Rataboli and Gopal Kamat Ganekar were examiners for the Marathi students at Lyceu in Panjim.¹²⁰ Further, the Catholic profile of the government schools in the Old Conquests drove the Hindu population away to the New Conquests.¹²¹

At the end of the nineteenth century, periodicals published by the GSB middle-class, such as *Dexassudaranetxo*, *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, *O Goatmá*, *Gomontoc*, *O Goa Panch*, *Niaya Chacxu* and *Gazeta de Pernem* campaigned for the setting up of government Marathi schools in the New Conquests. Often, a comparison was made between the Portuguese and the British empires in India to draw the attention of the government in Goa. They highlighted the significance of Marathi schools in the progress of Hindus in British India, making it possible for them to become doctors, advocates and government officials. In the meantime, disappointed to

¹¹⁶ José Agostinho Xavier, *Repertorio alfabético e remissivo das disposições contidas nos decretos e regulamentos sobre a instrução primária, secundaria e superior do Estado da Índia* (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1897), 3.

¹¹⁷ Pais, "History and Politics of Elections in Goa (1821–1963)," 170.

¹¹⁸ *O Goatmá*, 28 February 1887, 2.

¹¹⁹ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 7 January 1883, 3.

¹²⁰ *O Goatmá*, 21 June 1886, 3.

¹²¹ Sandra Ataíde Lobo, "The Languages of the Goan Periodical Press, 1820–1933," in *Media and the Portuguese Empire*, eds. José Luís Garcia, Chandrika Kaul, Filipa Subtil and Alexandra Santos (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 79.

find their demand to set up Marathi schools in the New Conquests not being met by the government, they even appealed to the traditional GSB elite to take a lead in setting up these schools. However, in the face of considerable demand, the credit of starting private primary Marathi schools goes to the individual efforts of Ramchandra Dattaji Azrekar, originating from British India.¹²²

In 1885, Ramchandra Dattaji Azrekar, alias Rambhau Kulkarni, set up the first Marathi private primary school at Mapuca.¹²³ In developing Marathi education, Azrekar attempted to gain support from several sources. First, he set up an association, Vidhya Prasarak Mandali, a society for propagation of knowledge, with the help of individuals who were supportive of Marathi education.¹²⁴ Moreover, by promoting it publicly, within a few years Azrekar managed to set up around ten private primary Marathi schools.¹²⁵ At the same time, efforts to promote a ‘proper’ Marathi led to the formation of Vaktrut Tejak Mandali in 1885. Drawing support from the GSB middle–class, with Azrekar as its secretary, Vaktrut Tejak Mandali was the first society in Goa to focus specifically on organising annual lectures and elocution competitions in Marathi, both for adults and children. Although the Vidhya Prasarak Mandali and Vaktrut Tejak Mandali were in existence for almost a decade, there were two important individuals associated with these organisations. The first was Shripad Vyankatesh Wagle, whose house was at times a venue for lectures, and who subsequently became an editor of *Konkanakhyan* and an active participant in the caste unity movement of the GSBs.¹²⁶ Second was Vaman Ragunath Varde Valavalikar, from Bicholim, a regular participant in the Marathi elocution competitions and a winner in 1892, at the age of fifteen.¹²⁷ Subsequently, Valavalikar not only gained the support of a section of the GSBs as the ‘maker of Konkani’ language but also heavily influenced the language discourse of Konkani and Marathi.

¹²² *Satsang* 9 (1902), 142.

¹²³ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 20 June 1886, 3; Sardesai, *Gomantakache Ase Te Divas*, 55–6.

¹²⁴ *Dnayna Prasarak Mandali, Mapuca: Dwitiya Varshik Ahaval* (1909–1910) (Bastora: Rangel Chapkhana, 1910), 1.

¹²⁵ *O Goa Panch*, March 1891, 1.

¹²⁶ *O Goatmá*, 18 September 1889, 4.

¹²⁷ *O Goa Panch*, October 1891, 3; *O Goa Panch*, December 1891, 4; *O Goa Panch*, November 1892, 2.

Voluntary financial support from the traditional elite was particularly important, given that it was against government policy to give financial support to Marathi schools in Goa. However, at this point of time the traditional GSB elite did not show much interest. On the contrary, they were keen to critically examine the quality of teaching at these few Marathi schools. For instance, in 1885 Suryaji Suryarao Sardesai from Savoi Verem made a surprise visit to the Marathi school at Mapuca and conducted an exam.¹²⁸ Later, in 1886, when Rayu Shenvi Dempo visited the school, he had brought a teacher with him to examine students—a visit not appreciated at all, although Dempo had awarded books to the students.¹²⁹ Frustrated by the lack of financial support, the GSB involved in widening their sphere of action and influence, contributed funds to set up a Marathi library at Panjim and also managed to get financial assistance from Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III on his visit to Goa in 1886.¹³⁰ Gaekwad's substantial financial contribution resulted in brisk activities. Although the library functioned only for two years, subsequently some of its members formed the Hindu Pustakalaya, literally Hindu Library, and later a Hindu Club at Panjim.¹³¹

The subordination of the *shenoimama* in-house teaching method to private Marathi schools was a further expression of the education project of the GSB middle-class. In 1890, Azrekar, in his presidential address at the newly established Hindu Pustakalaya at Panjim, appealed to the traditional GSB elite to give up in-house teaching in support of a more robust way of learning at private Marathi schools.¹³² Further, he emphasised the extent to which he had played a direct and major role in the establishment of ten schools, that too without resources, and had also assisted Pandarinath Kelekar to set up a Marathi school at Priol. Interestingly, although the Hindu Pustakalaya was headed by Rayu Shenvi Dempo, with Balkrishna Jivaji Shenvi Kundaikar as its vice-president, Azrekar declined their request to set up a Marathi school at Panjim. However, a year later the Hindu Pustakalaya added a Marathi school—perhaps the first private Marathi school in Panjim.

¹²⁸ *O Goatmá*, 30 November 1885, 3.

¹²⁹ *O Goatmá*, 24 May 1886, 5; *O Goatmá*, 14 June 1886, 2.

¹³⁰ *O Goatmá*, 3 May 1886, 3.

¹³¹ *O Goatmá*, 18 June 1890, 4.

¹³² *Gomontoc*, March 1890, 3–5.

At the end of the nineteenth century, as the number of private Marathi schools were increasing, they were recognised by the government. Consequently, these schools were known by their main founder or a house from where it functioned. In 1885, three Marathi schools were set up in Margao, but within a year they were merged into one.¹³³ Atmarama Vassudeva Porobo Dessai Desporobo who was involved with the caste unification movement of the GSBs set up a Marathi school and a Marathi library at Pernem in 1887.¹³⁴

In 1889, the Saraswat Pustakalaya and a Marathi school were set up at Marcela, primarily by individuals supporting the unity of the GSB *jatis*.¹³⁵ One such prominent person was Ramchandra Waman Nayak Karande, alias Phondushastri, who wrote a foreword that, in effect, served as an introduction to Wagle's *Konkanakhyan*.¹³⁶ In addition, Karande was well-known for editing *Satsang* (1902–1910), a Marathi monthly that was more focused on the life of the GSBs at various levels.¹³⁷ In 1908, Karande was a prominent speaker at a meeting held in Panjim at the house of Mhamai Kamat, one of the influential GSB trading families, that led to the setting up of the Mushtifund Sauntha at Panjim.¹³⁸ Although the funds were generated through a *mushti*-fund: fundraising through the donation of a fistful of rice on a weekly basis and then selling it, its membership was not open to all communities.¹³⁹ While, the aim of Mushtifund Sauntha was to take free education to the disadvantaged, it was alleged that most of its students were not poor.¹⁴⁰ Further, the membership was largely restricted to the GSBs and the trading communities from Panjim, such as Gujaratis, Vanis and Lingayats. The rare exception to this was the tailor community—an individual from this community was working for the Mushtifund

¹³³ These schools were merged due to financial difficulties and the new school functioned from the house of Fondu Naik Dalal. *O Goatmá*, 21 December 1885, 3.

¹³⁴ *O Goatmá*, 18 April 1887, 1.

¹³⁵ *Gomontoc*, 1 March 1891, 3; *Satsang* 9 (1902), 141.

¹³⁶ Ramchandra Waman Nayak Karande in his foreword to *Konkanakyan* made arguments in favour of unity of the GSB *jatis*. Ramchandra Waman Nayak Karande, "Prastavan," in *Konkanakyan Urf Dakshinathy Saraswat Brahmanakhyan*, 1–10.

¹³⁷ The official editor was Lakshaman Podmo Bandary.

¹³⁸ *Chittakarshan*, October 1908, 61–2.

¹³⁹ *Prabhat*, 28 August 1913, 3.

¹⁴⁰ *Prabhat*, 21 August 1913, 3.

Saunsta. In 1909, the Mushtifund Saunsta established a Marathi school, Saraswati Vidyalaya, at Mala, Panjim.

With education as a site in the construction of state–society relations, the relationship between the Marathi schools and avenues for mobility was vital in the making of a GSB middle–class. It offered employment opportunities in the Portuguese administration as well as British India. In fact, British India was more attractive as it offered a huge wage advantage and employed more people than did the Portuguese government in Goa. For instance, a clerk in the customs office in Portuguese Goa in the early 1880s, earned around rupees fifteen per month, while clerks in British India were paid relatively well and earned as much as rupees hundred, or more, and their average salary was rupees eighty-two per month in the 1880s.¹⁴¹

The period since the 1880s has been seen as a major turning point in the life of the Hindus of Goa. Its characterisation that came to be fashionably termed as the ‘renaissance’ captures the enthusiasm and mood of the Marathi educated elites who comprised the first and second generation of the Marathi-educated GSB middle–class.¹⁴² In fact, some studies continue to actually reinforce the renaissance model for understanding cultural change and this is a part of a wider problem of idealising GSB cultural processes.¹⁴³ The private Marathi education in Goa had three important features. First, these Marathi schools were not secular schools in the contemporary sense; in fact, they were all narrowly caste and community based. The government refused to accept any responsibility for the education in these schools and everything was left at the schools’ preferences. They, thus, became institutions to facilitate a corporate GSB identity through the operation of caste every day in the school. Students had to have a written approval from the founders of the school or the school committee to procure an admission.¹⁴⁴ While the teachers appointed were from the neighbouring territories of British India, soon the members of

¹⁴¹ Parvathibhai Athavale, *Mazi Kahani* (Hingane: Anatha Balikashram, 1928), 5; Valerie Anderson, *Race and Power in British India: Anglo-Indians, Class and Identity in the Nineteenth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015), 212.

¹⁴² Sardesai, *Gomantakache Ase Te Divas*, 55.

¹⁴³ Varsha Kamat, *Resurgent Goa: Goan Society from 1900–1961* (Panaji: Broadway Publishing House, 2019).

¹⁴⁴ *O Goatmá*, 21 December 1885, 3.

these school associations themselves began to shape the school programme, presenting it in ways which they felt would have the most appeal to their cultural contexts. The syllabus and textbooks on Goa were also limited to the GSBs and the editors of Goan Marathi periodicals often conducted the examinations.¹⁴⁵

In charting some of the social processes behind the production of school literature, scholars like Gauri Viswanathan and Krishna Kumar have studied the dominant impact of textbooks in British India.¹⁴⁶ Likewise school textbooks played a unique role in producing and maintaining structures of domination in colonial Goa. Secondly, these schools were allowed to charge an admission deposit and monthly fees without any permission from the government.¹⁴⁷ Thirdly, at times, when non-Brahmins did manage to get an admission, they were forced to work in the school premises.¹⁴⁸ These features made the model of Marathi education difficult for others, if not impossible.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, alongside setting up of Marathi schools and Marathi periodicals, the other important feature of public life was the establishment of Marathi public libraries and political associations. In the 1880s, Marathi libraries were established at Cumbarjua, Marcela, Panjim, Margao, Mapuca and Pernem. Developmental trajectories similar to Marathi schools are seen with these libraries. They were set-up by prominent GSB individuals and although these libraries were announced as public institutions, members from other communities had no easy access. In 1875, Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade had started Vasant Vyakhyanmala (spring lectures) in Pune.¹⁴⁹ Drawing inspiration from these lectures, libraries in Goa organised annual public lectures—they were seen as more effective when the literacy rate was not high. An accepted feature of these annual public lectures was their concern woven around three

¹⁴⁵ Tatyaji Sitaram Patkar, *Goa Prantatil Todkyat Mahiti* (Mumbai: Telgumitra Chapkhana, 1890); *O Goatmá*, 5 October 1885, 5.

¹⁴⁶ Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquests: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); Krishna Kumar, *Political Agenda of Education: A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991).

¹⁴⁷ *O Goatmá*, 21 December 1885, 3; *Gomontoc*, 1 March 1891, 3.

¹⁴⁸ *Prabhat*, 31 July 1913, 3.

¹⁴⁹ T. V. Parvate, *Mahadev Goivnd Ranade: A Biography* (New Delhi; Asia Publishing House, 1963), 98.

prominent themes: Marathi education, government employment and the progress of the Hindus. These lectures gave a wide public exposure to the idea of Hindu progress and drew a large section of the Hindus into an active support base. It is against this backdrop that in 1907 the Nabik (Barber) community from Panjim established the Shree Mahalaxmi Prasad Hindu Vacahn Mandir, one of the first libraries to be set up by any backward community in Goa.¹⁵⁰

2.5 Caste, class and political associations

At the end of the nineteenth century, the increasing competition forced the traditional GSB elite to dispense their wealth in charity for the building of temples, schools and organisations, and to re-invent their influence through a Hindu identity. However, at the same time, the GSB middle-class capitalised on this struggle, and subsequently, the movement towards a Hindu identity acquired new dimensions under the Republic. In 1888, drawing inspiration from the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, efforts were made to set up a similar organisation, called the Goa Hindu Sarvajanik Sabha.¹⁵¹ What strikes one the most is that its membership was largely dominated by strong, traditional GSB elite and included big landed families and government servants.¹⁵² Although Ramchandra Pandurang Vaidhya was the only non-GSB member, he too was a landlord like others, and became even more concerned with questions concerning the Hindu community.¹⁵³ In addition, Goa Hindu Sarvajanik Sabha's affairs were to be managed by an elected committee, all of whom were big landlords—a situation not accepted by a new class of individuals.¹⁵⁴ The committee drafted and finalised the statutes in closed-door meetings. The statutes were printed, and suggestions sought, implying a democratic exercise, but proposals were allowed, provided an individual travelled to the Mhamai Kamat house in Panjim and persuaded the committee members.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 68, 26 August 1911, 867–68.

¹⁵¹ *O Goatmá*, 3 December 1888, 4.

¹⁵² *Gomontoc*, March 1890, 8.

¹⁵³ Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai, *Dr. P V. Shirgaonkar* (Mumbai: Antarang Prakashan, 1950), 24–25.

¹⁵⁴ *Gomontoc*, April 1890, 3.

¹⁵⁵ *O Goatma*, 18 June 1890, 4.

In 1890, the Goa Hindu Sarvajanic Sabha organised the first extraordinary public meeting, calling all Hindus to gather at the Panjim municipality in order to confirm its statutes, and subsequently, seek the government's approval. The meeting was more an occasion to throw weight around than providing any opportunity for deliberations. Sondekar, the erstwhile ruler of the New Conquests, that included Ponda, Sanguem, Canacona and Quepem, presided over the meeting, yet, arrived late and left early.¹⁵⁶ Likewise, there were other influential members who not only changed the programme but left after making their speeches. Although the meeting was attended by people across communities, the mere presence of Hindu lower castes was seen as 'bad', while others were not allowed to speak.¹⁵⁷ Moreover, the public meeting was conducted largely to gain a legitimacy in the name of Hindus and its statutes were approved without allowing any discussions. Further, the executive committee and the sub-committees of all nine *conselhos* were exclusively constituted around the Brahmins. Consequently, Sonars (goldsmiths) present at the meeting accused the Goa Hindu Sarvajanic Sabha of running an association of the Brahmins in the name of Hindus.¹⁵⁸ Although the demand was to have at least one non-Brahmin member among its twenty-seven members of *conselho* committees, it was dismissed on the grounds of their lack of capability.¹⁵⁹ Subsequently, the Sonars gathered at the residence of Panduranga Shet Raikar at Panaji and made an attempt to set up their own association.¹⁶⁰

Similar to the Poona Sarvajanic Sabha, the aim of the Goa Hindu Sarvajanic Sabha was to get greater benefits for the Hindu elite, and to represent their views of a Hindu society.¹⁶¹ At a time when the GSB middle-class was increasing its presence in the public life, the traditional GSB elite saw themselves as the legitimate spokespersons of its society and looked for a continued flow of benefits from the colonial state. More importantly, by employing a Hindu identity, they demanded high administrative positions such as *administradores* of *conselhos*, for Hindus, and

¹⁵⁶ *O Goatma*, 25 June 1890, 2.

¹⁵⁷ *O Goatma*, 02 July 1890, 3–4.

¹⁵⁸ *O Goatma*, 16 July 1890, 3.

¹⁵⁹ *O Nyaya Chacxu*, 20 April 1890, 4.

¹⁶⁰ *O Goatma*, 18 June 1890, 3.

¹⁶¹ S. R. Mehrotra, "The Poona Sarvajanic Sabah: The Early Phase (1870–1880)," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 6, no. 3 (1969): 293–321.

religious freedom, which largely meant non-interference in the administration of temples.¹⁶² Further, in a period of declining influence of the traditional GSB elite it was emphasised that the Goa Hindu Sarvajanic Sabha will succeed only by defending orthodoxy—by not committing itself to the women’s questions on widow remarriage and the education for girls.¹⁶³

A consistently gendered rhetoric on womanhood and domesticity is also evident in the debates of the period. For instance, a letter written to *Gomontoc* by a Hindu man records an interesting conversation that the author heard at night between a Hindu upper caste man and a *Kalavantin* at the latter’s residence in the village of Kavale in Ponda.¹⁶⁴ The dialogue, initiated by the *Kalavantin*, emphasises the exclusion of women from the membership of the Goa Hindu Sarvajanic Sabha. Signifying her concern about the general failure to support the Hindu women and the missed opportunities, the *Kalavantin* says, even a small clause favourable towards women in general would have been valuable; however, by denying this, the Goa Hindu Sarvajanic Sabha have not only denied them this opportunity in the present, but also closed down this possibility in the future. On the other hand, the Hindu upper caste man, in his provocative reply, states that the reason to deny this right to women was not the concern of the Hindu upper caste wives, but it was the context of the *Kalavantins* itself. More importantly, it is evident that the arguments in favour of prohibiting women were not primarily concerned with women but the ways in which the category of women was produced with explicitly political aims in mind. The contrast between two forms of women—that of the *Kalavantin* in the world outside home and the subjection of the wife at home—was crucial.

While the Goa Hindu Sarvajanic Sabha had an early exit, in fact within a few days from its inception, in 1902 efforts were made to set up a Hindu Club at Panjim by Purshottam Vaman Shirgaonkar, a doctor from British India.¹⁶⁵ Shirgaonkar’s father was an ayurvedic practitioner and an agent of the British Indian Steam Navigation Company in Vengurla, while his mother was from Bicholim.¹⁶⁶ One of his brothers, Sakharam Shirgaonkar was bestowed with the

¹⁶² *Gomontoc*, July 1890, 1.

¹⁶³ *Gomontoc*, July 1890, 1.

¹⁶⁴ *Gomontoc*, 5–6.

¹⁶⁵ *Satsang* 1, no. 7 (1902), 186; *O Opinião Hindú*, 18 December 1911, 6.

¹⁶⁶ Sardesai, *Dr. P V. Shirgaonkar*, 6

honorific title of Rao Bahadur that used to be awarded by the British for distinguished service aiding the British cause. Subsequently, in 1919, he was one of the founders of the Goa Hindu Association, an important cultural organisation established by the GSBs settled in Mumbai to represent themselves in the city. Shirgaonkar was born at his maternal grandparents' place in Bicholim, and was educated in British India. In 1894, he came to Panjim to practice medicine.¹⁶⁷ At that time he was the second Hindu doctor after Sakharam Lad from Bardez to have a degree in western medicine.¹⁶⁸ In addition, he was the only Hindu doctor from Panjim to whom Hindus could approach, not just for medical consultation, but more importantly, for the death certificate, a mandatory document required for cremating human bodies legally.

The Goa Hindu Club was established in 1904.¹⁶⁹ While the Goa Hindu Sarvajanic Sabha was affected by the interests of the traditional GSB elite element, the Club reflected the views of an emerging GSB middle-class. Most of the members of the Goa Hindu Club were professional men: doctors, teachers, public servants and journalists. Since it was based in Panjim it was dominated by the GSBs from Panjim. The Club's main concern was to fight for the rights of the Hindus, largely the effects of the government's policy on education and public employment.¹⁷⁰ In 1906 it revived the Hindu Pustakalaya that was lying closed.¹⁷¹ The Club functioned from a rent-free room given by Vishnu Giridhar Dempo, and received a donation from Patankar Natak Mandali, and also raised funds for the library through a membership fee, entry fee, and by the practice of lending its funds at interest.¹⁷² In fact, moneylending was a unique way of raising funds for this association; until then lending money at interest was largely an arena of the traditional GSB elite and temples.

¹⁶⁷ *Nava-Jivana*, 16 July 1920, 2.

¹⁶⁸ Sardesai, *Dr. P. V. Shirgaonkar*, 6; Dharmanand Kosambi, *Nivedan* (Mumbai: Manoranjan Granthprasarak Mandali, 1924), 18.

¹⁶⁹ *Satsang*, August 1904, 70–4.

¹⁷⁰ *Chittakarshan*, August 1906, 84–7.

¹⁷¹ *Dr. Purshottam Waman Shirgaonkar: Vyakti-Karya-Athavi* (Panaji: Shree Saraswati Mandir, 1973), 6.

¹⁷² *Chittakarshan*, August 1908, 55–6.

The Club emerged as a prominent place to discuss the nationalist movement in British India.¹⁷³ It also explicitly exhorted Hindus to demand their rights, similar to the ones of Hindus in British India. Though the Club's politics was narrowly constructed, an attempt was made to give it a representative character by the term Hindu. Although it could define and organise the interests of Hindus, the Club had no access to the Hindu lower castes.¹⁷⁴ Further, the public perception of it was of a Brahmin's club.¹⁷⁵ The Club was closed at the end of 1910.¹⁷⁶ Among the other associations, Deshsevak Arya Samaj was set up in 1908. However, we do not have much details about its activities, except that most of its members were GSBs and Balkrishna Ladkoba Naik Prataprao Sardesai was its first secretary.¹⁷⁷

2.6 Regime change and political power

The revolution of 5 October, 1910, ended the constitutional monarchy and established the first Portuguese Republic (1910–1926).¹⁷⁸ The Hindus in Goa celebrated the coming of the Republic as a progressive and increasingly democratic regime.¹⁷⁹ More importantly, the Republic was more acceptable to the GSB middle-class than to the traditional GSB elite. There are a number of reasons why the Republic appears as the only memorable feature of Portuguese colonialism in Goa, further pointing to a social landscape marked by the ascent of the GSB middle-class. Firstly, the Republic adopted a much broader programme of universal suffrage. While falling short, both in terms of women and the lower castes, the franchise was more generous. The suffrage was still restricted, but the electorate had undergone an expansion. It did away with existing income-based qualifications and anyone who could read and write Portuguese, and paid

¹⁷³ Sardesai, *Dr. P V. Shirgaonkar*, 28.

¹⁷⁴ *Prabhat*, 31 July 1913, 3.

¹⁷⁵ *Prabhat*, 7 August 1913, 3.

¹⁷⁶ *Prabhat*, 14 September 1911, 5.

¹⁷⁷ *Chittakarshan*, October 1908, 84.

¹⁷⁸ By 1926, at the collapse of the parliamentary republic, Portugal had acquired the record of being Europe's most unstable parliamentary regime: forty-five governments during fifteen years and eight months. Wheeler, *Republican Portugal*, 156.

¹⁷⁹ António de Noronha, "Os Indús de Goa a e República Portuguesa," in *A India Portuguesa*, vol. II (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1923), 214–15.

an income tax to the state, was conferred voting rights.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the expansion of the electorate beyond the narrow, traditional GSB elite paralleled the widening of the arena of competitive politics. Propelling this system forward was the Republican government's commitment towards administrative decentralisation, endowing more power to the electorate.

The Republic continued with the voting rights of the Goans to the *Congresso da República*, the Portuguese parliament at a distant metropolis, but more importantly, extended political representation to the local institutions. Goans could elect two representatives to two houses of the *Congresso da República*—one each at *Câmara dos Deputados* (Chamber of Representatives) and the *Senado da República* (Chamber of Senators). In addition, the imperial government followed a policy of devolution of power at the local level. All municipalities in the New Conquests entered formal politics and they were to elect their government, unlike the earlier practice of nominating traditional GSB elite.¹⁸¹ Likewise, the Republic's commitment to autonomy forced the metropolitan government to set up an advisory council known as *Conselho do Governo* (Legislative Council) in 1918, consisting of nine government-nominated officials and ten elected representatives of the people, with the governor as its president.

The geographical distribution of constituencies and the composition of the Legislative Councils at different intervals reflected the electoral strength of particular communities. The Old Conquests voted for four legislators from its four *conselhos*, while the New Conquests had one legislator for its six *conselhos*, and Daman and Diu together had one.¹⁸² On the other hand, associations recognised by the government, such as commercial associations, agricultural and landholders associations, *comunidades* and ninety highest income taxpayers could vote one member each among themselves.¹⁸³ Later, a constituency of medical and pharmaceutical associations was added to elect one more member. While the tenure of the council was two years,

¹⁸⁰ *Prabhat*, 1 June 191, 4; *Código Eleitoral* (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1913).

¹⁸¹ Until 1919, only municipalities from the Old Conquests had elected councils. The only exception was the municipality of Pernem, which had an elected council in 1886. For details see, Pais, "History and Politics of Elections in Goa (1821–1963)," 278.

¹⁸² In 1917 the Mormugão conselho was created from Salcete.

¹⁸³ *Actas do Conselho do Governo do Estado da Índia*, nos. 9–12 (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1919), 1–3; *A Índia Portuguesa*, 11 December, 1926; *Vidiaprassar*, 29 January 1921, 3.

every constituency also elected a substitute to attend the council meeting in the absence of the main legislator. Subsequently, the military dictatorship (1926–1933) and Salazar's New State (1933–1961), reduced the strength of the council to ten; five nominated, and five elected—with three legislators for the Old Conquests, one for the New Conquests and one for Daman and Diu.¹⁸⁴

In addition, the administrative division of *Junta Local*, popularly called a *gram-mandal* (village assembly), was re-organised, incorporating villages not included in the municipal jurisdiction.¹⁸⁵ This was an attempt to extend autonomy to the villages that did not have a sufficient number of voters, more particularly in the New Conquests. A village or a group of villages having a minimum twenty registered voters constituted a *Junta Local*, headed by a government primary school teacher along with two elected members.¹⁸⁶ While its period was for two years, in the absence of a government primary teacher, it was headed by a *regidore*.¹⁸⁷ In 1928 there were eighty-four *Junta Locals*, covering all *conselhos*, except Sanquelim and Sattari.¹⁸⁸ The *Junta Local* was entrusted to provide basic services in the villages and plan for local development: build roads, lakes, wells, health centres, library, school, market, enforce law and impose taxes.¹⁸⁹ More importantly, they also had the power to issue a character certificate—a mandatory document, not only for public employment, but at times a requirement for having access to government policies.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁴ *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, (Suplemento) no. 97, 4 December 1926, 4; *Bharat*, 9 October 1930, 2.

¹⁸⁵ *Legislação Relativa ao Estado da Índia*, 1927, vol. XXVII (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1928), 41.

¹⁸⁶ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 92, 18 November 1913, 995–96; *Bharat*, 2 November 1922, 2; Furtado, *An Illustrated Guide to Goa*, 135.

¹⁸⁷ Furtado, *An Illustrated Guide to Goa*, 135.

¹⁸⁸ *Hindu*, 28 October 1930, 4–5.

¹⁸⁹ *Bharat*, 2 November 1922, 2.

¹⁹⁰ *Bharat*, 15 December 1921, 2–3.

The Legislative Council was seen as the most important institution, right next to the governor general and *administradores*.¹⁹¹ All laws enacted in Goa, including legislations concerning the religious life of the Hindus, were first discussed in the Legislative Council. Similarly, changes to the existing laws on *comunidades*, land and temples could be accomplished only through it.¹⁹² As this happened, a governor general who refused to confirm with the Legislative Council's vote, could appeal to the Overseas Minister in Portugal to dismiss the legislation.¹⁹³ Sometimes, there were also exceptions; the governor general enacted legislation without getting it to the Legislative Council.¹⁹⁴ Besides, members could raise any issue but only after prior government approval. Thus, the members secured not just legislative powers but a means to secure power and strengthen their position by negotiating with the colonial state. This inaugurated the second phase in the diffusion of an electoral type polity among the Hindus in Goa and advanced the ascendancy of the GSB middle-class which was secured politically and culturally. While the deepening of the electoral politics among the Hindu upper-caste was achieved through institutions such as the *Junta Local*, municipalities and the legislative council, this type of polity, newly introduced by the Republic, would remain the dominant form of the state system until Goa's liberation in 1961.

The second memorable feature is the secularisation of public life. Portugal had been a Catholic country since its foundation in the twelfth century. However, the Republic followed the principle of separation between the state and the Church. It renewed civil law—permitted divorce and mandated the civil registry of births, marriages and deaths. In addition, it banned the teaching of Christianity in all schools. In sum, secularisation put an end to Catholicism as the religion of the state, guaranteed religious freedom to all and abolished all titles of nobility. These circumstances had three elements of politics. Firstly, power became more accessible to the Hindus. The Republic provided an opportunity for the Hindus, particularly the GSB middle-class, to increase

¹⁹¹ Carmo D'Souza, "Goa's Legislative Institutions in the twentieth century: A Historical Perspective," in *Goa in the 20th Century*, eds. Pius Malekandathil and Remy Dias (Panjim: Institute Menezes Braganza, 2008), 1–22.

¹⁹² *Samaj Sudharak*, June 1939, 127.

¹⁹³ Luis das Dores Silva, ed., *Goa Today: Pictorial Review of Goa* (Bombay: Luis das Dores Silva, 1952), 4.

¹⁹⁴ *Bharat*, 24 November 1932, 2.

their share of power through actively participating in the governing framework. In contrast to the earlier regimes, now the aspirations of the GSB middle–class for government employment were prominently accommodated. An accepted feature of this period was the ascendancy of Hindus in the administration. They were appointed as government teachers, and also to important administrative positions on which the Catholics had a stranglehold.¹⁹⁵ Consequently, by the 1950s, the administration was seen as the monopoly of the Hindus.¹⁹⁶ Secondly, there was an obsession with numerical strength in order to use the idea of a Hindu majority to demand rights. And thirdly, there was a quest for a Hindu identity that could paper over the differences of caste. Further, as they sought Portuguese support for their own interests at the local level, it provoked an important fracture within Hindu society: domination of the GSB middle–class at all levels—administrative, public and cultural. However, these developments did not entirely destroy the position of the traditional GSB elite, but transformed their order of precedence.

2.7 The major players—the new elites

Until the 1910s electoral politics was restricted to the relatively few substantially big landlords. The Republic was the first moving engine in the emergence of a ‘politics of representation’ among the Hindus. The compulsions of electoral competition profoundly influenced the way in which the traditional GSB elite and the GSB middle–class were inducted into democratic politics. The increased electoral participation of the GSB middle–class, and the efforts for a unified representation, not only blurred the variety of identities among the GSBs, but also enabled its capacity to forge alliances with dominant elites, both the Hindu and the Catholic.

Since the late nineteenth century, unlike their counter parts, the GSB middle–class depended almost directly on the Portuguese for their position in local society. One of the most striking features of the autonomy, and subsequent governments in Goa, was the rising public employment with increasing salaries, thereby leading to deficit budgets and high taxation.¹⁹⁷ Consequently, unlike the earlier periods, Portuguese India seemed more attractive for public employment than

¹⁹⁵ *O Opinião Hindú*, 30 January, 1911, 3; *Nava–Jivana*, 15 December 1920, 2–3.

¹⁹⁶ C. F. Saldanha, “The Glory of Golden Goa,” in *Goa Today: Pictorial Review of Goa*, 159–79.

¹⁹⁷ *The Goan World*, February 1924, 10–3; T. B. Cunha, *Goa’s Struggle for Freedom* (Bombay: Dr. T B Cunha Memorial Committee, 1916), 16–22.

British India. Aware of the greater benefits, while the Hindus celebrated the setting up of the Republic, it was equally clear that they could draw benefits only by forging unity at two levels—first within the GSB community, and later across the Hindu communities. The expansion of this consciousness at varying degrees subsumed caste and religious identities and paralleled the widening of the arena of competitive politics.

In these circumstances, Purshottam Waman Shirgaonkar emerged as the central figure for a number of reasons. Firstly, apart from his well-known family background, he had been popular for practicing western medicine. In the early 1900s, when the deadly bubonic arrived in Panjim, he worked to help people and also started the festival of Bhajani Saptah for the good health of people at the Mahalaxmi temple, Panjim.¹⁹⁸ Secondly, he was involved with Marathi education, the Hindu Club and journalism. At a time when the periodical *O Opinião Hindú* opposed the unification of the GSB caste, Shirgaonkar established a weekly, *Prabhat* (A New Beginning) in 1911, and strove, first to consolidate GSB identity, and later, Hindu identity.¹⁹⁹ In 1913, Shirgaonkar, along with other prominent GSBs, founded the Saraswati Mandir Library at Panjim. Very uncommon in those days, Shirgaonkar also played an important role in setting up of a Hindu tea restaurant named Brahmani at Panjim, and particularly appointed a Brahmin cook from Belgaum.²⁰⁰ Transgressing elitist barriers that restricted the politics of the traditional GSB elite, Shirgaonkar, on his part, called upon the Hindus to make a united effort to acquire political rights. And for this purpose, he demanded autonomy and attempted to actively participate in the municipal elections. The activities of Shirgaonkar demonstrate how he represented and articulated the interests of the GSB middle-class in a colonial context. This political project required a radically different socio-political vision and a certain reworking of politics.

During the early twentieth century, the GSB community was vertically divided into two rival camps: one advocating unity amongst all sub-castes and popularly called *eki*, while the other opposing faction was called *beki*. In 1911, the first public meeting of all the GSBs was held at the Mahalaxmi temple in Panjim. An exceptional feature was the coming together of the two

¹⁹⁸ Sardesai, *Dr. P V. Shirgaonkar*, 30; *Dr. Purshottam Waman Shirgaonkar*, 46.

¹⁹⁹ *O Opinião Hindú*, 16 January, 1911, 2; 14 August, 1911, 3.

²⁰⁰ Yeshwant Suryarao Sardesai, “Panchvis Varshache Gomantak,” in *Gelaya Pavshatkatil Gomantak*, ed. Keshav Anant Naik (Margao: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1938), 185.

opposing GSB factions of *eki* and *beki*. United by a common cultural heritage, it was emphasised that they were all members of the same family, having the interests of the family at heart. In addition, Shirgaonkar underlined the strength of the Hindu vote and a need to establish a political association for the Hindus.²⁰¹ Much the same sentiment was found in the Goa Saraswat Mitra Samuha, a newly formed association of the GSBs that tried to move beyond *eki-beki* divisions.²⁰² One of the major focuses of Shirgaonkar's efforts was to challenge the politics of the traditional GSB elite played out in the shadows of Luso-*descendentes*. In this period, given the tenuous hold of the Luso-*descendentes*, Shirgaonkar strove to fill this void by the recently found political status of the GSB middle-class.²⁰³

It is against this backdrop that in 1913 the election to the municipality of Ilhas was held. During this time, the traditional GSB elite had no interest to lead a political party. Rather, they seemed to be more comfortable with their alliance with the Luso-*descendentes* and negotiating for Hindu candidates.²⁰⁴ Accordingly, a meeting of traditional GSB elite and prominent Catholics was called at the residence of Conde de Mayem, a Luso-*descendente*, to finalise the list of candidates.²⁰⁵ The panel of Conde de Mayem had two names of GSBs as members, suggesting a continued strategy of nominal representation of the Hindus.²⁰⁶ Surprised by the unchanged attitude of the Luso-*descendentes*, Shirgaonkar not only denounced the panel but also established the Republican Hindu Autonomy Party. Although a party comprising of the GSB middle-class, and perhaps understanding its religious implications, soon, it was re-named the Republican Autonomist Party and had a Catholic lawyer, Francisco Xavier Sales de Andrade, as its president.²⁰⁷ Thereafter, the party made efforts to extend its political base. Firstly, it looks like they were able to convince two Hindus from the panel of Conde de Mayem not to contest the election and settle for the secondary position of members.²⁰⁸ Secondly, they declared support to

²⁰¹ *O Opinião Hindú*, 27 February, 1911, 3.

²⁰² *Prabhat*, 9 November 1911, 3.

²⁰³ From 1911 to 1961, the Luso-*desendents* could not win a single parliamentary seat.

²⁰⁴ *A Patria*, 12 November 1913, 3.

²⁰⁵ *A Patria*, 3 December 1913, 3.

²⁰⁶ *A Patria*, 14 January 1914, 2.

²⁰⁷ *Prabhat*, 18 December 1913, 3; *Prabhat*, 25 December 1913, 3.

²⁰⁸ *A Patria*, 10 December 1913, 3.

these candidates.²⁰⁹ This compromise, struck during the municipal election, was the sort of local deal that formed the backdrop to the development of a GSB middle-class-based politics. Although all the candidates supported by the Republican Autonomist Party lost, these initial encounters between the GSB middle-class and the Luso-*descendentes* were extremely disruptive, especially for the former ruling elite.

Despite himself being Western-educated Shirgaonkar was able to function in the colonial elite society and also belong to the world of the masses. As a result, he was able to appeal to their religious and cultural sensibilities—his greatest attraction seems to have been his ability to create a sense of a natural Hindu community. Subsequently, until his death in 1916, Shirgaonkar, with his press reporting and educating the reading public in a newly politicised circumstance, emerged as the ‘first Hindu leader’ in Goa, adopting the strategy of mass politics. This distinguished Shirgaonkar—now called ‘Gomantakiya Tilak’—for his efforts to draw the masses into politics and to undercut the alliances of the traditional GSB elite with the Luso-*descendentes*.²¹⁰ Both, in his own days and for subsequent generations Shirgaonkar was understood as the bridge between two eras and between two distinctly different kinds of socio-political orders. In addition, he was idealised as an individual who was responsible for the progress of the Hindus.²¹¹

The next major player that attempted to change the rules of politics was an association that called itself progressive, the Pragatic Sangh.²¹² The setting up of the Pragatic Sangh is often acclaimed as the ‘inaugural moment’ or the ‘birth’ of politics among the Hindus.²¹³ Imbued with this aura, accounts of the Pragatic Sangh have consequently become more anecdotal than archival, and more celebratory than contextual. This now seems a rather simplistic perception of its politics. Founded in 1920 at Kavalem in Ponda, the Pragatic Sangh was an unabashedly elitist

²⁰⁹ *Prabhat*, 9 July 1914, 3.

²¹⁰ *Nava-Jivana Renovação*, 16 July 1920, 4.

²¹¹ *Satsang*, May 1904, 187; *Nava-Jivana Renovação*, 16 January 1920, 3; Sardesai, *Dr. P. V. Shirgaonkar; Dr. Purshottam Waman Shirgaonkar: Vyakti-Karya-Athavi*.

²¹² *Bhartodaya*, March 1921, 18.

²¹³ Sardesai, “Panchvis Varshache Gomantak,” 193–194; Sardesai, *Gomantakache Ase Te Diwas*, 177; Kamat, “Socio-Political and Religious life in Goa,” Pais, “History and Politics of Elections in Goa (1821–1963),” 232–36.

organisation, largely dominated by the GSBs—doctors, lawyers, contractors, journalists, writers and landlords, whose self-proclaimed mission was the progress of Hindus, and to produce the leaders for a renascent Hindu society.²¹⁴ In addition, it was founded on a premise of shared material interests that reflected the views of the GSB public servants and professionals. However, unlike the earlier political associations, moribund within a few years, the Pragmatic Sangh was seen as emblematic of the Hindu life and a plethora of associations came to be established over the next decades. With Shirgaonkar's death, although efforts were made to set up a political association by taking a Hindu name, the Pragmatic Sangh was established all of a sudden at the cusp of a meeting held to celebrate the election of two GSBs—a member and his substitute—over the Legislative Council from the New Conquests.²¹⁵ Its founding was the outcome of the unity forged during the *eki* movement—establishing links through pre-existing local associations, which found these ties advantageous to the Pragmatic Sangh.²¹⁶ The idea was to exploit the aspirations and interests of the GSBs through a Hindu identity and to draw support from the government officials and influential native Catholic elites by invoking the idea of being progressive.

Since its inception, the Pragmatic Sangh modelled itself on the lines of the Indian National Congress. Apart from holding annual sessions in December, the organisation consisted of an executive committee with a president, vice-presidents, secretaries, treasurers and other members, an advisory committee, a working committee and the *conselho* committees. As such, there was a separate committee for Goan Hindus living in British Bombay. In 1921 the Pragmatic Sangh framed its constitution at the house of Mhamai Kamat at Panaji.²¹⁷ A copy of this was also sent to Dharmanand Kosambi, who was in the United States.²¹⁸ Although its membership was largely drawn from the GSB caste, the Pragmatic Sangh made efforts to expand its base at the membership level and stressed obedience, discipline, loyalty, and ideological formation. Power required mobilisation of a large number of people and special appeals were made to non-

²¹⁴ *Swayamsevak*, September 1922, 198.

²¹⁵ *Swayamsevak*, December 1923, 129.

²¹⁶ *Bharat*, 10 February 1921, 2.

²¹⁷ *Vidhyaprasar*, 12 March 1921, 2.

²¹⁸ *Swayamsevak*, March 1922, 79.

Brahmins, particularly the Maratha and Vaishya castes, to enrol as members.²¹⁹ In addition, special membership drives were undertaken in villages.²²⁰ To enhance participation, its constitution laid down different types of memberships: patron, honourable, special and general, corresponding to the financial contribution or payment of fees.²²¹ Since the colonial franchise was very restricted for Hindus due to the required proficiency in the Portuguese language, its principal focus was the expansion of the Legislative Council to include more Hindus that would give them even more powers. All this could be accomplished with the inclusion of the Marathi language as a qualification for acquiring voting rights and a greater share for Hindus in public employment. In addition, the Sangh demanded a positive role from the government that would push the Hindus to follow the path that native Catholics were already following.

The political activity of the Pragmatic Sangh had two distinct forms—the metropolitan and the local—a strategy that became a source for legitimacy and the inclusion of its interests, both in Portugal and in Goa. The Pragmatic Sangh didn't contest a single parliamentary election, but actively supported the Catholic candidates. Rather, it was more content with voting as a block and becoming a larger force in influencing the elections.²²² Until the 1920s the Hindus supported José Minguel Lamartine Prazeres da Costa in all the parliamentary elections: 1911, 1915 and 1918. The traditional GSB elite saw the politics of Prazeres da Costa as primarily directed towards them. He found special support for minimising the costs of the local government by stopping the government grants to the Church, and shifting the cost of suppressing the recent Rane uprisings on the metropolitan government, and also for promoting education through the setting up of primary schools in the New Conquests, Lyceu Municipal at Margao and Mapuca, and a commercial school.²²³ In 1913, his birthday was celebrated as a major public event by the traditional GSB elite, a first of its kind in Goa.

²¹⁹ *Bharat*, 4 August 1921, 4; *Bharat*, 11 August 1921, 3.

²²⁰ *Bharat*, 22 September 1921, 3.

²²¹ *Vidiaprassar*, 12 March 1921, 3–4.

²²² P. D. Gaitonde, *The Liberation of Goa: A Participants View of History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 16.

²²³ *Bharat*, 19 March 1913, 1; *Luz do Oriente*, vol. VIII, no.1, 1915, 5–8.

However, the Pragatic Sangh charted a different course. By the 1920s, Prazeres da Costa, equipped with a tumultuous decade of politics, had used political power to establish local monopolies in the government, thereby eliminating the troublesome competition of the GSB middle-class and the native Catholic elite. These tensions are noticeable in the *Eleção Puran* composed by Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai.²²⁴ As a result, since its inception, the Pragatic Sangh campaigned against Prazeres da Costa.²²⁵ During the 1922 parliamentary election the Pragatic Sangh supported Indalêncio Froilano de Melo, a doctor, recently appointed as the director of the Medical School of Goa. All Marathi periodicals supported Froilano de Melo and the *Bharat* ran a full-page announcement declaring the support of the Pragatic Sangh to Froilano de Melo.²²⁶ Yet, Prazeres da Costa won, but with reduced margins—an outcome that the Pragatic Sangh credited itself with.²²⁷ Consequently, Froilano de Melo made efforts to win over the GSB middle-class by declaring his support for the Marathi language and a voting right through it.²²⁸

In 1925, the Pragatic Sangh again supported Froilano de Melo, putting an end to Prazeres da Costa's unprecedented fourteen years in office.²²⁹ However, after the electoral victory, all of a sudden, Froilano de Melo did a volte-face on his support to Marathi.²³⁰ Nevertheless, this victory did not lead him to the parliament in Portugal, for the 1926 military coup put an end to the republican regime. Subsequently, Froilano de Melo became the most famous Goan doctor ever, directed medical services and actively participated in overseas and local politics.²³¹ He got to be the mayor of the municipality of Ilhas between 1938–45 and represented Portuguese India in the Portuguese parliament during 1945–1949.

²²⁴ Dattatraya Venkatesh Pai, *Gomantakachi Rajyavavyastha* (Margao: Hindu Chapkhana, 1930), 19; Sardesai, *Granth*, 492–95.

²²⁵ *Bharat*, 6 October 1921, 3.

²²⁶ *Bharat* 7 July 1921, 2.

²²⁷ *Prachi Prabha*, 8 February 1922, 3; *Bharat*, 28 July, 1921, 2.

²²⁸ *Hindu*, 19 November 1925, 2–3; *Hindu*, 21 November 1925, 2–3.

²²⁹ *Prachi Prabha*, 12 November 1925, 3; *Prachi Prabha*, 19 November 1925, 3.

²³⁰ *Hindu*, 29 May 1926, 2; *Hindu*, 3 July 1926, 3.

²³¹ Christiana Bastos, “From India to Brazil, with a microscope and a seat in Parliament: the life and work of Dr. Indalêncio Froilano de Melo,” *Journal of History of Science and Technology* 2 (2008): 143–89.

A very different picture emerges, however, if one turns to the Pragatic Sangh and the elections to the Legislative Council. Although they were designed to secure the representation of certain special interests—associations recognised by the government, large landowners, *comunidades* and the dominant elites—a great deal was at stake in these elections. A representation in the Legislative Council gave a party or an individual the opportunity to assume responsibility for legislating policy in all fields, which had hitherto been the preserve of the government. Apart from the demonstration of popular support, these elections were an arena to represent certain political and cultural interests. The Pragatic Sangh had an overwhelming sense that the government would deliver only with the consolidation of the Hindus. Consequently, while the Pragatic Sangh's entire politics was driven by the ideal of progress for Hindus, in practice a closer analysis shows how narrowly their politics was constructed.

2.8 From democracy to oligarchy

The autonomy was celebrated by the local government and native elites, both Catholic and Hindu, to emphasise Goa's political advancement over British India. In 1924, two prominent native Catholics, Roberto Bruto da Costa and Luis Menezes Bragança, both elected to the Legislative Councils more than once in 1918, 1919 and 1920, represented Portuguese India at the Second Overseas Colonial Congress at Lisbon. Reflecting the political system in Portuguese India, they praised the idealism of autonomy stating that people are free to rule themselves and have an elected legislature and a responsive executive.²³² On the contrary, most of the members elected to the Legislative Council were seen as collaborators of the government.

The composition of the Pragatic Sangh provided new mechanisms for the strengthening of the GSBs. Although its membership was open to all Hindus, a member was required to pay fees and had to have the important qualification of being *kulin*, meaning 'cultured' (literally, high class), an inexplicit characteristic based on which membership could be denied. The tendency for political preferences to be determined by GSB cultural considerations had already been apparent during the formation of the central and *conselho* committees.²³³ Besides, the fielding of candidates was political in nature—in part, the selection of suitable persons to represent certain

²³² *The Goan World*, September 1924, 3–4.

²³³ *Bharat*, 31 December 1942, 2.

sectional interests. Throughout its twelve years of existence, the Pragatic Sangh never fielded or supported a non-Brahmin candidate. Not surprisingly, Narayan Anant Shet Bandodkar, a member of the Pragatic Sangh who was a Vaishya by caste, and a teacher and Director of Almeida School, was refused support in the run up to the elections in 1924 and 1926.²³⁴ But more was involved here than politics, the cultural value of which can be understood through the life of Bhaskar Prataprao Sardesai, a substitute candidate from the New Conquests who defeated Narayan Anant Shet Bandodkar at the Legislative Council.

Bhaskar Prataprao Sardesai was associated with the founding of Deshsevak Arya Samaj in 1908.²³⁵ In 1912, he was appointed as a member of the *Junta Geral de Província*, a state appointed body wherein each municipal council had to recommend three names from which the government would select one.²³⁶ When the Pragatic Sangh was founded, he was one of its secretaries.²³⁷ He was elected to the Legislative Council in 1926, and a year later, headed a government commission that was set up to recommend changes to the Code of Customs and Usages of the Hindus, 1880.²³⁸ Against this backdrop, in 1928, Bhaskar Prataprao Sardesai was appointed as the *administradore* of Pernem—a position that was usually reserved for the Catholics.²³⁹ Later, in 1939, he was nominated by the government to the Legislative Council.²⁴⁰ What is more, through these different positions he defended the cultural symbols of the GSBs, such as temples, that merited state protection against the rising claims made by other Hindu communities.²⁴¹

²³⁴ *A Patria*, 19 November 1913, 3; *Hindu*, 12 December, 1924, 2; *Bharat*, 3 November, 1921, 3; *Bharat*, 18 December, 1924, 3; *Bharat*, 30 December, 1926, 5.

²³⁵ *Chittakarshan*, October 1908, 84.

²³⁶ Bhaskar Prataprao Sardesai's name was suggested by the municipality of Ponda. *Bharat*, 18 December 1912, 4; *Bharat*, 25 December 1912, 4.

²³⁷ *Prachi Prabha*, 22 December 1923, 2.

²³⁸ *Hindu*, 10 July 1928, 5; *Hindu*, 26 February, 1929, 5.

²³⁹ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 1, 3 January 1928, 2–3.

²⁴⁰ *Actas do Conselho do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 16 (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1939), 257–58.

²⁴¹ *Samaj Sudharak*, June 1939, 127.

The composition of the Legislative Council was such that its members could manipulate their role in order to protect their interests. In a council of eleven elected members and seven government nominated ones, in spite of the majority of elected members, the governor general was often successful in carrying forward policies by winning over elected members. At times the strategy was to abstain from attending the council meeting without giving any advance notice. Venkatesh Vinayak Rao Desai, a member of the Pragmatic Sangh and a member of the Legislative Council (1921, 1922–1924), preferred to avoid an important session that raised taxes in 1923.²⁴² However, he defended his move and found his commitment towards the membership drive of the Pragmatic Sangh more important than attending the Legislative Council and voting against the government.²⁴³ Subsequently, Venkatesh Vinayak Rao Desai was elected to *Tribunal Administrativo, Fiscal e de Contas* (Administrative, Tax and Audit Court).²⁴⁴ Such was the political atmosphere that the vote became an instrument, not so much to criticise government policy, but to protect sectional interests.

The formal structure of the government provided the framework of politics and it was only by operating within it that the GSBs could share power. In a politically uncertain situation, the traditional GSB elite, and a few other members who were dissatisfied with the politics of the Pragmatic Sangh, founded the Hindu Mandal at Panjim, and the Hindu Sabha at Mapuca, both in 1923.²⁴⁵ Albeit short-lived—moribund within five years—the two bodies can be seen as emblematic of sectional interests. More important is the profile of the individuals involved. On the one hand the Hindu Mandal was led by Vishnu Giridhar Dempo, who had earlier led the *beki* faction and subsequently was a member of the Legislative Council in 1918 and 1919. On the other hand, the Hindu Sabha was led by Pandurang Sadashiv Shenvi Danait, who was popular

²⁴² *Vidiaprassar*, 5 February 1921, 2; *Bhartodaya*, March 1921, 17; *Bharat*, 10 January 1924, 3.

²⁴³ *Bharat*, 7 February, 1924, 2.

²⁴⁴ *Actas do Conselho do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 24 (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1924), 193–94.

²⁴⁵ *Swayamsevak*, December 1923, 143.

for his role in the *eki* movement. Significantly, Pandurang Sadashiv Shenvi Danait was the secretary of the Samyukta GSB conference held at Mapuca in 1910.²⁴⁶

Despite occasional differences, efforts were made to merge these organisations with the Pragatic Sangh, but they refused.²⁴⁷ Nevertheless, they were increasingly interdependent and these divisions did not affect the GSBs as they devised ways to avoid confrontation. While the Pragatic Sangh contested the seat for the New Conquests, the Hindu Mandal was focused on two seats: ninety major contributors or highest income tax-payers, and the commercial association, and the Hindu Sabha had its eyes on a seat over Bardez. A key element was the list of highest income tax-paying individuals. In 1924, the list of ninety individuals paying highest tax on income had fifty-one Hindus, thirty-eight Catholics and one Muslim.²⁴⁸ In 1934, new voting rules had a list of forty highest income tax-payers comprising of thirty-two Hindus and eight Catholics.²⁴⁹ This indicates the importance of the traditional GSB elite. In pursuing their respective aims, they achieved a degree of success in 1924, when, for the first time, three Hindus were elected to the Legislative Council: Jayram Shet Khalap from Bardez, Ramchandra Pundalik Shenvi Kenkre for highest income tax-payers and Sakharam Sadashiva Suryarao Desai from the New Conquests.²⁵⁰ However, Sakharam Sadashiva Suryarao Desai was supported by the Pragatic Sangh and it was alleged that the Partagal matha had influenced the outcome of the election.²⁵¹

Throughout the Pragatic Sangh's existence, the majority of the directly elected representatives were the GSBs. However, the only exception was in 1928, when Narayan Anant Shet Bandodkar contested a seat left vacant by Bhaskar Prataprao Sardesai. While the Pragatic Sangh was reluctant to field a candidate, it decided to support Narayan Anant Shet Bandodkar. However, he

²⁴⁶ *Shree Sansthan Kavalem (Gove) yetil Tisraya Gaud Saraswat Brahman Parishadechi Hakigat, 1910* (Mumbai: Krishnarao Sakharam Masurekar, 1910); *Prachi Prabha*, 22 March 1924, 4; *Bharat* 21 April 1927, 5.

²⁴⁷ *Bharat*, 10 January 1924, 2.

²⁴⁸ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 88, 31 October 1924, 1089–90.

²⁴⁹ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 86, 26 October 1934, 1595–96.

²⁵⁰ *Hindu*, 12 December 1924, 2; *Actas do Conselho do Governo do Estado da Índia 1925-1926*, no. 2 (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1925), 3–4.

²⁵¹ *Bharat*, 18 December 1924, 3; *Bharat*, 19 November 1925, 7.

won unopposed.²⁵² There is no direct evidence when the Hindu Mandal and the Hindu Sabha ceased to exist, though there is no evidence of their existence beyond 1927, whereas the Pragatic Sangh continued till 1932. Moreover, since the 1930s the Pragatic Sangh refused to contest elections to avoid disunity among the Hindus.²⁵³ Nevertheless, the more impressive accomplishment of the Pragatic Sangh was increasing its negotiating power with the government, rather than in formal politics. In 1924, the government celebrated the fourth death centenary of Vasco da Gama, a hero of the imperial past and an icon of national identity.²⁵⁴ The event was marked by elaborate festivities across Goa which were funded by the government through a loan and contributions made by temples and individuals.²⁵⁵ More importantly, the Pragatic Sangh was divided on the issue—while some members opposed the celebrations, few of those who supported it were appointed as members on different centenary committees.²⁵⁶ In 1925, Dr. Atmaram Govind Borkar, the president of the Pragatic Sangh—generally termed as its ‘hero’—and Mahadeva Shenvi Bhoje Caculo, one of its secretaries, were conferred the title of Cavaleiro da Ordem de Cristo (Knight of the Order of Christ) by the Portuguese government.²⁵⁷ Besides, as we have seen, some of its prominent members were rewarded by the government with administrative positions and memberships to various government bodies and committees.

Notably, apart from the *Eleção Puran*, contemporary literature, such as the *Demanda Mahatmaya* and the *Eleição Gatha*, has much to say about the nature of these elections.²⁵⁸ Moreover, the *Demanda Mahatmaya*, written in series under the pseudonym of Vishnudas by Vinayak K. Priolkar followed legal disputes—the Portuguese administration and courts were notoriously corrupt. Subsequently, the increasing popularity of *Demanda Mahatmaya* led to its

²⁵² *Bharat*, 16 February 1928, 5.

²⁵³ *Bharat*, 27 October 1932, 2; *Hindu*, 11 November 1930, 2.

²⁵⁴ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 99 (Suplemento), 9 December 1924 1–3; Edgar Prestage, “The Fourth Centenary of the Death of Vasco Da Gama,” *The Geographical Journal* 65, no. 1 (1925): 1–4.

²⁵⁵ *Hindu*, 12 December 1924, 2.

²⁵⁶ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 90, 7 November 1924, 1116; *Hindu*, 12 December 1924, 5.

²⁵⁷ *Hindu*, 4 April, 1925, 5; Sardesai, *Smarak Granth*, 507.

²⁵⁸ *Swayamsevak*, November 1923, 100–04; *Swayamsevak*, 8 October 1930, 8.

publication in a book form.²⁵⁹ Both these songs praised the elections to the Legislative Council as the most powerful politics—a process directed to solve the problems of the people. Moreover, their sharp scrutiny of the politics confirms what we have analysed about the nature of these elections—they were, both, an effect and an instrument of power, the most powerful vehicle of dominance. The most interesting part, however, is the assertion that the candidates offered rewards to get votes, and subsequently, the elected members pursued their self-interest, representing the interests of the rich and the powerful and running roughshod over the poor.

Likewise, there is evidence at the subaltern level that shows the Legislative Council as an oligarchy dominated by native elites, which in practice was neither responsive to public opinion nor responsible to the people.²⁶⁰ In the absence of representation for the lower castes, it was impossible to assume that a council, especially one that was dominated by the local elites, was acting in the interests of the people. Reacting sharply, the *Goan World* highlighted the problems of these individuals living in the supra-strata of aristocratic society who were not in a position to understand the acute misery and suffering of those less favoured, toiling and moiling for a mouthful of coarse rice.²⁶¹

Similarly, Krishna Sagun Fatarpekar, in his series of articles published in the *Prabhat* called ‘autonomy fake’—a makeover political system to redefine and strengthen prevailing forms of the GSB’s dominance. This form of autonomy, as such, was not likely to allow for the accommodation of lower-caste interests, he claimed.²⁶² Fatarpekar’s argumentation reflected his deep anger and abomination at the claims of the Republic. Although Fatarpekar’s efforts attracted publicity and were opposed by the GSBs, there was no change forthcoming, either from the government or from the GSB middle-class. Similarly, the *Pragati* denounced the Pragmatic Sangh as an association of the GSBs, founded to legitimise their interests through a Hindu identity. Moreover, it appealed to the Hindu lower-castes not to take up its membership, and to instead

²⁵⁹ V. K. Priolkar, *Demanda Mahatmaya* (Mumbai: Self-published, 1951).

²⁶⁰ *The Goan World*, February 1924, 5–7.

²⁶¹ *The Goan World*, September 1924, 3–4.

²⁶² *Prabhat*, 17 July 1913, 3; *Prabhat*, 31 July 1913, 3; *Prabhat*, 7 August 1913, 3; *Prabhat*, 21 August 1913, 3; *Prabhat*, 28 August 1913, 3.

use these funds towards education. Consequently, the Pragatic Sangh's brief attempts to mobilise the lower-castes came to virtually nothing.²⁶³

Since the inception of the Republic and subsequent governments, the traditional GSB elite, along with the GSB middle-class, dominated at all levels. In fact, the ascendancy of the Hindus, particularly the GSBs was so clearly marked that it caught the attention of Maharashtrians visiting Goa. Shridhar Venkatesh Ketkar, primarily known for his work on the Marathi encyclopaedia, *Maharashtriya Jnanakosha*, noticed the increasing numbers of GSBs in the administration during his short visit to Goa in 1924.²⁶⁴ It was quite noteworthy, given the small size of their population.²⁶⁵ While we do know that there are many reasons for the out-migration of the Catholics, in due course it was ascribed to the increasing numbers of Hindus in public employment and other professions.²⁶⁶ In addition, the relative decline in Catholic numbers that the decennial censuses had apparently established, now acquired a new importance. This was the context in which the GSB middle-class established schools, libraries, associations and conferences, and used the weight of Hindu identity to get a hold over the government and society.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ *Pragati*, 30 October 1921, 1.

²⁶⁴ *Vidhyasevak*, October 1924, 6.

²⁶⁵ *Bharat*, 8 July 1926, 6.

²⁶⁶ J. B. Pinto, *Goan Immigration* (Saligao: n.p., 1962), 3.

²⁶⁷ *Pragati*, 5 September 1921, 4.

Chapter 3

In Search of the Self: Struggle for New Identities

Until the nineteenth century we know relatively little about the responses of the non-Brahmin communities on the contestations of caste and identity. Since the 1860s, while the British rule in India was structured on extensive and detailed ethnographic accounts, and deployment of census that were concerned about the fundamental nature of Indian society and its civil and political institutions, the Portuguese in Goa declared a policy of non-interference with cultural and traditional matters.¹ By the nineteenth century, the colonial state in Goa saw two major transformations—territorial expansion and the advent of a vernacular press. Besides, in the nineteenth century, caste and identity, more than anything else, became the object of intense discussion. For much of the nineteenth century, and later, the GSBs, through the Marathi press, favoured historical research and the present sites of the past—ethnographic practices—became increasingly marginal in locating cultural life. Most of their writings are about historical questions of caste and communities and seem to define social life in Goa through the relationship between two castes—Brahmins and non-Brahmins. Deployment of defensive upper-caste rhetoric to undermine lower-caste claims towards upward mobility shows that social dignity, political power, social and ritual privileges, and material livelihoods were all at stake. One of the key points of focus in this chapter is the forging of solidarities, the consolidation of the *jatis* into a single caste and how these changes in Goa were at times driven by the urban experience and competition—political and social contexts—in British Bombay.

¹ Nicholas B. Dirks called the colonial state in India as the ethnographic state. See, Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 43–60.

From the 1870s the task of producing information on caste was taken up by the GSB writers through the Marathi press—an approach that continues to dominate the understanding of social life in Goa. Naik Danait and Wagle co-authored *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas* and depended more on pre-colonial texts such as the *Shudrakamlakara* in order to discuss appropriate daily ritual life for the Shudras. The *Shudrakamlakara* was widely influential, not only in northern India and Maharashtra, but also in Goa. Apart from Naik Danait and Wagle, there were many instances where the *Shudrakamlakara* was cited on the duties and religious observances appropriate for the Shudras in Goa.² Moreover, the text was frequently invoked by the GSBs to discuss the caste identity of non-Brahmins who were claiming an upward mobility.³ A number of communities claiming a Kshatriya caste status through Marathisation—Sonars demanding the caste position of Daivadnya Brahmins and Vanis asserting their Vaishya caste standing—were reduced to the status of Shudras. In these conflicts on the fundamental question on caste structure in Goa that advocated a society divided between Brahmins and Shudras, social dignity, political power, social and ritual privileges and material livelihoods were all at stake.

In other words, while the local vernacular histories had been deeply significant in caste conflicts, discourses of caste purity and honour were found to be cultural resources serving political and economic power, including the inferiorisation of the non-Brahmins who were to be excluded from all religious rites. Consequently, these non-Brahmin communities were engaged in caste contests employing much longer social histories, and were deeply familiar with the issues at stake—temple privileges, employment, property, marriage, inheritance and the overall approach of the colonial state. Thus, when the elite non-Brahmins like Sonars, the elite Marathas, Vanis, and other non-elite non-Brahmins turned towards the search of the self with a social campaign since the nineteenth century, the issues of caste identity, ritual rights, histories, size of communities, education and employment continued to lie at the heart of their programmes. And, barely literate individuals, or anyone with an elementary vernacular education could participate in these movements.

² P. S. S. Pissurlencar, “O Elemento Hindu da Casta Charddo,” *O Oriente Português* No° 12-13 (Bastora: Tipografia Rangel, 1936), 203–14.

³ *Bharat*, 5 November 1936, 2; *Vaishya Yuvak*, August 1937, 11–12; Narayan Datta Shet Verekar, *Os Chardés São Sudros? Gomantakiya Brahmanater hee Sarva Shudra aahe Kai?* (Calangute: Damodar Bagwant Divkar, 1937).

3.1 Sonar to Daivadnya: Recasting the Self

Sonar, or goldsmiths, claiming to be the lineal descendants of Visvakarma, the divine architect of the gods, sought the dignity of Vedic ritual and a Brahminical status. Historically the term Visvakarma began to appear in inscriptions referring to the smiths—five craft groups comprising blacksmiths, carpenters, coppersmiths, sculptors, and goldsmiths—from the twelfth century onwards.⁴ Given the close traditional relationship between castes, craft, religion and prestige, these craft groups had a social status equal to that of Brahmins.⁵ In its entirety, while all the craft groups claimed the status of ‘minor Brahmins’, it looks like that since the seventeenth century the Sonars were claiming the status of Daivadnya Brahmin—ritually higher, not only in comparison to the other four craft groups, but more importantly, at par with Brahmins.⁶ Despite the claim concerning their Brahmin caste, the Sonars had always been granted Puranic rites associated with the Shudra caste.⁷ However, in the nineteenth century, when Sonars were expressing their power through the Vedic ritual, the Brahmins in Goa and Maharashtra campaigned to limit the authority of Vedic ritual to Brahmins alone.

While making these claims, the Sonars were aided by a number of factors. In the sixteenth century, the Sonars are mentioned in the Portuguese records as *chatim* and *shets*, meaning merchants or businessmen.⁸ Moreover, these references indicate that they were recognised as Vaishyas, although GSBs, richer than the former, socially regarded them as Shudras. The Sonars

⁴ Vijaya Ramaswamy, “Vishwakarma Craftsmen in Early Medieval Peninsular India,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 4 (2004): 549.

⁵ A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Indian Craftsman* (London: Probsthain & Co., 1909), 52.

⁶ Manuel de Faria y Sousa, *The Portugues Asia: or, The History of the Discovery and Conquest of India by the Portugues*, vol. 3, trans. John Stevens (London: Printed for C. Brome, 1695), 295.

⁷ Filippe Nery Xavier, *Collecção de bandos, e outras diferentes providencias que servem de leis regulamentares para o governo economico, e judicial das provincias denominadas das Novas Conquistas*, vol. I (Panjim: Imprensa Nacional, 1840), 84–5.

⁸ Souza Viterbo, “Os Ourives Indigenas de Goa,” *O Oriente Português* 9, nos 3–4 (1910): 65–8; Nuno Vassallo e Silva, ed., *A Herança de Rauluchantim* (Lisboa: Museu de São Roque, 1996); M. N. Pearson, *Coastal western India: Studies from the Portuguese records* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1981), 102, 126–127, 149; P. P. Shirodkar, *Researches in Indo-Portuguese History*, vol. 1 (Jaipur: Publication Scheme, 1998), 194.

benefitted from the Portuguese conquest of Goa. From the letters of Afonso de Albuquerque, we know that Raulu Chatim worked for him in Goa.⁹ Subsequently, he even worked for the Portuguese king Dom Manuel in Lisbon, and returned home without going through a religious conversion.¹⁰ Another example is of Virupa Chatim, the chief of the goldsmiths of Goa, one of the richest businessmen, who had petitioned the Portuguese king against an increase in taxes paid by the goldsmiths of Goa in 1547–48.¹¹

While Goa, the capital of the Portuguese State of India, emerged as the centre for trade in gemstones, pearls and precious works in gold and silver, it not just benefitted the local Sonars, but also attracted jewellers and gem cutters from across Asia and Europe.¹² Apart from the production of luxury items known for their finest technical quality, which was the great driver of commerce along the Goa–Lisbon axis, there were also diplomatic artistic exchanges between the Portuguese and the Indian rulers.¹³ Besides the production of luxury items on a global scale, gold and silver gilded objects were consumed locally as jewellery, household vessels, boxes and caskets, decorative artefacts and religious images. As Goa emerged as the world emporium for

⁹ Henrique Lopes de Mendonça, ed., *Cartas de Affonso de Albuquerque: seguidas de documentos que as elucidam*, vol. VI (Lisboa: Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, 1915), 232.

¹⁰ Panduranga S. S. Pissurlencar, “Os primeiros Goeses em Portugal,” *Boletim do Instituto Vasco da Gama* 31 (1936): 61–2; Pratima Kamat, *Farar Far: Local Resistance to Colonial Hegemony in Goa 1510–1912* (Panjim: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999), 80.

¹¹ Francisco Pais, *Tombo da Ilha de Goa e das Terras de Salcête e Bardez* (Notas Historicas Finais por Panduranga S. S. Pissurlencar) (Bastorá: Tipografia Rangel, 1952), 184; Ângela Barreto Xavier, “Disquiet on the island: Conversion, conflicts and conformity in sixteenth-century Goa,” *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 44, no. 3 (2007): 274.

¹² Nuno Vassallo e Silva, “Treasures from the Orient,” in *Jewels from the India Run*, ed. Hugo Miguel Crespo (Lisbon, Fundação Oriente, 2015), 10–14.

¹³ Susan Stronge, “Ouro e Prata na Corte Mogol nos Séculos XVI e XVII,” in *A Herança de Rauluchantim*, ed. Nuno Vassallo e Silva (Lisboa, Museu de São Roque, 1996), 62–81; Nuno Vassallo e Silva, “Jewels for the Great Mughal: Goa a Centre of the Gem Trade in the Orient,” *Jewellery Studies* 10 (2004): 41–51; Nuno Vassallo e Silva, “Precious Stones, Jewels and Cameos: Jacques de Coutré’s Journey to Goa and Agra,” in *Goa and the Great Mughal*, eds. Nuno Vassallo e Silva and Jorge Flores (London: Scala, 2004), 116–33; Manuel Keene, “The Enamel Road, from Siena, Paris, London and Lisbon, leads to Lucknow,” *Jewellery Studies* 10 (2004): 99–126.

the trade in gems and precious works, the Portuguese pragmatically refused to force Christianity on the Sonars. This probably explains why today it is difficult to find a traditional Christian goldsmith from Goa.¹⁴

By the end of the seventeenth century, the Sonars prospered substantially, to the extent that they were second after the GSBs to hold *renda*—merchants acquiring right to farm duties, taxes on food shops, tobacco and spices—that were awarded by the Portuguese to the highest bidder.¹⁵ In Maharashtra, they benefitted from the growth and prosperity of Pune under the Peshwas, and the rise of state-licensed private mints were largely under Sonars.¹⁶ Since the eighteenth century, as they began to advance claims of being Daivadnya Brahmins (meaning, one who knows the work relating to god), there was a contest between the Sonars and the Brahmins with respect to their social standing in the caste hierarchy. More particularly, as R. E. Enthoven noted, the Sonars' claim to Brahminhood was located in their craft practice which gave them access to the inner sanctuary of the temples for installing images of gods.¹⁷ During the rule of the Peshwas, these claims for Vedokta rights and a twice-born status attracted severe corporal punishments.¹⁸ Subsequently, in 1824, when the Sonars were denied their claims for Vedokta rites, Jagannath Shankarseth, the leading banker of Bombay who was barely 22 years old, and sixteen other Sonars from Bombay petitioned Mountstuart Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, and argued for their claims to the Vedokta rites.¹⁹

¹⁴ Kamat, *Farar Far*, 80.

¹⁵ M. N. Pearson, "Indigenous Domination in a Colonial Economy: The Goa Rendas, 1600–1670," in *Mare Luso-Indicum: Etudes et documents sur l'histoire de l'océan Indien et des pays riverains à l'époque de la domination portugaise*, vol. II, ed. Jean Aubin (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1973), 61–73.

¹⁶ D. C. Sircar, *Studies in Indian Coins* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1968), 274–75; Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Caste and its Histories in Colonial India: A reappraisal," *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no. 2 (2017): 451–52.

¹⁷ R. E. Enthoven, *The Castes and Tribes of Bombay*, vol. III (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1922), 344.

¹⁸ Sudha Desai, *Social Life in Maharashtra Under the Peshwas* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1980), 39.

¹⁹ Narendra K. Wagle, "A Dispute between the Pancal Devajna Sonars and the Brahmanas of Pune regarding Social Rank and Ritual Privileges: A Case-Study of the British Administration of Jati Laws in

Such attempts caught the attention of British officials. For instance, Arthur Travers Crawford, the first municipal commissioner of Bombay, emphasises Jagannath Shankarseth as the ‘great philanthropist Sonar’ who earnestly hoped that he would be admitted to the Brahmin caste.²⁰ Delving further into the history of Sonars, John Wilson, makes significant observations. It is important to note that Wilson was a Scottish missionary. He was the president of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society from 1835–42 and subsequently the vice–chancellor of the University of Bombay in 1868.²¹ In his *Indian Caste*, that was written before 1857, Wilson refers to *Sahayadri Khanda*—perhaps a different manuscript to José Gerson da Cunha’s edition of 1877, denoting the Sonars as ‘Mahashudra’ or great Shudra. He then noted that they are the best of the Shudras.²²

One of the long–standing disputes between the GSBs and the Sonars in Portuguese Goa came from disagreements over insignia adopted by either side on ceremonial occasions, such as weddings. Mounting a direct challenge to the authority of the GSBs in Portuguese Goa, the Sonars, at least from the early seventeenth century, were styling themselves as Daivadnya Brahmins by using a *suryapan* (a peacock feather held by an emblem of the sun and the moon, carried on the chest during marriage), a parasol, and the right to ride a horse on the wedding day.²³ These privileges were special to the GSBs, who did not like this imitation and strongly opposed the transgression by the Sonars to pass off as Brahmins.²⁴ In 1837, the GSBs even got the government to issue a prohibitory order against this attempt on the part of the Sonars.²⁵

Maharashtra, 1822–1825,” in *Images of Maharashtra, A Regional Profile of India*, ed. N. K. Wagle (London and Dublin: Curzon Press, 1980), 129–59.

²⁰ Arthur Travers Crawford, *Our Troubles in Poona and the Deccan* (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1897), 210.

²¹ George Smith, *The Life of John Wilson* (London: John Murray, 1879); Govind Narayan Maadgaonkar, *Mumbaichi Varnan*, trans. and ed. Murali Ranganathan (London: Anthem Press, 2007), 357.

²² John Wilson, *Indian Caste*, vol. I (Bombay: Times of India Office, 1877), 56.

²³ Sousa, *The Portugues Asia*, 295; Sebastião Rodolpho Dalgado, *Glossário Luso–Asiática*, vol. II (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1921), 331–32.

²⁴ Augusto Carlos Teixeira de Aragão, *Descrição geral e histórica das moedas cunhadas em nome dos reis, regentes e governadores de Portugal*, vol. III (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1880), 23.

²⁵ *Legislação Novissima, 1834–1851*, vol. I (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1867), 53–4.

Subsequently, the Sonars petitioned the government in 1856 and got the issue decided in their favour.²⁶ This was not the first time, nor indeed the last, that the colonial state was oscillating on the caste standing and other forms of ritual entitlement of the Sonars. Moreover, this was a complex process fraught with tensions and one that necessitated more mundane considerations of material advantage. During 1870s–1890s, repeated complaints were made to the government by the GSBs requesting that the use of the *suryapan* should be prohibited for the Sonars. However, amidst the opposition by the GSBs, the government extended support to the Sonars on numerous occasions.²⁷

By the end of the nineteenth century, it looks like the Sonars were successful in asserting what they considered to be their established rights and prerogatives according to the custom. This is also obvious from the ethnographical work of Lopes Mendes. In a drawing of a goldsmith, he saw them styled as a Brahmin in costume with a parasol—revealing a very particular ethnographic sensibility—an important marker of hierarchy and difference.²⁸ Besides, as the temple was emerging as an important institution of caste identity, the Sonars challenged the position of the GSBs as *mahajans* in temples, and their consequent privileges.²⁹ Further, they were also able to consolidate their hold over the Kalika temple at Kasarpal, making it an exclusive temple of the Daivadnya Brahmins.³⁰ These different assertions of caste identity were further reflected in *Kalika Darshan*, a Marathi periodical of the Daivadnya, published from Panjim in 1898–99.³¹

On the other hand, the GSBs viewed the issue of the Sonars adopting ways of the Brahmins as a great breach of the Hindu religion and attacked them for buying caste, and looked down upon them as ‘*nali funkanare sonar*’, meaning craftsmen working with a metallic blow-pipe, a mark

²⁶ *Legislação Novíssima, 1852–1856*, vol. II (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1869), 729–30.

²⁷ Ramchandra Sabaji Samant, *Gove Prantatil Banda* (Ponda: Ek Vidhyarti, 1901), 9; *O Goa Panch* (Supplement), 16 June 1892; *O Goa Panch*, August 1892, 1–2.

²⁸ António Lopes Mendes, *A Índia Portuguesa*, vol. I (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1886), 41.

²⁹ *Bharat*, 18 June 1931, 3.

³⁰ This relationship between castes and temples has been examined in the next chapter.

³¹ N. B. Nayak, *Gomantakiya Niyatkaleke* (Rivona: Self-published, 1965), 28.

of social inferiority.³² They considered the Sonars to be Shudras and excluded them from the membership of the Goa Hindu Sarvajanic Sabha, one of the first political associations set up by the Hindus, more particularly the GSBs, in 1890.³³ In the early twentieth century, an extended campaign of polemic and counter–polemic gave a fresh impetus to the caste identity of the Sonars. Most works describing social life in Goa at this time characterised the community of the Sonars as making a claim for the Daivadnya Brahmin caste identity.³⁴ Pissurlencar highlighted that the Sonars that converted to Christianity were generally integrated in the Shudra caste.³⁵ There were also works such as J. A. Saldanha’s *Indian Caste: Konkani or Goan Castes* that placed the Sonars in the category of Konkani non–Brahmin Hindus.³⁶ In 1923, when Lingu Raghuvir Dalvi wrote an article ‘Daivadnya Brahman Nahi’, the Sonars in turn questioned the Brahminical status of the GSBs.³⁷ Further, a number of articles written by an individual under the pseudonym ‘Saraswat’ in the Marathi periodical *Bharat*, questioned the Daivadnya caste identity of the Sonars.³⁸ While the Daivadnya responded to these critiques, they continued to be an important aspect in elite political and caste struggles.

As the conflict regarding the purity of Brahmins, and with it, ritual entitlement, continued into the twentieth century, both in Maharashtra and Goa, efforts were made by the Sonars in Goa as well as those who had migrated to British Bombay, first to consolidate as Govekar or Gomantakastha Daivadnya, and subsequently to identify themselves with Konkani or Konkani Sonars—those settled on the Konkani coast, more particularly in Bombay, Thane, Kulaba, Ratnagiri, Sawantwadi, Pune, Sangli, Belgaum, Mangalore and Karwar. These communities of

³² Yeshwant Phondoba Naik Danait and Ramchandra Govind Wagle, *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas* (Mumbai: Asiatic Chapkhana, 1873), 44; *Prabhat*, 9 November 1911, 3.

³³ *O Niaya Chacxu*, 20 April, 1890, 4.

³⁴ A. B. de. Bragança Pereira, “Etnografia da Índia Portuguesa,” *A Índia Portuguesa*, vol. I (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1923), 353.

³⁵ Pissurlencar, “O Elemento Hindu da Casta Charddo,” 232.

³⁶ Jerome Anthony Saldanha, *Indian Caste: Konkani or Goan Castes*, vol. I (Bombay: Anglo-Lusitano Press, 1904), 20.

³⁷ *Prabhat*, November 1936, 9–18.

³⁸ *Bharat*, 18 June 1925, 6; *Bharat*, 6 August 1925, 5–6; *Bharat*, 24 September 1925, 5–6.

Sonars, spread across the Konkan coast, shared many common aspects, such as occupation, technology, tools, and more importantly, styling as Daivadnya Brahmin.

The strategy of unity and consolidation was to gain numerical strength that would facilitate articulation of interests, both in British India and Portuguese Goa. In 1903, the Daivadnya Association was set up in Bombay with a hope that it would confer benefits to members in the competitive urban arena.³⁹ Subsequently, in 1908, the first Daivadnya caste conference was held in Pune—a city that had castigated them for performing Vedic rituals and other forms of ritual entitlement.⁴⁰ It was largely attended by the Sonars from Maharashtra and a few from Goa who considered themselves eligible for the membership and agreed to meet every three years. More importantly, these conferences emerged as mediums to redefine their identity—henceforth in all their relations they were to use the term Daivadnya instead of traditional forms and they also made efforts to employ priests of their own caste.⁴¹ Similarly, they began to use the Marathi print more prominently to promote the cause of caste unity and progress. This eventually led to the publication of caste-based periodicals such as *Daivadnaya Masik* and *Daivadnaya–Prabhodini* from Bombay. These periodicals followed the contemporary developments and debates among the Daivadnya in Maharashtra, Goa and Karnataka—more particularly, the Konkan coast. As a result, they contributed towards the re-writing of their history from the point of view of the community's needs.

However, there was confusion over the caste identity of the Daivadnya who came from Portuguese Goa. This forced the second conference held at Bombay in 1911 to pass a resolution demanding the inclusion of Daivadnya from Goa and Karwar.⁴² On the contrary, the resolution turned controversial and the third conference that was to be held in 1914 was finally convened in 1917.⁴³ During this period from 1911–1917, many articles were published emphasising marriages between Daivadnya from Goa and Sawantwadi. Upholding the unity among them, the

³⁹ *Daivadnaya–Prabhodini*, November 1915, 3.

⁴⁰ *Daivadnaya Masik*, April 1914, 331–33.

⁴¹ *Daivadnaya–Prabhodini*, January–February 1918, 96.

⁴² *Daivadnaya Samajunnati Parishad– Adhiveshan Tisre, Satara, 1917: Report* (Mumbai: Yeshwant Vishnu Karekar, 1919), 24.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 12.

differences in customs, traditions and language were seen not as a difference in caste, but a product of distance.⁴⁴

One of the most significant outcomes of the second conference was the emphasis on vernacular education in Goa which had enabled people to obtain jobs and attain an economic mobility.⁴⁵ At the end of the nineteenth century, the GSBs had successfully directed their efforts toward establishing Marathi primary schools for their children. Subsequently, with a poor schooling record, the Daivadnya in Goa were forced to raise funds to set up Marathi primary schools, that too, during Shigmo celebrations at Kalika temple, Kasarpal.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, at the third Daivadnya conference held at Satara in 1917, and attended by sixteen Daivadnya from Goa, Govind Waman Nagvekar explained colonial Goa's disappointing performance in Marathi primary education due to the limited availability of public funds and appealed to the Daivadnya from Maharashtra to extend support.⁴⁷ Accordingly, when the Daivadnya from Goa organised meetings towards the spread of education at Kalika temple, they were prominently attended by the Daivadnya from Maharashtra.⁴⁸

At the start of the twentieth century, apart from the efforts made by the Daivadnya to establish Marathi schools in Goa's villages, where they were in considerable numbers, Jagannath Shankarseth, who had defended their Daivadnya caste status during the early half of the nineteenth-century in Maharashtra, emerged as the unifying symbol.⁴⁹ During this time, attention was not only focussed on celebrating his anniversaries, but he was also invoked to resolve internal differences among the Daivadnya in Goa.⁵⁰ In 1923, the Daivadnaya Brahmin Samaj

⁴⁴ *Daivadnaya-Prabhodini*, November 1917, 19.

⁴⁵ *Daivadnaya Masik*, January-February 1914, 265.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Daivadnaya Samajunnati Parishad- Adhiveshan Tisre, Satara, 1917: Report*, 30.

⁴⁸ *Daivadnaya Masik*, March 1923, back cover.

⁴⁹ *Daivadnaya Samajunnati Parishad- Adhiveshan Tisre, Satara, 1917: Report*, 10; *Bharat*, 6 August 1925, 5-6; *Bharat*, 13 January 1927, 5; *Hindu*, 13 August 1929, 7; Purshottam Balkrishna Kulkarni, *Nana Shankar Shet Yanche Charitra* (Mumbai: Nana Shankar Shet Charitra Prakashan Samiti, 1959).

⁵⁰ *Bharat*, 22 August 1929, 3.

was established at Margao and a library was added.⁵¹ Subsequently, in 1925, the Daivadnya Brahmin Samaj was also established at Mapuca.⁵² Besides, the sixth Daivadnya caste conference was held at Margao in 1926 under the photographic presence of Jagannath Shankarseth. It was hoped that this conference would stimulate the development of educational and economic institutions that would confer overall benefits, not only to economically well-to-do, but also enable the disadvantaged Daivadnya families to gain access to education and employment.⁵³ Further, the Portuguese governor who was being invited for the conference acknowledged their efforts towards education in his message. Although the Daivadnya from Goa found it difficult to access public employment due to the considerable hold of the GSBs over the Portuguese administration, they were able to redefine their status through the wealth they held. Thus, being able to be treated as a Daivadnya Brahmin was not only a matter of securing recognition through the performance of Vedic ritual, but more importantly, it rested on the ideals of unity and progress—both social as well as economic. And, these public activities around caste led to the construction of a structural unity among the Daivadnya.

3.2 Vani: Keeping up with the Vaishyas

One of the important features of social life in Goa's Hindu majority villages was the triangular rivalry between the GSBs, Daivadnya and Vani castes. Similar to the Daivadnya, the Vani, who claimed the status of Vaishya, were not only known as *shet*, but more importantly, had prefixed it to their surname. Furthermore, although the Vani as a caste do not exist among the Catholics in Goa, the baptism records show that they were recognised as Chardo (Catholic Kshatriya) upon conversion to Christianity. Besides, ethnographic evidence shows that Vani and Chardo shared common lineages.⁵⁴

Unlike the elite GSBs who resided in and around the port cities of Old Goa and Panjim, garnering immense wealth through their domination over maritime trade, the Vani were grocers, also

⁵¹ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 87, 31 October 1933, 1510–12.

⁵² *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 65, 13 August 1926, 848–50.

⁵³ *Bharat*, 13 January 1927, 5.

⁵⁴ A. B. de Bragança Pereira, “Os Ranés, os quetris, os oixos, os Charddos, e o bramanes de Goa,” *O Oriente Português XVI*, nos. 7–8 (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1919), 236.

involved in the allied activity of trade.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, there were a few Vani families who were commercially oriented and did prosper by participating in long-distance trade. One such family, Shet Khalap (Xette Colopo) from Mapuca, the richest of the Vanis, has noteworthy references on its participation in maritime trade. During the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries, the family shipped goods to major maritime trading regions of the Portuguese empire, trading in textile, pepper and opium with Macao, Timor, Mozambique and Brazil.⁵⁶

With the territorial expansion of Portuguese Goa in the eighteenth century, the city of Mapuca witnessed rapid growth, catering to the needs of populations from the New Conquests in North Goa. The Vanis benefitted from these developments—they were better off than the GSBs in Mapuca. This may account for the fact that Mapuca emerged as the centre of their community. However, this process took a decisive turn with the GSBs and the Vanis competing with each other as small-scale traders and shopkeepers, not just in urban areas but also in villages. By the nineteenth century, the Vanis sought the dignity of Vedic ritual and a ‘twice-born’ status, claiming to be of the Vaishya caste. The GSBs who saw them as Shudras did not like their performance of sacrifices and sacraments of the ‘twice-born’ and their attempt to pass off as Vaishyas. In addition, as the GSBs made increasing use of the colonial state for furthering their dominance, the Vanis, too, began to consolidate.

Overall, the Vani community was divided into three regional groups: Kudale, Patane (Satara) and Sangameshwari (Ratnagiri).⁵⁷ Although there were prohibitions on inter-dining and intermarriage, they followed the Shankaracharya of Karveer–Sankeshwar matha, one of the great authorities in matters of Hindu religious law, as their religious head. The 1901 census of British

⁵⁵ Naik Danait and Wagle, *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas*, 45.

⁵⁶ *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 32, 26 April 1861, 255; Waman Anantshet Khalap, *Mapuse yethil Khalap Gharanachya Itihas* (Pune: N. V. Khalap, 1954), 34–46; Celsa Pinto, *Trade and Finance in Portuguese India: A Study of the Portuguese Country Trade, 1770-1840* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1994), 125, 137, 189.

⁵⁷ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency: Belgaum* (Bombay: The Government Central Press, 1886), 99–100; *Vaishya Sevak*, May 1927, 8.

India showed Kudale Vani—at times known as Konkani Vani—as a separate community.⁵⁸ Historically, Kudale Vani were stated to have originated from Goa.⁵⁹ In sixteenth-century Portuguese Goa, they fled the region to escape forced conversions. Subsequently, their settlements across the Konkan coast contributed towards their geographical divisions.⁶⁰ They were sub-divided into Bandekar Vani, Narvekar Vani, Pednekar Vani and Bavkule Vani. While, they were spread across Goa, Mumbai, Sawantwadi, Banda, Kudal, Malvan, Vengurla, Devagadh, Karwar, Belgaum, Mangalore and Cochin, their lineage gods were located in Goa.⁶¹

At the end of the nineteenth century, as the Vanis were making claims to a Vaishya caste identity and its entitlements, the GSB and other Brahmin priests from Goa refused to perform *upanayana* (the thread ceremony) for them, claiming they were Shudras. In retaliation, the Vanis claimed that the Shankaracharya of Karveer–Sankeshwar matha had settled the dispute which established them as Vaishyas.⁶² Besides, they were commissioning priests from outside Goa to carry out Vedic rituals to which they were not entitled. Subsequently, efforts were made to unite the Vani in Goa leading to the setting up of the Vani Mandal at Mapuca in 1886.⁶³ At the same time, they saw the lack of education as the source of their backwardness.⁶⁴

In 1908, individuals from the Vani community led by Ravalu Shambu Shet Khalap and Vaman Anant Shet Khalap formed Dnayna Prasarak Mandali, an association to set up a Marathi school at Mapuca.⁶⁵ It was perhaps the first Marathi school established by any non–Brahmin community.⁶⁶ The funds were generated through a *mushti*–fund. In addition, Velingkar, a teacher

⁵⁸ *Census of India, 1911. Bombay*, vol. VIII, Part I: Report (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1912), 197.

⁵⁹ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency: Belgaum*, 99–100.

⁶⁰ *Vaishya Yuvak*, November 1937, 7–13.

⁶¹ Saldanha, *Indian Caste: Konkani or Goan Castes*, 21.

⁶² *Bharat*, 8 October 1936, 5; *Bharat* 3 December, 1936, 5.

⁶³ *O Goatmá*, 9 August 1886, 4.

⁶⁴ *Vaishya Masik*, April 1910, 2–7.

⁶⁵ *Dnayna Prasarak Mandali, Mapuca: Niyamavali va Pahila Varshik Ahaval (1908–1909)* (Kumbahrjua: Kapataru Chapkhana, 1909).

⁶⁶ *Prabhat*, 9 January 1913, 3.

and a proprietor of a circus, donated a show's income.⁶⁷ The school was set up against the backdrop of social tensions between the two leading communities of Mapuca—the GSB and the Vani. In the early 1900s, due to a confrontation during the re-consecration of the Shantadurga deity at Dhargal, the GSBs refused to pay *potti*—the annual contribution towards the temple. On the other hand, the Vani community complained to the Shankaracharya of Sankeshwar–Karveer matha, who ordered the Hindus to boycott troublemakers.⁶⁸ Determined then, this face-off forced the GSBs to unite and question the Shankaracharya's authority to arbitrate.⁶⁹ The confrontation perhaps explains why the GSB community from Mapuca had to take a lead in the caste unity movement of the GSBs in Goa.⁷⁰

In the early half of the twentieth century, as the GSBs emphasised the Shudra caste identity of the Vanis, the latter saw it as a strategy employed by the GSBs to take over their temples.⁷¹ This ideological competition between the GSBs and the Vanis with respect to their social status in the caste hierarchy forced Narayan Datta Shet Verekar to publish a critique of the GSB writers by raising an important question—'are all non-Brahmins Shudras?'⁷² Moreover, they not only competed with the GSBs over the position of *mahajan* in temples of lineage gods but also set up their temples in urban areas. In 1883, *compromisso* of the Maruti temple, Mapuca, was approved by the government with Vanis as the *mahajans*. And in 1910s they built the Vithal temple at Margao, and the *compromisso* was approved in 1919.⁷³ More importantly, these temples were located in the prominent cities of Goa, one in the north and the other in the south, and would play an important role in networking the community and diffusing internal conflicts.⁷⁴ Further, they

⁶⁷ Dnayna Prasarak Mandali, *Mapuca: Dwitiya Varshik Ahaval (1909–1910)* (Bastora: Rangel Chapkhana, 1910), 3.

⁶⁸ *Satsang* 4, no. 3 (1905), 56.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ In 1910, a first Samyukta Gaud Saraswat Brahmin Parishad was held at Mapuca. For details see, Parag D. Parobo, *India's First Democratic Revolution: Dayanand Bhandarkar and the rise of Bahujan in Goa* (Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2015), 31.

⁷¹ *Bharat*, 3 December 1936, 5.

⁷² Shet Verekar, *Os Chardés São Sudros?*

⁷³ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 24, 25 March 1919, 257–60.

⁷⁴ *Prabhat*, 22 January 1914, 3.

were seen as confidence building institutions, which would contribute towards the social progress of the 'Vaishya samaj'.⁷⁵

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the most striking feature of the Vanis was the extension of their activities to British India. Around 1910s it looks like the Vanis from Goa, and those based in Bombay, had established the Vaishya Mandal and the Vaishya Vidhyarthi Sahayak Mandal to support students belonging to the community. Subsequently, in 1922 they were merged to form the Vaishya Samaj.⁷⁶ At the same time, the Vaishya Bhavan was set up at Mapuca to work towards education, with its constitution approved by the government in 1924.⁷⁷ While most of these endeavours were carried out at the regional levels, now efforts were made to consolidate all Vani communities spread across the Konkan coast—the most remarkable being the first Vaishya conference held at Dhargal, Goa, in 1925. Although the conference was seen as a new beginning towards the unity and progress of Vanis, it was in fact the peak of the unification movement initiated at the end of the nineteenth century. Before the conference, six committees comprising of Vanis from Goa were formed and the members visited various places in Maharashtra and Karnataka, carrying the message and purpose of the conference.

Around 5,000 members, including women, attended the conference, with participants coming from all over the western coast of India.⁷⁸ It represented an attempt made by the Vanis from Goa, more particularly from Mapuca, to unite regional subgroupings into a single caste. This integration was to have historical and modern dimensions. In terms of historical lineage, all the speakers, including the president of the conference, Narayan Balwant Padte, an advocate from Bombay, publicly identified them as descendants from Goa in the distant past.⁷⁹ While they accused Brahmins of downgrading the status of Vaishyas, they hoped for a unity in the development of educational and economic institutions that would confer benefits, not only to those already in the competitive urban areas, but also enable disadvantaged families to gain

⁷⁵ *Nava-Jivana*, 16 March 1920, 3.

⁷⁶ *Vaishya Sevak*, August 1928, 3–5.

⁷⁷ *Bharat*, 6 December 1923, 2; *Boletim Official do Estado da Índia*, no. 60, 25 July 1924, 710–11.

⁷⁸ *Hindu*, 2 January 1926, 5.

⁷⁹ *Vaishya Parishad: Adhiveshan Pahile, 1925–Dhargal* (Mapuca: Vaishya Parishad, 1927).

access to education and employment.⁸⁰ A demand for girls' education by Yesubai Madgut and Radha Mapusekar forced the conference to pass a resolution in support of their education, including that of widows.⁸¹ Further, it was decided to undertake a population enumeration of Vanis from Goa. As a result, a committee headed by Narayan Anant Shet Bandodkar was established, which appealed to Vanis to register their names.⁸²

Subsequent to the caste conference, the community witnessed a number of developments. Firstly, efforts were made by the Vani to locate their glorious period in remote antiquity. The kings of early India such as Samudragupta and Harshavardhan were carefully invoked. Moreover, they were seen as prominent Vaishya who had performed the role of Kshatriya after resisting oppressive taxation by the previous rulers.⁸³ Secondly, it led to the setting up of new periodicals in British India and Portuguese Goa. Until now, *Vaishya Masik*, published from Bombay, had been the only prominent periodical of the community, but subsequently *Vaishya Sevak* and *Vaishya Yuvak* were established in British India. Besides, Shambu Anant Shet Kesarkar established *Vaishya Masik* at Panjim in 1931.⁸⁴ Thirdly, the community set up Marathi primary schools and libraries, more prominently in Mapuca and Ponda, and efforts were made to generate funds to provide scholarships for higher education of students in Bombay.⁸⁵ Further, all their meetings began with a call towards unity, and subsequently the Vaishya Ekikaran Mandal was set up in Bombay in 1934 to unite Vaishyas from Goa and Maharashtra.⁸⁶ These developments were transforming the Vanis remarkably—one indicator of importance in this case was the election of Narayan Anant Shet Bandodkar to the *conselho do Governo* in 1928.

⁸⁰ *Vaishya Parishad: Adhiveshan Pahile, 1925–Dhargal; Hindu*, 9 January 1926, 4.

⁸¹ *Hindu*, 9 January 1926, 3.

⁸² *Bharat*, 9 January 1930, 3.

⁸³ Shet Verekar, *Os Chardés São Sudros*, 5.

⁸⁴ Nayak, *Gomantakatil Niyatikale*, 63.

⁸⁵ *Bharat*, 1 April 1926, 3.

⁸⁶ *Bharat*, 24 July 1934, 4.

3.3 Military *naukari* and the Kshatriya Marathas

Contemporary references to the term Maratha in an early modern context tend to be historiographically over-burdened, neglectful of how the term was reshaped over time, especially at the end of the nineteenth century. This oversimplification has led to the establishment of martial stereotypes. Moreover, as Prachi Deshpande has suggested, the term has taken on a deceptive aura of familiarity, although its precise definition as it developed is vitally rooted in the contexts in which it is used.⁸⁷ Further, recent scholarship that has examined the military employment composed of a vast number of mercenary networks for medieval India as a whole have shown that many of the terms described as castes, such as the Rajput in the north Indian context, and the Marathas in south India, were, although created out of the interaction of military service, were in fact, open, relational and ascriptive terms at the turn of the nineteenth century.⁸⁸ These contexts inflected by historical periods—precolonial and colonial, exhibit a wide range of socio-political dynamics.

Following the decline of the Kadamba dynasty that ruled over various parts of the Deccan and Goa from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries, Vijayanagar, Bahmani—and its successor state Adil Shahi—fought wars over Goa. While the Kadamba rule has been described as a period of peace and prosperity, notable for cultural achievements, the post-Kadamba period was marked by constant warfare.⁸⁹ The rapid expansion of emerging regional states and constant warfare provided unintended opportunities for social mobility, not just for the scribal elite, but also for the peasant-in-arms. According to the intensity and duration of the conflict, successive regimes in western India were forced to draw their soldiers more heavily from the peasantry. Further,

⁸⁷ Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India 1700-1960* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007).

⁸⁸ Dirk H. A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Stewart Gordon, *Marathas, Marauders, and State Formation in Eighteenth-Century India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994); Prachi Deshpande, “Caste as Maratha: Social Categories, Colonial Policy and Identity in Early Twentieth-Century Maharashtra,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 41, no. 1 (2004): 7–32.

⁸⁹ George M. Moraes, *Kadamba Kula: A History of Ancient and Medieval Karnataka* (Bombay: B. X. Furtado & Sons, 1931), 165–216.

when a campaign was undertaken, the peasantry could be acquired readily—volunteered or recruited for the duration of the conflict.⁹⁰ In addition, as the states were finding it difficult to control armed peasantry, the post-Kadamba period, more particularly the Adil Shahi rule, witnessed the assignment of fiefs to the families who had gained mobility either through civil administration or via military service. While these fiefs were revenue assignments, the feudal lords were conferred with the titles of *Sardesai* and *Desai*, and remunerated by land grants such as *mokaso* (rent-free lands) and *inam* (gift lands).⁹¹ Further, they emerged as a key military resource for the Adil Shahi sultanate—they had to defend the region and maintain troops which were recruited from the peasantry. This illustrates the different ways in which the Adil Shahi sultanate was beginning to make demands on their local populations, and the opportunities these institutions opened up for social mobility.⁹²

With the Portuguese capture of Old Conquests by the mid–sixteenth century, they were able to regulate the kinds of individuals taken into the army. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Portuguese army was comprised of Portuguese and Luso–*descendentes* who were attracted by offers of a favoured status, and the Goan Catholics. Although the Goan Catholics formed the majority, the colonial state’s ability to modify its army demonstrated the way in which they not only centralised it, but also achieved the de–militarisation of the peasantry.⁹³ However, when the Portuguese captured the territories of the New Conquests at the turn of the eighteenth century, they were relatively weak and powerless as compared to the sixteenth century and imitated the indigenous pattern of recruitment in these regions.

⁹⁰ This system continued as late as the early half of the nineteenth century. See, Narhar Vyankajee Rajyadhyaksha, *True history of the Scindias containing the life of Bakshi Bahadur Mujafardaul Jiwajee Ballal alias Jivababadada Kerkar Bahadar Fattejang and other generals who had made the Marathas rulers of India, such as Lakhabadada Lad, Jagoba Bapu and other personages* (Bombay: Nirnayasagar Press, 1907), 5.

⁹¹ Hiroshi Fukazawa, “A Study of the Local Administration of Adil Shahi Sultanate (A.D. 1489–1686),” *Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics* 3, no. 2 (1963): 37–67.

⁹² Sumit Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India, 1200-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 85–107.

⁹³ Frederico Diniz d’Ayalla, *Goa: Antiga e Moderna* (Lisboa: Tipografia do Jornal do Comércio, 1888), 260.

The bureaucratisation of the New Conquests with limited resources was bound to produce a degree of flexibility in the organisation of the army. One of the most striking features of the provinces in the New Conquests from the mid-eighteenth century to the turn of the nineteenth century was the cost-effective accommodation of the *Sardesais* and the *Desais*. All their traditional rights, land grants and other entitlements to the land that came from the Adil Shahi, the Sunda kings and Bhonsales of Sawantwadi, except for revenue collection, were transformed into tax exempted landed property, inherited patrilineally. Some of them were even confirmed as military officials. In addition, they received whole villages or scattered properties in several villages to meet their military obligations.⁹⁴ They had to supply troops to the colonial state when called for, therefore subjecting themselves to protect the interests of the government. Moreover, their troops included not just individuals with a military history but also others in search of social mobility. Consequently, this military patronage and granting of villages in the New Conquests not only transformed the land relations in these regions, but at the same time, brought about the decline of the village community system.⁹⁵

Although we do not have much evidence on when exactly this system of military patronage ended, it looks like it was falling around the mid-nineteenth century. Only when the centralised system of recruitment in the army was extended to the New Conquests was there an attempt to regulate the kinds of individuals taken into the military. In 1870s, the Gomantak Kshatriya Marathas, who were mainly settled in the New Conquests and practiced agriculture, were making claims of superiority.⁹⁶ As communities found themselves competing for military employment, many sought to strengthen their claims in the Maratha identity that would display their martial spirit.⁹⁷ Out of these processes, particularly when opportunities for military employment were most scarce, perhaps developed some of the most creative strategies to advance and represent one's own interests and to revive the prospects of employment in the Portuguese army. That discussions about the place of Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha were occurring indicates a

⁹⁴ Filippe Nery Xavier, *Desenvolvimento da Natureza dos Bens dos Desaidos das Novas Conquistas* (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1845), 13–8.

⁹⁵ Remy A. D. Dias, “The Socio-Economic History of Goa with Special Reference to the Comunidade System: 1750-1910,” (PhD diss., Goa University, 2004), 73.

⁹⁶ Naik Danait and Wagle, *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas*, 45.

⁹⁷ *A Patria*, 23 September 1913, 3.

widespread anxiety about re-defining how they would fit within the warrior ethos of the Kshatriya caste, perhaps due to the magnitude of change occurring.

More importantly, life in Sattari, a hilly and forested area at this time, reflects these social and political tensions. In the later decades of the fifteenth century, Satroji Rane served Adil Shah at the time of his conquest of Goa. Immediately afterward, Adil Shah awarded him the title of *Sardesai*. The process was repeated after Adil Shah's rule; the Ranes shifted their loyalties from the Bhonsles of Sawantwadi to the Portuguese. In 1746, when the Ranes became vassals of the Portuguese, they not only continued to enjoy the same rights as they had under the Bhonsles, but were also allowed to maintain a force of 800 soldiers.⁹⁸ While the Ranes were to recruit fighting men for this force, the Portuguese would pay for the maintenance of these troops in return for military support, as and when required. Armed with military history and enjoying a favoured status at the courts of Adil Shah, Bhonsles and the Portuguese, the Ranes were claiming Kshatriya-hood, first by invoking a Rajput lineage, and later, in the nineteenth century, stressing their Maratha roots. From 1852–1855, when Dipu Rane revolted against the Portuguese fearing a loss of feudal comfort, it was also an attempt to establish a hold over employment in the Portuguese army by social groups claiming a Maratha caste identity. More importantly, the revolt led to the appointment of Dipu Rane as a captain in the Portuguese army, while his nephew was made a second-lieutenant, and another relative was recruited as a lieutenant. Amidst this fierce competition that emerged with a new political institution—the Portuguese army—a special unit of Maratha soldiers was created in 1855 which continued until 1932.⁹⁹

At the end of the nineteenth century, it seems that the Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha were recruited into prominent positions in the Portuguese army. In 1888, *O Goatmá* reports: until now, soldiers in the Portuguese army in Macao were largely comprised of locals, however, the government is now making a regiment of Marathas.¹⁰⁰ Frequency in army recruitment, fighting tenacity, and above all, a sense of courage and loyalty were the characteristics attributed to the Gomantak Kshatriya Marathas—the martial race. In the 1890s garrisons of Panjim consisted of

⁹⁸ Kamat, *Farar Far*, 163.

⁹⁹ Kamat, *Farar Far*, 178; J. S. Sukhtankar and R. V. Nayak, eds., *Aajcha Va Kalcha Gomantak* (Bombay: Goa Hindu Association, 1954), 67.

¹⁰⁰ *O Goatmá*, 2 April 1888, 2.

one infantry battalion, one battery unit of artillery and one company of police, each under a different command, but exclusively of Gomantak Kshatriya Marathas.¹⁰¹ Simultaneously, in 1895, Visconde de Ourem, the governor of Goa, was telegraphically informed by Ferreira de Almeida, the overseas and navy minister of Portugal, to organize a force of ‘true Marathas’ for suppressing the revolt at Mozambique.¹⁰² They were also used as a part of expansionist forces sent to Africa, Timor and Macao.¹⁰³ Further, they enhanced their martial caste identity through marriage alliances with Maratha families. In 1913, Gajraraje from the Rane family of Sanquelim was married into the Scindias—the Maratha royal family from Gwalior.¹⁰⁴ Thus arose the caste identity networks held together by marriages.

The colonial martial race ideology and its insistence on a high-caste Maratha pedigree for recruitment in the army, genealogy, marriage restrictions, as well as marriages with prominent Maratha princely families from British India led to identifying the Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha as a ‘true’ Kshatriya, different from other rural caste groups. Similar to the developments in British India, the interplay of caste rivalries among competing Hindu communities for selective military employment, and the colonial state’s support to the new models for a Maratha identity that stressed a glorious military tradition helped the Gomantak Kshatriya Marathas to shape their caste identity as true Maratha.¹⁰⁵ Finally, the celebration of the martial spirit for fighting against the colonial state at different times, more particularly, the Cuncolim revolt of 1583 during which five Jesuits were killed, and a series of Rane revolts (1850s–1910s) in the heroic mode, were used to reinforce their caste identity in the face of more intrusive demands over Maratha identity by other non-elite Maratha communities.¹⁰⁶ Subsequently, as demands were made for recruitment in the army by other communities, the rules of recruitment into the army were

¹⁰¹ Kamat, *Farar Far*, 244.

¹⁰² Visconde de Ourem, *A Revolta dos Marathas em 1895* (Lisbon: Tipografia Moreira e Pinheiro, 1900), 8; M. J. Gabriel de Saldanha, *História de Goa: Política e Arqueológica*, vol. I (Nova Goa: Nova Goa: Casa Editora Livraria Coelho, 1925), 295.

¹⁰³ Kamat, *Farar Far*, 241.

¹⁰⁴ Vijayaraje Scindia with Manohar Malgaonkar, *Princess: The Autobiography of the Dowager Maharani of Gwalior* (New Delhi: Times Books International, 1988), 120–21.

¹⁰⁵ Prachi Deshpande, “Caste as Maratha,” 30.

¹⁰⁶ *Bharat*, 19 September 1946, 3.

amended in 1913 to include Naik and Bhandari castes along with the Marathas, Catholics and Muslims.¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, this was protested by the GSBs who also sought service in the army.¹⁰⁸ Subsequently, in 1920, when the vacancies in the police department of Macao were announced, only candidates from the Maratha caste could apply.¹⁰⁹

As they navigated the new conditions of service in the 1920s, early efforts were made to launch a movement towards the progress of the Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha. It was led by Babu Shivram Prabhudessai, an advocate from Kotambi, and was founded upon the belief that education holds out the promise of full and participatory citizenship.¹¹⁰ Interestingly, amid opportunities for personal advancement and the complexities of political affiliation, Prabhudessai was also aspiring to participate in political life. A first step was to establish a political association. He was not only a founding member of Lok Paksha (People's Party) in Quepem, but was also a member of the Pragatic Sangh and had worked to improve its primary membership by appealing to individuals from his community to register.¹¹¹ In 1924, with the support of the Pragatic Sangh, Prabhudessai was elected to the legislative assembly as a substitute from the New Conquests.¹¹² Nevertheless, this victory did not strengthen his position in the legislative assembly, for Sakharam Sadashiva Suryarao Desai, a prominent GSB, the legislator voted for New Conquests, hardly failed to attend the meetings of the legislative assembly. It looks like Prabhudessai's political career lasted only a few years and henceforth he devoted his entire time and energy to organise the community.

Subsequently, Prabhudessai established an association, the Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha, at Kotambi, Quepem, for the purpose of consolidating and fostering networks within the community. This was to be accomplished by setting up schools and libraries, giving importance to learning Portuguese, creating a fund to provide scholarships and organising an annual caste conference. Moreover, although it was established around the late 1920s, the association was

¹⁰⁷ *Boletim Official da India Portuguesa*, no. 68, 26 August 1913, 706–07.

¹⁰⁸ *A Patria*, 23 September 1913, 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Bharat*, 13 May 1920, 3.

¹¹⁰ *Bharat*, 15 September 1921, 3.

¹¹¹ *Bharat*, 11 August 1921, 3.

¹¹² *Hindu*, 12 December 1924, 5.

formally registered only in 1940.¹¹³ Over the years, its activity was extended to chiefly organising its annual caste conferences, which meant that it was possible to protect their social and ritual status—by building a network and maintaining ties. In 1942, its fourth conference was held at Mallikarjun temple, Canacona, under the presidentship of Bhausahab Rane of Sanquelim.¹¹⁴ Along with these efforts to consolidate the community, a periodical, *Gadgadat* (thunder), was published for a short while in 1921.¹¹⁵ These developments promoted the ascendancy of the emerging elite of the Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha over rural society.

The GSBs were initially reluctant to accept the caste identity of the Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha, however, gradually they were forced to recognise their claims of a warrior ethos and the caste identity of the Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha was reshaped and negotiated. Firstly, similar to the Maharashtrian Brahmins who had refused to accept the Brahmin caste identity of the GSBs, the Marathas were considered Shudras.¹¹⁶ In 1900s, during the Vedokta controversy of Shahu, the ruler of Kolhapur, a princely state in Maharashtra, the GSBs supported the family's claim to a Kshatriya status and to perform certain religious rites.¹¹⁷ Besides, they used this conflict to downplay the value of the Karveer–Sankeshwar matha and created a division between the Shankaracharya and the non–Brahmins in Goa.¹¹⁸ Secondly, as Goa's struggle for freedom was developing, the discourse around such violent heroic resistance—Cuncolim and the Rane revolts—contributed enormously in developing genealogical narratives about the identity of Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha. And, similar to Maharashtra, those who benefited the most from the representation of this view were the rural elites who were best placed to successfully establish this pedigree.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, series I, no. 47, December 26 1940, 394–97.

¹¹⁴ *Bharat*, 4 June 1942, 3.

¹¹⁵ *Pragati*, 14 February 1921, 2.

¹¹⁶ Maratha Samaj, Baroda, *Sankeshwar Mathache Adhikarchyut Swamini Marathanchye Kshatriyatva sambandhane Nastipakshi Kelelya Tharavacha Nished* (Baroda: Baroda Vatsal, 1906).

¹¹⁷ *Satsang*, March 1907, 117–20.

¹¹⁸ Shenoji Goembab [Vaman Ragunath Varde Valavalikar], *Kahi Marathi Lekh* (Mumbai: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1945), 132–33.

¹¹⁹ Deshpande, “Caste as Maratha,” 30.

At the very moment when the term ‘Maratha ideology’ emerged as a new vocabulary for the promotion of social change by a variety of social groups in the nineteenth century, the Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha distanced themselves socially. Throughout the early twentieth century, the assertion of Maratha identity as a ‘true’ Kshatriya, different from other rural caste groups, allowed the Gomantak Kshatriya Marathas to not just claim an exclusive history and a heritage of a martial ethos, but through their resistance to colonial rule cemented their position, making it difficult for all non-Brahmin groups to make an equal claim for Maratha-hood. Further, the Portuguese also acknowledged this ascriptive characteristic of caste in their army reorganization. Moreover, the ambiguity over the Maratha category’s content and meaning, as Rosalind O’Hanlon has remarked, was a source of both strength and weakness.¹²⁰ Out of these processes emerged Marathisation of the non-Brahmin social groups who sought to promote a Maratha identity as a strategy of resistance to a Brahminised social structure.

3.4 Imagining Futures: From *Devadasi* to Gomantak Maratha

In the year 1969, Rajaram Rangaji Painginkar, who was born in a *devadasi* (servants of gods) household, wrote an influential autobiography in Marathi entitled *Mee Kon?* (Who am I?).¹²¹ Two years later, a second part was added.¹²² Notably the most absorbing dimension of the text is its self-conscious historicization. As the title suggests, this work spans a range of moral viewpoints—an impressive narrative about the self and the *devadasi* community, weaving together elements of history and autobiography in a seamless manner. Burdened by anxieties, the text itself was the culmination of a goal to envisage a new future through a claim for a Maratha caste identity—a kind of a social renewal movement that began at the turn of the twentieth century.

The expression *devadasi* derives from the terms *deva*—god, and *dasi*—servant. As a result, they were seen as women attached to temples. Since the sixteenth century, Portuguese sources

¹²⁰ Rosalind O’Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict, and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth-Century Western India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 275–77.

¹²¹ Rajaram Rangaji Painginkar, *Mee Kon?*, vol. I (Margao: Gomant Chhapkhana, 1969).

¹²² Rajaram Rangaji Painginkar, *Mee Kon?*, vol. II (Margao: Gomant Chhapkhana, 1971).

frequently refer to the existence of *devadasis*, who were termed as *bailadeiras*.¹²³ Although both these terms were used interchangeably, they were largely known as dancing girls, particularly associated with temples, and their image was built on literary tropes, such as ‘fallen women’ or ‘prostitutes’. Though historicisation of *devadasis* of this sort goes far back in the history of Goa, the literary representations about sexual deviance prominently appear only in the nineteenth century.¹²⁴ A common understanding of these terms not only essentialises the community, but also reduces them to a uniform social category.

With the Portuguese control of Old Conquests, the Church condemned *devadasis* as immoral women and efforts were made to curb their activities. Consequently, at the close of the seventeenth century, they were expelled from Portuguese Goa.¹²⁵ However, regardless of the royal order prohibiting their services, there were Portuguese men who were ready to make high payments for personal favours.¹²⁶ On the other hand, as the Hindu deities were ferried across rivers to the New Conquests where temples were built for them, the *devadasis* also moved to these places and attracted connoisseurs in the garb of devotees. Interestingly, there were frequent complaints that they attracted more men, including Europeans, than the deity itself.¹²⁷ In 1851,

¹²³ Fernão Pais, *Chronica dos Reis de Bisnaga*, ed. David Lopes (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1897), 85, 100; Cristóvão Aires, *Indianas e Portuguezas, 1870–1875* (Porto: Imprensa Portuguesa, 1881), 1; Alberto Osório de Castro, *Foral de Coral* (Dili: Imprensa Nacional, 1908), 134; Hipácio Brion, *A Índia Portuguesa: conferência feita em 16 de Março de 1908* (Lisboa, Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, 1908), 26–7, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/31166/31166-h/31166-h.htm> accessed on 29 January 2021.

¹²⁴ Richard Francis Burton, *Goa, and the Blue Mountains; or Six Months of Sick Leave* (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), 117–35; Franciso Luís Gomes, *Os Brahmanes* (Lisboa: Typografia da Gazeta de Portugal, 1866), 184.

¹²⁵ Rosa Maria Perez, “The Rhetoric of Empire: Gender Representations in Portuguese India,” *Portuguese Studies* 21 (2005): 131.

¹²⁶ C. R. Boxer, “Fidalgos Portuguêses e Bailadeiras Indianas (séculos XVII e XVIII),” *Revista de História* 22, no. 45 (1961): 3–105.

¹²⁷ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 21 May 1882, 4; *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 24 September 1882, 3–4; Ramchandra Pandurang Vaidhya, *Mardolchi Yatra* (Mumbai: Nirayanasagar Chapkhana, 1892); *Bharat*, 3 December 1913, 3; *Kala*, September 1938, 24.

Richard Francis Burton (1821–90), while on a two-year sick leave to Ooty in southern India, visited Goa that was outside the traveller’s circuit precisely because of dancing girls.¹²⁸

It is important to recognise that the institution of *devadasis* functioned within a matrilineal set-up and was comprised of not just women but also male members. In addition, they were divided into different social groups and the class identities of these communities placed them in various levels of hierarchy. *Kalavant* (artist), derived from *kala* (art), were performers who ranked first and were also known as Naikins.¹²⁹ Historically, *Kalavants* performed in different settings while men played the musical instruments. Firstly, they were part of the royal court performances, a service that continued until the end of the nineteenth century. Until 1880s, *Kalavants* were professional entertainers associated with the court of Sondekar, descendants of a former ruling family.¹³⁰ Secondly, a large number of them were professional singers and dancers who enjoyed patronage to display their creative talents for their *yajaman*, upper caste male patrons, and received gifts and land grants in exchange for their service. These patrons were no longer emperors and nobles, but wealthy men who considered the *Kalavants* as a social symbol—their presence at ceremonies was a statement of position.

Thirdly, they were integral to the cultural life of the Hindu temple, performing on grand festivals and ordinary occasions alike, a service that entitled them to a land grant with hereditary rights. Often, the girls were initiated within a temple at the tender age of eight or nine through a customary ritual called *shens*, a ceremony that resembles marriage to a dancing girl dressed as a groom, or with an object, usually a plant or hibiscus flower, signifying that they were now married to the temple deity. This ritual marked and confirmed her incorporation into temple service. The festivities could last from one to five days, and the costs of the temple dedication

¹²⁸ Shiroda’s status as a site of dancing girls was one of the reasons why Burton was drawn towards Goa. Richard Francis Burton, *Goa, and the Blue Mountains*, 118–32. For more details about other factors, see, Pamila Gupta, “A Voyage of Convalescence: Richard Burton and the Imperial Ills of Portuguese India,” *South African Historical Journal* 61, no. (2009): 802–16.

¹²⁹ *O Goatmá*, 3 May 1886, 3; Mendes, *A Índia Portuguesa*, 34; Saldanha, *Indian Caste*, 66.

¹³⁰ *O Goatmá*, 10 January 1887, 4.

were usually met by a wealthy man who looked for her favours after she had attained puberty.¹³¹ Fourthly, they were usually hired by the Hindu elite for dancing and singing at the thread and marriage ceremonies, and on other grand occasions. While all these female performers were known as *Kalavantin* or *bailadeira*, the term was often suffixed as a surname.¹³² However, it looks like at the end of the nineteenth century they were taking surnames derived from the villages in Goa.¹³³ In British Bombay they were subdivided into Borikars, Bandodkars, Shirodkars, Kakodkars, Narvekars and Fatarpekars, village names from where they originally came.¹³⁴

Unlike other social groups within the community, *Kalavants* enjoyed a unique status. They were much closer to seats of power and have noteworthy archival references. In a society with limited literacy for women, *Kalavants* not only received training in music and dance, but also had access to education. They were relatively more educated when compared with other upper caste married women. Besides, they had other rights such as inheritance of family property and adoption, unavailable to married women.¹³⁵ More importantly, on many occasions they themselves were patrons; rich *Kalavants* funded the re-construction of temples, financed temple festivals and donated land and precious goods to temples.¹³⁶ Moreover, not all *devadasis* had equal access to the resources associated with temples and patrons. While *devadasis* formed a heterogeneous category marked by differences in mode of life, wealth and privilege, we have few and scattered mentions to the other sub-groupings.

¹³¹ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Kanara*. vol. XV, Part I (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1883), 323–24.

¹³² *Boletim Official Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 90, 26 April 1886, 360; *Boletim Official Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 189, 1 September 1886, 774.

¹³³ *Shree Pandurang Prasadie Vidhyabhavan: Report, 1910–1912* (Nova Goa: Minerva Press, 1913), 15–17; *Bharat*, 30 July 1913, 3.

¹³⁴ Saldanha, *Indian Caste*, 66.

¹³⁵ Filippe Nery Xavier, *Código de Usos e Costumes de Hindus Gentios de Goa, em Portuguez e Maratha* (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1861), 9–10.

¹³⁶ *O Oriente Português* 3, no. 8–9 (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1906): 339–45; *Pragati*, 27 December 1920, 2; *Bharat*, 7 September 1939, 5.

Others who rendered services to the temples were: *Devli*, men who were responsible for lighting lamps and torches, blowing the temple horns and trumpets in the morning and evening, carrying earthen lamps and helping out during palanquin marches; *Bhavin*, women who were in charge of cleaning the temple premises and its palanquins, sweeping and maintaining the cow–dung floors and waving the fly–whisk before the deity.¹³⁷ Unlike *Kalavants*, *Devli* and *Bhavin* were exclusively devoted to the services of the temples and received land grants with hereditary rights.¹³⁸ In addition, there were social groups such as *Bande*, *Perni*, *Farjand*, *Chedva* and *Chede* which had no direct relationship with a temple. *Bande* were tied to wealthy households, *Pernis* were solely involved with performing the mask–dance drama known as *zagor*, and *Farjand* were children from the maidservant.¹³⁹ *Chedva* were girls born of illicit relationships that also included daughters of the *devadasi* communities, and *Chede*, at times, meant the brother of a *Kalavantin*.¹⁴⁰ Apart from these communities there are references to other social groups as well, such as *Adbatkis* (meaning half slaves) and *Padiars* under the *devadasi* community, but we do not have any details to help us understand their modes of life. Though all these social groups were reduced to a *devadasi* caste they would never see themselves as one community. On the contrary, they followed restrictions on inter–dining and inter–marriage and competed among themselves with *Kalavants*, making claims for a superior status. As the other social groups were making efforts to transform themselves by taking to music and dance, *Kalavants* refused to perform with them.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ R. E. Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, vol. I (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1920), 147.

¹³⁸ Mendes, *A Índia Portuguesa*, 34; Antonio Emilio d’Almeida Azevedo, *As Comunidades de Goa: história das instituições ntigas* (Lisboa: Viuva Bertrand & C^a Sucessores Carvalho & C^a, 1890), 95.

¹³⁹ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Ratnagiri and Savantwadi*, vol. X (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1880), 124.

¹⁴⁰ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 20 August 1882, 3–4; *O Goatmá*, 10 May 1886, 3.

¹⁴¹ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Kanara*, vol. XV, Part I (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1883), 322.

Several studies on South India describe the varied opportunities that these women enjoyed that were not available to other women.¹⁴² However, at the turn of the nineteenth century, the politics of morality pushed by the British, and a nationalist discourse that was subsequently extended to Portuguese Goa, created a social stigma against *devadasis* that eventually led to their marginalisation and ostracization from public life. At the social level, the *devadasis* ranked below Shudras and above ‘impure’ castes.¹⁴³ But they were not a caste by itself, even though common understanding sees various social groups as *jatis* within.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, this belief was largely a product of two developments. Firstly, the usage of a pan-Indian term *devadasi*. In the nineteenth century various identities were forged into that of the *devadasi* and institutionalised. Secondly, the well-established interchangeable meaning of *devadasi* as sex worker or prostitute. The identification of *devadasis* as prostitutes was produced by the classification of Anglo-Indian courts which made attempts to define them within the normative and acceptable legal framework of patriarchal society.¹⁴⁵ Representations of this sort produced literary tropes about sexual deviance that encouraged the socially perceived association with moral nonconformity. The *devadasi* lifestyle was deemed profane and, subsequently, such reification paved the way for social stigma and they began being rejected by society.¹⁴⁶ Moral evaluations of *devadasis* as diseased or fallen women became pervasive in early print material—but little work remains,

¹⁴² Amrit Srinivasan, *Temple “Prostitution” and Community Reform: An Examination of Ethnographic, Historical and Textual Contexts of the Devadasi of Tamil Nadu, South India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1984); Avanthi Meduri, *Nation, Woman, Representation: The Sutured History of the Devadasis and Her Dance* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1996); Saskia C. Kerserboom, *Nityasumangali: Devadasi Tradition in South India* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publications, 1998); Mytheli Sreenivas, “Creating Conjugal Subjects: Devadasis and the Politics of Marriage in Colonial Madras Presidency,” *Feminist Studies* 37, no. 1 (2011): 63–92; Davesh Soneji, *Unfinished Gestures: Devadasis, Memory and Modernity in South India* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

¹⁴³ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Kanara*, vol. XV, Part I, 323.

¹⁴⁴ Naik Danait and Wagle, *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas*, 47.

¹⁴⁵ Kunal Parker, “A Corporation of Superior Prostitutes’ Anglo-Indian Legal Conceptions of Temple Dancing Girls, 1800–1914,” *Modern Asian Studies* 32 no. 3 (1998): 559–633.

¹⁴⁶ *Prachi Prabha*, August 1909, 187–90.

except for newspaper articles and advertisements that point to their business. Subsequent writings draw upon these well-established literary representations.¹⁴⁷

Apart from the politics of morality, there were other processes at work that pushed them to the fringes of society. Their livelihood was dependent upon patronage. The Portuguese civil code, 1867, that regulated wills and partition of family property, meant they were losing out on these opportunities. In addition, over the course of the nineteenth century, as the colonial regime in Goa sought to regulate the temple economy, they gradually lost varied opportunities. The colonial law facilitated the takeover of temples by the *mahajans* and subsequently the *devadasis* were impoverished by a growing administrative dominance over their personal lives and a constant threat to their land grants that remained an important source of financial support. As a result, they were forced to move to Bombay, a major city of British India to look for livelihood, not only among the increasing presence of British personnel, but more importantly, among an emerging Indian colonial elite, such as the Parsis. As the local elite appropriated many aspects of the nationalist discourse on *devadasis* in shaping their own narratives of subjecthood, we do come across protest letters written by *Kalvantin* in the Marathi newspapers that challenged the appellation of ‘prostitute’ and clearly spoke with an agenda to restore respectability.¹⁴⁸ A striking feature of the *devadasi* communities throughout the early half of twentieth century is a surge of interest in the Maratha identity represented by the figure of Shivaji—a strategy employed at self-fashioning.

While both, the male and female members of the *devadasi* communities were targeted for their traditions, efforts were made by them to claim a new caste status. At the turn of the twentieth century residences of prominent *Kalavantins* were emerging as meeting points for *devadasi* men and women to gather and discuss issues pertaining to their community. In 1906 the first meeting of the community was held at Ponda, but the members were finding it difficult to see themselves

¹⁴⁷ Floriano Barreto, *Phalenas com uma parte sobre assumptos Indianos* (Bastorá: Typografia Rangel, 1898); Nascimento Mendonça, *Vatsalá* (Bastorá: Typografia Rangel, 1938); Paulino Dias, *No Pais de Suria* (Nova Goa: Tipografia Bragança, 1935); B. B. Borkar, *Bhavin* (Pune: Continental Prakashan, 1950).

¹⁴⁸ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 20 August 1882, 3–4; *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 24 September 1882, 3–4.

as a community. For instance, Paiginkar, who had travelled from Canacona, was initially considered an outsider.¹⁴⁹ In 1911 Paiginkar went to British Bombay to mobilise the support of prominent members of the community in order to forge unity through conferences.¹⁵⁰ In 1917 the movement towards self-fashioning, by making a claim for a Maratha Gayak identity, was first launched through a conference held at Kakoda. However, what started as a move to limit the movement only to *Kalavants*, at the very first meeting, moved resolutions to unite all social groups.¹⁵¹ Besides, it was decided to organise caste unity conferences, to set up Maratha Vidhyarthi Sahayak Mandal and to publish a magazine entitled *Maratha Gayak Mitra*. Subsequently, the second and third conferences were held at Shiroda and Bandora in 1918.

On the other hand, they simultaneously sought to promote an open-status Maratha identity as an egalitarian strategy of resistance. However, this was not so simple and raised awkward questions about the relationship between their mode of life and Maratha identity. This dilemma is demonstrated when Paiginkar was forced to attend the second Kshatriya Maratha Parishad—a conference of the elite Marathas held at Halge in Karwar in 1921. At that time, he met Bhaskarrao Jadhav, a prominent Maratha leader of the non-Brahmin movement from Kolhapur, and sought his guidance on their claims for a Maratha caste identity. The questions were broad and general, and Jadhav pointed out that if the Gayak Samaj could make social progress, they had no issues regarding their Maratha identity.¹⁵² As the Maratha ideology remained a powerful discourse for the promotion of social change by a variety of social groups, the elite Maratha in Goa were not prepared to see the Gayak Samaj as ‘true’ Marathas. Although they were sympathetic towards the movement of the Gayak Samaj, the elite Marathas distinguished themselves as Kshatriya Maratha.¹⁵³ In this, they defined Kshatriya Maratha as a caste of ninety-six Maratha lineages with established rights over temples and village communities.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ *Samaj Sudharak*, September 1941, 187–88.

¹⁵⁰ *Pragatik Maratha Samaj: Report (14 September 1959–31 December 1960)* (Panaji: Tipografia Prafulla, 1961), 11.

¹⁵¹ *Maratha Gayak Mitra*, March–April 1918, 5, 8–11.

¹⁵² *Pragati*, 28 February 1921, 2–3.

¹⁵³ *Pragati*, 26 March 1921, 4.

¹⁵⁴ *Bharat*, 3 July 1941, 1.

More importantly, although we do have references to the men from *devadasi* communities taking to arms, the Maratha Gayak sought their Maratha identity not by emulating local martial traditions, but employing heroism of Shivaji as a strong contestatory challenge to the Brahminical caste hierarchy.¹⁵⁵ Albeit in slightly different ways, they would identify with the past glories of Maratha history. The exploits of Shivaji became a powerful and emotive subject for the community. Also, the figure of Shivaji was made the focus of a number of institutions that they established.

Interest in, and concern with, reinventing the self was by no means restricted only to a Maratha identity, but was also expressed in the demands for education, marriage and a law banning *shens*. In the wider context, the Maratha Gayak Samaj largely benefitted from two important developments. The first phase of transition was in the nineteenth century when *Kalavants* began to leave their villages in Goa for cities, prominently British Bombay. The instrumentalities of an urban setting were of great consequence. Bombay not only opened up new patrons—colonial elites, both Indian and British, but also helped them find new audiences for their performances. What was even more remarkable was that *Kalavants* were willing to contribute or raise funds towards the progress of their community. The second aspect was the expansion of educational opportunities in Bombay and the quest for adequate education in Goa. While the women in Bombay were performing, they were funding education through grants and scholarships. At the turn of the nineteenth century, *devadasi* communities saw knowledge of English as a new means of mobility. Their children, especially the sons, were attending formal schools and colleges, acquiring ‘Western’ education, working as government servants, doctors, teachers, lawyers and members of the ‘polite’ professions. By the 1920s, the community was known for doctors such as Vithal Shirodkar, subsequently well-known for his contribution to a cervical stitch named as ‘Shirodkar Cerclage’, and Shayamrao R. Mulgaonkar who was conferred with the title of Kaiser-i-Hind by the British government.¹⁵⁶

The most significant expansion of educational opportunity in Marathi was the product of private efforts. During the early twentieth century, while the *Kalavants* were contributing towards the setting up of Marathi schools in Goa, the schools closed their doors to children from these

¹⁵⁵ *Bharat*, 17 September 1913, 4.

¹⁵⁶ *Pragati*, 14 February 1921, 2; *Pragati*, 27 June 1921, 4.

communities. In 1912, although the *Kalavants* contributed towards the Goa Vidyaprasarak Mandal and the establishment of Colégio António José de Almeida, there were concerns about admitting girls from the community.¹⁵⁷ When girls from the *devadasi* community who had undergone *shens* were finally permitted to enter Colégio António José de Almeida in 1915, it was disapproved heavily by moral condemnations.¹⁵⁸ Given the opposition to the schooling of the children from the *devadasi* communities by the upper castes, and the treatment meted out to them, they were forced to establish their own schools. By declaring that education is the only solution for their progress, the Gayak Maratha Samaj set up many institutions and Marathi primary schools in the villages of Goa that had a sizeable population of the community.

In 1920, Goa Nitivardhak and Shikshan Prasarak Samaj was formed to promote Marathi education.¹⁵⁹ On the contrary, the first attempt to spread Portuguese education was made in Bombay with the setting up of the Portuguese Shikshan Fund.¹⁶⁰ While it had an early exit, it led to the establishment of the Portuguese Shikshan Prasarak Maratha Samaj in Goa in 1925.¹⁶¹ In 1927, Gomantak Maratha Samaj was formed in Bombay, and subsequently its network was extended to Goa and Karnataka.¹⁶² While the upper castes questioned the Maratha identity, the Gayak Samaj went on to construct the Gomantak Maratha Samaj as a caste comprising of all the *devadasi* communities from Goa, including those who had migrated out. Further, in 1932, Goa Nitivardhak and Shikshan Prasarak Samaj were merged to form Pragatik Maratha Samaj.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷ *Prabhat*, 12 December 1912, 3; *Bharat* 13 January 1938, 7.

¹⁵⁸ *Bharat*, 3 November 1915, 3.

¹⁵⁹ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral da Estado da Índia*, no. 74, 14 September 1920, 847–850.

¹⁶⁰ *Maratha–Portuguese Shikshan Prasarak Samaj: Pahila Varshik Report* (Mumbai: Gogte Printing Company, 1926), 5.

¹⁶¹ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral da Estado da Índia*, no. 65, 13 August 1926, 850–51.

¹⁶² Anjali Arondekar, “Subject to Sex: A Small History of the Gomantak Maratha Samaj,” in *South Asian Feminisms: Contemporary Interventions*, eds. Ania Loomba and Ritty Lukose (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 257.

¹⁶³ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral da Estado da Índia*, no. 102, 20 December 1932, 1687–91. *Pragatik Maratha Samaj: Niyamavali* (Margao: Hindu Chapkhana, 1933), 1.

These organisations, particularly the Portuguese Shikshan Prasarak Maratha Samaj and Gomantak Maratha Samaj, had three important characteristics in consolidating the caste identity of Gomantak Maratha. Firstly, they organised caste conferences—around fifteen conferences were held in Goa with members from all over Goa, Maharashtra and Karnataka that discussed the future of the Samaj. Secondly, these organisations offered financial assistance to the primary Marathi schools set up by their community members. What is remarkable about this patronage is that while the assistance meant that no schools of the community closed down, the insistence on an annual report to get financial support for an academic year necessitated minimum standards in teaching and learning.¹⁶⁴ Thirdly, these institutions were driven towards caste reform. Besides, the founding of Marathi periodicals such as *Maratha Gayak Mitra* (Friends of Singers) in 1918, *Pragati* (Progress) in 1920 and subsequently *Samaj Sudharak* (Social Reformer) in 1929 laid the basis for sharing experiences and forging a sense of community.

On the issue of caste reform, the agenda was to ban *shens* and encourage monogamous marriages. While the question of reform was an on-going one, going back to the late nineteenth century, the setting up of new organisations and convening conferences in Goa added a new dynamism to the movement. Apart from unity, education and marriage, all organisations and conferences demanded a ban on *shens*, which was seen as central to the destruction of the *devadasi* system. Since 1910s various attempts were made to ban *shens* by reaching out, not just to the Portuguese government, but also to the Shankaracharya of Karveer–Sankeshwar matha. Interestingly, during this period, the colonial state and the Shankaracharya were caught up in their conflicted understanding of what constitutes religious action. While the government saw it as a religious issue of the Hindus, Shankaracharya was concerned about *shastra*. Subsequently, due to the efforts of Narayan Anant Shet Bandodkar, who tabled a bill banning *shens* in the legislative assembly, the custom was abolished in 1930.¹⁶⁵ Although this move of the government was questioned and was seen as a violation of the Republican constitution that guaranteed non-interference in religion and customs and usages of citizens, the law not only abolished *shens* but also protected the right of the *Kalavant* and *Bhavin* over land grant in lieu of services. More importantly, the temples had no option but to expel them from temple services for not performing *shens*.

¹⁶⁴ *Samaj Sudharak*, May 1951, 95.

¹⁶⁵ *Boletim Oficial do Govêrno Geral da Estado da Índia*, no. 77, 26 September 1930, 1437.

Within the first half of the twentieth century, by rejecting the appellation of ‘prostitute’ the *devadasi* community’s construction of the identity of Gomantak Maratha Samaj not only escaped the social stigma but also negotiated possibilities for future social and economic success. And this was the product of diverse identities forged into a new caste identity that was institutionalised through the setting up of institutions and conferences, building a complex relationship with western education and primary Marathi schools, and finally, recourse to colonial law.

3.5 Beyond Indignity: Bhandaris and the construction of self

At the turn of the nineteenth century, Bhandaris, a caste of toddy-tappers and distillers of alcohol spread along the western coast—Goa, Maharashtra and Karnataka—raised new questions about their low-caste Shudra identity. Bhandaris were divided into various *jatis* such as Kitte, Hetkari, Shinde, Gawad, Thale, Shesvanshi and More.¹⁶⁶ While, Kitte and Hetkari, who were settled along the Konkan coastline, comprised the majority, others were few in numbers.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, these *jatis* were not a single caste group. They were further divided into groups based on their traditional and associated occupations. The majority of Bhandaris were engaged with the ‘disreputable’ occupation of palm liquor production—taking coconut trees on rent and paying tax on every tree tapped for liquor. However, there were groups whose members had recently become moderately prosperous through their involvement in other occupations. For instance, while the Bhandari, the largest single caste in Goa, comprised exclusively of Hetkari *jati* it was divided into *poim-kape*, those involved in the collection of the sap of toddy and the fermentation and distillation of toddy, and others who had taken to crop growing.¹⁶⁸

Against the intense social competitiveness of caste communities that had accelerated in the city of Bombay during the nineteenth century, we find relatively few Bhandaris advancing through their involvement in trade, colonial administration, printing and publishing. One of the most important figures in the development of Marathi print was Ganpat Krishnaji, a Bhandari by caste.

¹⁶⁶ *Shree Bhandari Shikshan Parishad, Mumbai: Baithak Pahile* (Mumbai: Anandrao Narayanrao Surve, 1914), 7.

¹⁶⁷ *Bhandari Bhavitavya*, February 1951, 34.

¹⁶⁸ Azevedo, *As Comunidades de Goa*, 11; Bragança Pereira, “Etnografia da Índia Portuguesa,” 354–55.

In 1840s he set up an indigenously developed Marathi printing press by introducing important technical innovations.¹⁶⁹ Besides, he was well-known for publishing one of the first *panchang* (almanac) in print.¹⁷⁰ The other important individual was Tukaram Tatya Padval, who came from a successful Bhandari family in Bombay and was engaged in business in London for a European firm.¹⁷¹ In 1861, Padval wrote *Jatibheda Vivekasara* ('Essence of the discernment of distinctions between *jatis*'), one of the earliest works on the non-Brahmin critique of caste.¹⁷² Written in the backdrop of caste conflicts, he attacked the purity of castes and all social unities that were built on it.¹⁷³ These developments were largely products of individual efforts and they seem to have had no visible impact on the progress of the Bhandaris.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Bhandaris were making efforts to unite when the Bombay government enacted the new, far-reaching Abkari Act in 1878. The legislation not only increased the taxes on toddy, but also placed severe restrictions on the production of toddy, benefitting the new wealthy producers over the traditional toddy tappers. Further, the British efforts to commercialise liquor manufacture had benefitted the Parsis who dominated the liquor trade. As the Bhandaris were priced out of the market, they organised strikes.¹⁷⁴ Under the Anglo-Portuguese treaty of 1878, Goa was subjected to the Bombay Abkari Act, which not only prohibited the sale of Goan liquor in British India but also streamlined the tax rates on toddy-tapping and distillation, in keeping with the rates in operation in the districts of Ratnagiri and

¹⁶⁹ Veena Naregal, *Language, Politics, Elites and the Public Sphere* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 180.

¹⁷⁰ Govind Narayan Madgaonkar, *Mubaiche Varnan*, 2nd ed. (Mumbai: Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya, [1863] 1961), 224–25.

¹⁷¹ Christine Dobbin, *Urban Leadership in Western India: Politics and communities in Bombay city* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 137.

¹⁷² Tukaram Tatya Padval, *Jatibhed Vivekasara*, 2nd ed. (Bombay: Ganpat Krishnaji Press, 1865).

¹⁷³ For a summary, see Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Caste and its Histories in Colonial India: A Reappraisal," *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no. 2 (2017): 455–60.

¹⁷⁴ Erica Wald, "Governing the Bottle: Alcohol, Race and Class in Nineteenth-Century India," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 46, no. 3 (2018): 411.

Kanara.¹⁷⁵ The treaty was denounced strongly in Goa and it threw insurmountable challenge to the livelihood of the Bhandaris. Subsequently, as the taxes on coconut were rising regularly, there were many occasions when the Bhandaris in Goa were forced to organise strikes and refused to acknowledge the authority of the colonial state. Besides, the Bhandari movement got intensified in Bombay with the British efforts to protect the rights and interests of backward communities through the introduction of group representation in 1909. This was accompanied with the reserved seats to the Bombay legislative council and municipality.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a period of gradual change in the situation of the Bhandaris who hoped that their rise would follow by uniting the *jatis* into a single caste, combined with the availability of education. In 1890, Kite Bhandari Ekyavardhak Mandali, one of the earliest Bhandari organisations calling for unity, was set up in Bombay.¹⁷⁶ While the organisation was established with the efforts of Sitaram Keshav Bole—a non-Brahmin reformer—it was factional in nature. More focused on unity within the Kite *jati*, it gradually opened up possibilities for the consolidation of the Bhandari caste across the western coast of India.¹⁷⁷ Bole's family was from Aare village in Guhagar *taluka* but had moved to Bombay in the early nineteenth century. A third matriculate from the Bhandari caste, Bole had begun his professional life as an inspector in the Abkari department.¹⁷⁸ But later, and for the most part of his life, Bole was committed to the upliftment of his Bhandari caste. To this end, Bole was the founder member of Bhandari Shikshan Parishad, an organisation devoted to the causes of unity and progress of the Bhandaris in Goa, Maharashtra and Karnataka. In 1913 he presided over the first Bhandari Shikshan Parishad held at Bombay, and later actively participated in its subsequent conferences. Besides, Bole was also a leader of the moderate Bombay Textile Labour Union. For his efforts in mobilising mill workers, the provincial government of Bombay made him a

¹⁷⁵ The British government had appealed to the Portuguese in Goa to increase the tax on coconut trees reserved for toddy tapping by rupees three. *Boletim do Offical do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 288, 31 December 1883, 1163; Celsa Pinto, *Goa: Images and Perceptions* (Panjim: Rajhauns, 1996), 117–18.

¹⁷⁶ *Shree Bhandari Shikshan Parishad, Vijaydurg, Ratnagiri: Baithak Navavi, Report* (Mumbai: Atmaram Babaji Pendurkar, 1922), 17–22.

¹⁷⁷ *Shree Bhandari Shikshan Parishad, Mumbai: Baithak Pahile*, 13–6.

¹⁷⁸ *Bhandari Vihari*, May–August 1914, 3; Dhananjay Keer, *Lokhitkarte Babasaheb Bole* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1978), 9.

representative of labour to the Bombay Legislative Council in 1921.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, he would use this opportunity not only to advocate the welfare of mill workers but to extend support to B. R. Ambedkar in his movement against untouchability.¹⁸⁰

At another level, one of the most striking features of the Bhandaris was the assertion of a new identity, providing a remarkably effective basis for cohesion and the mobilisation of community resources. During the nineteenth century, British attempts to control alcohol in India acquired a prominent place in public discourse and political rhetoric. Consequently, it transformed the ways in which ideas about consumption of alcohol—drink and ‘respectability’ were understood.¹⁸¹ This would eventually set the stage for the demands for its prohibition, not just in British India but also in Portuguese Goa. At the end of the nineteenth century a movement to ban alcohol in Goa began to gain momentum. The regularity with which drinking appears as a subject in the upper caste discourses on drinking practices, as well as the details by which this activity was typically described, suggests a physical threat to religious life. However, for the periodicals whose readership was largely the upper castes, the greatest threat was the love of drink among ‘respectable’ castes.¹⁸² This was supposedly dangerous—a dissatisfaction that also found its way at the seventh *Congresso Provincial* in 1927 which debated on the problem of alcohol consumption in colonial Goa.¹⁸³ These narrative accounts of crisis declared alcohol as a social menace, ‘unwholesome’, ‘illicit’ and ‘dangerous’, affecting moral progress. Following this metaphor, the Bhandaris who were traditionally engaged in the production and sale of toddy were transformed into a disreputable caste.

¹⁷⁹ Priyanka Srivastava, *The Well-Being of the Labour Force in Colonial Bombay: Discourses and Practices* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 161.

¹⁸⁰ Dhananjay Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1954), 52, 64.

¹⁸¹ Wald, “Governing the Bottle,” 397–417.

¹⁸² *O Goano*, 14 March 1908, 5; *Bharat*, 13 August 1913, 2–3; V. R. Sheldekar, *Madhyapan Nished* (Antruz: Hitachintak Mandali, 1913); *Hindu*, 26 September 1924, 4.

¹⁸³ António Maria da Cunha, *Congresso Provincial da India Portuguesa—Subsídios para sua História*, vol. IV (7th Congresso) (Nova Goa: Casa Luso Francesa, 1929), 130–42; Balcrisna Dattarama Sinai Sacardandó, *Sétimo Congresso Provincial da India: Comissão de estados Relatorio* (Nova Goa: R. M. Rau and Irmãos, 1927).

Out of these processes emerged the movement for caste unity and advancement of an identity among the Bhandaris. Historically, the Bhandari caste identity was represented as Shudra. There was, of course, opposition to their social location and by the end of the nineteenth century, the Bhandaris were shaping a remarkably different identity. At first, they questioned the origins of their caste name, found in the Sanskrit term *mandarak*, meaning distiller. They preferred to have it derived from *bhandar*, a treasury, on the grounds that they formerly guarded the treasury. Subsequently, they were making direct claims to a Kshatriya identity. In this context, Sakharam Hari Golatkar wrote *Bhandari Jaticha Itihas* ('History of the Bhandari caste') in Marathi, somewhere between 1890s to 1909.¹⁸⁴ Golatkar, born into a Bhandari family that had settled in Bombay, was personally involved with a history of a prolonged struggle, not only in the matter of how they represented themselves, but also in the naming of the community they belonged to. While there already existed two works on their history, they lacked historical depth and were more concerned on narrating the Bhandaris' social life.¹⁸⁵ In this context, Golatkar required a new approach that would highlight the martial lineage of Bhandaris and posit them as equals to Marathas.

While writing the history of the Bhandaris, Golatkar was deeply familiar with caste contests, the issues at stake and complexities of much longer histories. In claiming a Kshatriya caste identity for the Bhandari caste, Golatkar employed Sanskrit texts, oral traditions, history, colonial dictionaries and ethnographies to furnish a modern caste identity. At first, he is critical of traditional accounts on the origins of Bhandaris that associated them to Bhavagun, the first Bhandari born out of a drop sweat of god Shiva. As god Shiva requested Bhavagun to get water, he inquired about the source. This led to the creation of a coconut tree by god Shiva, who then ordered him to draw toddy. Yet another account connects Bhavagun to goddess Parvati, wife of god Shiva, who had cursed him to survive by the means of selling toddy. Golatkar was sharply aware of the challenge not just by the upper castes, but also elite Marathas. He wrote a new kind of history of the Bhandari caste and asserted that during the days of Rajput supremacy over Northern India, an army of Rajputs defeated an uprising in Deccan, and as a result, they were called 'Bandari'. What Golatkar offered, in effect, was a modified origin of Bhandaris as Rajputs

¹⁸⁴ Sakharam Hari Golatkar, *Bhandari Jaticha Itihas* (Mumbai: Vijay Chapkhana, n.d., ca. 1909), 1.

¹⁸⁵ Vithoba Sonji Chavan, *Bhandari Lokache Vrutant* (Mumbai: Joint Stock, 1887), Bapuji Govind Mithkar, *Bhandari Lokanche Sankshipta Varnan* (Mumbai: n.p., 1899).

involved in suppressing rebellions. This was similar to the elite Marathas who had made claims to the Kshatriya caste identity through a Rajput lineage. Besides, claiming a North Indian origin, Golatkar stressed Goa as the original home of Bhandaris, to such an extent that they shared lineages with the Kadamba dynasty, whose mythical founder was also born from a drop of god Shiva, similar to Bhavaguna.¹⁸⁶

What is more important, Golatkar was not just highlighting the martial ethos of Bhandaris, but was tracing the many historical features that inspired this claim. He showed that Bhandaris were Marathas, having a military background from the times of Shivaji. Hetkari Bhandaris were employed in Shivaji's army.¹⁸⁷ Mai Naik, a Bhandari, commanded Shivaji's navy in 1660s.¹⁸⁸ Besides, Bhandaris came to exercise a subcontinent-wide role in matters of military. Apart from the local rulers, they were recruited in the armies of the Portuguese and the British since the seventeenth centuries.¹⁸⁹ Right from its beginning, Bombay was exposed to trouble, that led the English to set up a Bhandari force of military around 1672–73.¹⁹⁰ In 1728, the Portuguese garrison at the fort of Chaul was supported by a force of 234 Bhandaris.¹⁹¹ By the end of the nineteenth century, although the Bhandaris were making claims to a Kshatriya caste identity, they considered themselves as Maratha. They continually endeavoured to stress the valued traditions of their former military and political power, as against customary practices, which

¹⁸⁶ Golatkar, *Bhandari Jaticha Itihas*, 31–3.

¹⁸⁷ James Grant Duff, *History of the Mahrattas*, vol. I, 4th ed. (Bombay: Times of India Office, 1878), 173–74, 189–90.

¹⁸⁸ Krishanji Anant Sabhasad, *Chatrapati Shree Shivaji Raje yanchi Bakhar*, ed. Shankar Narayan Joshi (Pune: Chitrashala, 1960), 99; S. N. Sen, *Military System of the Marathas: With a Brief Account of their Maritime Activities* (Calcutta: The Book Company Ltd., 1928), 182.

¹⁸⁹ John Fryer, *A new account of East-India and Persia, in eight letters, being nine years travels, begun 1672 and finished 1681: containing observations made of the moral, natural and artificial estate of those countries* (London: Ri. Chiswell, 1698), 66; *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Ratnagiri and Savantwadi*, 124.

¹⁹⁰ S. M. Edwards, *Bombay City and Police: Historical Sketch, 1672–1916* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), 1–19.

¹⁹¹ J. Gerson Da Cunha, *Notes on the History and Antiquities of Chaul and Bassein* (Bombay: Thacker, Vining & Co., 1876), 88.

perhaps forced S. M. Edwards to term Bhandaris as constituting Maratha.¹⁹² Besides, Golatkar was also making a claim of distinct ethnological connection with the elite Marathas through lineage and family names. In other ways, while negotiating with their present mode of life, he argued that Bhandaris were forced to take up toddy tapping as a means for their survival. And, it was improper to perceive their occupation as a caste independently.¹⁹³

Subsequently, Golatkar's text emerged as the major force behind the pride with which the Bhandaris began to assert their history, identity, and legitimate political rights and expectations. When, therefore, the Bhandaris turned to social campaigning, their historical association with Shivaji continued to lie at the heart of their programmes. All activities of the Bhandaris—conferences and meetings, and setting up of institutions and periodicals, would never fail to acknowledge Golatkar's text in order to validate their glorious lineage.

As the Bhandaris were consolidating in Bombay, the movement was gradually extended to Portuguese Goa. The earliest evidence of the Bhandaris making efforts towards unity is seen among the families settled in Panjim. While Panjim was a fishing village full of marshlands, they benefitted from its urbanisation as it transformed into the capital city of the colonial state since 1843.¹⁹⁴ Arrival of new people meant reclamation of land, construction of private houses and public administrative buildings. As Panjim grew rapidly, it led to a decline in the city's coconut trees. Furthermore, the colonial state was making efforts to control the revenues on the production and consumption of liquor by constantly increasing taxes on every coconut tree tapped for liquor. Reacting to these developments, the Bhandaris in Panjim transformed some of their traditional practices and took to masonry, carpentry, and some of them benefitted financially as contactors and traders. For instance, Bablo Masno Naik Volvoikar, a contactor from Panjim who made efforts to bring about the development and progress of the Bhandaris in Goa, was one among the ninety highest tax payers to the colonial state in the 1920s.¹⁹⁵ However, these individuals that emerged remained in various ways closely tied to a long-stigmatised lower-caste status. Besides,

¹⁹² See the footnote by S. M. Edwards to James Grant Duff, *History of the Mahrattas*, vol. I (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), 175–76.

¹⁹³ Golatkar, *Bhandari Jaticha Itihas*, 160.

¹⁹⁴ Celsa Pinto, *Anatomy of a colonial capital: Panjim* (Saligao: Goa 1556, 2016).

¹⁹⁵ *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 88, 31 October 1924, 1089.

it needs to be stressed that although taxes on coconut trees were increasing, the Bhandaris outside Panjim were ever more engaged with toddy-tapping and the distillation of alcohol. No employment alternatives in the villages forced their dependence on traditional occupations for their livelihoods.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Bhandaris that were found at different levels of economic development in Panjim were making efforts to unite their social groups within the city. In these efforts they were largely following the Bhandaris from Konkan who had set up one of the earliest caste schools at Malvan in 1892.¹⁹⁶ Further, *Bhandari Vihari*—the first and the most important periodical of the caste published by Ravji Ramji Ganga Naik from Bombay since 1909—brought the Bhandaris from different regions together in a way that could not have happened in the nineteenth century. As a result, Shree Pandurang Prasad Vidhyabhavan was established at Panjim in 1910 with a sense of a mission—unity, spread of education and progress of the caste.¹⁹⁷ Bablo Masno Naik Volvoikar and Laxaman Kashinath Kharde, who had played an important role in founding this organisation, were its president and secretary. More importantly, on the occasion of the foundation, Golatkar's text and the Kshatriya history of the Bhandaris was highlighted.

It is necessary to stress that education was, in the twentieth century, the major aspiration and mode of advancement for the widest sections of the lower castes in Goa. In 1911 Shree Pandurang Prasad Vidhyabhavan opened a Marathi library, and subsequently, around 1930s, set up a primary Marathi school.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, as Shree Pandurang Prasad Vidhyabhavan struggled for financial resources, support was sought not only from the Bhandaris outside Panjim, but also from other castes in the form of cash or a donation of books.¹⁹⁹ In 1913, Shree Shantadurga Prasad Sangeet Natak Mandali, largely comprising of Bhandaris and Kharvis from Cumbarjua, raised funds by staging Marathi dramas.²⁰⁰ In its first few years, through

¹⁹⁶ *Bhandari Vijay*, February 1921, 99.

¹⁹⁷ *Shree Pandurang Prasad Vidhyabhavan: Report, 1910–1912* (Nova Goa: Minerva Press, 1913), 1.

¹⁹⁸ *Bharat*, 24 October 1935, 2.

¹⁹⁹ *Daivadhanya Masik*, June 1913, 57.

²⁰⁰ *A Patria*, 19 November 1913, 3.

cooperation and shared interests, Shree Pandurang Prasad Vidhyabhavan had succeeded in bringing together the Bhandaris from Panjim.

In 1913, the Bhandari Shikshan Parishad was launched in Bombay and it made efforts to construct an ideological basis for the unification of all the Bhandaris on the western coast of India. More importantly, the conference had many representatives from Goa.²⁰¹ Laxman Kashinath Kharde attended the Parishad and highlighted that their backwardness in Goa was the product of disunity and a lack of education.²⁰² In the 1920s, the Bhandari movement intensified in Goa. Firstly, the constant increases in the taxes on toddy forced the Bhandaris to go on strike in 1921. Although this was not the first strike, it was widespread, with a remarkable show of unity among the Bhandaris that brought Goa to its knees.²⁰³ In 1924, Bablo Masno Naik Volvoikar attended the eleventh Bhandari Shikshan Parishad, held at Vengurla.²⁰⁴ What is noteworthy is that the conference not only deliberated on many issues concerning the Bhandaris from Goa, but also passed a resolution requesting the Portuguese government to set up primary Marathi schools in Goa that would enable backward communities to take up education for a desired social change.²⁰⁵ Besides, it was also decided to organise lectures to promote a social movement among the Bhandaris.

Secondly, the arrival of important Bhandari leaders from Bombay forced them to organise and establish new institutions in Goa. In 1924, Bole and Anandrao Surve who had come to Belgaum to attend an annual session of the Congress presided by Gandhi, were requested to visit Goa.²⁰⁶ These ‘great’ men, who could come to Goa in 1924–25, were felicitated. During this occasion the intensity of the factional conflict among the Bhandaris in Goa was resolved when four different Bhandari groups settled under the leadership of Bablo Masno Naik Volvoikar and established the Kshatriya Bhandari Samaj.²⁰⁷ At the same time, Golatkar’s visit to Goa dealt with

²⁰¹ *A Patria*, 14 January 1914, 3.

²⁰² *Shree Bhandari Shikshan Parishad, Mumbai: Baithak Pahile*, 69–71.

²⁰³ *Bharat*, 6 January 1921, 3.

²⁰⁴ *Bhandari Vijay*, December 1924, 187.

²⁰⁵ *Hindu*, 14 February 1925, 4–5.

²⁰⁶ *Hindu*, 3 January 1925, 5.

²⁰⁷ *Hindu*, 10 January 1925, 7.

public talks on the history of the Bhandaris.²⁰⁸ Besides, the first Gomantak Kshatriya Sammelan was organised and presided by Raghunath V. Kambli, the general secretary of the Bhandari Shikshan Parishad and the superintendent of the Malvan Bhandari High School.²⁰⁹ All these developments led to the setting up of the Rudreshwar Prasad Bhandari Shikshonotejak Samaj, Shree Shivaji Vidhayala, Gomantak Bhandari Sangh and Akhil Gomantakiya Kshatriya Bhandari Sangha in 1925.²¹⁰ While the former organisations were set up to promote education, the latter was established to organise the Bandhari Shikshan Parishad.

In 1926, the thirteenth Bandhari Shikshan Parishad, a three-day conference, was convened at Panjim. Around two thousand delegates from all over Goa, Maharashtra, and Karnataka gathered to discuss the social progress of the Bhandaris with a confidence that unity and education would bring power to the community. The conference was presided by Surve and attended by prominent members from other castes. On the second day, the Portuguese governor arrived and congratulated the Bhandaris for making efforts towards education.²¹¹ Although the backwardness of the Bhandaris was an issue, the thrust of the conference was directed towards reclaiming a Maratha identity. Reform and dissent came to the conference in the guise of a temple. As temples were emerging as an important feature in the assertion of identity, Bablo Masno Naik Volvoikar contested GSB claims over the Mahalaxmi temple at Panjim. Besides, the Bhandaris were declared as *gaunkars* of the village communities and *mahajans* of temples.²¹² These efforts prompted an assessment of the history of Goa—it was proclaimed that the region was the original home of the Bhandaris who were forced to leave due to the religious persecution of the Portuguese. What was more, the temple of Rudreshwar at Harvalem, that emerged as the patron god of the Bhandaris, further served as instrumentalities for defining the caste.²¹³

²⁰⁸ *Hindu*, 25 April 1925, 6

²⁰⁹ *Hindu*, 6 June 1925, 6–7.

²¹⁰ *Bhandari Vijay*, July 1925, 126–28.

²¹¹ *Bharat*, 13 January 1927, 6.

²¹² Dattaram Vamona Naique, ed., *Bandhari Shikshan Parishad: Thirteenth Adhiveshan: Panaji, December 1926* (Panaji: Yaduvir Naik Shirodkar, 1939), 20.

²¹³ This aspect has been examined in Chapter Four.

Most importantly, Shivaji served as a symbol for a series of activities among the Bhandaris. They not only staged dramas about Shivaji and celebrated his birth anniversary, but also set up institutions named after the Maratha ruler. In 1927, the tri-centenary celebration of Shivaji's birth was convened by the Kshatriya Bhandari Samaj at Panjim. The celebrations continued for three days, with the greatest attraction being the image of Shivaji carried in a palanquin from Shree Pandurang Prasadik Vidyabhavan to the house of Bablo Masno Naik Volvoikar.²¹⁴ The overall effect of these activities was to publicise and cement a Kshatriya caste identity through a claim to a Maratha status. When the winds of change did come, with the creation and promotion of associations open only to the Bhandaris, they were unevenly distributed among the members. The Bhandaris from urban areas such as Panjim were among the major beneficiaries of primary education in Marathi, while the remaining majority of the community members were yet to reach school.²¹⁵ What was clear is that as the government service was beginning to attract a few educated Bhandaris in Panjim, the opportunities were growing scarcer as the GSBs continued to exercise their commanding influence in the administration. While the non-GSB castes were publicly critical of this situation, the rural economy, dominated by the GSBs through landholding, did little to arrest the backwardness of the Bhandaris.

3.6 Gabit/Tari and the question of community

Prior to Portuguese rule, the use of the generic term Kharvi, derived from *khar*, meaning salty, to denote Hindu and Catholic Goan fisher communities, on the whole, was absent. It looks like the word was first used by Afonso de Albuquerque, though it is not clear for what reason.²¹⁶ While the word Kharvi largely meant Catholic fisherfolk, it was also used to describe Hindu communities involved in sailing and fishing. As the term Kharvi was applied generically to fisherfolk, during the nineteenth century the Hindu fisherfolk were forced to distinguish themselves as Tari/Trukar, or Gabit. Besides, there are references to spaces such as Gabitvado, which are the settlements founded by the community.²¹⁷ The term Gabit comes from the Arabic

²¹⁴ *Bharat*, 19 May 1927, 5.

²¹⁵ *Hetkari*, February 1962, 31–5.

²¹⁶ Sebastião Rodolpho Dalgado, *Glossário Luso-Asiática*, vol. I (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1919), 222.

²¹⁷ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 62, 9 August 1861, 499.

word *ghurab*, a kind of sailing vessel usually employed on sea during war, and is constantly mentioned from the eleventh century to the eighteenth century.²¹⁸ Similarly, Tari/Trukar also means individuals possessing river boats that were used to ferry people and goods. More importantly, they were not only involved in small-scale fishing but also in boat building, transporting passengers across riverbanks, sailing and shipping of food.²¹⁹ In 1879, there is a reference to Narna Gabit from Kumpta supplying food items carried in a *machua*, a small oar ship equipped with one quadrangular sail, to the port of Betul in Goa.²²⁰ We see further evidence of this identification with A. B de Bragança Pereira's ethnography of Goa, which refers to the Kharvis or Tavis or Gabits as fishermen and sailors.²²¹

At the turn of the twentieth century, we find that the Hindu communities at sea were largely divided into three categories. Firstly, Gabit, a term losing its significance in Goa but acquiring prominence among fishers from Ratnagiri and Kanara districts of British India. Secondly, Kharvi, a term that replaced Tari/Gabit in Goa; at times the words Kharvi and Gabit were used interchangeably to mean fishing communities. For instance, Suriagy Ananda Rau in his *Diccionario Maratha-Portuguez* of 1879, refers to both Kharvi and Gabit as fisherfolk.²²² In his 1920 study, R. E. Enthoven identifies Gabits as chiefly found in Ratnagiri and Kanara districts, but originally from Goa, where they are known as Kharvi.²²³ In addition, a recent report

²¹⁸ Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson: a glossary of colloquial Anglo-Indian words and phrases, and of kindred terms, etymological, historical, geographical and discursive* (London: Murray, 1903), 391–92.

²¹⁹ James Thomas Molesworth, *A dictionary, Marathi and English*. 2nd ed., rev. and enl. (Bombay: Bombay Education Society's Press, 1857), 205, 233.

²²⁰ Historical Archives of Goa, Alfandega de Betul, 1877–1880, no. 5947. Also see, Murelle Maria Leonildes da Costa, "History of Trade and Commerce in Goa 1878-1961," (PhD diss., Goa University, 2002), 282.

²²¹ A. B. de Bragança Pereira, "Etnografia da Índia Portuguesa," 354.

²²² Suriagy Ananda Rau, *Diccionario Maratha-Portuguez* (Nova Goa Imprensa Nacional, 1879), 275, 311.

²²³ R. E. Enthoven, *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, vol. I, 348–49.

emphasises that Gabits speak the Konkani language.²²⁴ During the Portuguese rule, they fled to coasts of Konkan, and those who remained were converted to Christianity. Thirdly, Pagui, a fisher community settled in Canacona, deriving its name from a throw net. More importantly, these three groups not only had restrictions on marriage and eating, but also had their own claims of superiority. Besides, there was also a wide diversity within these communities based on the kind of sea craft they used and the different types of nets employed in different zones of rivers.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Tari/Gabit were making claims to a Kshatriya Maratha identity. As the colonial state refused to accept responsibility for public education in Marathi, private primary schools were established. However, they were marked by a range of exclusions that forced lower castes to consolidate and make efforts to set up their own institutions encouraging education. In 1913, Shree Kelambika Prasadik Hindu Vachanalaya, the first library for Tari/Gabit was set up at Volvoi in Ponda.²²⁵ Around this time, efforts were also made to draw the attention of the community towards education.²²⁶ Besides, the government, in the 1920s and the 1930s, was continually forcing fishers to sell their catch by weight and fixed prices.²²⁷ Such a measure apparently gave no protection to the fisher community and made matters easy for the landlords to secure first-grade fish on payment of inadequate rates. These developments furthered unity. This was witnessed during the strike in 1920 and 1924, which remarkably forced the government to withdraw its order on weighing fish.²²⁸ A significant fallout of these developments was the foundation of Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha Vidhyavardhak Mandal in 1926.²²⁹ Although the institution never struck wide roots, and had an early exit, it was important for its purpose—to promote education and make an attempt to get members together.

The need for identities had led to a deeper interest in the past. In 1929, Baburao Bhikaji Prabhu, who was from Vengurla and belonged to the Tari/Gabit caste, though he had settled in Goa,

²²⁴ R. M. Bapat, *Maharashtra State Other Backward Caste Commission, Report number 17* (February 2006), 48.

²²⁵ *Bharat*, 14 May 1913, 3.

²²⁶ *Bharat*, 16 July 1913, 4.

²²⁷ *The Goan World*, September 1924, 5–8; *The Goan World*, March 1937, 18.

²²⁸ *Bharat*, 9 September 1920, 2; *Bharat*, 14 August 1924, 4.

²²⁹ *Bharat*, 29 January 1942, 2.

wrote *Konkanastha Maratha–Kshatriya Samajacha Sanshipt Itihas* ('A Brief History of Konkanastha Maratha–Kshatriya').²³⁰ A host of GSB scholars had also begun to take an active interest in the past and had written about the Hindu fishers as Kharvis in Marathi books and periodicals.²³¹ However, this was the first book from the community perspective. More importantly, Prabhu found that the upper–caste historical accounts were clearly at odds with the history of the community. He accused the educated elite of conspiring to deny them a Maratha caste identity. The very title of the book described the community as Maratha Kshatriya from Konkan. In the retelling of history, in the context of disputes relating to the past, Prabhu refuses to use the term Kharvi and positions the entire fishing community across Ratnagiri and Kanara districts, and Goa, as Gabit, alias Tari. Establishing a fuller understanding of the community, he argues for a regional Maratha caste identity. This demand had two important features. Firstly, Prabhu refuted the label of Gabit, alias Tari, as a caste name and considered it as an occupation. Secondly, the exploits of Gabits and their martial feats in the armies of the erstwhile Maratha state, and their sharing of family names and lineages with elite Marathas, were highlighted to strengthen claims over a Maratha caste identity.

Moreover, these claims were not made for the first time, but go back to the nineteenth century. For instance, the 1911 census report of British India states that Gabit call themselves Konkan Marathas, who had manned the Maratha navy.²³² Subsequently, with the defeat of the Marathas and the abolition of the Maratha navy, they took to fishing which isolated them from the elite Marathas. Thus, by the end of the eighteenth century, as the creeks and backwaters passed under the control of the British, it caused a serious loss to the Gabit. Furthermore, in terms of contemporary times, the census report further highlighted that although the hereditary occupation of Gabits was of seafaring and catching and selling fish, their lineages are found to be of elite Marathas, a clear indication of 'probable Maratha' origin of the caste.²³³ As Maratha history became a powerful and emotive subject, the Gabits emphasised their deeds of heroism. One such

²³⁰ Baburao Bhikaji Prabhu, *Konkanastha Maratha–Kshatriya Samajacha Sanshipt Itihas* (Ribandar: Mahasagar Press, 1929).

²³¹ Naik Danait and Wagle, *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas*, 46.

²³² P. J. Mead and G Liard MacGregor, *Census of India, 1911. Bombay*, vol. VIII, Part I: Report (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1912), 256.

²³³ *Ibid.*

hero was Ganoji Tandel, alias Ganba Tari, who had saved Shivaji from an attack of the Portuguese.²³⁴

What is noteworthy about Prabhu's effort is that this was the first, and probably the last, attempt made to unite Gabits, alias Taris, settled across the Konkan coast. At the same time, while caste identity was becoming important in the private Marathi schools of Goa, Prabhu appealed to the teachers to record the caste of Gabits, alias Taris, as Konkanastha Kshatriya Maratha.²³⁵ Further, he had plans to publish the second edition of his work. This would increase the size of the book from forty-four to 250 pages with a greater historical depth, recounting the history of the community since the eighth century and containing details on prominent families, lineages, along with photographs on the temples of the community.²³⁶

These efforts to advance the community led to the setting up of four Marathi primary schools from 1930s to 1940s at Volvai, Ekoshim, Pomburfa and Sant Estevam—villages where the community was prominently located. At the same time, the older Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha Vidhyavardhak Mandal was revived and the Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha Samaj was established in 1942.²³⁷ The mid-nineteenth century saw the founding of the cotton textile industry in Bombay, and the Taris/Gabits, constrained by economic pressures, were driven out. Subsequently, Bombay emerged as the hub of industrial activities in colonial India and Taris/Gabits began to settle in the city. Their depressed conditions forced them to make adjustments to the city and to unite for marginal advantages. This led to the foundation of Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha Samaj at Bombay in 1939.²³⁸

On the other hand, as historical contestation was pitting one social group against another, the Gabit movement towards a Maratha caste identity in British Bombay gained real momentum in

²³⁴ P. K. Gode, "Caste Name "Gabit'," in *Sardessai Commemoration Volume*, ed. Shripad R. Tikekar (Bombay: Keshav Bhikaji Dhawale, 1938), 222.

²³⁵ *Bharat*, 21 December, 1933, 2.

²³⁶ *Bharat*, 29 September 1932, 3; *Bharat*, 1 February 1934, 3.

²³⁷ *Bharat*, 29 January 1942, 2.

²³⁸ *Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha Samaj, Mumbai: 23rd annual report* (Mumbai: Gomantak Kshatriya Maratha Samaj, 1961).

the political bargaining of the 1920s. Gabits from the Ratnagiri district who had settled in Bombay were contesting their fisherfolk identity. While the 1911 census report had admitted the Gabit as being of probable Maratha origin, they began to submit memorandums urging that they should be shown as Marathas and the name Gabit be abandoned. As a result, the census of 1921 included them as a separate unit in the Maratha Kunbi group.²³⁹ It is also interesting to note that for the elections to the Bombay provincial legislative assembly the Gabit caste was included in the expression 'Marathas' in the election manual.²⁴⁰ By 1920s the British had announced measures to achieve a fair representation of castes and communities in government services.²⁴¹ The British classified all communities in the Bombay province into three classes: advanced, intermediate and backward. While the term 'backward classes' was used in a wider sense, they were further divided into three categories: 'depressed classes', aboriginal and hill tribes, and other backward classes. This classification was significant as the government of Bombay province had fixed a minimum percentage for recruitment of backward and intermediate communities in the clerical cadre. Further, the percentage for recruitment varied according to the population of these communities in various districts of the province.

By this time representations were made by various communities from the Bombay province to the government on their social status with a request for a re-classification from advanced, or intermediate, to backward classes that would enable concessions.²⁴² As the communities began to write to the government, making a request for a particular category, they were also engaged in constructing an identity that would address their insecurities. Interestingly, there were also Brahmin communities demanding a re-classification into the backward class.²⁴³ Most of these

²³⁹ L. J. Sedgwick, *Census of India, 1921. Bombay Presidency*, vol. VIII, Part I: General Report (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1922), 183–84.

²⁴⁰ Maharashtra State Archives, Government of Bombay, Political and Services Department, File No. 1673/34–X.

²⁴¹ Marc Galanter, "Who Are the Other Backward Classes?: An Introduction to a Constitutional Puzzle," *Economic and Political Weekly* 13, no. 43/44 (1978): 1813.

²⁴² Maharashtra State Archives, Government of Bombay, Political and Services Department, File No. 490/46–II.

²⁴³ Maharashtra State Archives, Government of Bombay, Political and Services Department, File No. 1673/34–III.

representations received attention from the government, necessitating detailed inquiries that would include officers at the provincial, district and local levels. Prior to the publication of the list of backward classes in 1933, Gabits were regarded as belonging to an intermediate class.²⁴⁴ It was at the instance of the leading members from the Gabit caste, and the extreme backwardness that was highlighted in the investigation by the officials from Ratnagiri and Kanara districts, that they were included in the backward classes. Subsequently, in 1939, Savalaram Babaji Kubal, who belonged to the Gabit caste residing in Bombay and held the position of secretary of Konkan Maratha Sangh, Vengurla, appealed to the government to re-classify his caste as Konkani Maratha. Further, in order to support his claim, Savalaram Babaji Kubal mentioned Sonars who had been transformed to Daivadnya. Through his rather long petition that detailed out their Maratha past similar to Prabhu's account, he requested the British government to elevate them into the intermediate class.²⁴⁵ The plea surprised the officials; where the usual demands were to move downwards to claim backwardness, in this case it was the opposite.

Unlike other communities that were able to forge a unity across their social groups, not just in Goa, but also neighbouring territories, Tari/Gabit from Goa and Gabit from Ratnagiri and Kanara districts failed to consolidate. In 1905, the Gabits residing in Bombay established the Dakshin Kokanastha Maratha Vidhya Prasar Mandali, and later, the Maratha Kshatriya Vidhyawardhak Mandal in 1919.²⁴⁶ Upon the commencement of these institutions, they attempted to quickly contact their members. During this time, the Goan Gabits/Taris in Bombay were seen as newcomers—strangers. Consecutively, this was not appreciated altogether by the members of the Goan Gabits/Taris in the city. Despite the emphasis upon their unity in the 1920s, the competition in the city of Bombay and over sea waters—customary or traditional rights to exploit resources and to fish in adjacent coastal areas between Portuguese Goa and British India—obscured their interests. In such circumstances, the Gabit/Tari and the Pagui from Goa, and the Gabit from Ratnagiri and Kanara districts, failed to consolidate and present themselves as a community in need of advancement and the government's support.

²⁴⁴ Note by Backward Class Officer, Bombay Province, Poona, dated 25 October 1939. Maharashtra State Archives, Government of Bombay, Political and Services Department File No. 1673/34-X.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ramesh Kubal, *Gabit Kshatriya Armari Gharanyacha Itihas* (Mumbai: Kshatriya Armari Maratha Samaj, 1983), 178.

3.7 In search of lost times

Apart from the castes discussed, the adjudication of the disputed caste status of the Nabhik, Komarpant and Mith–Gaudas also necessitated new identities. Although they were considered as degraded due to their mode of life, they made traditional claims to a lost Kshatriya caste identity. Historically, the Nabhik, the barber community, was referred to as Napit, one who lived by unproductive services and were, hence, inferior. While they owed their services to the entire village, since the late eighteenth century, the Nabhik were dependent to different degrees, and in different ways, on Panjim. They migrated from the New Conquests to Panjim and benefitted not only in terms of their traditional service becoming professional, but also through new patterns of work that forced them to diversify.

Notably, they were one of the first lower caste communities within Goa to make efforts towards advancement. First, they contested the word Napit and claimed a caste identity of Nabhik—one who is born from the *nabhi* (navel) of Brahma, the Hindu creator god. Secondly, in order to relocate and redefine themselves in a historical context, the Nabhik saw Chandragupta Maurya as the Navhi-Samrat (Barber-Emperor).²⁴⁷ Thirdly, they began to consolidate around the Mahalaxmi temple in Panjim. They would not only take credit for facilitating the construction of the temple in 1818 by getting the governor general's approval, but also began to consolidate around the temple. In 1907, Mahalaxmi Prasadik Hindu Vachan Mandir was founded in Panjim—probably one of the first libraries set up by a barber community in India.²⁴⁸ Nabhiks were also keen to spread education and added the Mahalaxmi Prasadik Mofat (free) Marathi Primary School to the library in 1920. Moreover, to raise awareness within the community a Marathi periodical *Napitodaya* (The Rise of Napits, later renamed to *Nabhikodaya*) was started at Panjim in 1921. Subsequently, in the 1940s, they built a temple of Gomteshwar (a form of Shiva) at Brahmapuri, Old Goa, with exclusive *mahajan* rights over it.²⁴⁹ Although community-based networks such as a library, school, periodical and temple were effective in supporting the occupational and spatial mobility of the Nabhiks in Panjim, they also restricted the mobility of

²⁴⁷ *Nabhikodaya*, January 1931, 2–5.

²⁴⁸ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 68, 26 August 1911, 867–68.

²⁴⁹ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, series I, no. 50, 23 December 1948, 195–98.

their members from outside the city; once these networks were established in the city, little efforts were made to take the movement outside Panjim.

By the nineteenth century, the Komarpaik/Komarpant, who were farmers and toddy tappers largely settled in south Goa and Kanara district, were claiming a Kshatriya caste identity. While they appear to have been soldiers in the service of the Sonda chiefs, the name *paik* suggests foot soldier, thus signifying a warrior ethos.²⁵⁰ Similarly, the Mith–Gaudas, who were involved in salt production and were found largely in north Goa and the Konkan coast, were asserting a Kshatriya caste identity. In the 1930s, they formed Kshatrakulotpnna Maratha Samaj in Bombay, and subsequently extended its reach to Goa after the liberation.²⁵¹ Moreover, this tradition of Marathisation acquired new salience after Goa’s liberation, and other communities such as Gauda of tribal origin and Madval, the washermen community, also sought to extend their claim over a Maratha identity, and looked to their own histories for affirmation of their caste. In addition, liberation brought not only new confidence, but new political leverage, and led to new caste solidarities and political alliances.

The caste conflicts that we have examined reflect deeper historical contests where social dignity, political leverage, and material livelihoods were all at issue. The castes that were considered to be ‘Shudra like’ do not see themselves as inferior in status. More importantly, these caste movements illustrate the agency, resistance and resilience of communities as they engage in constructing an identity to address the tension between how others view them and how they view themselves, and construct a sense of a valued life and self. They fought for the claim over more established castes and called for a caste status superior to Brahmins, Kshatriya and Vaishya but there was no dearth of contradictions.

First, as they attacked the Brahmin dominance, it forced the non–Brahmin castes to make efforts to produce priests from their respective communities. Yet, almost all castes made use of Brahmin

²⁵⁰ *Census of India, 1911. Bombay*, vol. VIII. Part I: Report (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1912), 276.

²⁵¹ *Vikas* (Dr. R. K. Shirodkar Smritimala), vol. 60 (Mumbai: Kshatrakulotpnna Maratha Samaj, 2008). For more details see, <http://www.kmseducationinstitution.com/WebsitePages/Founder.aspx>, accessed on 3 January 2022.

priests for weddings, funerals and other sacraments. Second, in contesting the caste hierarchy and caste oppression through a Maratha caste identity, social groups hierarchised one another. Thus, the identification with the glories of a Maratha past was a great source of strength, and also a source of weakness. Third, the intense social competitiveness of caste communities failed to develop into a non-Brahmin movement. Portuguese colonialism and the stranglehold of the GSBs over the administration and society did not create new opportunities for others. Subsequently, even though very few non-Brahmins made efforts to acquire basic education, finishing primary schooling in Marathi no longer guaranteed upward mobility.²⁵² Moreover, the Portuguese public schools and the private Marathi primary schools encouraged the education of lower castes as a social adornment and an end in itself, and not as a means to step out. The only evidence of consolidation of non-GSB castes in Goa was the establishment of the Gomantak Saraswatater Samaj in 1929.²⁵³ It was set up in the context of the GSBs' exclusive claim for the right of *mahajan* at the Mahalaxmi temple at Panjim and its membership was open to any non-Saraswat person who was 18 years or above.²⁵⁴ Although the larger aim of the organisation was to promote advancement of the non-Saraswats, it failed to extend its influence outside Panjim and was largely restricted to the Mahalaxmi temple issue.

²⁵² *Swayamsevak*, 9 April 1930, 10.

²⁵³ *Hindu*, 22 October 1929, 7.

²⁵⁴ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 65, August 14 1931, 970–71.

Chapter 4

Land and Temples: Present Sites of the Past

As anyone who has spent time in Goa knows, a temple is not just a place where communities gather to offer prayers. For well over three hundred years, it has stood for two things—caste and status—that have always been evident to people who use it. In one sense, it enables the upper castes, both Catholic and Hindu, with diverse interests, to speak of the past of one another. *Goa: A Daughter's Story* informs us of a conversation of the author with a GSB Goan friend that illustrates this point:

Dona Aurora, you belong to my temple, Ramnathji, which is a few kilometres from Ponda. The voice belonged to M. S. Talaulikar, an industrialist and mine-owner. Holding out a hand as he walked towards me, he greeted me with the warmth of family. Did we belong to the same temple? Talaulikar was a *mahajan* of the temple and was therefore able to confirm that many Catholic Brahmin families had an unbroken tradition of sending customary offerings to the temple. He told me facts about my ancestors...¹

On the other hand, popular representations of the temples often tend to erase subaltern communities and their aspirations.

Since the early twentieth century indigenous accounts have perceived the temple as an ideal religious institution.² They rehearse a common story about the temples being destroyed by the

¹ Maria Aurora Couto, *Goa: A Daughter's Story* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2004), 178.

² Vishnu Rangaji Sheldekar, *Shree Chandreshwar Mahatmya* (Khanapur: Dhananjay Chapkhana, 1902); Vishnu Rangaji Sheldekar, *Gomantakatil Kaivalyapur Yethil Shree Shantadurga Sansthancha Itihas* (Chandor: Vishnu Rangaji Sheldekar and Mukund Sadashiv Sheldekar, 1912); Shripad Venkatesh Wagle, *Shree Mangesh Devasthancha Sanshipta Itihas* (Mumbai: Self-published, 1907); Shripad Venkatesh Wagle, *Gomantakatil Shree Nagesh Maharudra, Shree Mahalaxmi, Shree Ramnath, Shree Mahalasa va*

Portuguese and the shifting of the deities to safer locations under the leadership of the GSBs. In the process, modern scholarship has failed to move beyond this dominant reading, and popular belief produced by the temple literature. Scholars who focus on temples, usually in the vein of social history, approach their field with a set of analytical tools attuned to religious studies.³ Accordingly, their enthusiasm to study the temple, tends to flatten the subject as a symbol of Hindu identity.⁴ This has led to a troubled relationship, with most historians and anthropologists viewing religion as a source of temple life and treating the other social aspects as a peripheral concern. The politics associated with temples is somewhat noticeably absent in these analyses. Temple histories need to be taken with a grain of salt, so as not to imagine a single, linear history.

A temple is not just a religious place; several aspects of life intersect in the temple. In addition to being centres of worship, temples have been of enormous significance in social, economic and political developments. In important ways, they are representative of life, at least in the South Indian context, already richly documented by anthropologists and historians.⁵ This distinction of

Shree Laxmi Narsinha ya Devasthanacha Sansipta Itihas (Mapuca: Self-published, 1913); Jaywantrao Vinayak Suryarao Sardesai, *Shree Kshetra Narve Yethil Shree Saptakoteswar Devasthanacha Prachinani Arvachin Itihas* (Mumbai: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1934); R. S. Pandit, "The temple of Shantadurga," *All India Saraswat* 4, no. 4 (1922): 61–70.

³ V. Gopala Rao, "Temples of Goa—An Architectural Study," (PhD diss., Goa University, 2003).

⁴ Paul Axelrod and Michelle A. Fuerch, "Flight of the Deities: Hindu Resistance in Portuguese Goa," *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (1996): 387–421; V. Gopala Rao, "Temples of Goa—An Architectural Study," (PhD diss., Goa University, 2003); Pandurang Phaldesai, "A Cultural History of Canacona Taluka of Goa," (PhD diss., Goa University, 2001); Padmaja Kamat, "Ponda: A History of temples," (PhD diss., Goa University, 2011).

⁵ Since 1970s, anthropologists and historians have offered a more nuanced approach to the temple as a 'process' or 'cultural field'. This temple framework offers insights to understand the problem of how to envision and describe crucial changes in the past. For details, please see: Arjun Appadurai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule: A South Indian Case* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1983); Carol Appadurai Breckenridge, "From Protector to Litigant—Changing Relations Between Hindu Temples and the Raja of Ramnad," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 14, no. 1 (1977): 75–106; Susan Bayly, "Hindu Kingship and the Origin of Community: Religion, State and Society in Kerala, 1750–1850," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 2 (1984): 177–213; Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory*

the temple is a useful way of thinking our way into the idea of a place of worship. Temples are both religious and political—they performed the functions for the legitimacy of kings and social groups, functioned as economic centres and provided a nexus for ritual and economic transactions. Thus, the influence of temples goes beyond religion; they shape identities and are institutions that are central in defining social hierarchies and relations. The temple was a site of many internal conflicts and an investigation of these conflicts offers a window into the cultural history of caste identities. The question is, how can the temple be historically understood as a site of agency?

4.1 Temple: Situating historical evidence

When scholars write about the temple as a historical phenomenon, they are more often than not idealising the cultural and social past of the GSBs, rather than uncovering material evidence for it. This approach foregrounds the GSBs, referring to the temple uncritically to narrate the cultural life of the GSBs and their resistance to the colonial state. However, the more pervasive view is that the temple had evolved into an institution that could be used by indigenous groups to advance and protect their respective interests. There is a basic question at the heart of these discussions of the temple and caste identity: should narrations of the past portray the temple more as a source of religious identity or as an instrument for caste assertion? This question can be addressed by allowing a greater possibility for the temple and society shaping each other by examining crucial changes in the past that led to the emergence, spread, and institutionalisation of temples.

The claim of control over a temple is a major assertion and is entrenched in ‘ancient history’, taken to be synonymous with the maintenance of a social order. But the modern discipline of history is particularly troubled with the historical evidence and the foundational claims made over temples. While the historical record is more fragmentary, we are left with two different sets

of an Indian Kingdom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); C. J. Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess: The Priests of a South Indian Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Franklin A. Presler, *Religion under Bureaucracy Policy and Administration for Hindu Temples in South India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Kanakalatha Mukund, *View from Below: Indigenous Society, Temples and the Early Colonial State in Tamilnadu 1700–1835* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2005); Pamela G. Price, *Kingship and Political Practice in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

of sources: stone and copper inscriptions, literary texts such as the *Sahayadari Khandā*, and the *Konkanakhyān*, *Foral* of 1526, and temple histories and village records in Marathi. The inscriptions from the tenth century onwards show the Shilahara, Kadamba and Vijayanagar rulers establishing a relationship with the deity through land grants. While these gifts of land were meant for undertaking regular acts of worship, they legitimised the position of the kings in the local society. This is mainly because kings saw themselves as being part of the ‘divine economy’ and donations or gift-giving of lands tied to proprietary rights over those lands sustained the entire structure of the local village ritual and signified their unquestionable authority.⁶

There is one link between the Kadambas and modern Goa—the Saptakoteshwar, a form of god Siva, whose temple was built by the Kadambas on the island of Divar.⁷ The power in the relationship between the king and the deity is established in the context of Saptakoteshwar. Two points are noteworthy here. First, around the eleventh to mid-thirteenth centuries, Saptakoteshwar is prominently mentioned as the family deity of the Kadamba rulers in Goa.⁸ While scholars have related the origin of Saptakoteshwar to a folk god, royal patronage suggests its prominence.⁹ By expressing their role as the first worshippers of the god, the Kadamba rulers acquired royal patronage, a much-needed form of legitimisation. Subsequently, the temple of Saptakoteshwar was destroyed on two occasions. Under the Bahmanis in the fourteenth century, but rebuilt by the Vijayanagar general Madhav Mantri. And, in the sixteenth century, as the Portuguese destroyed the temple, it was shifted to Narve and favoured with the patronage of the Maratha ruler Shivaji in the seventeenth century. Secondly, contrary to historical evidence, the

⁶ James Heitzam, *Gifts of Power: Lordship in an Early Indian State* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁷ V. T. Gune, ed., *Gazetteer of the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu*, vol. 1 (Panaji: Gazetteer Department, 1979), 793–95.

⁸ George Moraes, *The Kadamba Kula: A History of Ancient and Mediaeval Karnataka* (Bombay: B. X. Furtado and Sons, 1931), 384; V. R. Mitragotri, *Socio Cultural History of Goa: From Bhojas to Vijayanagar* (Panaji: Institute Menezes Braganca, 1999), 111, 161.

⁹ V. T. Gune, *Ancient Shrines of Goa: A Pictorial Survey* (Panaji: Department of Information, Government of Goa, 1965), 13–4; Mitragotri, *Socio Cultural History of Goa*, 49.

Kadambas are seen as Jains persecuting the Brahmins in Goa.¹⁰ And the patronage to Saptakoteshwar is understood as their acceptance of Hinduism.¹¹

Besides, local officials participated in this model of ritual polity. Seeking legitimacy, more for the purpose of enforcing rule, some of the gifts were made by the local officials through the state. There is a stone inscription from the Vijayanagar period that records the land grant made by Mai Shenoji Wagle for the Nagesh and Mahalaxmi temples to sustain everyday temple rituals in 1413. In this, status was determined by the receipt of honours bestowed by the gods in return for the donation. Mai Shenoji Wagle gave material resources to the deity and, in return, received the honour of the first worship.¹² Subsequently, he was proclaimed as the first *mahajan* of the temple, a relationship which became the source of his authority.¹³ It is perhaps worth noting that the epigraphs deal with land grants and do not offer us any direct evidence that might help to understand the foundation of the temples. In fact, social history is not well-defined in the works based on the inscriptions.

At the other end of the spectrum, the *Sahaydari Khanda* and *Konkanakhyana* are more focused on how the temples were established in Goa. The *Sahaydari Khanda* of the *Skanda Purana* is a text dealing with the account of the creation of Goa by lord Parashurama, and the settlement of the GSBs hailing from Tirhut in north-eastern India. While lord Parashurama settled the best and most virtuous of all the Brahmin communities—the GSBs of Goa—important deities such as Shantadurga, Mangesh, Mahalsa, Nagesh, Saptakoteshwar and Mahalaxmi, whose temples actually formed part of the landscape of sixteenth-century Goa, accompanied them. The historiography of the *purana* and everyday practices clearly demonstrates the difficulties in

¹⁰ Vaman Rangunath Varde Valavalikar, *Goemkarachi Goyabhayali Vosnuk* (Bombay: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1928), 40.

¹¹ V. N. Kudva, *History of the Dakshinatyā Saraswats* (Madras: Samyukta Gowda Saraswata Sabha, 1972), 158.

¹² Shripad Venkatesh Wagle, ed., *Konkanakhyana urfa Dakshinatyā Saraswat Brahmanakhyana* (Mumbai: author, 1909), 79.

¹³ Pandurang Sadashiv Pissurlencar, “Shree Shantadurga–Shree Mangeshche kahi Namankit Kulavi,” in *Shree Shantadurga Chaturshatabdi Mahotsav Granth*, ed. Pandurang Sadashiv Pissurlencar (Mumbai: Shree Shantadurga Seva Samiti, 1966), 201–05.

establishing a specific date for these texts as a whole.¹⁴ Specifically, scholars now date *Sahayadri Khanda* to before the middle of the thirteenth century, but it has been added to over a millennium, or more, by many undated compositions.¹⁵ Besides, there were different manuscripts. José Gerson da Cunha, a Goan Catholic Brahmin who first edited the text in 1877, recorded that he collated fourteen different rare manuscripts of the *Sahayadri Khanda*, obtained from Cochin, Junnar, Bombay, Kota, Siddhapur, Chempi, Goa and Banaras.¹⁶ However, not all manuscripts have been re-discovered. It is important to note that one of the most engaged, early reviews of the *Sahayadri Khanda* came in *Dexassudharanetxo*—written almost within a month of its publication.¹⁷ The reviewer for the most part complimented Da Cunha, a Catholic, for his outsider’s role in editing the Sanskrit text with the assistance of three Brahmins, that too, when all efforts were made by the Peshwas to destroy the *Sahayadri Khanda*, thus making it probably the most important work ever published. On the other hand, while the reviewer faulted about its order, he nevertheless clarified that the problem was of the text itself rather anything to do with the editor.

The *Sahayadri Khanda* is an account explaining the origin of various Brahmins in Konkan and Goa in remote times. More importantly, it is based on a GSB point of view, and while they are the heroes of the text, it denigrates other Brahmin communities and formulates their lower origin. For instance, Chitpavan Brahmins are stated to be a community of fishermen who were purified by god Parshuram and offered Brahminhood. As a result, James Grant Duff, in his book on the history of the Marathas, notes that the Peshwas carefully suppressed or destroyed all copies of the *Sahaydari Khanda*, where their origin is mentioned, and a few years back a highly regarded Brahmin from Waee was disgraced by Peshwa Bajirao for having a copy of it.¹⁸

¹⁴ Ludo Rocher, *The Puraṇas* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986); Hans T. Bakker, ed., *Origin and Growth of the Puranic Text Corpus, with Special Reference to the Skanda Purana* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004).

¹⁵ Stephan Hillyer Levitt, *The Pāṭityagrāmanirṇaya: a Purāṇic history of some Brahman communities* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2017), 97–8.

¹⁶ José Gerson da Cunha, ed., *The Sahyādri-khanda of the Skanda Purāna: A Mythological, Historical and Geographical Survey of Western India* (Bombay: Thacker Vining and Company, 1877), 1–2.

¹⁷ *Dexassudharanetxo*, 27 June 1877, 3.

¹⁸ James Grant Duff, *A History of the Mahrattas*, vol. I (Calcutta: R. Cambay & Co., 1912), 9.

A century later, Gajanan Shastri Gaitonde, a GSB, consulted various manuscripts that were skipped by Da Cunha. He translated and edited *Sahayadri Khanda* and claimed it to be a corrected version of Da Cunha's edition.¹⁹ In Gaitonde's edition, names are given to all of the various chapters, for many of which Da Cunha's colophons give none.²⁰ Further, Gaitonde mentions various handwritten copies of *Sahayadri Khanda* located in India, Nepal and England, which are not complete and lack uniformity. The other noteworthy feature of the *Sahayadri Khanda* is the addition of *mahatmyas*, or legends, in connection with the foundation of temples in Goa. Da Cunha makes it clear that addition of *mahatmyas* was the result of his editorial interventions, but they were considered to be supplements of the *Sahayadri Khanda*.²¹ In this process, Da Cunha, however, tends to include few *mahatmyas*, though there are others traditionally attached to the text, such as the Hatkeshwar *mahatmya* that finds fragmentary mention in the *Sahayadri Khanda* itself.²² Gaitonde only presents the *mahatmyas* given by Da Cunha, but there were other *mahatmyas* as well.²³ This makes it difficult to distinguish the original text from its many later additions and editions. Stephan Hillyer Levitt rightly observes that the text has undergone many interpolations—different sections of *Sahayadri Khanda* have come from different sources, or different sections from the same source, and by the time it was identified as the *Sahayadri Khanda*, the text may have been extremely corrupted.²⁴ Besides, the claim to be a part of the *Skanda Purana*, endows its accounts with a distinctive aura of sacredness and authenticity emanating from a legendary past.

Writing in 1721, an anonymous author, who is claimed to have been a GSB, relied heavily on *Sahayadri Khanda* to produce the *Konkanakhyān*. There is a tendency to see these texts together, but they are remarkably different. Three points are noteworthy here. First, *Konkanakhyān* directly borrows the account of Lord Parashuram and the GSB settlement in Goa from the

¹⁹ Gajanan Shastri Gaitonde, trans. and ed., *Shree Skandapurāṇa—Sahyādrīkhanda* (Mumbai: Shri Katyayani Publications, 1971), 21–2.

²⁰ Stephan Hillyer Levitt, “Reflections on the Sahyādrīkhaṇḍa's Uttarārḍha,” *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 5 (2017): 151–61.

²¹ Cunha, *The Sahyādrī-khanda of the Skanda Purāna*, 2.

²² Cunha, *The Sahyādrī-khanda of the Skanda Purāna*, 491.

²³ For a fuller discussion of this, Stephan Hillyer Levitt, *The Pātityagrāmanirṇaya*, 31–5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Sahayadri Khanda, but nowhere refers to the derogatory description of Chitpavan and Karhade Brahmins as found in the latter. This approach towards the Maharashtra Brahmins, may be due to the fact that Chitpavans had acquired political power as the Peshwas of the Maratha empire.²⁵ Secondly, *Konkanakhyan* refers to the Maratha ruler Shivaji's arrival at Kudal in 1663 that had raised a question on the caste identity of Shenvis.²⁶ During this time, the debate in Shivaji's court, titled *Shenvijatinirnaya*, concluded that the Shenvis were *trikarmi* Brahmins, but despite this ruling, *Konkanakhyan* inverts the judgement and claims them to be *shatakarmi* Brahmins.²⁷ Thirdly, while *Sahayadri Khanda* is concerned with the 'ancient past' of the GSBs, *Konkanakhyan* is the account of their contemporary social life that would serve to unite all their *jatis*.²⁸

In spite of the very public presence of the GSBs, their group identities remain locked in anonymity. The *Konkanakhyan* shows how the GSB community was once united and provides reasons for their split into different *jatis*. It is perhaps worth noting that the *Konkanakhyan* was written during the Portuguese rule over the Old Conquests and the unspoken intention of the author seems to be more to increase the authority of his community by addressing disunity, which ultimately fails to transform the community and the people's status within it. In effect, the text makes crucial choices about where to focus its attention and frame the story it wants to tell. This took the form of highlighting the GSBs' unique self-understanding, such as the role of the temple, the village and lineage, which enabled one to relate with the community. While, the *Konkanakhyan* establishes claims of the GSBs over the deities and the villages that are both

²⁵ Urmila R. Patil, "Conflict, Identity and Narratives: The Brahman Communities of Western India from Seventeenth through the Nineteenth Centuries," (PhD. diss., University of Texas, 2010), 203.

²⁶ Wagle, *Konkanakhyana*, 49–50.

²⁷ Wagle, *Konkanakhyana*, 197; Rosalind O'Hanlon and Christopher Minkowski, "What Makes People Who They Are? Pandit Networks and the Problem of Livelihoods in Early Modern Western India," *Indian Economic Social History Review* 45, no. 3 (2008): 381–416; Madhav M. Deshpande, "Pañcha Gauda and Pañcha Drāvida: Contested borders of a traditional classification," in *Anantam Sastram: Indological and Linguistic Studies in Honour of Bertil Tikkanen*, ed. Klaus Karttunen, (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 2010), 41.

²⁸ Vinayak Shenvi Khandeparkar, "The Eki-Beki dispute and the unification of the Gauda Saraswat Brahman caste," (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2018).

included and excluded in the *Sahayadri Khandā*, it clearly exemplifies the centrality of the temple in determining social status and establishing the legitimacy of authority, both social and political. More importantly, the text introduces the category of the *kuladevata* that perhaps began to gain prominence in the eighteenth century.

On the other hand, what do the Portuguese records tell us about the impact of the colonial state on the village life of Goa? In 1526, sixteen years after the conquest of Tiswadi, Afonso Mexia, the *Vedor*, or Comptroller of the Exchequer, issued *Foral de usos e costumes dos Gancares e Lavradores desta Ilha de Goa e outras annexas a ella* (The Charter of Customs and Practices of *Gaunkaria*).²⁹ Comprising of forty-nine articles, the *Foral* was not a gift from the Portuguese monarch, Dom João III, but a document negotiated and agreed between Mexia and local elites, more prominently, the GSBs.³⁰ The *Foral* is celebrated as the original evidence of the structure of the village community and begins with a settler story.³¹ It narrates the first settling of the land in ancient times by four men who introduced cultivation on two uninhabited islands in Goa. Subsequently, the settlers increased in numbers and the first ‘original’ settlers had the title of ‘*gaunkar*’ conferred on them with an inalienable right to the land. Rulers from the Ghats assumed power and demanded rent and tax in return for continuity of patrimonial rights and customs of the *gaunkars*. As the head of the village, *gaunkars*—the descendants of the original settlers—paid a fixed tribute or tax to the state, auctioned the rights to cultivation, divided a percentage of the income earned as shares to the members of the *gaunkaria*, and reserved lands for the temple and village servants. While the title of *gaunkars* was successfully claimed by the upper castes,

²⁹ For a detailed account and commentary on the *Foral*, see B. H. Baden–Powell, “The Villages of Goa in the Early Sixteenth Century,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (1900), 261–91; Rochelle Pinto, “The Foral in the History of the Comunidades of Goa,” *Journal of World History* 29, no 2 (2018):185–212.

³⁰ Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 119; Valentino Viegas, *As Políticas Portuguesas na Índia e o Foral de Goa* (Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 2005); Pinto, “The Foral in the History of the Comunidades of Goa,” 185–212.

³¹ Joaquim Heliodoro da Cunha Rivara, ed., “Foral dos usos e costumes dos Gancares e Lavradores da Ilha de Goa e outras annexas a ella,” *Arquivo Portuguez Oriental*, vol. V, doc. 58 (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1857).

only recently have scholars started paying attention to the role of the Gaudas, the original settlers of Goa, presently comprising tribal communities, who started settling down to establish villages—with which began the process of taking up the title of *gaunkar*.³²

Portuguese colonialism destroyed the initial characteristics of the *gaunkaria*, and they were reconstituted into a new pattern with very little of their primitive qualities.³³ A noteworthy aspect of the *Foral* is the emphasis on land, and not on the temple, as the basis of life in the village.³⁴ It inscribes the efforts of the colonial state to facilitate revenue collection by codifying land relations and thereby transforming the *gaunkari* into the institution called *comunidade*, a Portuguese word used throughout Goa, denoting the joint ownership of the village land by *gaunkars*—the shareholders who divide the profits from the land. In addition, the communal control in each village was fixed to groups of patrilineages of *gaunkar* families called *vangods*, which enhanced its wealth, status and prestige within the village.

There was one striking difference in terms of the construction of the *Comunidade*. From the late seventeenth century onwards, as the state altered its taxation demands, colonial representation constructed the *comunidades* as agricultural associations that were established for managing land and paying tax in each village since its foundation.³⁵ This framing reduced the *comunidades* to an economic category to fulfil the revenue demand.³⁶ However, there are references to *comunidades* with non-landed villages of significant size and resources, such as of fish sellers and toddy-tappers.³⁷ This shows that economic co-operation was realised not

³² Remy Dias, “The Socio-Economic History of Goa with Special Reference to the *Comunidade* System 1750-1910,” (PhD diss., Goa University, 2004), 42.

³³ Rui Gomes Pereira, *Goa: Hindu Temples and Deities* (Panaji: Printwell Press, 1978), 4; Rui Gomes Pereira, *Goa: Gaunkari*, vol. II (Panaji: A. Gomes Pereira, 1981).

³⁴ Paul Axelrod and Michelle A. Fuerch, “Portuguese Orientalism and the Making of the Village Communities of Goa,” *Ethnohistory* 45, no. 3 (1998): 439–76.

³⁵ *Representações das comunidades agrícolas do estado da Índia* (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1861).

³⁶ Dias, “The Socio-Economic History of Goa with Special Reference to the *Comunidade* System,”.

³⁷ Alito Siqueira and Alexander Henn, “The Ganvpon and the *Comunidade*: Towards an anthropological reading for the social history of Goa,” Paper presented at the Seminar on Maritime activities of India with special reference to the Portuguese, 1500-1800, Goa University, Goa, 25–28 April, 2001.

among agriculturists alone. As the *Foral* emerged as a register of property and persons, the communities that did not need to pay taxes were excluded from it and they were declared as extinct on record, even while these communities continued to exist.³⁸

By the eighteenth century, the traditional rights and privileges in each village had come into conflict with new economic interests brought to the fore by the Portuguese colonial rule.³⁹ The *Foral* acquired value not just as a foundational text of codification and legal innovations governing the relations between the colonial power and the local populations, but also constituted a historical document on the basis of which the dominant local groups took recourse to the timeless claim of *gaunkars* and their control over the village and the temple.⁴⁰ Under such circumstances, the political and legal claims made by the GSB temple histories over the position of a *mahajan* in a temple drew on this attribute of an ancient tradition as a historical description of sixteenth century realities. While the *Foral* enabled the GSBs to establish themselves as the *gaunkars* of prominent villages, the Marathi records on village communities from the New Conquests suggest that the GSBs and their lineages of their primary members were the product of scribal skills.⁴¹ They are familiar to us as an influential elite that was part of the official class and clerky culture, which became necessary for the emerging states in the Deccan, and were apparently integrated into the village community with similar rights and privileges as the *gaunkars*. Their scribal skills and access to administration enabled them to amass extensive landed rights. And, because these records were maintained and created by the GSB scribes, they worked as a mechanism of self-legitimation.⁴² Not all *gaunkars* were GSBs, but almost all GSB

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ A. R. Kulkarni, "Marathi Records on Village Communities in Goa Archives," *Indian Economic Social History Review* 19, nos 3–4 (1982): 77–85.

⁴⁰ Pinto, "The Foral in the History of the Comunidades of Goa,".

⁴¹ Kulkarni, "Marathi Records on Village Communities in Goa Archives,"; Paul Axelrod, "Living on the Edge: The village and the state on the Goa-Maratha frontier," *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 45, no. 4 (2008): 553–80.

⁴² Michelle Fuerch and Paul Axelrod, "Listening to the Text: The Many Voices of the Goa Archives," in *Fourth Centenary Volume of the Goa Archives (1595–1995)*, ed. S. K. Mhamai (Panaji: Directorate of Archives and Archaeology, 2001), 156.

families held rights as *gaunkars* and appear to have kept the best and most fertile lands under their control.⁴³

Consequently, the tribals and other caste groups were either displaced or denied full rights in the affairs of the village community, but as landholders, they had revenue obligations.⁴⁴ Further, the dominance of the GSBs increased with the coming of the *Foral* and subsequent codification and legal innovations. More prominently, their authority continued to be rooted in literary culture, which also finds a reference in *Konkanakhyan*. The story suggests that a son of Mhadgaonkar in a great deal of anger left his house and settled in a village having many *khazans* (lands reclaimed from sea water for cultivation of paddy) but not a single Kamat was present, who would perhaps record agrarian produce of these lands.⁴⁵ Accordingly, villagers appointed him to the position of Kamat, who permanently settled in the village and also worshipped the village deity of Ravalnath.

4.2 Making of tradition and its processes

At issue here is historical memory and a larger vision of society under the Portuguese rule from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. For some decades now, scholars who have focused their attention more to the Portuguese destruction of the temples have often overlooked the nuances of history, or have taken them for granted. Because history became so central to the discussions of access to social institutions such as temples, it is important to draw out these nuances by tracking how this history was applied. By the nineteenth century, the antiquity of the village, the deity and lineage acquired a cultural value and its elements (even if in traces) were privileged as it accorded power and status in the local society. In this context, it is important to note that scholars have not only failed to engage with commonly accepted interpretations of temples in Goa, but they increasingly delve closely into everyday practices of the GSBs. In the last several decades, anthropologists and historians have been guided by two approaches for temporally

⁴³ D. D. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality: Studies in the Formation of Indian Culture* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1962), 169; T. R. de Souza, *Medieval Goa: A Socio-Economic History* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1979), 51–90.

⁴⁴ Axelrod, “Living on the Edge,” 565.

⁴⁵ Wagle, *Konkanakhyan*, 29.

framing what they observe. One approach constitutes the longer historical timeframe that only tends to view the GSB past. The second approach is focused on a situational analysis—occurrences that merit attentions are those that deal with the cultural life of the GSBs. In effect, both these approaches provide a readymade structure for narrating the past. Thus, the *Sahayadri Khanda*, *Konkanakhyan* and *Foral* of 1526 constitute a testimony of the pre-colonial past to which GSBs take recourse in support of their claims and aspirations.

This raises important questions about the *Sahayadri Khanda*, *Konkanakhyan* and *Foral* of 1526. Should we map the political significance of the legendary past that legitimised the primacy of GSBs and their lineages over the village and the temple by incorporating it into the written document? Why was Da Cunha so selective about *mahatmyas*? Why do so many GSB texts tell such stories on founding of temples, and more pointedly, why do they go on repeating them? All of these questions revolve around the prioritising of the trajectory of change or pattern as one narrates the past, and how these narratives are destined to result in re-configuration of temples. How one situates the historical representation of temples by analysing patronage and myths across Goa, in keeping with the usages and customs of the land makes all the difference.

In 1510, Tiswadi was the first territory conquered by the Portuguese, after which the territories of Bardez and Salcete were incorporated in 1543. The conversion and Christianisation of the inhabitants of these territories culminated in the destruction of numerous temples. Despite this, the Hindus of the Portuguese-occupied villages, shifted their deities to safer places outside Portuguese dominions, that remained, for short periods, under several rulers, including the sultanate of Bijapur, the Marathas, the Mughals, the Bhonsales of Sawantwadi and Sondekar. This act of Hindu resistance to Portuguese hegemony in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been exclusively claimed by the GSBs, and the role of other communities is made invisible in the literature on Goa. It's often claimed that the temples of the Old Conquests that were shifted belong to the GSBs in their entirety.⁴⁶ In contrast, ethnohistory produces its own archive, provides a different history and makes encounters with conflicting representations of the past inevitable. For instance, the image of Mahalaxmi was shifted from Colva in Salcete to Bandora

⁴⁶ Pereira, *Goa: Hindu Temples and Deities*, 18.

in Ponda by two lower caste men, Sapto and Fato.⁴⁷ And, for risking their lives in shifting the deity, they are worshipped in the form of two *lingas* outside the temple.

What the militant conversion process did was to sever entirely the temple from the central and critical role it played in the village community—the temple of the village was no longer in the village.⁴⁸ At new locations, makeshift structures were erected to house the rescued deities.⁴⁹ And, as individual and deity were separated from one another, these new temple places attracted not just Hindu population, but also converted inhabitants. All of this evoked a negative reaction on the part of the Christian authorities.⁵⁰ Many of the newly rebuilt temples have fragmentary historical records, especially on their construction activities from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries. However, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we do have evidence of Maratha support for the reconstruction of at least three major temples that housed shifted deities. The first refers to the Saptakoteshwar temple at Narve that has been discussed earlier. The other two deities are Shantadurga at Kavalem and Mangesh at Priol. They present a complex and interesting challenge to social historians and offer insights on the processes that established the GSBs' dominance over prominent temples.

What was it that made these deities who they are? The deities of Shantadurga and Mangesh do not appear in any inscriptional records. Similar to South India, Goa has also given form to many of its most vital ideas through the medium of myths and legends.⁵¹ A text that is most commonly

⁴⁷ Vishnu Rangaji Sheldekar, *Gomantakatil Gaud Saraswat Brahman ani Tyanche Kuldev* (Mumbai: Gopal Narayan Patkar, 1938), 80.

⁴⁸ Alito Siqueira, "Performing Myths of Location: The Return of the Goddess of Saltura," in *Rituals in an Unstable World: Contingency: Hybridity-Embodiment*, eds. Alexander Henn and Klaus-Peter (Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH, 2008), 50.

⁴⁹ David M. Kowal, "Hindu Temples of Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Goa: The Maintenance of a Sacred Integrity and the Process of East-West Cross Fertilization," *Portuguese Study Review* 9, nos. 1–2 (2001): 398–99.

⁵⁰ Délio de Mendonça, *Conversions and Citizenry: Goa under Portugal, 1510-1610* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2002).

⁵¹ David Shulman, *Tamil temple myths: sacrifice and divine marriage in the South Indian Saiva tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 2.

cited, and through which the GSBs reflect on the questions of temples and their histories, is the *Sahayadri Khanda*. The text says that god Parshuram brought Brahmins comprising of ten *gotras* from the northern region of Tirhotra (Tirhut in Bihar) and settled the most virtuous in the villages of Keloshi and Kushasthali. It also describes prominent gods such as Shantadurga and Mangesh, which god Parshuram brought to Goa from Tirhotra. At Kushasthali, the GSBs consisting of ten Vasta *gotra* families and fourteen Kaundinya *gotra* families counted themselves as *gaunkars* of the village and claimed Mangesh as their family god. Similarly, the village of Keloshi had twelve Kaushika *gotra* families, and subsequently they incorporated one each from the Vasta and Bharadwaj *gotras*, all of whom claimed Shantadurga as their family goddess.

It is important to note that the *Sahayadri Khanda* has confusing narratives on the foundation of gods, reflecting cultural tensions. These narratives are by no means complete but are linked on the basis of deities and *gotras*. For instance, there are four different accounts leading to the establishment of Mangesh at Kushasthali.⁵² One description deals with a frightened Parvati crying out ‘Mang–gish’, meaning ‘Protect me, o Lord of the Mountain’, and the subsequent settling of Shiva in the form of a *linga*. The second account states that the god was first established by the Brahmins in the form of a *linga* at Mangirish mountain at Tirhotra and subsequently transferred to Goa. According to the *Mangesh Mahatmaya*, the *linga* of Mangesh was found in Goa by Devsharma, who is stated to have led the second GSB migration from Kannauj to Goa. On the contrary, the fourth version is related to a boy from the Gauda community first discovering the *linga* of Mangesh, who has been subsequently identified as Mulkeswar, a faithful Shudra servant of Devsharma.⁵³ More importantly, Mulkeswar is worshiped in a small shrine located behind Mangesh temple.

On the other hand, Shantadurga, one of the most popular deities of Goa, has a fragmentary reference in *Sahayadri Khanda*. Historically, her identity as Shantadurga was less strongly represented in the region. While few verses mention a deity as Shanta devi, the word Shantadurga is mentioned only once in *Nagvayaya Mahatmya*: in Gaitonde’s edition, the chapter is titled *Shantadurgecha Pradurbhav* (Shantadurga’s manifestation), while Da Cunha gives it at the

⁵² Cunha, *The Sahyadri-khanda of the Skanda Purana*, 308–09; 533–76.

⁵³ Vishnu Rangaji Sheldekar, *Gomantakatil Gaud Saraswat Brahmins and Tanche Kuldev*, 43.

end.⁵⁴ Even during the sixteenth century when the temples were destroyed by the Portuguese, we have no evidence of a Shantadurga temple being demolished, but the prevailing predominant female deity repeatedly mentioned was known as Samtery (Sateri).⁵⁵ In these texts, female deities are mentioned in a variety of ways; however, Sateri has 66 temples—the highest number for temples dedicated to a single deity.⁵⁶ No deity in Goa has a longer history of representation than Sateri.

Ethnographic evidence shows that traditionally the worship of Sateri—seven layers of a sacred anthill—was a well-known feature of village life.⁵⁷ In most areas, the sacred anthill is identified with a village goddess and the anthill and the deity are regarded as one. Worship of an anthill once occupied a central place, at least as early as the first millennium BCE, and probably earlier.⁵⁸ This worship survives in many parts of the Konkan coast, including Goa, up to the present day. It can be well established ethnographically that Sateri was transformed from a folk deity—anthill—to Shantadurga, a Sanskritic deity. Winning local favours required a process of theological choreography whereby local deities were subsumed under a Brahminical pantheon and given histories as Puranic divinities. This attempt to forge a new identity for the deity was very much a reflection of a new vision of a society, and was done in several ways. While the process was undoubtedly lengthy and complex, these transformations are readily apparent, at least since the eighteenth century, through two authoritative texts, the *Sahyadri Khanda* and the *Konkanakhyana*, as well as grants made by the Marathas. Interestingly, while we are certain that *Konkanakhyana* was composed in 1721, the copy of *Sahyadri Khanda* that Da Cunha found in Goa bears the date of 1700.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Cunha, *The Sahyadri-khanda of the Skanda Purana*, 512; Gaitonde, *Shree Skandapuraṇa—Sahyadrikhanda*, 255.

⁵⁵ Francisco Pais, *Tombo da Ilha de Goa e das Terras de Salcête e Bardês* (Notas Históricas Finais por Panduranga S. S. Pissurlencar) (Bastorá: Tipografia Rangel, 1952), 165–82.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ P. R. Behere, *Shree Ravalnath va Konkanachi Devaski* (Mumbai: Durga Prakashan, 1955), 16.

⁵⁸ John C. Irwin, “The Sacred Anthill and the Cult of the Primordial Mound,” *History of Religions* 21, no. 4 (1982): 339–60.

⁵⁹ Cunha, *The Sahyadri-khanda of the Skanda Purana*, 1–2.

Most of the stories told about the origin of Shantadurga in *Sahayadri Khanda* and *Konkanakhyana* never fail to associate the deity with the GSBs. Frequently interlocking, these texts are themselves a source for much literature on temple histories. Shantadurga is often described in terms directly borrowed from the northern tradition. The *Nagvayaya Mahatmya* of *Sahayadri Khanda* narrates an account of Shanta sage. Here, the deity Bhagavati, also mentioned as Bhagavati Shante, first appears before the sage, guides him to worship the creators of the world, Aniruddha and Shanta devi, and then disappears into an anthill. While the GSBs were divided in their worship of Shiva and Vishnu, *mahatmyas* emphasise a cordial relation between these gods, and they are stated as one.⁶⁰ In this extraordinary process, a remarkably different theme turns up in the songs of praise to Shantadurga, composed by Maheswar Bhat Sukhtankar, a prominent GSB scholar in the eighteenth century, and his grandson Raghunath Shastri, alias Moru Bhatt.⁶¹ They exclude the version of *Sahayadri Khanda* to develop a new combination. In support for their account a new etymology of her name is worked out which is seen to be of a ferocious Durga who pacified a terrifying fight between Vishnu and Shiva—thus transforming herself as Shantadurga. By firmly establishing the term Shantadurga, their central polemical tactic was to adopt the folk deity into the Brahminic pantheon and thereby claim the deity as a family goddess of the GSB lineages. Subsequently, this account remained at the centre of argumentation about the origin of Shantadurga. Similarly, *Konkanakhyana* prominently mentions the worship of Sateri at many places in Goa, but while referring to the village of Keloshi, the deity is identified as Shantadurga.⁶² Thus, the roles of GSB-poets and *Konkanakhyana* have converged to produce a far more encompassing image of the GSBs and the goddess Shantadurga.

In addition to Shantadurga and Mangesh, similar tendencies are at work with the other deities, such as Mahalsa, Nagesh, Mahalaxmi, Chandreshwar, Kamaxi and Saptakoteshwar, found in *mahatmyas* of *Sahayadri Khanda*. More importantly, for the other prominent deities that are not part of *Sahayadri Khanda*, a more radical intervention was made by *Konkanakhyana* by making claims to these deities as the family deities of the GSBs. It is important to note that while these folk deities retained their distinct specificities—they will have both a local name and a

⁶⁰ Cunha, *The Sahyadri-khanda of the Skanda Purana*, 546–47.

⁶¹ Sheldekar, *Gomantakatil Kaivalyapur Yethil Shree Shantadurga Sansthanacha Itihas*, 8–9.

⁶² Wagle, *Konkanakhyana*, 33.

mythological history—but the individual deities themselves were adopted into the general traits of northern gods with whom they were identified. These legends were absorbed into ancient traditions and subsequently entered colonial anthropology and judicial administration. Thus, the GSBs became the custodians, and in some cases the creators, of the temple traditions in Goa. These processes continued to gather pace from the 1840s and are exemplified in Antonio Emilio d’Almeida Azavedo’s book *As Comunidades de Goa*, published in 1890.⁶³ Azavedo’s analysis proceeded in two broad stages. Firstly, he shows that Sateri is worshipped as a village deity in many parts of the New Conquests. Once a week, non-Brahmins (Curumbins, Sudras and Marathas) offer milk, rice and other foods to anthills, and during the Shravan period it is covered with flowers.⁶⁴ In other words, in the hinterland villages Sateri is seen in her primitive form of an anthill. Secondly, however, Azavedo notes that on approaching Brahmin dominated villages, the deity is represented by an image, and they prefer to call it Shantadurga.⁶⁵

What influence did this change of cult have upon social life? It is important to note that the transformation from a sacred anthill to an image of the deity was a much less straightforward process. For our purposes it is essential to realize that myths and her birth as an anthropomorphic goddess radically changes the moral world of the deity and the rituals. This was also the case with other male deities who, as Kosambi remarked in the case of Mangesh, “has been forcibly converted into an image, though originally (and still under the golden mask) a stone phallic symbol of Siva”.⁶⁶ From very early times, the non-Brahmin priestly class among the Shudras, such as Gurav, Zalmi, Kunbi or Velip, continued to serve local gods.⁶⁷ They were found

⁶³ Antonio Emilio d’Almeida Azevedo, *As Comunidades de Goa: história das instituições ntigas* (Lisboa: Viuva Bertrand & C^a Sucessores Carvalho & C^a, 1890).

⁶⁴ Azevedo, *As Comunidades de Goa*, 39.

⁶⁵ Azevedo, *As Comunidades de Goa*, 42.

⁶⁶ D. D. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality: Studies in the Formation of Indian Culture* (Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1962), 167.

⁶⁷ Jerome Anthony Saldanha, *Indian Caste: Konkani or Goan Castes*, vol. I (Bombay: Anglo-Lusitano Press, 1904), 64; A. B. de Bragança Pereira, “Etnografia da Índia Portuguesa,” in *A Índia Portuguesa*, vol. I (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1923), 352; A. K. Priolkar, “Saraswat Brahman ani tyanche Saraswata,” in *Shree Shantadurga Chaturshatabdi Mahotsava Granth*, ed. Panduranga Sadashiva Shenvi Pissurlencar (Mumbai: Shree Shantadurga Seva Samiti, 1966), 1–52.

throughout in the village temples of Goa, each of them associated with a specific range of performing rituals. Moreover, they expressed their power not so much through the Vedic ritual associated with the twice-born status, but rather in their role as first worshippers of the deity. In Maharashtra, the Gurav priestly caste formed the ninth *balutedar*—village servants—and while their function was to manage and maintain the temple, and also to act as temple priests, they were regarded as Shudras.⁶⁸ In Goa and the Konkan areas of Maharashtra, the Gurav were not just priests of the village deity, but also obtained omens from the idol and received answers to specific questions asked by the devotee.⁶⁹ Apart from the regular rituals, the practice of blood sacrifice was also associated with the worship of the deity. These priests continue to perform such rituals, but only in a few temples.⁷⁰ In many places they have either been removed or their significance undermined by a Brahmin priest, a process that gained momentum since the nineteenth century. It follows that the Brahmins had to adopt the local rituals to the ritual purity of the deity, and this superiority of the ideal of purity underlies the Brahmin claim to prestige. Besides, they also control both, the deities and the oral traditions about them.

Two points are noteworthy here. Firstly, the deities were carried across to the New Conquests, yet, we have not found any images of these deities dating back to the sixteenth century. Secondly, it looks like the sacred presence of the deities in the form of the soil of an anthill, or stone, was carried in a pot containing water, which was subsequently viewed as permanent embodiments of the deities they represented. Even today, the worshipped images of the deities appear in the form of a *kalash* (sacred pot) to which a mask or head is added.⁷¹ The installation of an image leads to the appointment of a Brahmin priest who recites appropriate prayers that infuse life to the figure, and carries out regular rituals of the deity. Gradually the earlier animal sacrifices are

⁶⁸ Jayant Bhalchandra Bapat, “The Gurav Temple Priests of Maharashtra,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 16, no. 1 (1993): 79–100.

⁶⁹ Dharmanand Kosambi, *Nivedan* (Mumbai: Manoranjan Granthprasarak Mandali, 1924), 10–11; R. N. Kelkar, “Konkan Prantatil Gurav Samaj,” *Bharat Itahas Samshodhan Mandal Quarterly* 60 (1981): 17.

⁷⁰ Yeshwant Phondoba Naik Danait and Ramchandra Govind Wagle, *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas* (Mumbai: Asiatic Chapkhana, 1873), 43; Kashinath Damodar Naik, *Gomantakache Antarang* (Panaji: Rajhaus, 1995), 46.

⁷¹ Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai, *Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai (Bhai Desai): Smarak Granth* (Mumbai: Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai Smarak, Samiti, 1965), 497.

discontinued and the functions of the non-Brahmin priestly class are significantly reduced, being accommodated only for certain important rituals of the deity. Power and prestige are supposedly at the heart of this enterprise. While the GSBs were busy legitimating local rituals, they did not impair the recognition of the original model of worship, but instead, positioned themselves into a place of authority to decide the degree of admissibility of the local practices.

Rituals were reformulated and the past reinterpreted, in keeping with the wider Brahminical culture. S. S. Talmaki suggests that ritual changes were among the many innovations initiated.⁷² He provides ethnographical details to substantiate the fact that the deities were originally outside the Brahminical fold. More importantly, he emphasises the GSB custom of *devkarya*, a tradition followed by the GSB families in their houses in honour of their family god, wherein persons from the Gaude community are invited to dine. While followers of Mangesh invite men, those who follow the goddess Shantadurga invite women. In many temples of Goa, the Gaudes had the honour of taking the gods' blessings first.⁷³ This symbolises that they were worshiping these village deities before the GSBs began to worship them as their own family deities.

On the other hand, the issue is not confined to the myths and the birth of an image; power was also enhanced through patronage to a deity. Temples enjoyed patronage from rulers and wealthy donors, and their histories represent an alternative archive of memories about the past.⁷⁴ Historical evidence suggests that since the eighteenth-century, temple-construction had begun to play a peculiar and powerful role. The surge of temple-building during this period represented an expression of a dynamic economic environment in which both social and geographic mobility were key motors of change. In fact, this intervention of building temples was an overt trial of strength between the GSBs and others. In the early half of the eighteenth century, the Peshwas made donations to the temples of Mangeshi, Shantadurga, Nagesh, Mahalsa and Mahalaxmi.⁷⁵

⁷² S. S. Talmaki, *Saraswat Families*, Part I (Bombay: Self-published, 1935), 24–5.

⁷³ Sheldekar, *Gomantakatil GSB ani Tanchye Kuldev*, 40; Dada Vaidya Memorial Committee, *Dada Vaidya Memorial Book* (Pune: Sudha Mahadev Joshi, 1954), 12.

⁷⁴ Breckenridge, "From Protector to Litigant," 75–106.

⁷⁵ The copies of these grants are found in most of the texts that deal with GSB histories, or the history of GSB temples. See Wagle, *Shree Mangesh Devasthancha Sanshipta Itihas*; 12–4; Sheldekar,

The Peshwas were relatively new entrants into the Maratha power-centre. They established their rule over different parts of Goa and validated it by making grants to prominent temples, particularly in Ponda. In 1737, Balaji Ballal, the Peshwa of Shahu, made grants to the Shree Devi (Shantadurga) temple at Kavalem for undertaking regular acts of worship. Two years later, a prominent GSB, Naro Ram Rege, alias Mantri, hailing from the rural village of Kochre, near Vengurla, and a minister at Shahu's court who mentions himself as 'devotee of Shanta Dev', renewed these grants. Pissurlencar informs us that Shantadurga of Kavalem was the *kuladevata* of Mantri and he had played an important role in building the temple.⁷⁶ Besides, Mantri's niece was married to Vithoba Shenvi Dhume, a rich merchant from Cumbarjua.⁷⁷ In the mid-eighteenth century, another prominent GSB official at the Peshwa court, Ramchandra Malhar, alias Sukhtankar, hailing from the Aravali village in Sawantwadi, secured land at Priol and made an annual monetary grant for the maintenance of the Mangesh temple through the Peshwa. Accordingly, the king of Sonda, Imadi Sadashiv Rajendra, who had accepted the vassalage of the Marathas, executed orders. In addition, Sukhtankar is believed to have constructed over a hundred temples.⁷⁸

What is noteworthy is that considerable improvements were made to the Shantadurga temple at Kavalem with donations made by Mantri and Sukhtankar, who were then introduced as the 'kulavi' and 'mahajan' of the deity in almost all texts written by the GSBs. This was so because Mantri and Sukhtankar were seen as constituting the GSB extended families. We are aware from Carol Breckenridge's earlier work on the significance of endowments to the temple, and the ways in which they have produced their authority.⁷⁹ Such gifting activity would have placed the GSBs in a direct transactional relationship with the deity from whom they would have received temple-

Gomantakatil Kaivalyapur Yethil Shree Shantadurga Sansthancha Itihas; Narayan Bhaskar Nayak, *Gomantakiya Devalaye* (Margao: Mitra Chapkhana, 1959), 18–24.

⁷⁶ Pandurang Sadashiv Pissurlencar, "Introduction," in *Shree Shantadurga Chaturshatabdi Mahotsav Granth*, ed. Pandurang Sadashiv Pissurlencar (Mumbai: Shree Shantadurga Seva Samiti, 1966).

⁷⁷ Vinayak Narayan Shenvi Dhume, *Shree Mangesh Devasthan: Samagra Itihas* (Margao: Timaji Shenvi Kakodkar, 1971), 75–6.

⁷⁸ Ramchandra Narahari Sohani, *Gaud Saraswat Brahmanacha Itihas* (Khanapur: Self-published, 1937), 99.

⁷⁹ Breckenridge, "From Protector to Litigant," 75–106.

honours. The descendants of Mantri had privileges in Shantadurga temple that were next only to the GSB Swamis.⁸⁰ Besides, they were also reserved a sitting place near the pillar of the temple which began to be known as the pillar of Mantri.

Subsequently, prominent GSBs who had earned profits through trade with the Portuguese actively sought to widen their social base by spreading their donative activities, and the construction of temples was one arena in which worshippers defined claims of eminence.⁸¹ This replication of the relationship between the deity and the numerous GSB donors in the temple transformed the temple system and its authority. What this suggests is that the sponsorship of the construction of temples, along with its rituals and festivals, became a source of authority. Thus, the legitimacy of the GSBs' control over village temples rested not just on the legendary claims of founding the place of worship and the Sanskritisation of the deities, but also on patronage and support extended to the temple which further validated their authority. More importantly, while the GSB patronage of temples has been undoubtedly established through their literature, the contributions by the other communities were rarely recognised. Thus, in production of the archive, these communities became muffled and then lost their ubiquitous and pervasive presence once they inhabited the new archive. In the course of the nineteenth century, as the Portuguese government was establishing a new legal and economic basis for the administration of temples, the cultural markers of authority, namely, history and patronage, received renewed attention.

4.3 The colonial state and the temple

Until the early nineteenth century, when it concerns the management of temple resources, direct material evidence rarely exists. What we know from the accounts related to the temple is that they were administered by a committee comprising of individuals known as *mahajans*, whose authority was essentially based on their position. In other words, the right to administer a temple was not regulated by law, but by competition, in which, it is frequently implied, power played a key role. It is, nonetheless, helpful to observe that the usage of the term *mahajan* had a range of

⁸⁰ Sheldekar, *Gomantakatil Kaivalyapur Yethil Shree Shantadurga Sansthancha Itihas*, 48–9.

⁸¹ Pratima Kamat, *Farar Far: Local Resistance to Colonial Hegemony in Goa 1510–1912* (Panjim: Institute Menezes Braganza, 1999), 73.

meanings. Over a very long period, the term was employed in many contexts to refer to prominent, highly regarded or influential individuals.⁸² We can safely say that before the nineteenth century the category of *mahajan* did not have a legal standing, as it does today.⁸³ As the temples became wealthier, owing to donations coming from not just the Marathas and prominent GSBs, but also from marginal communities, the control over the position of *mahajan* began to gain prominence for pursuing status, honour and profit. The immense resources of the temple could be exploited for personal gain by the *mahajan*.

All the income and properties of the temple stood in the name of the *mahajans*.⁸⁴ They had direct access to cash that could be diverted for personal use. They could profit by lending out temple money that would establish their hold over hypothecations of jewellery and land. Additionally, *mahajans* could help their family and friends obtain a lease to temple land, receive lucrative contracts of agrarian produce, and rent a space in the temple's properties. Even modestly endowed temples had community resources and control over land and income: how much land they had, and what was the income was a crucial aspect that was seen as extremely beneficial for *mahajans*. Misuse of temple funds by *mahajans* was common knowledge. Even at the end of the nineteenth century the colonial state was making efforts to force the *mahajans* to declare the properties of temples which they held as their personal right.⁸⁵ Thus, conflicts between communities over the position of a *mahajan* that made control over a temple possible was at the centre of temple life.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the colonial state in Goa expanded territorially by incorporating the New Conquests. At the same time, the maritime trade of the Portuguese declined and the GSBs strengthened their position as an influential mercantile elite on the

⁸² Sheldekar, *Gomantakatil Kaivalyapur Yethil Shree Shantadurga Sansthancha Itihas*, 56; Sashishekar Damodar Athavale, *Shree Sansthan Karveer va Sankeshwarcha Itihas* (Kolhapur: Dynasagar Chapkhana, 1889), 23–6; Govind Narayan Madgaonkar, *Mumbaichi Varnan*, trans. and ed. Murali Ranganathan (London: Anthem Press, 2008), 253.

⁸³ Sebastião Rodolpho Dalgado, *Glossário Luso-Asiática*, vol. II (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1921), 46–7.

⁸⁴ Pereira, *Goa: Hindu Temples and Deities*, 25.

⁸⁵ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 129, 19 November 1881, 781.

western coast of India.⁸⁶ More importantly, as the Portuguese became a territorial power, their attention shifted to realising revenue from the land. As a result, the need for understanding the dynamics of the temples, that the colonial state had encountered in the sixteenth century when they first arrived, gained importance.⁸⁷ Of particular interest is the deployment of the concept of *mazania* (*mahajan*) by the local administration. The question is, to what extent did the colonial legislations that sought to bring order to temple administration transform its practices?

In the early nineteenth century, as the temples grew richer, there is an image of the temples as badly governed and corrupt.⁸⁸ The resources of the temples were constantly exploited for personal gain, and the picture of the temple that emerges from the complaints is that of an institution with few defences against those who would exploit it, especially the *mahajan*. It is important to note that traditionally, the deity, or the idol, was not a juristic person, and could not take part in ownership of material resources.⁸⁹ Accordingly, all the income and properties—the most prestigious source being land—stood in the name of the *mahajans* who diverted these material resources for personal benefit. As the government received several complaints regarding the poor state of the temples, it turned to a more active interventionist policy at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1828, an order was issued that established the system of having three custodians of the key to the temple's safe as well as book-keeping of all the accounts and maintaining inventory books of all the movable properties of the temple.⁹⁰ However, these regulations were not followed and the *mahajans* continued to operate the funds of the temple in their own names.

⁸⁶ Pius Malekandathil, "Indian Ocean in the Shaping of Late Medieval India," *Studies in History* 30, no. 2 (2014): 125–49.

⁸⁷ Dias, "The Socio-Economic History of Goa with Special Reference to the Comunidade System 1750-1910," 90.

⁸⁸ Filipe Nery Xavier, *Collecção de bandos, e outras diferentes providencias que servem de leis regulamentares para o governo economico, e judicial das provincias denominadas das Novas Conquistas*, vol. I (Panjim: Imprensa Nacional, 1840), 103–4.

⁸⁹ Pereira, *Goa: Hindu Temples and Deities*, 25.

⁹⁰ Xavier, *Collecção de bandos*, 103–4.

The temple was a site of many internal conflicts, and in the nineteenth century, temple management came to be a hotly disputed issue. Tension between the GSBs and the marginal communities resulted in the temple case of Sateri, a deity shifted from Cumbarjua to Marcella, in the village of Orgaon. The protracted litigation of this case is sobering. It was not just the first temple that inspired marginal social groups to assert themselves, but the case is important for two more reasons. First, it helps us to identify what kind of relationship existed between the *mahajans* and the temple. Second, one can fruitfully trace the processes at work that have been discussed above, which enabled the GSBs to control the temples.

In 1846, three marginal communities comprising of Gaude, Kharvis and Morgancares from the island of Cumbarjua, petitioned the government against the GSB monopoly over the position of *mahajan* in the Sateri temple at Marcella.⁹¹ The dispute was grounded in the right of each community to administer the temple, but was primarily concerned with the GSB ascendancy over the temple, and temple honours, especially regarding the procession of the deity, the presentation of its accounts and the security of the treasury. On the one side, the GSBs maintained that their right over the temple was established through three things. Firstly, they possessed the customary right, such as the entry into the *garbhagriha* (sanctum sanctorum) and touching the deity inside. This privilege was to show that in their eyes the other castes were lower in hierarchy, even though they directed their primary worship to the goddess. Through this special personal relationship with the deity, the GSBs saw themselves as the deity's prime devotees. Secondly, they argued that they were wealthy and their claim to being *mahajans* primarily rested on their efforts to re-establish and revitalise the functioning of the temple, which was then in a ruinous condition. They claimed that it was their major financial contributions that had sustained the regular acts of worship. Thirdly, as *mahajans* of many temples in Goa, they had played an active role in the supervision of temples, which was demonstrated in their greater participation, while the other communities were admitted only as temple servants.

On the other hand, Gaude, Kharvis and Morgancares reasoned that they had first established the deity in the island of Cumbarjua. After some time, they had invited a Brahmin to perform the worship and had paid for his services in paddy, a practice that continued. In 1812, they had invited the GSBs to keep regular accounts of the receipts, expenditures and the remaining funds.

⁹¹ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 48, 14 October 1846, 313.

These acts enabled the GSBs to intervene and gain advantages to establish their hold over the position of *mahajan*. In addition, Gaude, Kharvis and Morgancares contested that the ascendancy of the GSBs over the temple's administration does not constitute the right of *kuladevata*. Accordingly, Gaude, Kharvis and Morgancares, emphasised their precedence in temple rituals and festivals. They invoked the rhetoric of custom, or long-prevailing practice, in order to make their claims. It was emphasised that antiquity and custom was the only legitimate claim to argue for honours, and financial contributions were seen as having no validity. These rituals served as a proof of their right over the temple and brought into question the GSBs attempt to transform the deity as their *kuladevata*. Another aspect that was raised was more of a practical question—can a family have more than one *kuladevata*? Although, one deity could constitute the *kuladevata*, the GSBs who were making claims over this temple, had successfully established their claim over other deities as their *kuladevatas*.

One of the distinguishing features of the Sateri temple is that it was outside the Brahminical fold. The deity was the *gramdevata* who possessed the power of protecting the village and its people. During the annual festival of Shigmo, the procession of the goddess would move from Marcella to Cumbarjua, with the Gaude, Kharvis and Morgancares having pre-eminence in the rituals and celebrations—the festival reaffirmed village and caste roots. The judgement found answers to this question of rights over the temple in custom and usage and confirmed the right of the Gaude, Kharvis and Morgancares as *mahajans*. A committee, comprising one individual each from the above communities, was to be constituted which would have the rights over the temple's administration and would undertake regular acts of worship. They were also confirmed as the three key holders of the temple's treasury chest, with one key placed under the control of each community. It is important to note that although the verdict was against the GSBs, yet they could not be ignored completely. In determining their role in the temple, the judgment did not completely overlook their financial contributions, and to this effect, proposed a compromise; the GSBs were permitted to become the fourth member in the temple committee. However, this solution turned out to be less helpful to the marginal communities than it had at first seemed. Although, the lower castes objected to the management of the temple's assets and revenues by the GSBs because of a fear that they would lose their rights, as a matter of fact, the Portuguese, by creating a fourth GSB member in the temple committee, ultimately conferred them the right of being a *mahajan*.

Temple disputes had strong undercurrents of issues of caste honour, privileges and status, as well as other long-smouldering differences between the GSBs and other communities. As the position of *mahajan* came to generate conflicts, the questions became more about the ownership of the temple's resources and their best possible use. Public opinion was that corruption and mismanagement had to be brought under control. On the contrary, in the face of rising demands for rights in the administration of temples, the Portuguese gravitated towards the GSBs. The Portuguese intervened in the temple economy on the pretext of preventing the misappropriation of temple funds. In the process, both the GSBs and the colonial state were involved in redefining the temple. Owing to continuing complaints, claims, and disputes arising in the economic administration of the temples, and the fact that there were no norms to address them, in 1851 the government appointed the first temple commission headed by Purshottam Shenvi Kenkre, a prominent GSB who had a significant hold over the administration.⁹² In 1856, a five member commission comprising of Filippe Nery Xavier, Constancio do Rozario e Miranda, Purshottam Shenvi Kenkre, Mukund Joshi and Keshav Kamat was established to examine if the regulations of Confrarias were applicable to the temples, and if in part they are not to replace them, so that accounts of the temples could be brought under the control of the government.⁹³ These efforts led to the first temple law of 1858 which established Kenkre's version of the temple that was steeped in perpetuating GSB nativism and whose expression ultimately changed the direction of Portuguese policy.⁹⁴ Kenkre was underwriting the entire social order in which the temple's institutional structure, its devotees and the *mahajans* had traditionally functioned. It is perhaps important to note that the drafting of the first temple law was carefully timed. Kenkre, who was residing at Cumbarjua, had personal stakes in the Sateri temple at Marcella, whose judgement had come as a setback to the GSBs.

⁹² *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 23, 6 June 1851, 181–82.

⁹³ *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 6, 18 January 1856, 29.

⁹⁴ Most Marathi works prominently credit Purshottam Shenvi Kenkre for the first temple law, see V. V. Vaidhya, *Shree Mahalasa Devasthan* (Khanapur: Dhananjay Press, 1932), 24; N. B. Naik, *Shree Ramnath Devalayacha Itihas* (Margao: Bharatmitra, 1967), 50; Manohar Hirba Sardesai, *Gomantakache Ase Te Divas* (Caranzalim: Purogami Prakashan, 1994), 94. For the first temple law see, *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 82, 19 October 1858, 620–23.

When there were temple conflicts, who was a *mahajan* remained unresolved, and the government was forced to define it for determining the rights to a temple. The temple law of 1858, was the first elaborate attempt to lay out the administrative structure of the temple and find answers to the general question about *mahajans* and the kind of rights they had. Article 1 defined the *mazania* containing *mahajans* as an institution for the administration of the temple. In other words, the *mahajan* became the custodian of the temple and controlled its material resources and forms of worship. In addition, the act divided *mahajans* into two categories: Cullaves and Palves. The Cullaves are stated as the legitimate male descendants of families who founded the deity in a specific place. On the other hand, the Palves were those who had contributed monetarily to support the acts of worship when the deity was first established. These rights of Cullaves and Palves were defined as hereditary and perpetual, which no one could acquire any other way, except through contributions at the installation of the deity. In keeping with this principle, the GSBs acquired the position of *mahajans* in the temple of Sateri at Marcella.

Two points are noteworthy here. First, the act demands the drawing of statutes of the temple, known as *compromisso*, that would first establish the founders of the deity, or the temple, and customs and usages practiced in the temple. Second, there was to be a catalogue which would reveal the legitimate descendants of the founders. Before the Portuguese produced the *mahajan* as a discrete legal category there was no fixed meaning. And, although the *mazania* was established through a law in the nineteenth century, it was extended back in time. Thus, though being a *mahajan* was traditionally a right, claimed on ancient history, customs and usages, it had recently been formalised through a demand for inscription in the *compromisso* and the catalogue. As a result, the right of the *mahajan* passing on hereditarily was acquired only when registered under the statutes. The deity was now transformed from being a *gramdevata*, where every person in the village enjoyed some ritual honours, to a *kuladevata*, managed as the property of select clans. Once the matter of who controlled the temple was decided on the basis of the *compromisso* and the catalogue, *mahajans* acquired the autonomy to administer the temple with no further challenge by other social groups.

Besides, the act lists the rights of *mahajans*: to elect an administrative board; to appoint an audit committee and their substitutes; decide on appeals; deliberate on the tenure of renting properties; custody, sale and acquisition of precious possessions; pecuniary penalties; monthly and annual meetings; conduct of regular worship and festivals; and to keep records up to date. On the other

hand, the temple administration was placed under the control of an administrative board comprising of a president, clerk, treasurer and attorney, elected for a period of two years by the *mahajans* through a secret ballot. They were to administer the temple properties, keep regular accounts of the receipts, expenditures and funds, and submit to the government if there were any complaints about mismanagement by the *mahajans* associated with the temple. In this process, Kenkre's efforts led to the withdrawal of the official recognition to the pre-eminence that other communities had in temple life and established a new legal and economic basis for temple administration in Goa. Thus, the first temple law itself acted in such a manner that the *mahajans* were established as having proprietary rights over the temple. In addition, temples were placed under the jurisdiction of an administrative authority.

While the act of 1858 first established the *mahajan* as a legal category, it encountered a certain resistance from those at the bottom. More importantly, although the act was in existence for over eight years, there was hardly any temple with a *compromisso* and its catalogue. This forced the colonial state to introduce a new temple law in 1866, longer than the earlier with 112 articles.⁹⁵ It provides a conspicuous arena for power struggles in temples that mostly seem to move in one direction—consolidating the tenacious grip of the GSBs. Unlike the 1858 law that classifies the *mahajan* into two distinct categories, the 1866 act qualified the *mahajans* as individuals enjoying this right from immemorial times, or having pre-eminence in the temple as per this law, in which their descendants succeed. In addition, it tried to simplify and rationalise the process of identifying the *mahajans* by giving this right to the administrator of the province, or to the revenue department. The fact that the Portuguese were now engaged in a continuous attempt to describe, define, interpret and categorise a *mahajan*, the right was reduced to writing by an authority that enabled the GSBs to employ their influence.

On the one side, economic imperatives required the colonial state to take a more active part in acquiring control over the temples. There are references that the government had 'drained' wealth from the temples to pay for defence, and building roads, that too in collaboration with the *mahajans*.⁹⁶ In fact, a major part of this act is about government control over different kinds of economic activities of the temple. On the other side, the act introduced cultural resources that

⁹⁵ *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 53, 10 July 1866, 441–47.

⁹⁶ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 19 October 1884, 3; *Bharat*, 11 December 1912, 2–3.

were advantageous to the GSBs. Of particular interest is the deployment of new categories such as *vangod* and *gotra* to define a *mahajan*. While establishing the social significance of clans on the temples, three implications may be drawn. First, both the comunidade and the temple are configured as indistinguishable. This would enable the GSBs to claim their legendary past to establish their right as *mahajan*. Second, the comunidade emerged as the criterion for membership of a *mahajan* and the enjoyment of the honours and privileges associated with it. New formulations of territory and identity were forged. From now onwards the village was gradually becoming a symbol of identity and efforts were made to show that the *vangods* of the comunidade were identical to that of *mahajans* of the temple. This process of creating a metonymical relation between the temple and the village pushed the GSBs to supplement their traditional surnames with village names—a move subsequently seen among other social groups as well. Furthermore, the village name was also suffixed to the shifted deity.

A structured interdependence built around the village and the caste was central to an identity and social order. However, a weakness of such a strong focus on defining a *mahajan* is that it excludes the majority of the people who have no part in such matters of precedence and ranking. Traditionally, local communities used to tax themselves voluntarily to raise money for sustaining regular worship. This evidently created unrest among people, and even after the legislations of 1858 and 1866, the question of who constituted a *mahajan* remained inconclusive. In addition, the temples were brought under the government's authority and greater responsibilities were thrust on the administrators and revenue departments. The ultimate consequence was a significant delay in the drafting of the *compromisso* and the catalogue. To see what has been established by these two acts, there is hardly any *compromisso* available from 1850s to 1870s. In this setting, the authority and management of temples was shaped by local distributions of power and wealth, and the special ways in which the Portuguese appointed individuals to administer temples. Certain conditions attached to a temple's administration might have provided a strong stimulus to support the GSBs' interests as it served the two purposes of administration. First, writing, to which few had access. Second, the government needed rich merchants who would conduct the temple business and pay taxes and, in effect, recognised them as new leaders of society.

In any case, the *mahajans* enjoyed an enormous opportunity when the government formed the temple committee for the first time. What is noteworthy is that in appointing individuals over

temple committees the provincial *administradores* manipulated the provisions of the 1858 and 1866 laws to realise their own objectives. No *mahajan* could be appointed outside the temple, but available evidence suggests otherwise. For instance in 1874, governor general Joaquim José de Macedo e Couto appointed Giri Sinai Dempo, who was conferred the title of Baron by the government, and whose *kuladevata* was Shree Mahamaya, situated at Ankola, as the president of the Mahalaxmi temple in Panjim.⁹⁷ In 1884 there were allegations against the president of Mangeshi temple for misappropriating temple funds to purchase landed properties.⁹⁸ As a result, in 1885, the government dissolved the temple committee and appointed Giri Sinai Dempo as the president of the Mangeshi temple.⁹⁹ Interestingly, Pedro Alcantara Leitão, a Catholic was also appointed over the audit committee of three temples in Canacona.¹⁰⁰

It was not until 1883 that the governor general Visconde de Paço d'Arcos, in response to public pressure, appointed deputies to the provincial administrators of six provinces in the New Conquests for supervising temples exclusively.¹⁰¹ The more important part of their work was to investigate how temples were administered. They had to check the *compromissos*, catalogues and accounts, and investigate whether the temples were administered by a *mahajan* or a committee appointed by the government, examine material resources and moneylending practices, and also see whether the temples fulfilled the requirements of the 1866 law.¹⁰² This led to a series of orders threatening the temples to submit a *compromisso* and catalogue of *mahajans*, failing which the temple committees would be dissolved and have the temple properties confiscated.¹⁰³ These orders were flouted time and again by the temples and it is doubtful whether any of these orders and resolutions were effective. This forced the government to abolish the 1866 law and enact a new law in 1886, running over four hundred articles, termed

⁹⁷ *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 12, 10 February 1874, 68.

⁹⁸ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 9 November 1884, 4.

⁹⁹ *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 23, 29 January 1885, 89.

¹⁰⁰ *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 170, 10 August 1886, 696.

¹⁰¹ *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 196, 4 September 1883, 786.

¹⁰² *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 204, 13 September 1883, 823.

¹⁰³ *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 205, 14 September 1883, 826; *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 269, 5 December 1883, 1083.

Regulamento das Mazanias.¹⁰⁴ It is important to note that the Regulamento das Mazanias, 1886, and its subsequent amendments in 1933 and 1959, in their quest for precision regarding *mahajans*, established a reference language of ‘founder’. Thus, the *mahajans* were established as the founders of the deity in a specific place.

The acts of 1866, 1886, and its subsequent amendments were framed in the context of a deepening concern that the temples were slowly, but surely, losing land, gold, carvings and jewels from their vaults. The temples were placed under the jurisdiction of an administrative authority with a right to appeal to the administrative tribunals and overseas council. As a result, these laws accelerated the process of record keeping and expansion of paper use: all actions of *mahajans* had to be documented in five different books stamped by the government. Moreover, it created new rules to establish control over the temple economy and created institutional arrangements to deal with temple resources. The significance of these changes is illustrated by new amendments to these laws.

Restrictions were placed on the expenditure incurred on the administration of temples. Moneylending was regulated with fixed rates of interest up to a certain amount. The process of renting of temple properties was specified, problems of recovery of debts were addressed, and the kinds of mortgage were fixed, along with control over the temple’s material resources. Although these changes in the overall matrix of a temple’s resources were introduced in order to legally handle the material resources of temple, it transformed the idol or the deity into a juristic

¹⁰⁴ *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 266, 27 November 1883, 1073; *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 266, 30 November 1883, 1073; *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 238, October 30, 1886, 980–81; *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 241, November 4, 1886, 983–84; *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 242, November 5, 1886, 987–88; *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 243, November 6, 1886, 991–92; *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 244, November 8, 1886, 995–97; *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 245, November 9, 1886, 1001–03; *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 247, November 11, 1886, 1011–12; *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 248, November 12, 1886, 1019–20; *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 249, November 13, 1886, 1025–26.

person. This idea was first introduced in India by the British during the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, the *mahajans*, through the deity's medium, were legally entitled to material resources of the temple by delegitimising the customary claims of all other groups, especially of donors, and those performing rituals and other services in temples. In other words, these laws strengthened the idea that the temples were really of the founders—the *mahajans*, but open to all devotees only to the extent of worship and offerings. Further, it firmly established the position of the *mahajan*—to be acquired only through inscription in the *compromisso* and catalogue. As a result, the laws themselves, which were brought to curtail the powers of the *mahajans*, placed the control of the temple squarely with the *mahajans* and transformed them as a juridical personality. This system continues to have a strong impact on society till today.

As the transformation of temples was under way through these laws, I will return to the question of the Sateri temple at Marcella. In 1846, the government had recognised the rights of the Gaudes, Kharvis and Morgancares as the *mahajans* of the temple.¹⁰⁶ However, the 1858 act that was legislated through Purshottam Shenvi Kenkre's efforts had enabled the GSBs to re-establish themselves as *mahajans*. Available evidence suggests that by 1870s the GSBs were controlling the administration of the Sateri temple and there were complaints about misappropriation of the temple funds and the failure to protect the temple's properties. Interestingly, these complaints were reported by the GSBs themselves through their letters to the Marathi periodical *Dexassudharanetxo*.¹⁰⁷ These letters are important expressions of the socio-political context in which they were produced. They were written against the traditional GSB elite by the emerging GSB middle-class individuals who were also aspiring to penetrate the temple committees in order to establish themselves as new leaders in society. And, since these letters were against influential GSBs, they were reluctantly published by *Dexassudharanetxo*, and that too, with editorial modifications—changing the tone of the complaint and removing the names. The immediate cause for the complaint was the control exercised by the temple committee over the

¹⁰⁵ G. D. Sontheimer, "Religious Endowments in India: The Juristic Personality of Hindu Deities," *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft*, 67 (1964): 45–100; Nicholas B. Dirks, "The Policing of Tradition: Colonialism and Anthropology in Southern India," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 1 (1997): 182–212.

¹⁰⁶ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 48, 14 October 1846, 313.

¹⁰⁷ *Dexassudharanetxo*, 19 September 1877, 2.

temple treasury that had been generated over the last fifty years. A major part of the treasury was constituted of donations made by all the devotees during an annual visit of the *gramdevata* from Marcella to Cumbarjua on the occasion of the Shigmo festival. What is perhaps obvious and well-illustrated in these letters is that the deity was a *gramdevata*—perhaps still primarily addressed as Sateri—and that there was a single annual visit to Cumbarjua.

More importantly, the process of the GSB takeover of the temple was complete in 1911, when the *compromisso* and the catalogue of the *mahajans* was registered with the government.¹⁰⁸ Even though there had been protests, the *compromisso* and the catalogue depicting the GSBs as *mahajans* was approved by the government.¹⁰⁹ From what has thus far been discussed, for over half a century since the first dispute was reported, it is possible now to take a closer view of what happened, and to see the results of the process. The rights to the marginal communities conferred in 1846 were denied in 1911. The *compromisso* established two categories of *mahajans*. One category comprises of the GSBs, with an exclusive right over the temple administration and the material resources of the temple. The other consists of all the other residents of Cumbarjua who do not have any right over the administration, but were required to contribute towards sustaining regular worship and the festivals.

It is important to note that the *compromisso* also regulated the worship and rights in a temple. Firstly, the *compromisso* amends the name of the deity to Shantadurga, and there is no reference to the term Sateri. This allowed the GSBs to ban all non-Brahmins because their presence offends the sanctity of the deity inside the sanctum sanctorum; the traditional priests, such as the Zalmi, who belonged to the Gaude community, were not only made marginal to the Brahmin priests, but were relegated to the position of temple servants. Secondly, the GSBs gained authority by projecting themselves as the founders of the deity and obtained their legitimacy by recreating an ideal past. While the 1846 judgment had clearly established that the deity was established by marginal communities, Article 3 of the *compromisso* declared the GSBs as founders of the deity and credited Panddu Naique Oddie, a GSB, for constructing the temple in the fifteenth century. It is evident that the insertion of new festivals also affected the temple and were possibly intended to exclude other communities. Until the 1870s, the deity returned to

¹⁰⁸ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 89, 10 November 1911, 1165–67.

¹⁰⁹ *Bharat*, 23 July 1913, 4.

Cumbarjua once a year at Shigmo, a major festival of the deity in which non-Brahmins figured prominently. However, subsequently, a new festival of Vasant pooja was introduced, probably around the late 1880s, and confirmed through the *compromisso*.¹¹⁰ This was the second annual visit of the deity to Cumbarjua whereby the deity was hosted by the GSBs for five days, with all expenses borne by them. Apart from this festival, prominent GSB families also instituted new rituals or sponsored them, thus changing the nature of the rituals in the temple. It is also perhaps worth noting that elsewhere, where the GSBs established their control over the temples, two other processes followed. Firstly, an attempt to stabilise the temple worship through Vedic rituals associated with a twice-born status, and secondly, to establish the prestige of the GSB swamis in the order of precedence in the temple honours. In this way, together with the phenomena discussed above, it gave the GSBs complete control over the temple and its properties. This process was not, of course, limited to the Sateri temple that was re-configured as the Shantadurga temple at Marcella.

As the transformation of the temple was taking place through colonial laws, one notices a change in the orientation of temple conflicts. Earlier, such conflicts sprang from disagreements over the receipt of honours and ceremonial occasions, but from the mid-nineteenth century onwards the focus of the disputes shifted to the question of who is to be a *mahajan*, and how exactly the *compromissos* are to be drafted, questions that continue to be negotiated and contested. Two major issues surfaced: who owns the temple, and in whose interests should the temple and its properties be administered?

4.4 Caste and identity

It is important to note, that the temples articulated a sense of identity in social, moral, and political terms. Moreover, they were entwined with, both, legitimacy and economic resources. This link between control over the temple and that of the economy was made particularly explicit in three ways. First, the GSBs exerted control over the markets, fairs, and economic activities associated with the temples. Second, they shared the temple's resources across their lineages through participation in the affairs of caste. Lastly, it is clear that these temples claimed by the

¹¹⁰ Shenoi Goembab [Vaman Ragunath Varde Valavalikar], *Kahi Marathi Lekh* (Mumbai: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1945), 252.

GSBs also participated in activities well outside their ritual domain and that they played an important part in the extension of their political activities and public life. This goes some way towards explaining why the non-Brahmins were challenging the GSB hold over the temples. Besides, the gradual emergence of caste identities and the advancement of the claims of the *mahajans* in defining social status at all levels of non-Brahmin society was one of the most salient features of social change amongst marginal groups.

The tension between the GSBs and the non-Brahmins resulted in many temple cases, three of which are under consideration here. When the non-Brahmins turned to social campaigning and consolidation of their castes, the issue of *mahajans* continued to lie at the heart of their programmes. Apart from the conflict of the Sateri temple that we have discussed, I take up three other temple cases to understand more clearly what the temple conflicts are all about. These temple cases not only bring into the open the underlying tensions and contradictions of caste and identity, but they are more important since they reveal the tendencies of the litigants. The first temple case is of Rudreshwar, a form of god Shiva, that played an important role in the consolidation of the Bhandari identity in Goa. The second deals with the Anant temple, a form of god Vishnu, and the claims made by the Verekar Vani. The last one is about the Mahalaxmi temple at Panjim, a *gramdevata*. What these examples offer, in effect, is a closer examination of three different orientations of the temple: caste, lineage and the village. These are large questions, and mapping the long processes adds to the evidence.

The temple of Rudreshwar at Arvalem is perhaps the oldest temple in Goa. Epigraphic evidence suggests that the temple was constructed around the sixth century CE.¹¹¹ However, we do not have much of an idea about the temple until the nineteenth century. What we do know is that the intervention of the colonial law was altering the system of temple relations decisively, which had already been dynamic and fluid. It is perhaps important to note that the festival of Maha Shivratri, literally translating to the greatest night of Shiva, was celebrated on a grand scale annually in honour of the god Rudreshwar.¹¹² The festival drew a large number of devotees from across Goa and produced a substantial income for the temple, enough to sustain the worship for the whole year. Besides, the waterfall which runs nearby the temple served as a sacred site for bathing, and

¹¹¹ Mitragotri, *Socio Cultural History of Goa*, 109–110.

¹¹² *Correspondencia de Goa*, 30 June 1891, 2–3.

also for immersion of the ashes of the dead. Available historical evidence suggests that the first temple law of 1858 gave advantages to the GSBs in administering temples. In the meantime, from 1861 to 1891, the GSBs were appointed by the colonial state to administer the temple of Rudreshwar.¹¹³ As the temple was controlled by them for almost 30 years, the GSBs established their claim that it belonged to them, and relatedly, it gave rise to their right over the *mahajan*.

In 1891, Dattaram Shenvi Budkule, a member of the temple administration committee, called an extraordinary meeting of the *mahajans* of the temple in order to draft the *compromisso* and the catalogue of the *mahajans*.¹¹⁴ Due to the dominant role of the GSBs in the temple administration, they were able to register themselves as the *mahajans* by excluding the Bhandaris. Any complaint against the *compromisso* and catalogue had to be made within thirty days of their publication in the official gazette. The Bhandaris, who saw themselves as constituting the primary worshippers of the god, challenged the monopoly of the GSBs and their claim of heritable right over the *mahajan*.¹¹⁵ We do not know whether, or to what extent, the Bhandaris did indeed enjoy hereditary rights. However, it represented an attempt by a mobile group of toddy-tappers, who had benefitted by the growing demand of alcohol, to diversify and enter other fields. Gopal Laxman Naik, a Bhandari by caste who had established himself as a prominent dealer of lime, objected to the management of the temple by the GSBs and took his case to the provincial council.¹¹⁶

The plaint in the suit stated that the plaintiff's community held hereditary rights over the temple for centuries. It cited the meeting held in the temple in 1814, when the *mahajans* assembled on the orders of the provincial commander, Henry Claudio de Tonnellete.¹¹⁷ At this time there were only Bhandaris in charge of the temple administration. This was also seen in the order of the *administrador fiscal* (fiscal administrator) of the New Conquests in 1857. After four years of

¹¹³ *Boletim do Official do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 57, 13 March 1885, 225; *O Goatmá*, 24 October 1887, 4.

¹¹⁴ *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 111, 10 October 1891, 765.

¹¹⁵ *Collecção da Legislação Novissima Ultramar, 1897*, vol. 25 (Lisboa: Companhia Tipographica, 1901), 78.

¹¹⁶ *Bhandari Vijay*, September–October 1924, 155–56.

¹¹⁷ *Collecção da Legislação Novissima Ultramar, 1897*, 78.

litigation, in 1895, the provincial council concluded on the weight of the evidence that their ancestors were holders of that office and granted the claim of the Bhandaris as legitimate *mahajans*. However, the GSBs, led by Dattaram Shenvi Budkule, appealed against the verdict in the Supreme Administrative Court, the highest organ of the judiciary based in Lisbon and the judgement on this suit was delivered in 1897.¹¹⁸

Let us compare the arguments used by the GSBs, more particularly the families of Budkule and Mollios, who had registered themselves as *mahajans* through the *compromisso*. Firstly, they questioned the 1814 and 1858 documents supporting the decision of 1895 for their legal value and also for their genuineness. These documents made no mention of the *mahajan's* rights, they averred, and denied that interpretation when the Bhandaris were not even registered as *mahajans* in the temple records. Secondly, the GSBs claimed that the *mazania* of Rudreshwar had always been composed of the individuals belonging to the families of Budkule and Mollios, and not Shudras. This, they argued, was established by a land donated to the temple in 1785. Thirdly, an attempt was made to question the very basis of the complaint that was out of time, an appeal filed seven days after the deadline of thirty days. Thus, it follows that only the descendants of Budkule and Mollios could possibly hold the rights of *mahajans* legitimately. Effectively, in the eyes of the law, the only point to be decided was whether the Bhandaris had such rights. As the GSBs had failed to substantiate the allegation of forged documents, the judgement supported the Bhandaris and revealed that they were administering the temple until the 1860s, when the provincial administrators appointed the GSBs to administer the temple.

In this stand-off, although the judgement favoured the Bhandaris, it took them almost thirty-one years to register themselves as the *mahajans* through the *compromisso* and the catalogue of the Rudreshwar temple. During this period, Rudreshwar emerged as the patron god of the Bhandari caste, while the temple emerged as a site of Bhandari identity and led to the processes of coalescing which produced new notions of a community. Thus, the development of wider caste identities gave a fresh impetus to the Rudreshwar temple as a key symbol in the Bhandari's strategy. From now onwards no representation of the Bhandaris was complete without a reference to the Rudreshwar temple.¹¹⁹ More importantly, Gopal Laxman Naik was declared as

¹¹⁸ *Collecção da Legislação Novissima Ultramar, 1897, 78.*

¹¹⁹ *Bhandari Vijay, March–April 1924, 62–4.*

the ‘founder’ of the temple for having liberated it from the hold of the GSBs.¹²⁰ In 1925, the Shree Rudreshwar Prasadik Bhandari Shikshonotejak Samaj was established, and in 1926 the thirteenth Bandhari Shikshan Parishad was held at Panjim, and both declared the Rudreshwar temple as the temple of the Bhandaris.¹²¹

It is possible to conclude that while in the early days only a few Bhandari persons from the village of Arvalem managed to enter the temple, they had grown in number by the early 1920s and included a large number of Bhandaris who were from outside the village. The numerical majority potentially changed the alignments and broke the GSB hold over the temple, opening out the domain of *mahajan* in Rudreshwar temple to all Bhandaris cutting across hitherto sub-castes of the community. In 1928, the *compromisso* was registered with the Bhandaris holding exclusive rights over *mahajans*.¹²² Subsequently, Bablo Masno Naik Volvoikar, whose wealth came through contracting and landowning, and who was one among the ninety highest tax payers to the government, became an influential *mahajan* of the temple and the focal point of Bhandari politics.¹²³ Moreover, in the 1930s–40s, on many occasions, Bablo Masno Naik Volvoikar was elected as the president of the temple.¹²⁴ After their success, the Bhandaris opened the access to the sanctum sanctorum to all Hindu communities once a year on the festival of Maha Shivaratri.¹²⁵

One can now move on to the second case in this definition of temple and identity. In the temple of Ananta, a form of Vishnu, located amid a predominantly rural area at Savoi–Verem, the deity lies down on a coil of the seven-headed great snake, Shesha Naga. The image is carved in black

¹²⁰ *Bhandari Vijay*, September–October 1924, 155–56.

¹²¹ Dattaram Vamona Naique, ed., *Bandhari Shikshan Parishad: Thirteenth Adhiveshan–Panaji, December 1926* (Panaji: Yaduvir Naik Shirodkar, 1939), 20.

¹²² *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 14, 17 February 1928, 215–29.

¹²³ *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 88, 31 October 1924, 1089; *Correio de Bicholim*, 10 May 1931, 5.

¹²⁴ *Correio de Bicholim*, 10 May 1931, 5; *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, series III, no. 44, 4 November 1943, 320.

¹²⁵ We have no clues whether this privilege was also extended to untouchables. *Bharat*, 17 February 1938, 3.

stone and has been affixed in the wall of the sanctum. In 1939, Shet Verekars, who were Vanis and Vaishya by caste, had been successful in registering themselves as the *mahajans*, and behind this is the account of a seventy-year-long litigation. Historically, while Lord Ananta existed by the start of the fifteenth century, and probably very much earlier, most of the present temple was built during the early 1920s.¹²⁶ The history of the temple's conflict illustrates explicit attempts made by the Brahmins to deny entry to Shet Verekar Vanis as the *mahajans* of the temple. It is perhaps important to note that these contests were not just for administrative rights but for a right that would give fresh impetus to caste identities, helping shape the aspiration for maintaining and increasing a community's status and honour through the control of the temple.

There was a longer history to this dispute. Shet Verekars, residing in the locality of Chafebhat, appealed to ancient usage, claiming that the Ananta temple had existed in the village of Verem since time immemorial and was founded by their ancestors. In the sixteenth century, the conquest of Salcete by the Portuguese had led to the arrival of two groups of Brahmins: the Padyes, commonly known as Bhattas, a group belonging to Panch Dravida Brahmins, and Singbals—the GSBs.¹²⁷ As they settled down permanently, they capitalised on local opportunities for service. What they offered, in effect, was new services to the village and the temple. The two moved more closely together; while, the Bhattas established themselves as priests to perform services for the god, Singbals wielded the scribe's pen to serve as *kulkarnis*, the village record keepers. These positions gave them prestige, but they were seen as outsiders. Over the years, through their influence, literary skills and a long-established relationship with the village and its traces that were privileged, Shet Verekars claimed that these two groups were able to register themselves as the *gaunkars* of the village to the exclusion of the latter. By the nineteenth century, when the antiquity of the *gaunkar* acquired value, the Brahmins further exploited the situation to create their legitimacy and visibility over the temple and the village. Nonetheless, the Shet Verekars believed that they were the true original members of the village and the temple. It was in this context that an intense conflict developed between the Shet Verekars and the Brahmins.

¹²⁶ A marble plaque outside the *garbhagriha* mentions 1923–24 as the year of construction. For earlier period, see Mitragotri, *Socio Cultural History of Goa*, 104.

¹²⁷ Narana Data Xete Vernekar, *Mistérios dos Botos e Sinbales de Verém—Uma questão que data de 50 anos* (Mapuca: Tipografia Popular, 1939), 2.

The immediate cause for the conflict was the drafting of the *compromisso* and the catalogue of the *mahajans*. In the 1880s, the first unsuccessful attempt was made to register the *mahajans* by the Bhattas and Singbals.¹²⁸ It met with intense opposition from the Shet Verekars who had been emptied of the ‘real’ meaning of the *mahajan* but believed that their rights to the temple predated those of the Bhattas and Singbals. Shet Verekars claimed that until the temple laws came into existence, the temple was administered collectively by the Bhattas, Singbals and Shet Verekars. Subsequently, when the government began to appoint committees to oversee the temple administration, the Shet Verekars found no representation.¹²⁹ Moreover, they complained to the government, and a new committee was constituted comprising all three groups.¹³⁰

Two decades later, in 1909, a second attempt was made to draft the *compromisso*.¹³¹ It seems that the Shet Verekars were deeply aware of the complexities of the process, and attended the meeting in large numbers. We have no idea about the range of documents that the Shet Verekars could have brought, but their claim was accepted and a committee was formed to draft a *compromisso*. However, subsequently, the committee, largely comprising of the Brahmins, refused to acknowledge the Shet Verekars as *mahajans*. While the Shet Verekars protested and petitioned the government, a meeting was called on the orders of Captain Manoel Henriques Lopes Bragança, the *administrador* of Ponda, in his office.¹³² All communities who felt that they had a right to be entered in the catalogue of *mazania* were ordered to attend but had to produce documentary evidence to support their claim. These developments, in turn, brought their own problems, and there emerged a fourth group of Palcars, of tribal origin, who claimed the *mahajan* right, but were prevented from doing so due to absence of evidence in officially designated archival forms. In this setting, there was a rather different interplay—all the three groups, the Bhattas, Singbals and Shet Verekars came together to exclude the new claimants. The meeting decided in favour of the Shet Verekars and a committee comprising of one member from each community was formed.¹³³

¹²⁸ Xete Vernekar, *Mistérios dos Botos e Sinbales de Verém*, 6.

¹²⁹ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 129, 5 December 1889, 806.

¹³⁰ *Bharat*, 29 September 1938, 2.

¹³¹ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 3, 12 January 1909, 36.

¹³² *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 46, 19 June 1909, 496.

¹³³ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 53, 13 July 1909, 552.

Subsequently, attempts were made to finalise the *compromisso*, which had led to an extraordinary meeting with the *administrador* of Ponda.¹³⁴ On this occasion there was a conflict between the Bhattas and the Singbals over introducing rights and benefits for themselves in order to define their claims of eminence in the temple. In the case of the Bhattas, they were preoccupied with their prominent role as priests who linked the worshippers and the deity—a distinctive marker of their dignities. These are not purely economic matters. As the priests, the Bhattas enter into a special personal relationship with the deity and see themselves as the deity's prime devotees. Whereas the Singbals—the GSBs whose respectability of being 'pure' Brahmins continued to be in doubt—believed that their rights to perform the worship predated others. However, these groups did not reach any agreement which led to several disturbances in the functioning of the temple. It seems that six years later, the Bhattas and the Singbals had managed to resolve their differences. This was clearly evident from a meeting convened by Ramchandra Narana Sinai Singbal to draft the *compromisso* in 1917.¹³⁵ The result was a compromise, with the Bhattas and the Singbals coming together to form a numerical majority in order to deny the rights to the Shet Verekars. Yet again, the Shet Verekars petitioned the government. Moreover, from 1917 to 1929 many unsuccessful attempts were made to finalise the *compromisso* by excluding the Shet Verekars.¹³⁶ So it is not surprising that the Shet Verekars often resorted to litigation in defence of their claimed rights.

It is important to note that by this time, although the *compromisso* was yet to be registered, the regular convening of temple meetings had led to a paradoxical consequence—the creation of a catalogue of *mahajans* to the exclusion of the Shet Verekars and Palcars. Two points are noteworthy here. Firstly, the catalogue was used to explicitly deny the Shet Verekars the right to administer the temple alongside the Brahmins. Secondly, once the Brahmins were able to establish that the temple was founded by the comunidade, they argued against the Shet Verekars who were not the *gaunkars* and had gradually settled outside the village. Besides, the

¹³⁴ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 79, 12 October 1909, 852; *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 39, 24 May 1910, 454.

¹³⁵ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 59, 24 July 1917, 642.

¹³⁶ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 84, 20 October 1922, 982; *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 29, 9 April 1929, 598; *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 39, 14 May 1929, 778.

GSBs employed an expansive cultural strategy and sought to raise the issue of caste status and claimed that the Vanis were Shudras.¹³⁷ This principle shaped the criteria by which the different customs, rights and privileges of the communities could be known. Moreover, the Brahmins argued that the Shet Verekars were merely devotees, like any other community. In 1931, Tribunal Administrativo, Fiscal e de Contas (Administrative Tax and Audit Court) delivered a judgement and confirmed the hereditary rights claimed by the Shet Verekars. However, the decision did not subject the notion of right to any analysis, but clearly took its meaningfulness based on the earlier intervention of the government in 1909 when an agreement was reached to include the Verekars as *mahajan*.¹³⁸ The judgement of the Tribunal Administrativo, Fiscal e de Contas was contested in Conselho Superior das Colónias.¹³⁹

The Bhattas and Singbals protested, claiming that they were forced to include the Shet Verekars when they had no such right, and indeed refused to include them as *mahajans* and ignored their presence during the temple meetings. In 1933, the Shet Verekars complained to the *administrador*, requesting his intervention to convene a meeting of the *mahajans* in order to draft the *compromisso* and the catalogue, and to approve the draft budget for the revenue and expenditure of the temple for the financial year 1933–34.¹⁴⁰ While the meeting was called, once again, the Shet Verekars were ignored. They appealed to the *administrador* of Ponda against the proceedings of the meeting held in 1933, and these proceedings were dismissed.¹⁴¹ More importantly, as the Shet Verekars sought to protect their interests through the intervention of the state, and organised themselves, one significant result of these campaigns of protest and petition were the changes in relationship between the Bhattas, the Singbals and the other competing group of Palcars.

In 1935, when a meeting of the *mahajans* was held, it was attended by the *administrador* and the lawyers appearing on behalf of both sides: Bhattas and Singbals, as opposed to the Shet

¹³⁷ *Vaishya*, vol. 12, December 1931; Xete Vernekar, *Mistérios dos Botos e Sinbales de Verém*, 36.

¹³⁸ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 100, 15 December 1931, 1557.

¹³⁹ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 54, 7 July 1933, 903–04.

¹⁴⁰ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 102, 22 December 1933, 1880.

¹⁴¹ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 87, 31 October 1933, 1526.

Verekars.¹⁴² A key fallout of this process was that although the Shet Verekars' right to being *mahajans* was recognised, the Bhattas and Singbals insisted on including the Palcars. Clearly, these changes were sought in order to gain a numerical majority that would enable the Bhattas and Singbals to counter the presence of the Shet Verekars in the administration of the temple. In this sense, we detect a critical transformation here through which notions of the *mahajans* being related to the temples emerge. However, the Shet Verekars strongly opposed the inclusion of the Palcars, who had failed to produce any documentary evidence, but had in fact been temple servants who had never held any rights in the temple.¹⁴³ The Shet Verekars filed an appeal against the proceedings of the meeting in the Tribunal Administrativo. However, the tribunal did not take notice of the appeal on the grounds of incompetence and, without entering into the substance of the matter, gave a decision against the appeal.¹⁴⁴

Moreover, and importantly, in response to regular petitioning, the Shet Verekars sought to raise a new claim in order to advance their legitimacy. In practice, and over time, they began to produce significant and recognisable details on *kuladevata* and *gramdevata*, making them useful for the purpose of the definition of a *mahajan*. Even more dramatically, these categories were drawn from the GSBs and were more common to their cultural productions. To an extent, since the eighteenth century this model of transforming *gramdevata* into *kuladevata* had offered a means of acquiring control over the temples. In effect, the Shet Verekars claimed that the god Ananta was their *kuladevata*, while for others groups who had established independent deities for their lineages, he was a *gramdevata*.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, and most critically, the adoption and adaptation of these categories, which they strategically deployed, inevitably taking from the GSBs, appear to have benefitted them.

In 1938, the Shet Verekars petitioned the governor general requesting his intervention to finalise the *compromisso* and the catalogue. Rather, the considerable delay in registering the *compromisso* and the catalogue forced the government to close down the temple for regular worship and for devotees. Subsequently, the temple was reopened on the condition that the

¹⁴² *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 25, 26 March 1935, 504.

¹⁴³ Xete Vernekar, *Mistérios dos Botos e Sinbales de Verém*, 35–6.

¹⁴⁴ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 51, 26 June 1936, 868–69.

¹⁴⁵ *Bharat*, 29 September 1938, 5.

compromisso would be registered within 30 days.¹⁴⁶ Accordingly, a meeting was called in the presence of the *administrador* which was attended by seventy-one Bhatts, twenty-six Singbals and 126 Shet Verekars, accompanied by their lawyers.¹⁴⁷ At this time, the Bhatts and the Singbals offered to accept only twenty-six Shet Verekars, a proposal collectively opposed by the latter. Later, a meeting was convened in 1939 and a *compromisso* and catalogue with the Bhatts, the Singbals and the Shet Verekars was constituted.¹⁴⁸ However, the Bhatts and the Singbals appealed against the verdict, and a judgement on this appeal suit was delivered in 1942.¹⁴⁹ After a long, drawn-out legal battle, the Shet Verekars finally got legal rights as the *mahajans* of the Ananta temple.

While colonial interventions were changing the temple's character at various levels, they also had vast consequences on the communities. A whole range of questions related to the 'private' rights over the temples were being formulated and investigated. To that end, we begin to look more closely towards the cultural and social dynamics of the Mahalaxmi temple situated in Panjim that correspond rather well to the scheme of things laid out.

In the sixteenth century, the goddess Mahalaxmi was shifted from Taleigao, a village adjoining Panjim, to Mayem, a village outside the Portuguese jurisdiction. In 1818, the residents of Panjim, after seeking permission from the Portuguese Viceroy, Count of Rio Pardo, brought back the image of Mahalaxmi to Panjim.¹⁵⁰ Subsequently, they made contributions, received donations and built a temple to house the deity. From this time onward the temple was administered by the GSBs, an instance where wealth and power align. Besides, writing skills acquired a great prestige and its degree of penetration in society was a significant element in the administration of a temple.

¹⁴⁶ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 80, 7 October 1938, 1522; *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral do Estado da Índia*, no. 84, 21 October 1938, 1574.

¹⁴⁷ Xete Vernekar, *Mistérios dos Botos e Sinbales de Verém*, 40.

¹⁴⁸ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, series III, no. 1, 5 January 1939, 15.

¹⁴⁹ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, series II, no. 20, 14 May 1942, 171–72.

¹⁵⁰ Filipe Nery Xavier, *Bosquejo historico das comunidades das aldeas dos concelhos das Ilhas, Salsete e Bardez*, vol. II (Bastora: Typografia Rangel, 1907), 247.

With the passing of the temple legislations in 1858 and 1866, the GSBs were able to formalise their hold over the Mahalaxmi temple administration. For instance, in 1874, the temple committee appointed by the governor general comprised only of the GSBs from Panjim.¹⁵¹ The temple committee recorded the management and administration of the temple as a response to the requirements of law. Gradually it would create an informal catalogue of individuals, more prominently of the GSBs, which could be used to establish their legitimacy as *mahajans*. In 1883, in the absence of a legal catalogue, the first attempt was made by the GSBs to catalogue themselves as *mahajans* of the Mahalaxmi temple, who would then draft the *compromisso*. This discovery and classification of the *mahajan* was based on the history of the GSBs' involvement in the temple's administration and was related to the rights and privileges they would seek over other groups.¹⁵² However, the non-GSB groups, such as Tarukar (Tari/Kharvi/Gabit), Daivadnya, Bhandari, Gauda and Nabhik, who were reduced to simple devotees of the temple, protested their exclusion to the revenue department, and challenged the efforts made by the GSBs to manufacture a legal sanctity and establish themselves as the *mahajans*. Despite this, over the next forty years, many attempts were made by the GSBs to draft the *compromisso* and the catalogue to the exclusion of all the other communities. Nevertheless, these efforts were unsuccessful and the government authorities were inundated by petitions from different castes to recognise their claims. On the other hand, the deadline to register the *compromisso* and the catalogue was repeatedly revised. In 1929, a revised deadline, failing which the doors of the temple could be sealed, forced the GSBs to empower themselves to draft the *compromisso* and the catalogue.¹⁵³ Yet, they could not avoid the issue of legitimacy.

The non-GSBs were furious and various opposing communities, led by the Nabhik, Bhandari and Tarukar met at Shree Pandurang Devalaya, a temple set up by the Bhandaris in Panjim, and immediately sent a petition of protest.¹⁵⁴ Under these pressures, the conflict would serve to unite the non-GSBs. What is interesting here is the way in which they consolidated to counter the

¹⁵¹ *Boletim do Governo Estado da Índia*, no. 12, 10 February 1874, 68.

¹⁵² Sridora Jenardona Camotim Sancoaltar, Giri Camotim Mamai, Srinivassa Sinai Dempo Pundolica Ananta Quenim and Baburau Narana S. Quencró Agacikar, *Templo de Xri Mahalaximi de Panjim (Memorial)* (Nova Goa: R. M. and Irmão, 1929), 6.

¹⁵³ *Hindu*, 2 July 1929, 5.

¹⁵⁴ *Hindu*, 8 October 1929, 7.

dominance of the GSBs. Two points are noteworthy here. Firstly, having complained that most of the non-GSBs had not been catalogued as *mahajans*, efforts were made to stay together, and immediately a coalition of all protesting groups, called Saraswatater Samaj (non-Saraswat community), that cut across the boundaries of castes, was established.¹⁵⁵ Two years later, Saraswatater Samaj was renamed as Gomantak Saraswatater Samaj, in an effort to broaden its base. In 1931, the statutes of Gomantak Saraswatater Samaj were approved by the government—one unusual feature being the equality of rights and the spirit of brotherhood.¹⁵⁶ Secondly, the excluded groups refused to enter the Mahalaxmi temple and boycotted the prayers until they had realised their rightful position in the temple. They, therefore, built a new temple—the temple of Maruti in Panjim which consisted of non-GSB members.¹⁵⁷

To make sense of this extraordinary temple conflict, we need to look at both, the urban environment of Panjim itself, and the arguments used by both sides. Historically, Panjim was a fishing village replete with marshlands that transformed into a suburban space from the second half of the eighteenth century.¹⁵⁸ In 1635 Panjim had around fifty houses, some belonging to the Portuguese, and others perhaps primarily of the Kharvis and the Bhandaris.¹⁵⁹ For about 84 years, from 1759 to 1843, Panjim was the unofficial capital, but in 1843 it was officially elevated to the status of the capital of the *Estado da Índia*. During these years its growth was phenomenal—first as the prime commercial seaport and then as the chief political centre. It is perhaps important to note that since the eighteenth century, Panjim acquired much of its population through immigration.¹⁶⁰ Growing urbanisation gave rise to new challenges and uncertain social standings. However, the goddess who once protected the people, was no longer in the village. Besides, the new city lacked all traditions, and the social groups had to establish various symbols to confirm their identity in the fluid and changing times. As a result, the Hindu residents of Panjim brought back the goddess—the benevolent mother coming home to her troubled children, and built a temple in 1818 that soon emerged as the centre of cultural life.

¹⁵⁵ *Hindu*, 22 October 1929, 7.

¹⁵⁶ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 65, 14 August 1931, 970–71.

¹⁵⁷ *Bharat*, 7 June 1934, 2.

¹⁵⁸ Celsa Pinto, *Anatomy of a colonial capital: Panjim* (Saligao: Goa 1556, 2016), 32, 187–88.

¹⁵⁹ Pinto, *Anatomy of a Colonial Capital*, 34.

¹⁶⁰ Celsa Pinto, *Colonial Panjim: Its Governance, Its People* (Saligao: Goa 1556, 2017), 227.

It is important to note that the individuals who in-migrated came largely from the different villages of Goa, and to some extent, the Konkan areas. In a town lacking markers of social cohesion, the Mahalaxmi temple provided a way for different Hindu communities to associate themselves and mobilise around the deity. By the end of the nineteenth century, new festivals such as Saptaha—festivities that last seven days—and staging of Marathi dramas were introduced. These were crucial to the social construction of Panjim as a city and marked a process of creating a new urban sensibility. For instance, as the city was transforming traditional village-based services into professions, the Nabhiks, hailing from different parts of the New Conquests, came and settled in Panjim. They were working closely with the Portuguese and had begun to establish themselves in the town by taking up other services emerging from the demands of city living. While they tended to vigorously belong to their respective neighbourhoods, it is only through the Mahalaxmi temple that they belonged to the city as a whole. In 1907, the Nabhiks established the Mahalaxmi Prasad Hindu Vachan Mandir.¹⁶¹ Thus, the Mahalaxmi temple constituted a sense of identity for this new urban community and was inextricably linked with an element of achievement. In other words, the temple became an integral part of the public and community life, providing a sense of embeddedness in cultural terms.

Let us explore the dimensions of this process by investigating the legal history of the dispute. Since the 1880s, at issue was a disagreement about the entitlement to the position of *mahajans*, which was important to the prestige and identity of each of the two contending parties. On the one side, the GSBs' claim to be the legitimate holders of the *mahajan* rights is most clearly expressed in the very history of the temple. This refers to the popular story whereby the deity came in the dreams of Narayan Kamat Mhamai, seeking her return. It is important to note that Kamat Mhamai was a leading business family from Guirdolim in Salcete which had left the village to escape conversion to Christianity in the sixteenth century. In 1759, as the Portuguese viceroy shifted his residence to Panaji, Suba Kamat Mhamai, one of the four official brokers of the Goa customs also moved to the city. In Panaji, his three sons Venkatesh, Narayan and Yeshwant expanded the family business and their maritime network spread from the Indian Ocean to Brazil. The family wore many hats—they were state revenue farmers, provision-

¹⁶¹ *Boletim Official do Estado da Índia*, no. 68, 26 August 1911, 867–68.

suppliers, shipyard contractors, official brokers of the French in Goa, moneylenders, political informers and dealers in slaves and opium.¹⁶²

In 1818, Narayan Kamat Mhamai brought back the deity to the city, invested his personal resources, donating the highest amount, and built the temple along with the contributions made by other GSBs and non-GSBs. Thus, the claim of the Narayan Kamat Mhamai family of having built the temple and starting the worship was clearly an important element, a claim firmly established in Article 1 of the *compromisso* registered in 1934.¹⁶³ More importantly, the figure of Narayan Kamat Mhamai gave the GSBs access to an already existing caste network and enabled them to recruit him to their cause. As the colonial state pioneered the use of books, legislated the temple laws and appointed temple committees, these processes strengthened the GSBs' claim over the position of *mahajan*, sometimes encapsulated in the idea that there existed a historical identity of *mahajans*. It is perhaps important to state that since the first temple law—an initiative of Purshottam Kenkre—all the individuals elected or appointed to the temple committees were GSBs. This is, of course, a reflection of the deeper tensions at play.

The GSBs also employed new ways of asserting and justifying their right. Firstly, they questioned the existence of the deity at Taleigao and the *gaunkari* right of the protesting communities. Secondly, they invoked a new identity of the deity, calling her Mahalaxmi Duadaxa-Bhumica, to assert that the deity was brought back by Narayan Kamat Mhamai accompanied by eleven other GSB families.¹⁶⁴ It had become common practice among these families to throw an annual feast called *samaradhana*, where food was served. This was used as the evidence to support the historical claim that the deity belonged to the GSBs. Thirdly, they raised serious doubts about the contributions made by the non-GSBs in constructing and expanding the temple and asked how realistic it was to expect relatively negligible contributions to provide enough funds to build and maintain a temple.¹⁶⁵ In this setting, arguments about Vedic ritual and caste status acquired new salience. While the GSBs invoked their rights to the dignity of Vedic ritual, two points are noteworthy here. The worship in the Mahalaxmi temple was

¹⁶² T. R. de Souza, *Goa to Me* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1994), 120–25.

¹⁶³ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 76 (Supplement), 22 September 1934, 1423.

¹⁶⁴ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, series II, no. 36, 9 September 1943, 157–59.

¹⁶⁵ Camotim Sancoalcar, Camotim Mamai, Dempo et al., *Templo de Xri Mahalaximi de Panjim*, 2.

through Vedic ritual, a distinctive marker of the dignities of the GSBs, instead of Puranic rites. Accordingly, it became their key tactic to attack the caste status of the opposing groups, and by implication, their claims to be a *mahajan*. At another level, the GSBs demonstrated their elevated status through installing precedence for their Swamis in the temple.¹⁶⁶ These aspects gave caste identity its key, and continuing, role in the maintenance of hierarchy in the temple.

On the other side, the non-GSBs who had mobilised under a single banner, argued forcefully against the claims advanced by the GSBs. Moreover, they maintained that the return of the goddess was not at the initiative of the GSBs. In their version of history, the non-GSBs, particularly the Tarukar and the Bhandaris from Panjim, went to Mayem and through their combined efforts ferried back the deity. While Narayan Kamat Mhamai only assisted them in this venture, the deity was first kept at Fontainas, an area inhabited by the the Tarukar and the Bhandaris.¹⁶⁷ Subsequently, it was decided to worship the deity in the palatial house of Narayan Kamat Mhamai until a temple was constructed. At the same time, however, the efforts to build a temple, in turn, brought their own problems, particularly with the Archbishop of Goa opposing the move vehemently.¹⁶⁸ The government was also reluctant to endorse the reverse-migration of the deity, fearing that similar claims would emerge from other temples. Under these pressures, Khema Mhalo, who was of the Nabhik caste and a barber in the service of the Viceroy, Count of Rio Pardo, succeeded in getting the requisite government permission.¹⁶⁹

What is interesting here is that the non-GSBs also devised new ways to defend their claim. It was in the backdrop of these factional settings and struggles for political advantage that the non-GSBs were determined to conduct the regular worship at the newly built Maruti temple through the Vedic ritual, a distinctive marker of the dignities of the twice-born castes.¹⁷⁰ They went even further and showed the presence of the deity in Taleigao in the sixteenth century, with evidence to back it up, a fact that would enable them to establish the *gramdevata* status for Mahalaxmi,

¹⁶⁶ K. S. Nayak, "Panjechoya Mahalaxmi Devalachi Nemval," *Navem Goem*, no. 1 (1935): 17–23.

¹⁶⁷ Camotim Sancoaltar, Camotim Mamai, Dempo et al., *Templo de Xri Mahalaximi de Panjim*, 4.

¹⁶⁸ Pereira, *Goa: Hindu Temples and Deities*, 37–8.

¹⁶⁹ S. T. Pednekar, *Panjitil amchi don devalaye ani anayaviruddha dilela yashasvi ladha* (Panaji: Paush Pornimekar Samaj, 2005), 19.

¹⁷⁰ *Boletim Official do Estado da Índia*, no. 65, August 14, 1931, 970–71.

and thus denying that there was any hereditary basis to the GSB right over *mahajans*. This was undoubtedly reported in the *Hindu*: Mahalaxmi of Panaji is not a deity that the GSBs have brought from North India—it is, in fact, the *gramdevata*, and to say that only the GSBs have a right to administer the temple is based on a false claim which subsequently denies a similar right to others who have contributed to the construction of the temple through money and other means.¹⁷¹ Particular attention was drawn to their regular contributions for building the temple, and maintaining regular worship, and also their participation in various temple festivals. For instance, in 1919, when funds were raised to reconstruct an *agrashala* and a residence for the temple priest, all communities contributed financially—although the GSBs would have contributed more than the others.¹⁷²

This was an extraordinary case fought in the capital of the colonial state that had led to the consolidation of the non-GSBs and caught people's attention, not just in Goa, but also in Bombay and Pune. It is important to note that the non-GSBs had been protesting since the 1880s and the verdict was in their favour, forcing the GSBs to amend the *compromisso*. Accordingly, in 1934, the *compromisso* and catalogue of the Mahalaxmi temple was registered with a list of 1,013 Hindus as the *mahjanas*. Here, the GSBs alone had as many as 518 individuals, while others who had legally qualified as *mahajans* included: Dravidian Brahmins, Lingayats, Rajputs, Gujirs, Kasars, Lohars, Daivadnya Brahmins, Vaishyas, Naik Gaonkars, Tarukars, Naik Bhandaris and Naik Marathas. However, the GSBs who opposed the inclusion of non-GSBs as *mahajans* forcefully protested. They first complained to the government in Goa, and later at the Imperial Colonial Council in Lisbon, and sought the court's intervention for destroying the sanctity of the *mahajan*.¹⁷³ Meanwhile, the non-GSBs continued their boycott of the temple, while Nanu Tarcar Pednekar, a Nabhik and a clerk in the government, led a defence against the appeal to re-amend the *compromisso*. Finally, in 1943, a judgment favouring the non-GSBs affirmed the identity of the deity as *gramdevata* and not belonging to a particular community.

¹⁷¹ *Hindu*, 1 October 1929, 5.

¹⁷² Nayak, "Panjechoya Mahalaxmi Devalachi Nemval," 17–23.

¹⁷³ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, series II, no. 21, 23 May, 1940, 206; *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, series, II, no. 47, 19 November, 1942, 368; *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, series II, no. 36, 9 September 1943, 157–59.

Although the case seemed fairly straightforward, it was after fourteen years of boycott that the non-GSBs finally entered the temple.

The temple and its histories of contestation are also significant from another perspective. They cast a long shadow and formed the basis of political culture. The consequences of this emerged out of the histories of social contestation. Firstly, litigation was an expensive affair and held back many castes from participating in the contests over temples, as their counterparts, the GSBs, were able to do. The GSBs also employed the material resources of the temple itself to fight litigations over the rights and privileges in the temples. In addition, the GSBs were better equipped with a legendary past, and a theological choreography whereby local gods were adopted into the Brahminical pantheon. They enjoyed bureaucratic roles and also had material resources to fight the cases. In the absence of historical evidence on temple control, the colonial state did not subject the notion of hereditary right to *mahajans* to any analysis and took the claim of the GSBs for granted. The only point to be decided, therefore, was whether other communities who asserted their rights had such rights, and to what extent they could be established through the archive.

Secondly, the protests required political and organisational strengths, which many so conspicuously lacked. Thirdly, the colonial law transformed the temple into a 'private' property of the *mahajans*, and others were transformed to simple devotees or temple servants. By the time the temple laws had run their course, the administrative framework of the temple was set in place, precedents established and causalities certified. It is perhaps important to note that many communities who were transformed into temple servants would never make a claim to the position of *mahajans*. The consequences of this emerge with particular clarity when seen in the context of the Gomantak Maratha Samaj. More importantly, the women from the community who had made noteworthy offerings to the temples, or fetched donations, and had instituted festivals in the temples, were never acknowledged. While they led the protest to liberate the temples from the monopolistic hold of the *mahajans*, and at times were forced to migrate outside Goa, more prominently to British Bombay, they never demanded the right of *mahajans*. Each of these aspects were shaped by local actors, as well as the Portuguese, and the form of these histories shows three distinctive political strategies emerging—one was to protest, the second was to accept the disenfranchised position of being a mere worshipper, even though the deity

was claimed as a *kuladevata*, and the third was to build a new temple. These developments profoundly shaped the political culture of Goa during the colonial period, and beyond.

Chapter 5

Sutca: The Bahujan in Post–Colonial Goa

The social and cultural transformations of post-colonial Goa have been marked by a heightened sensitivity to the past and caste identity. In fact, this interest is not one that has been sparked suddenly at the time of Liberation in 1961, but has developed gradually amongst communities, in relation to the movements of assertion of Maratha identity and enhancement of their status. At a time when a public culture was shaped through the medium of a Marathi press, since the late nineteenth century, along with Marathi education that denigrated the non–Brahmins, the ideology of the Bahujan that was deeply alive to their perceived interests and needs, provided a new collective identity. More importantly, it was related to the image of the majority—the Bahujan Samaj that lived and laboured, while the GSBs had monopolised education along with government and professional employment.

A striking feature of the lower–caste struggle since the late nineteenth century has been the contestation of the supposed inferior origins of their communities. Subsequently, this struggle for upward mobility led to the emergence of the Bahujan movement in the 1920s. What was significant was that the notion of Bahujan, underlying the expression of opposition to entrenched structures of GSB power, surfaced constantly and became a major source of contention within the political discourse. However, with the exception of the establishment of the Gomantak Saraswatater Samaj in 1929, the ideology failed to subsume the non–Brahmin castes into any collective action and, rather, directed their energies principally to establish caste associations.¹ Moreover, during this time, the ideology of the Bahujan represented an aspiration that articulated a common historical vision: an ancient past of upper–caste distinction that had long since

¹ *Hindu*, 22 October 1929, 7; *Boletim Official do Estado da Índia*, no. 65, 14 August 1931, 970–71.

deteriorated into present-day dishonour, and these very factors caused tensions and rivalries between the lower castes and other groups.

Liberation brought with it not only a new confidence, but a new political leverage, and led to fresh caste solidarities and political alliances that challenged the social and economic supremacy of the GSBs. While a numerically small caste, the GSBs exercised their hegemony, and the Bahujan Samaj, with many cleavages running through this very large and heterogenous section of society, began to consolidate across non-Brahmin *jatis* for power and status. It is the assertion of the powerful counter-ideology of the Bahujan and their assimilation into a united group that made them capable of great political power and self-determination—a process which has shaped politics among the Hindus in post-colonial Goa.

Accordingly, this chapter examines the content of the Bahujan ideology and the attendant political competition. We shall be looking at several negotiations of the Bahujan Samaj, all of which tried to mediate cultural differences and material interests. This chapter has four aims. First, it seeks to understand caste identity movements that were extended after 1961. Second, it examines the relationship between the Bahujan and religion: the growth of the new religious movements and the response manifested in many institutional and cultural contexts. Third, it analyses the profound impact of Bahujan ideology on politics, and how they shaped each other. Fourth, it investigates the question of Maharashtrawad, the linguistic and cultural domain that provides an interesting and extremely complex example of the relationships between language, religion and community.

5.1 Search for a community

Caste has remained an important source of power and status. Therefore, the pressures to validate caste identities, characterised by a concern with the natural and political rights of the lower-caste groups in society has remained a continuing challenge. For instance, the arguments about the caste identity of the Gaudas took on new dimensions early in the 1960s, particularly with their claim for a Maratha status. Historically, the Gaudas were less strongly represented in Goa. However, by the early nineteenth century the tribal communities in Goa were known as Gaudas

and Kunbis—the earliest inhabitants of villages, most of whom didn't own any land.² It is important to note that, subsequently, a third group of Velips was formed when the term was inscribed as a surname. In the nineteenth century, these tribal communities were largely employed as cultivators or labourers. While it was possible for small numbers of the lower castes to acquire some sort of education with the setting up of private Marathi schools, Gaudas and Kunbis were simply too poor to afford the luxury of education.³ It is perhaps important to note that Catholic Gaudas were discriminated against in the Church and that led some of them to re-convert to Hinduism in order to escape discrimination at the hands of the Church and the Catholics.⁴ While the mass re-conversion process launched through the *shuddhi* movement had increased the population of the Hindus by around ten thousand, the Hindu Gaudas refused to acknowledge the re-converts as their own, leading to the creation of a new sub-grouping called Nav-Hindus. In 1929, the first attempt to unite the Hindu Gaudas was made through an organisation called Akhil Gauda Samaj, aiming for social progress.⁵ However, it was here that the older attitudes about community generated conflicts between the Hindu Gaudas and the Nav-Hindus over honours in festivals and affected their ability to respond to these opportunities. Besides, their efforts towards social progress drew antipathy from the elite caste groups who feared the loss of easy access to cheap labour.

It looks like that by the 1950s the Gaudas were making efforts to claim a Maratha identity. However, it was only in 1962 that the Gauda Maratha Samaj was established under the leadership of Krishna Bandodkar.⁶ This issue provoked a sharp debate, particularly with the rise of Gauda

² J. T. Molesworth, *A Dictionary, Marathi and English*, 2nd ed., revised and enlarged (Bombay: Bombay Education Society's Press, 1857), 235; *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Kanara*. vol. XV, Part I (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1883), 216–20; Filippe Nery Xavier, *Bosquejo Historico das Comunidades das Aldeas dos Concelhos das Ilhas, Salcete e Bardez*, vol. 1 (Bastora: Typografia Rangel, 1903), 78–9; A. B. de Bragança Pereira, "Etnografia da Índia Portuguesa," in *A Índia Portuguesa*, Vol. I (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1923), 355–56.

³ *Bharat*, 13 October 1915, 3.

⁴ Parag D. Parobo, *India's First Democratic Revolution: Dayanand Bandodkar and the rise of Bahujan in Goa* (New Delhi: Orient Balckswan, 2015), 67.

⁵ *Bharat*, 22 August 1929, 2.

⁶ *Gomantak*, 30 January 1963, 2.

demands for their claim to a Maratha caste status. In 1962, a report submitted by the Advisory Committee to the Lieutenant Governor, Tumkur Shivsankar, referred to the Gaudas as *adivasis*, the original settlers.⁷ It was a disappointment to the Gaudas because it described them as the most primitive, and forced Krishna Bandodkar to argue that they were not *adivasis*, but, rather, Gaud Maratha. It is important to note that had they settled for the *adivasi* identity, they would have benefitted by the reservations that were later established for scheduled castes and tribes.⁸ However, Gaudas asserted that they possessed poor levels of skills as they were deprived of education. Accordingly, they were forced to live as impoverished cultivators and refused the classification of a scheduled tribe. More importantly, they felt the term *adivasi* was a humiliation.

At the other level, the Gaudas were criticised for claiming a Maratha identity. Despite continued resentment and debate, the Gaudas strengthened their appeal and articulated their own claims to a Maratha and Kshatriya identity. Unlike other communities that attempted to demonstrate their Marathahood through martial prowess and genealogical connections with Maratha families, the claim for an upward social mobility among the Gaudas was centred on the Kunbi identity. However, the idea of an original Maratha identity for the Kunbis, now lost, is a common feature of the culture of the Bahujan castes. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the term Kunbi was used as an imprecise and comprehensive social category that denoted cultivators, or all those who worked on the land.⁹ In projecting the Gauda community also as Kunbi, the term was imbued with a new and radical meaning. This new meaning of the term was determined by the larger debate over the real nature of the term Kunbi Maratha, and the Gaudas attempted to demonstrate that by presenting the Maratha king Shivaji as a Kunbi ruler.¹⁰

The Nav–Hindus, on the other hand, who were seen as inferior by the Hindu Gaudas, found it difficult to go with this new identity and this difficulty was derived from two quite separate sources. The first source of difference was in the domestic and social practices of the Nav–Hindus which they derived from their close historical association with Christianity from the

⁷ *Gomantak*, 23 January 1963, 3.

⁸ *Mandavi*, June 1963, 13–15.

⁹ Rosalind O’Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict, and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth-Century Western India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 131.

¹⁰ Pratapsingh Velip Kankar, *The Kurmis–Kunbis of India* (Margao: Pritam Prakashan, 2006), 23–4.

sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. Most importantly, their conversion to Christianity meant that some essentially Christian domestic practices were integrated into the broader collection of beliefs and social practices. As a result, the Hindu Gaudas saw them as impure and denied them participation in ritual practices and equality before the community. The second source of difference was the Maratha aspiration of the Hindu Gaudas. The distinctiveness of some of the aspects of Nav–Hindus’ social life led to difficulties and tensions and these can be seen more concretely in the events surrounding the Akhil Gomantakiya Gauda Samaj Parishad, held at Panjim in 1963.¹¹ The conference was largely dominated by the Nav–Hindus and was intended to convey an overall idea of some of the issues facing the community. They demanded free primary education and scholarships for high school along with a political representation in the forthcoming legislative assembly. Further, the demand that featured most prominently was a concession in the fees to register their family and individual’s name from a Catholic background to a Hindu cultural attachment.¹²

The tradition of Marathisation acquired a new salience after Goa’s liberation and, apart from the Gaudas, there were other communities such as Madval, the washermen community, who also extended their claims for a Maratha identity. Subsequently, even the Nav–Hindus saw themselves as Gauda Maratha. On the other side, the communities with a history of caste movements, such as Gomantak Maratha, Bhandaris and Kharvis had begun to enlarge their capacities to pursue the new opportunities that were presented by Liberation, and which pushed them into an organized political mobilisation. More importantly, these castes, armed with the experience of consolidation, launched campaigns to formalise their caste associations and construct samaj buildings that would provide a vehicle for the articulation of a culture and identity for the castes. In 1962, Gomantak Kshatriya Bhandari Samaj was established at Panjim to protect the interests of Naik and Bhandari communities.¹³ Donations were sought from community members to construct a building of the Bhandari Samaj.¹⁴ Similarly, the Gomantak Maratha community constructed its own building. It is perhaps important to note that while Bablo Masno Naik Volvoikar had played an important role in the caste movement of the Bhandaris in

¹¹ *Gomantak*, 21 September 1963, 2.

¹² *Gomantak*, 28 September 1963, 2.

¹³ *Gomantak Kshatriya Bhandari Samaj, Panaji: Niyamavali* (Margao: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1964).

¹⁴ *Gomantak*, 25 June 1962, 3.

Goa during the first half of the twentieth century, the newly established Gomantak Kshatriya Bhandari Samaj was led by his son Vithal Bablo Naik Volvoikar.¹⁵

In 1967, the Goa Kshatriya Maratha—the Kharvi Samaj—organised its first conference to mark twenty-five years of its foundation at Mapuca. The president of the conference, Mahabaleshwar Morje, was an advocate from Mumbai who reiterated the need for unity and outlined the efforts to be made to take advantage of Goa's Liberation.¹⁶ The conference proceedings included matters on education and the role of the community members in Goa's struggle for freedom. Moreover, the overall effect of these activities was to publicise their Maratha identity and an elaboration of the pressing needs of the time—Morje campaigned strongly for the introduction of some measures encouraging higher education among the non-literary and backward castes.

Besides, after 1961, various castes adapted Shivaji to their own ideological and rhetorical patterns for a moral meaning and attempted to change the rules of politics. As a result, since the 1960s, the new public celebration of Shivaji's birth spread throughout Goa, which later became increasingly political in content. More importantly, Shivaji was promoted as a symbol of identity and political action, and demands were made for installing his statues across Goa—a process that continues till today.¹⁷ Overall, these stratagems of using a Maratha identity to unite *jatis* into single castes would prove useful to the Bhaujan in the political domain, in the light of new political perceptions characterised by a concern with natural and political rights.

5.2 Caste, ritual and religion

Apart from the Maratha identity discourse, grievances of the lower castes are also expressed in religious language. More importantly, these processes of identity and ritual are not separate but are interweaved through the related processes of claims for an upward mobility and religious identity formation. For the communities involved in upward mobility, affiliations to the new religious orders were inextricably linked to their issues of identity. One of the most significant developments in post-colonial period in Goa is the declining influence of the Shankaracharya of

¹⁵ *Gomantak*, 4 March 1963, 4.

¹⁶ *Gomantak*, 25 December 1967, 1, 4.

¹⁷ *Gomantak*, 14 May 1962, 2.

Kolhapur–Sankeshwar *matha* over the lower castes. Since the nineteenth century, the Shankaracharya styled himself as a *Jagat Guru*, or World Teacher, and headed a *matha* originally based at Kolhapur and subsequently shifted to Sankeshwar. Contemporary descriptions of the Shankaracharya convey his active role in the life of all the Hindus in Goa, except the GSBs.¹⁸ In fact, he was the central religious figure who exercised his authority by deputing agents and commanded goods and services. Moreover, he arbitrated caste disputes, outcasting people, or reinstating them, and received annual contributions through a fee. Above all, his influence took on an even greater significance in socio–political life. This was apparent when the Portuguese used the services of the Shankaracharya to conclude a peace with the Ranés who had taken up arms against the government during 1895 to 1897.¹⁹

More importantly, the authority of the Shankaracharya was invoked to legitimise the claims of upward mobility by the communities who had worked energetically to reduce their ritual distance with the Brahmins. Such considerations had become important with the relatively wealthy groups like Daivadnya, Bhatta–Prabhu and the Vanis and had led them to adopt the values and rituals of the Brahmins, and the Shankaracharya had legislated favourably on the campaigns of these castes.²⁰ This opened the door for other castes, and those who pressed in this way to receive an exalted status by the Shankaracharya included communities such as the elite Maratha, Bhandari and Gomantak Maratha. On the contrary, more annoyingly, they were denied these claims to represent themselves. During the Vedokta controversy in 1900–1905, between Shahu of Kolhapur and his *rajopadhyaya* (priest to the royal family) over the demands of the Marathas for

¹⁸ Sashishekar Damodar Athavale, *Shree Sansthan Karveer va Sankeshwarcha Itihas* (Kolhapur: Dynasagar Chapkhana, 1889); Mahadev Rajaram Bondas, *Shankaracharya va Tyancha Sampradaya* (Pune: Jagdishchu Press, 1923); Vaman Ragunath Varde Valavalikar, *Kahi Marathi Lekh* (Mumbai: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1945), 134; *Navem Gōi*, April 1937, 126–32.

¹⁹ Ramchandra Sabaji Samant, *Gove Prantatil Banda* (Ponda: Ek Vidhyarti, 1901), 4.

²⁰ In 1930 the Shankaracharya issued an order stating that Bhatta–Prabhu are Pancha Dravida Brahmins. For details see Parobo, *India's First Democratic Revolution*, 34.

recognition as Kshatriyas, the Shankaracharya sided with the latter to reiterate their Shudra identity.²¹

On the other hand, around 1922, the Bhandaris, who were claiming a Maratha Kshatriya identity, were accused of having originated as ‘untouchables’.²² On this basis, in 1923, when a person from the Bhandari community had relations with an ‘impure untouchable’, this issue was debated in public.²³ In consequence, the Bhandaris, who saw themselves as Maratha Kshatriya, petitioned the Shankaracharya and when that failed, ceased associating with the Karveer–Sankeshwar *matha*.²⁴ Similarly, the Gomantak Maratha Samaj was unsuccessful in getting the support of the Shankaracharya for its caste reform movement. Consequently, they decided to boycott all activities that were traditionally associated with his arrival in Goa.²⁵

While these issues were important in contributing towards the waning of the influence of the Shankaracharya over Goa, there were other issues as well. Some Shankaracharyas had lived lavishly by taking loans on a security of *inams* (gifts of land) given by the Kolhapur rulers to the *matha*.²⁶ For instance, in the 1880s, Balwant Ramchandra Natu had given a loan to the *matha* by keeping twelve villages of the *matha* as security.²⁷ During the Vedokta controversy, Shahu confiscated the estates held by the *matha* in Kolhapur state and Balwant Ramchandra Natu suffered, since he held Shankaracharya’s Kolhapur villages as security for his loan.²⁸ Further, as

²¹ Maratha Samaj—Baroda, *Sankeshwar Mathache Adhikarchyut Swamini Marathanchye Kshatriyatva sambandhane Nastipakshi Kelelya Tharavacha Nished* (Baroda: Baroda Vatsal, 1906), 34; Jaysinhrao B. Pawar, ed., *Rajarshi Shahu Chatrapatinche Jahirname va Hukumname* (Pune: Mehta Publishing House, 2018), 28–9.

²² *Bhandari Vijay*, April 1922, 130–35; *Bhandari Vijay*, August 1922, 5; *Bhandari Vijay*, January 1926, 69–72.

²³ *Bharat*, 26 February 1925, 5.

²⁴ *Bharat*, 2 July 1925, 5.

²⁵ *Samaj Sudharak*, January 1930, 24.

²⁶ Athavale, *Shree Sansthan Karveer va Sankeshwarcha Itihas*, 55–59.

²⁷ *O Goatma*, 19 June 1889, 4; Gordon Johnson, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism: Bombay and the Indian National Congress, 1880 to 1915* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 105.

²⁸ Johnson, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism*, 105.

a major part of the revenue of the *matha* came from villages in the Kolhapur state, the Shankaracharya was unable to repay the loan. Later, in 1933, Natu approached the Satara court for the settlement of the unpaid loan. In 1940, a compromise was worked out by the court and the Shankaracharya was ordered to pay a lower amount of the claim, along with interests on the loaned amount.²⁹ As a result, an appeal was made to Goans to contribute towards the repayment of the loan, but it failed to garner any support.

These developments led to a crisis in the traditional prestige that accompanied the Shankaracharya and had important implications for the development of new religious movements in Goa, such as the Padmanabha *sampradaya* (religious community). Non-Brahmin leaders believed that the Shankaracharya was hostile to lower-caste improvement, and it was in meeting this challenge that they thought it necessary to support new swamis. More importantly, it formed the basis for establishing an independent *matha* of lower castes for a revolution in social and religious values. This resolves itself naturally into a question: What are we to make of the social groups who saw the spread of caste mobilisation, and the ways in which the Padmanabha *sampradaya* was incorporated, into a larger ideological scheme?

The Padmanabha *sampradaya* derives its name from its founder, Govind Raghunath Mahajan, a Deshastha Brahmin who was initiated into the Datta *sampradaya* by his guru Yeshwant Mahadev Bosekar, or Siddhapadacharya swami, who combined a career in the civil service with a gradual path towards guruhood.³⁰ It is perhaps important to know that the *sampradaya* follows a tradition of re-naming a disciple by a guru on his initiation. Govind Raghunath Mahajan was born at Taral, a village in Ratnagiri district, in 1849, and having lost his father at the age of ten, he was forced to seek work in Bombay. Subsequently, he worked at various places, including a cotton textile mill.³¹ In 1885 he met Siddhapadacharya swami who initiated him as his disciple and named him Padmanabha. Since then, and up to his death in 1912, Padmanabha dedicated his life

²⁹ *Bharat*, 29 February 1940, 5.

³⁰ Kashinath Mahadev Tamankar, *Shree Sadguru Padmanabhacharya Swami Maharaj* (Mumbai: Raghunath Dipaji Desai, 1949), 25–6; *Shreemat Sadguru Padmanabhacahrya Swami Maharaj Yancha Samadhi Amrut Mahotsav: Smaranika* (Mumbai: Padmanabhacahrya Swami Maharaj Shishya Sampradaya, 1987), 1–2.

³¹ Tamankar, *Shree Sadguru Padmanabhacharya Swami Maharaj*, 28.

to working towards the spiritual and social upliftment of the textile mill workers in Girangaon (present Girgaon), literally, the mill village.

From the mid–nineteenth century, the rapid development of cotton textile mills produced a distinct category of a mill workers community in Bombay.³² In 1870 there were 8,103 workers employed by only a total of ten cotton mills, but in the next two decades there were seventy mills employing 59,139 workers.³³ These mill workers were first migrants to the city and came from various regions and social backgrounds. However, until the early twentieth century, the mill workers were predominantly from the Konkan region and the lower caste communities, such as the Bhandaris, Gabit and the Mithgavdas formed the bulk of these migrants. Even in the 1910s, marginal communities from the Konkan region contributed more than fifty per cent of the total labour force.³⁴ On the other hand, the grim daily routine of the workers—long hours of work and low wages, coupled with the lack of adequate housing and inadequate living conditions of their homes (ill-lit, ill-ventilated dens in largely undeveloped, undrained areas) pushed them towards a regular intake of alcohol.³⁵ As such, shopkeepers and grain dealers also exerted dominance on these mill workers through providing credit, both in money and goods, a condition largely reflective of the factory workers’ abysmal incomes. These material conditions impacted the moral and physical health of the mill workers and made them easy prey to various diseases.

The cotton textile industry and its workforce had played a significant role in the rise of the Padmanabha *sampradaya* that had emerged from the guru lineage stemming from Datta *sampradaya*. It was in the unhealthy working and living conditions of workers—insanitation, sickness, deaths, stillbirths and alcoholism—that Padmanabha began to preach well-being, both spiritual as well as physical, among the mill workers. More importantly, in 1900, Padmanabha built a Datta temple in Bombay through public funds. Accordingly, he introduced these marginal

³² Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, “Workers’ Politics and the Mill Districts in Bombay between the Wars,” *Modern Asian Studies* 15, no. 3 (1981): 605.

³³ Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay, “Cotton Mill Workers in Bombay, 1875 to 1918: Conditions of Work and Life,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 25, no. 30 (1990): PE87.

³⁴ Morris D. Morris, *The Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force in India A Study of Bombay Cotton Mills 1854–1947* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1965), 22–38.

³⁵ Upadhyay, “Cotton Mill Workers in Bombay, 1875 to 1918,” PE87–PE99.

communities to the Datta *sampradaya*, its guru–*shishya* relationship and gained influence over the mill workers from the Konkan region.³⁶ Indeed, it is possible to argue that these developments intersected with the claims for upward mobility and the popularity of the Datta cult since the nineteenth century.

It is perhaps important to note that while references to Datta are found in Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas, his worship gains prominence steadily only around the sixteenth century.³⁷ As R. C. Dhere notes, the internal fragmentation between Vaishnavites and Shaivites and the intersection with Islam contributed to the creation of Datta. Unlike the other gods, Datta is rather more important for three reasons. Firstly, Datta is an assimilative force and bears the three heads of the main gods—Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva—into a single form.³⁸ Secondly, Datta has a living presence on earth and appears in the form of human gurus.³⁹ Thirdly, while Datta is represented both as guru and god, importantly, he is more than a god—the guru who can offer what gods cannot.⁴⁰ Datta looks upon all human beings impartially and places comparatively less emphasis on caste purity or impurity. While Datta is seen as an immortal guru, there are *avatars*—guru incarnations—of the god in the form of a living human being who appears suddenly and unexpectedly. More importantly, Datta has been appropriated by both Brahminical and non-Brahminical groups.⁴¹

³⁶ Bhandari Bhavitavya, February 1956, 42.

³⁷ R. C. Dhere, *Datta Sampradayacha Itihas*, 4th ed. (Pune: Padmaganda Prakashan, 1999).

³⁸ Hariprasad Shivprasad Joshi, *Origin and Development of Dattatreya Worship in India* (Baroda: Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1965).

³⁹ Charles Pain with Eleanor Zelliott, “The God Dattatreya and the Datta Temples of Pune,” in *The Experience of Hinduism: Essays on Religion in Maharashtra*, eds. Eleanor Zelliott and Maxine Berntsen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 95–108.

⁴⁰ Jacob Copeman and Aya Ikegame, “The multifarious guru: an introduction,” in *The Guru in South Asia: New Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. Jacob Copeman and Aya Ikegame (New York: Routledge, 2012), 23.

⁴¹ Antonio Rigopoulos, *Dattatreya: The Immortal Guru, Yogin, and Avatāra: A Study of the Transformative and Inclusive Character of a Multi-Faceted Hindu Deity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998).

The guru forms a part of an uninterrupted chain of *avatars* and is an incarnation of the Datta who offers salvation. He is a dispeller of ignorance and only the guru can guide and instruct; his worship alone can open the gates of heaven. For disciples who are initiated into a particular *sampradaya*, the guru is a personal god, and the local gods play a subordinate role in their social life. A representation of guru often occupies centre stage in a family's place of worship. This devotion to and worship of the guru, representing the embodiment of Datta, is similar to that of a deity worshipped in a temple. The guru–*shishya* culture is of cardinal importance and is characterised by a spiritually egalitarian ethos that places less emphasis on rules of caste and rituals, offers the freedom from control of priests, and in so doing, gives importance to one's relationship with the guru.⁴²

It is pertinent to note here that Padmanabha's central focus was on the worship of Datta that exemplified the moral consequences of actions, rather than the proper performance of rituals. Padmanabha also responded to the different needs and concerns of these communities and insisted on the dignity of physical work. For instance, Padmanabha's *Jativeda*, published in 1908, and concerned with questions of self and identity, stressed on egalitarian principles and emerged as a powerful critique of caste hierarchy.⁴³ Further, as it gradually became clear that many of these communities thought of themselves as Kshatriyas, he not only attended to the vexed question of status and hierarchy, but also legitimised their claims through ancient lineages. On the other hand, Padmanabha encouraged a pure lifestyle that involved abstinence from meat and spirituous liquors as a way of inculcation of a just moral order, and more importantly, in undermining the caste hierarchy that stigmatised these mill–worker communities. He also emphasised work ethics and recommended the path of the householder, rather than that of the renouncer. Padmanabha is today held by his followers to have been an *avata* of Datta, and the institutional centrality of the *sampradaya* is reflected in the guru–*shishya* relationship that connects every follower to a guru, and through an unbroken succession of gurus with Padmanabha himself, and eventually, Datta.

⁴² Copeman and Ikegame, "The multifarious guru: an introduction," 23.

⁴³ Padmanabha Swami, *Jativeda* (Mumbai: Shree Jagdishwar Press, 1909); Tamankar, *Shree Sadguru Padmanabhacharya Swami Maharaj*, 30–1.

In the *sampradaya*, where gurus had married, Padmanabha laid out his plan of succession by appointing sixteen *bhartis*—biologically unrelated successors who would spread his philosophy. One such *bharti* was Sambhaji Ramji Mandrekar who was born into a Bhandari family from Satose, a small village in present-day Sawantwadi taluka, on the borders of Goa. Beginning in the 1910s, Mandrekar moved to Mumbai and was initiated into the *sampradaya* by Padmanabha at the Datta temple and re-named as Sushen. In 1923 Sushen was brought to Mormugao, Goa, by Tukaram Babu Redkar, a disciple of the swami and an important Bhandari leader who would later play an important role in organising the thirteenth *Bhandari Shikshan Parishad at Panjim in 1926*.⁴⁴ It is important to note that the Redkar's were from Redi, a village in Maharashtra, and had migrated to Mormugao in the 1870s to pursue opportunities offered by the development of the Mormugao port and a railway line connecting it to British India.

In the 1920s, Sushen often travelled between Satose and Goa and was able to gain followers, more prominently among the Bhandaris and Kharvis/Gabits. This led to the establishment of two Datta temples in Bicholim, first at Varpal, and later, a temple and a *matha* at Haturli. Further, a Datta temple, which was also used as a Marathi school at Mormugao in Redkar's property, was established around 1931.⁴⁵ By the time of his death in 1931, Sushen swami was regarded as an *avatara* of Datta and the *matha* at Haturli was named after him. Subsequently, the followers invited Krishnaji Ramchandra Kedar, alias Sadananda swami, a disciple of Sushen swami from Gulduve village in Sawantwadi, who had been initiated into the *sampradaya* in 1906.⁴⁶

Sadananda swami played an important role in spreading the popularity of the Padmanabha *sampradaya*. There are at least four reasons for this. First, as the *sampradaya* progressed it became more radical, challenging Brahminical moral codes, and specifically undertook not to employ a Brahmin priest or any other form of intermediary in the performance of rituals. In particular, it freed followers from the apparently obscurantist machinations of Brahmin priests and freely admitted and invested lower castes with the sacred thread signifying their 'twice born'

⁴⁴ Dattaram Vamona Naique, ed., *Bandhari Shikshan Parishad: Thirteenth Adhiveshan: Panaji, December 1926* (Panaji: Yaduvir Naik Shirodkar, 1939), 7; Namrata Bhat, ed., *Sakal Sant Charitra Gatha* (Mumbai: Self-published, 1998), 708.

⁴⁵ Records of this temple and school are with the Redkar family.

⁴⁶ Bal Apte, *Swami Sadanandacharya Charitra* (Haturli, Goa: Shree Guru Vadmay Mandal, 1986), 228.

status. Accordingly, the *sampradaya* challenged the Brahmins' exclusive control over scriptural knowledge and ritual performance by inducting non-Brahmin priests. Besides, it also had a flexible approach to rules about food, and gave importance to the householder, rather than ascetic lifestyles and values. Second, Sadananda swami was a practitioner of ayurvedic medicine. It was believed that he carried the cures for many ills and had gained power over diseases. He was said to have performed many acts of miraculous healing. Thus, one could even say that faith in his healing prowess was contingent upon his knowledge and charisma. Besides, Sadananda's teaching of ayurvedic medicine to his followers contributed towards their empowerment. Until the nineteenth century, the field of ayurvedic practitioners was dominated by Brahmins and the training of non-Brahmin medical practitioners was a significant departure.

Third, Sadananda encouraged education, and the Marathi school at Mormugoa was named as Sushenashram, with teaching-learning systematised. Fourth, the development of a print culture also contributed to the popularisation of the Padmanabha *sampradaya*. One of the important characteristics of the Padmanabha *sampradaya* is the high value that disciples place on the worship of pictures of Padmanabha, Sushen, Sadananda and the succeeding gurus as the incarnation of Datta at the family altar. An image cannot be recognised as sacred without any ritual consecration by a Brahmin priest. Under such circumstances, the absence of image worship of gurus diminished the role of the Brahmin priests in consecration and shows a tendency to place a much larger emphasis on the role of their gurus than on priests. As a result, the followers are more concerned with a personal experience of the presence of gurus, and pictures emerged as a new means for gurus to transmit their presence. This undoubtedly raised their status and made them more accessible to the devotees. Subsequently, with the democratisation of print technology, a new range of books of the Padmanabha *sampradaya* proliferated.

One of the significant developments of the emergence and popularity of the Padmanabha *sampradaya* in Goa was the establishment of Datta temples. It is important to note that in the early stages, when these temples were built, there was no image of Datta; he was worshipped in the form of a coconut. In 1965, an image of Datta in its present iconic form and *padukas* (ceremonial sandals) were installed at Haturli *matha*—a ceremony attended by Dayanand Bandodkar, the chief minister of Goa.⁴⁷ In 1976, Sadananda Swami died and was succeeded by

⁴⁷ Apte, *Swami Sadanandacharya Charitra*, 220.

his nephew Vasant Narayan Kedar, alias Brahmanada swami, who shifted the centre of the *sampradaya* from its *matha* at Haturli to Kundai in Ponda. Judging from the large area of the *matha* at Kundai, comprising a huge complex, rich interiors and the large number of visitors that includes politicians, it's clear that the Padmanabha *sampradaya* has attracted a particularly large following and a widespread recognition in Goa.

We have explored the social and historical context of the rise and spread of the Padmanabha *sampradaya* in Goa. However, it is necessary to re-emphasise that although Padmanabha was a Brahmin, his successors were non-Brahmins who founded an independent *matha* around the aspirations of the Bahunjan Samaj. The Padmanabha *sampradaya* was successful because it made the *matha* open and accessible to the lower castes and also elevated them to a status equal to that of the upper castes. While all the gurus came from the Bhandari caste, they were from the region of Sawantwadi. However, the present guru, Brahmeshananda, who succeeded Brahmananda in 2002, hailed from Goa. Subsequently, Brahmeshananda has expanded the social activities of the *matha* which now operates educational institutions, thus transforming the *matha* into a modern enterprise that generates its own resources. It is also important to note that Goa has a longstanding tradition of socially and politically active *mathas*. The political strength of this religious realm will be analysed later.

Even as the Padmanabha *sampradaya* gained wide popularity, there were other *sampradayas* associated with Datta that made their way into Goa. For instance, Sitaram Laxman Naik Rane, alias Babla Maharaj (1869–1940), who was from an elite Maratha caste and came from the village of Reddi, made frequent visits to Goa at the request of his followers between the 1920s and the 1940s. Similar to Sadananda swami, Babla also had knowledge of ayurvedic medicine and had trained his disciples as ayurvedic practitioners. As such, both these *sampradayas* exhibit similarities, but unlike the Padmanabha *sampradaya*, Babla had failed to introduce the practice of succession, or establish Datta temples, although he was seen as an *avatara* of Datta. Without institutionalisation, Babla's *sampradaya* continued to exist at an individual level. However, in 1984, Umesh Baburao Shirodkar, from Bethora, Goa, professed himself to be a disciple of Babla, with the title of Parwadeshwar Maharaj and established his own *matha* at Parwad in Karnataka.⁴⁸ His initiative set off a broad and very active movement of the lower castes outside Goa.

⁴⁸ *The Times of India*, 23 June 2015, 6.

Subsequently, he established a *matha* at Bethora, yet his followers were prominently from the villages of Maharashtra and Karnataka. More importantly he established 285 *mathas* in his name in several countries and in 2004 the United Nations declared him as the world ambassador for peace.⁴⁹ In 2015, the sudden death of Parwadeshwar Maharaj led to his succession by his brother.

5.3 Of Gods, temples and worship

Temples and worship exert an enormous influence on a community and its identity. Consequently, as analysed in Chapter Four, temples have to regularly deal with questions of power and authority. In fact, the present-day conflicts of temples over their origin and the rights of *mahajans* correspond in many ways to the process outlined during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There are, however, some interesting and noteworthy differences that require attention and are crucial for our understanding of contemporary temple disputes and the underlying structural relationships between ritual and power. More importantly, they not only help us to better understand the relationship between the temple and the community, but also to investigate how temples and gods extend their influence to secular matters.

Power hinges crucially on the position of the *mahajans*, and any new changes are seen as threats to the community and the continuity of its tradition. One of the most important ways geared towards resisting GSB domination is by demanding an equal share over the position of *mahajans* and temple resources. The Liberation of Goa brought forth a demand for protection from caste-based discrimination in temples for the ‘untouchables.’ In the early 1960s, the temple entry movement gained momentum with the advent of the Constitution of India that threw Hindu religious institutions of public character open to all castes. While the demand to open temples was growing, *mahajans* of the prominent temples administered by the GSBs resisted such dramatic innovation.⁵⁰ Overall, they argued that social change can’t be achieved through the force of law, and freedom must be given to the *mahajans* to exercise their prudence.⁵¹ Linked with this was the argument that the temples in other parts of India had been public, but Goa’s

⁴⁹ *Lokmat*, 23 June 2015, 1, 8, *The Navhind Times*, 23 June 2015, 2.

⁵⁰ *Gomantak*, 2 July 1963, 2–3.

⁵¹ *Gomantak*, 18 June 1963, 2; *Gomantak*, 4 July 1963, 2.

temples were private and were maintained and managed by the efforts of the *mahajans*.⁵² Questions were also raised about the significance of their entry into temples, especially when the ‘untouchables’ had not progressed in their mode of life. The temple entry movement received wide publicity and references to the anti-untouchability measures undertaken by the government of India were cited in its support. In 1963, when Nehru visited Goa, ‘untouchables’ sought his help in securing their entry into the temples.⁵³ As a result, the temples were opened for the untouchables, but discrimination continued.

Another perennial problem that confronted the Bahujan lay in defining the exact status of *mahajans*. As a result, since the early 1960s, the demand was to either abolish temple law or introduce amendments leading to the inclusion of other communities as *mahajans*, especially for those who considered the deity as their *kuladevata*.⁵⁴ Thus, the longstanding tensions with the GSBs were the crux of the problem and, in the 1980s, led to a movement demanding the democratisation of the right to be a *mahajan*. It is important to note that this movement was launched against the background of GSB ‘injustice’, where Nakul Gurav, a traditional priest at Mahalasa temple in Mardol, was transformed into a temple servant through the colonial law and was removed from his services.⁵⁵ Nakul Gurav was an adopted son, who, from his childhood, had performed the traditional duties of offering *tirth-prasad* to the devotees visiting the temple. The key element of this service was Gurav’s right over the plated offerings made to the goddess by its devotees. The starting point of the conflict was around the 1960s, when a declaration was given by his mother, Padmavati Gurav, a widow to the *mahajan* of the temple, offering to surrender her family’s right to perform the traditional duties at the temple after her death.⁵⁶ After her death in 1975, the *mahajans* called a meeting to implement the declaration and terminated Gurav’s right to perform services and collect offerings.⁵⁷ On the other hand, supporters of Gurav doubted the validity of the document and claimed that Gurav’s mother was illiterate, and what’s

⁵² *Gomantak*, 2 July 1963, 2–3.

⁵³ *Navhind Times*, 25 May 1963, 1–2.

⁵⁴ *Gomantak*, 4 October 1962, 2–3.

⁵⁵ N. Shivdas, *Devalaye Ukti Karat Manje Kite?* (Margao: Premanand Lotlikar, 2002), 31.

⁵⁶ *The Indian Express*, 18 December 1980, 13.

⁵⁷ *Official Gazette*, Government of Goa, Daman and Diu, series III, no. 33, Panaji, 13 November, 1975, 214.

more, she was made to put her thumb impression on an agreement written in Portuguese. However, the intervention by the then chief minister, Shashikala Kakodkar, forced the *mahajans* to continue with Gurav's services.⁵⁸

In 1980, the *mahajans* met once again and decided that the distribution of *tirtha-prasad* shall be done through self-service—without the services of any person and without making any payment.⁵⁹ Further, *tirtha-prasad* was to be laid out by a Brahmin priest at a place chosen by the temple committee. As a consequence, Gurav objected and petitioned the courts. On the other hand, he received popular support against 'mahajanshahi's' high-handed behaviour. It was against this background that the movement demanding an equal share over the position of *mahajans* and temple resources was launched. This forced Pratapsingh Rane, the chief minister of Goa, to intervene. Accordingly, the Rane government, which viewed *mahajanshahi* suspiciously as the cause of temple problems, appointed a committee to recommend ways and means to bring the administration of temples in line with the endowment trusts elsewhere in the country.⁶⁰ However, this seemed more to be a political act, and the work of this committee remained unknown.⁶¹

While the movement confronted the issue of basic equality over the position of *mahajans*, it is important to note that it received a mixed response and largely failed in pushing for equality, especially in the *kuladevata* temples, for three reasons. Firstly, the *kuladevata* temples were not only of the GSBs, but of the other communities as well. Indeed, the developments during the nineteenth centuries had led to the establishment of three types of temples that reflected a hierarchy. On the one side were the exclusive caste temples, and on the other side were exclusive or mixed lineage temples that belonged to one or more lineages from one or more castes. Besides, there were many prominent temples where the GSB lineages had firmly established themselves as *mahajans* with a claim of *kuladevata*, although this privilege was contested by the other castes. Such a profusion of differences meant that the movement was largely restricted only to those

⁵⁸ *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 21 March 1982, 61–62.

⁵⁹ *The Navhind Times*, 14 December 1980, 2.

⁶⁰ *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 21 March 1982, 61–62.

⁶¹ Shivdas, *Devalaye Ukti Karat Manje Kite?*, 34–5.

groups who demanded equality—admission as *mahajan*, and in other cases, equal rights to all *mahajans* irrespective of caste—and presented a more difficult problem for the movement.

Secondly, the cultural and emotional attitudes towards Konkani and Marathi languages had as much bearing as the conflict over rituals. Such attitudes divided the movement, for the Konkani and the Marathi language groups looked to different historical traditions that set them in opposition. Those who led the movement supported Konkani; however, the promoters of Konkani were largely GSBs who were engaged in the process of creating myths of antiquity of language and attaching value to it as a symbol of their caste identity. These perceptions on the making of the language and the mother tongue served to weaken what the Bahujan perceived to have in common and thwarted the prospects of the movement. Another feature of this movement was that the agitators attempted to influence the government through meetings and petitions with hundreds of signatures. However, the government failed to alleviate the tensions and dissatisfactions.

On the other hand, the judgement of the civil court in 1987 dismissed Gurav's petition, and subsequent appeals against this judgment were also dismissed by the appellate court in 1989, and finally by the Supreme Court in 1990. After this, there were no serious efforts made by the government to amend the *mazania*, the temple law. In light of this, a bill introduced in the Goa legislative assembly by the legislator Prakash Velip in 1995 was a rare and notable exception. It is worth noting that Velip was proposing an amendment to the *mazania* which states that any Hindu above eighteen years of age, residing within the jurisdiction area of the temple shall be admitted as a *mahajan*, irrespective of race, caste and sect of the family group on the payment of rupees two hundred as the membership fee and an agreement to pay the annual subscription.⁶² His argument was that the definitions offered by the earlier colonial laws should not be taken as an indication of pre-colonial reality and they were wrong. Obviously, these efforts were not supported.

⁶² Goa Legislative Diploma No. 645 dated 30-3-1995 (Amendment) Bill, 1995, accessed on 3 January 2022, https://www.goavidhansabha.gov.in/uploads/bills/523_field_BNAI_18_1995_-The-Goa-Legislative-Diploma-No.-645-dated-30-3-1995--Amendment--Bill-1995.pdf.

Despite these difficulties and conflicts the movement did succeed to some extent, primarily when the efforts were directed towards *gramdevatas*. From a more practical and historical vantage point, let us return to the Shantadurga temple of Cumbarjua whose conflict we have closely followed since 1846 to 1911, in Chapter Four. In 1911, when the *compromisso* of the temple was approved, it had created two categories of *mahajans* comprising of the villagers, but only the GSBs had the exclusive right over the administration and temple resources.⁶³ Despite the opposition by the non-Brahmins, the colonial state supported the GSBs.⁶⁴ In 1983, an extraordinary meeting of the *mahajans* of the temple was convened in order to discuss an appeal by the non-Brahmins which demanded the abolition of inequality of rights over the position of *mahajans* in the temple.⁶⁵ Such demands were not made for the first time, but there were different circumstances at work which forced the *mahajans* to consider the petition. Firstly, many prominent GSB families had shifted to urban areas. This meant that the non-GSBs were more closely linked with the everyday life of the temple, except for its administration. Secondly, demands for equal rights in the temple administration were growing louder and could have provoked violence. Though these developments may seem separate, they were closely intertwined. Finally, the GSBs were forced to call the meeting and make an amendment to the *compromisso* that abolished the existing hierarchy over the position of *mahajans*. Simultaneously, there was also a request made by the other residents whose families had been residing in the village at least from the mid-twentieth century and yet had not been registered as *mahajans*. However, this request to admit new *mahajans* was turned down.

It is perhaps important to note that the stranglehold of the *mahajans* over the temples has contributed towards new assertions—appropriation and invention of tradition—that has inaugurated a new phase in the construction of village temples. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, the emergence of a number of temples within the broader non-Brahmin movement represented both a challenge to the older caste authority and creation of new sources of power, for the control of which political leaders compete. These temples are of two kinds. The first is an entirely new temple constructed for prominent Hindu gods, or popular saints like Sai Baba, who is identified as an incarnation of Datta. The second type is for folk deities that are housed

⁶³ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 89, 10 November 1911, 1165–67.

⁶⁴ *Boletim Oficial do Governo Geral da Estado da Índia*, no. 57, 18 July 1913, 563–64.

⁶⁵ *Official Gazette*, Government of Goa, Daman and Diu, series III, no. 3, 18 April 1985, 35–9.

in make-shift arrangements and how they are known, experienced and made present in villages. Most villages in Goa display a *devuli*, a small temple, or a *gumpti*, a grotto shaped abode of folk gods—sacred and spiritual beings who are embedded in and circumscribed by their respective localities.⁶⁶

Long-standing religious concepts associated with spaces give rise to folk deities of various types: *shimeveilo*, one who guards the village boundaries; *jagayaveilo*, of particular locations, or a *rakhandar* who protects the village. These folk deities draw on history, geography and memory to create for a village its sacred history and identity, which is distinct and unique. Wherever they were, these folk deities possessed a common ritual tradition, symbolised by their non-Brahmin priests, blood sacrifices of a cock and offerings such as alcohol and *vido*, a roll of betel leaves. For long, these folk deities have been transformed into main Hindu gods, such as Shiva. It is perhaps important to note that, as we have analysed in Chapter Four, these processes are very clear, at least from the eighteenth century onwards, and more particularly are associated with the temples controlled by the GSBs. However, during the early half of the twentieth century this process was extended to the other village deities as well and subsequently, with Liberation, has gained momentum.

What does this suggest? Most importantly, these transformations are related to the ways in which the non-Brahmin communities are asserting themselves, while the worship of these deities remains central in many ways to the identity of non-Brahmins. In the beginning, new myths and stories are produced whereby the folk deities are adopted with modifications into the Brahminical pantheon. For instance, they are transformed into a higher god, *Ishwar*, a form of God Shiva, that now determines their more general characteristic. Subsequently, they are moulded into a human form that leads to the appointment of Brahmin priests, replacing the earlier practices of rituals with Brahminical practices. Obviously, the ‘upward mobility’ of the gods meant that rituals for these deities should be carried out by a Brahmin priest with a knowledge of sacred texts. These efforts were initially supported, primarily through donations and subscriptions from the villagers. At the same time, the ostentatious display of worship and temple-building attracts

⁶⁶ Alexander Henn, “The Becoming of Goa Space and Culture in the Emergence of a Multicultural Lifeworld,” *Lusotopie* (2000): 334; Alexander Henn, “Shrines of Goa: Iconographic Formation and Popular Appeal,” *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 18 (2018): 1–17.

new political players. In other words, a shrine eventually is raised up to become a real temple. Often, this leads to the invention of tradition that constructs a new hierarchy among gods by classifying these tutelary deities as the manifestation of higher gods. This process of conferring a new status on the deity—a transformation from a tutelary god into the *gramdevata*—reflects the aspirations of the non-Brahmins and creates new centres of power.

There is a need to recognise that elevating the status of the deities, appropriating of Brahminical rituals, temple-building and the invocation of divine power is an expression of grievances expressed in religious language. Together, they form the ideological background to the competing attempts made by the lower castes to produce new sources of power and opportunity. Today, one can easily see the extremely complicated claims for privileges and rights, manipulated by one or another party in an effort to gain status that was determined by the receipt of honours, which the competing groups sought to defend. It is here that, at times, the government is forced to close down a temple, or suspend the celebrations of festivals until the conflict is resolved. Equally important are the new processes, such as Liberation, that offered and enhanced opportunities for diverse economic and social capabilities among non-Brahmins. In the analysis that follows later, therefore, we will concentrate on the aspects of religious life outlined above and focus largely on their impact on the political sphere.

5.4 Bahujan and politics

One of the most remarkable features of the politics of Goa in the 1960s, and the following decade of the 1970s, has been the success of the newly formed Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP) which launched a new phase in the political mobilisation of the Bahujan in India.⁶⁷ The party was led by Dayanand Bandodkar, a lower caste capitalist from the Gomantak Maratha caste, who was to go on to work closely with the other non-Brahmin castes which were also subject to social oppression and economic exploitation. What is distinctively new about Bandodkar and the MGP is that the party achieved electoral success and formed the first four governments in 1963, 1967, 1972 and 1977. In order to understand this success, we have to examine the relationship between the non-Brahmin ideology and the emergence of a new Bahujan identity. The connection

⁶⁷ Parobo, *India's First Democratic Revolution*.

between them requires very careful elucidation, both in terms of the communities that aspired to mobilise a Bahujan identity and the interaction of ideas about Hindu society and Portuguese rule.

While the ideology of the Bahujan was born out of the experience of oppression, it seems to be a misplaced idea that there is a natural alliance between lower caste groups. At the beginning of the twentieth century, one does notice the emergence of the Bahujan movement. This was evident with the setting up of two important institutions in Panjim: Mahalaxmi Prasad Hindu Vachan Mandir in 1907, and Shree Pandurang Prasad Vidhyabhavan in 1910. While these institutions were established by the Nabhik and Bhandari castes, they were largely supported by other communities. For instance, the composition of the early committees of these institutions shows that their membership was not restricted to a particular caste and efforts were made to forge alliances across caste.⁶⁸ In the early stage, the ideology of the Bahujan had concentrated on education, rather than a direct intellectual attack on the dominance of the GSBs. As the rhetoric of the Bahujan and their social critique was growing, focusing far less on the colonial state than on caste, the periodical press edited by the GSBs, such as *Prabhat* and *Bharat*, were critical about the ideology. In 1913, *Bharat* carried an article titled ‘Brahmanavar Gahajab’ (Outrage against the Brahmins) that acknowledged the prominence of the Brahmins, yet argued that Brahmins have suffered more during the colonial rule.⁶⁹ Significantly, attempts were also made to declare the end of caste, with priests performing rituals for the lower-castes, and Brahmins such as Jivabadada Kerkar taking to arms.⁷⁰ Further, an article in *Prabhat* highlighted the tensions that were emerging and warned that an advantage in numbers does not mean strength by itself, claiming that the Brahmins have always dominated through their superior intelligence, and truth being on their side.⁷¹

The 1920s saw the great expansion in the ideology of the Bahujan with the establishment of four important Marathi periodicals—*Janata*, *Ghadgadat*, *Napitodaya* and *Pragati*—by the non-

⁶⁸ *Shree Pandurang Prasad Vidhyabhavan: Report, 1910–1912* (Nova Goa: Minerva Press, 1913), 25; *Shree Mahalaxmi Prasad Hindu Vachan Mandiracha Choutha Report: April 1913–March 1921* (Nova Goa: Minerva Press, 1921), 13.

⁶⁹ *Bharat*, 22 October 1913, 2.

⁷⁰ *Bharat*, 10 November 1915, 3.

⁷¹ *Prabhat*, 26 October 1911, 4.

Brahmins.⁷² With the exception of *Pragati*, it looks like these periodicals didn't last for long. In 1918, *Maratha Gayak Mitra* was published by the members from the Gomantak Maratha Samaj, highlighting the issues concerning the community. In 1919, the periodical was closed, but it had led to a new periodical, *Pragati*, edited by Motiram B. Zambaulekar and Sakharam Ramnathkar.⁷³ It is important to note that *Pragati* had launched itself by declaring to fight for the larger interests of the Bahujan Samaj and not only for the Gomantak Maratha Samaj per se.⁷⁴ The periodical ran for two years, from 1920–21, and participated in fierce public debates on GSB dominance in all walks of life. What was new about it was that, first of all, the perspective of the Bahujan as the oppressed and exploited was put firmly at centre stage. Moreover, *Pragati* was instrumental in gradually expanding the term Bahujan to all the subordinate groups that were defined as low or inferior in caste terms, borrowing the terminology from the non-Brahmin campaign of late–nineteenth–century Maharashtra, in order to forge a political unity between the lower castes.⁷⁵

Pragati saw the Bahujan as a homogeneous community and set itself to expose and refute, in full public debate conducted in the press, the attempts made by the GSB periodical press to condemn the emerging Bahujan movement. On the one hand, it launched a sustained radical critique of the GSBs, highlighting their control over the temples and their lands; the Pragatic Sangh; the elections to the legislative council; and over public employment.⁷⁶ On the other hand, through wide caste alliances, it was concerned with the setting up of a political party comprising of 'Saraswatater' (non-GSBs), so that they could create some presence in government institutions.⁷⁷ Furthermore, they also took to some of the most important symbols—the seventeenth century Maratha king Shivaji, who had become popular among the lower castes. The attempt to identify and appropriate the figure of Shivaji had become one of the central ideological enterprises among the marginal communities in the late nineteenth century and had gathered strength in the twentieth century. In 1921, when a Shivaji statue was built in Pune, and whose

⁷² *Pragati*, 30 October 1921, 1; *Pragati*, 7 November 1921, 4.

⁷³ *Pragatik Maratha Samaj: Pahila Varshik Ahaval* (Panaji: Shri Shivaji Mudranalaya, 1933), 2.

⁷⁴ *Pragati*, 13 September 1920, 2.

⁷⁵ *Pragati*, 2 May 1921, 2.

⁷⁶ *Pragati*, 22 August 1921, 4; *Pragati*, 5 September 1921, 4.

⁷⁷ *Pragati*, 30 October 1921, 3; *Pragati*, 14 November 1921, 2–3.

foundation stone was laid by the Prince of Wales, the non-Brahmins from Goa actively collaborated in the fundraising.⁷⁸ More importantly, a memorial committee headed by Narayan Shet Bandodkar was formed and tasked with raising funds.⁷⁹ Although the Bahujan ideology had become important in the 1920s, and the more so in the 1930s, its success was limited to the establishment of the Gomantak Saraswatater Samaj in 1929 and here too, it was restricted to the conflict over the position of *mahajans* at the Mahalaxmi temple in Panjim.⁸⁰ In the course of the 1940s, the Bahujan ideology was not so successful, and the reception of the ideology needs to be understood in relation to the contextual factors.

The vision of a Bahujan community was momentary and was constrained by many factors. This might have had something to do with the limited resources that the Bahujan had and the hierarchical nature of colonial education that made it, generally, quite a limited affair. After all, knowledge of the Portuguese language was a means towards acquiring voting rights and it was unsurprising that, among the Hindus, this came from the GSBs who had a tradition of literacy and occupational mobility. This important move contributed substantially to widening the power and influence of the GSBs and showed a self-awareness that they were intrinsically different from other communities. Of course, in many ways, the lower castes had realised the significance of the Portuguese language. However, the demands for Portuguese education came largely from the Gomantak Maratha community. In 1921, Rajaram Rangaji Paiginkar appealed to the lower castes to make a shift towards Portuguese, the language of administration and communication with the state.⁸¹ The critical factor here has been the recognition of advantages to act on the language of state.⁸² Particularly notable here is Paiginkar's statistics on 205 students from his community as the prime example, among whom only two were receiving an education in Portuguese—a development seen as the 'rise' of his community.

The relationship between voting rights and language was also recognised by other communities. For instance, in 1925, *Bhandari Vijay* established the links between the lack of voting rights and

⁷⁸ *Pragati*, 7 November 1921, 4.

⁷⁹ *Bharat*, 3 November 1921, 3.

⁸⁰ *Hindu*, 22 October 1929, 7.

⁸¹ *Pragati*, 25 April 1921, 3.

⁸² *Ibid.*

the consequent hardships of the Bhandari community.⁸³ The establishment, in 1925, of the Maratha–Portuguese Shikshan Prasarak Samaj by the Gomantak Maratha Samaj marked an important change in strategy to spread education in Portuguese language.⁸⁴ Yet, tensions of several kinds also surfaced. The emergence of nationalist politics and the extension of the idea of Indianness converged with very different political views that led to portraying the Portuguese as an unmitigated evil and gave little or no space for compromise positions.⁸⁵ Above all, the Bahujan were now supposed to protect the interests of Hindus and had good reason to distance themselves from the language of administration. Further, at this time, education in Marathi and the accompanying textbooks were the products of the active and successful influence of the GSBs. There was a palpable contradiction between the acknowledged social importance of languages, with the GSB challenging the prominence of Portuguese and making a promise that Marathi was well on its way to succeeding it as the language of administration and deciding the right to vote. As a result, these efforts towards a Portuguese education failed to yield any systematic and comprehensive results for the Bahujan.

Furthermore, a lower caste periodical such as *Pragati* was in competition with the already established periodicals by the GSB that were at the forefront of public sphere activities. Unlike *Pragati*, which decided to publish only in Marathi in a strategy to reach out to the masses, the GSB periodicals were not only bilingual, published in Portuguese and Marathi, but also made a claim to speak for Hindus at large, rather than specific castes or communities and had been successful in influencing the administration. Moreover, they were a powerful means to establish the status and cultural values of the GSBs. It was on this fragmented and contested terrain that *Pragati* took shape as a periodical and attempted to assert its authority. However, its very limited circulation mirrored the limited appeal of its activities. In any case, the Bahujan ideology failed

⁸³ *Bhandari Vijay*, February–March 1925, 43–4.

⁸⁴ *Maratha–Portuguese Shikshan Prasarak Samaj: Pahila Varshik Report* (Mumbai: Gogte Printing Company, 1926), 5.

⁸⁵ Sandra Ataíde Lobo, “The Return to Indianness: Goan Nationalism in the 1920s,” in *Goa 2011: Reviewing and Recovering Fifty Years*, eds. Savio Abreu and Rudolf C. Heredia (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2014), 121–43. Also see, Parag D. Parobo, “Tristão Bragança Cunha, and Nationalism in Colonial Goa: Mediating Difference and Essentialising Nationhood”, *Economic and Political Weekly* 50, no. 31 (2015): 61–8.

to produce leaders who could act beyond their castes.⁸⁶ Although many leaders and activists emerged, such as Rajaram Rangaji Paiginkar, Bablo Masno Naik Volvaikar and Nanu Tarkar Pednekar, barring a few occasions, such as the Mahalaxmi temple issue, their influence was restricted to their castes. After all, these leaders had led their respective castes to assert a Kshatriya caste identity. At the local level, the effectiveness of the campaign for Marathahood had succeeded in impressing their own meanings upon the term Maratha. However, the resulting competition to see themselves as 'true' Maratha and part of the higher status thereafter was a great weakness.⁸⁷ In other words, the intimations of equality offered by the Bahujan ideology were thwarted by the claims for Maratha identity, and while caste and exploitation could have forged unity, these very factors created fissures and segmentation.

On the other hand, debates about caste and dominance were also profoundly affected by the symbolic identification of the Hindu religion with Indianness. The GSBs that were active in public life, whether through print, education, activism, or as professionals, unleashed a quest for Hindu identity and used it to moderate the growing Bahujan movement. Moreover, they employed the popular symbol of the Maratha king Shivaji, with whom the lower castes had begun identifying since the late nineteenth-century, in order to construct a positive identity and to produce a religious identity. It is perhaps important to note that the GSBs had an ambivalent relationship with Shivaji. They had not only been employed in the Maratha administration but had also backed the Portuguese state throughout the Maratha attacks.⁸⁸

In addition, there were prominent GSBs who had made serious observations on the caste identity of Shivaji. For instance, with regards to the coronation of Shivaji and his Kshatriya status, K. T. Telang states that, 'Taking the whole evidence together, it looks like a case of a more or less deliberate manipulation of facts and religious rules, in aid of a foregone conclusion adopted for

⁸⁶ *Pragati*, 6 December 1920, 1.

⁸⁷ This was also the case with Maharashtra. For more details, see Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict, and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth-Century Western India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁸⁸ Kenneth Maxwell, *Pombal: Paradox of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 128–29.

a purely political purpose'.⁸⁹ In 1921, the GSBs were even opposed to Goans contributing towards a Shivaji statue in Pune.⁹⁰ As a result, the GSBs were accused of caste politics and they responded by projecting Shivaji as the cultural foundation for national life in their Marathi schools and literary associations. Moreover, through the celebration of Shivaji's birth anniversary, public lectures on Maratha history and dramas centred on it, a new historical view gained currency. In fact, they adopted Shivaji as a symbol of resistance to foreign domination and portrayed him as a Hindu ruler who gave importance to religious unity above caste.

At the same time, the GSBs worked to create a Hindu identity through practices and beliefs around symbols such as the *Bhagavad Gita* and public performances of rituals conducted through the Satyanarayan pooja.⁹¹ It is perhaps important to note that the pooja was traditionally associated with rulers and merchants and required elaborate rituals to be performed under the supervision of a Brahmin priest. However, the GSBs encouraged its public celebration to convey a sense of a natural cohesion of the Hindu society. Furthermore, in order to consolidate their hold over Hindu identity, the GSBs drew on existing symbols of the cow and the Marathi language and strongly opposed any government interference with religion. In the 1920s, when the cow protection campaign was launched in Goa, it was looked upon favourably by the lower castes.⁹² Similarly, while the GSBs emerged as a champion of the Marathi language and the guardians of Hindu interests, it was hardly on an equal footing or a readiness to listen to the demands of lower castes. The Marathi language underwent processes of expansion and institutionalisation, and this will be discussed in the last section. How did the Bahujan react to these developments? And in what ways did Liberation and mass politicisation bring these communities together, signalling a greater awareness of dominance?

It was against this background that the Bahujan ideology expanded noticeably, acquiring prominence after the Liberation of Goa. In fact, the early phase of the Bahujan movement had

⁸⁹ K. T. Telang, "Gleanings from Maratha Chronicles," published as appendix in M. G. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power* (Bombay: Punalekar and Company, 1900), 288.

⁹⁰ *Bharat*, 10 November 1921, 3; *Bharat*, 17 November 1921, 2–3; *Bharat*, 24 November 1921, 3; *Bharat*, 8 December 1921, 3–4.

⁹¹ *Hindu*, 21 October 1930, 5; *Bharat*, 29 December 1932, 2; *Bharat*, 6 April 1939, 2.

⁹² *Prachi Prabha*, 8 September 1923, 3; *Swayamsevak (O Voluntário)*, October 1923, 70.

led to the emergence of new leaders, and by the early 1960s a political leadership had emerged that was ready to take on the dominance of the GSBs. Take, for instance, the case of Bandodkar, whose success was not only a product of a new mobility of his caste but also lay in gathering support of the lower castes in rural areas, rather than in the cities. Bandodkar's politics mobilised the Bahujan from early on and attempted to create a community of equals, thus elevating the Bahujan ideology to another level. Bandodkar was born into a *Kalavant* community in 1911. What is striking about Bandodkar's family is that they ranked second among the sub-groupings of the *Kalavant* community.⁹³ It is important to note that by the 1930s the community had asserted a self-identity of being Maratha and was a part of the ambitious movement that attacked the peculiar nature of the dominance that the GSBs had established.

There is some evidence enabling us to reconstruct the early life of Bandodkar and his involvement in mass movements within the overall upper-caste dominance. Interestingly, one of the first references to Bandodkar shows that he was a member of the Gomantakiya Yuvak Sangh and a founding member of Panaji Yuvak Sangh in 1929.⁹⁴ It was surprising that the initiative for the first social organisation with a reformist agenda for the youth in the capital city came from Bandodkar. In 1930, he was involved as a volunteer in the activities of the fifteenth Maharashtra Sahitya Sammelan.⁹⁵ Although this event was critiqued as a Saraswat sammelan, Bandodkar attended all three days of the event, travelling from Panjim to Margao. In 1933, Bandodkar joined the GSBs from Panjim to organise the public Ganapati festival—a celebration that became a lavish public affair, lasting for nine days.⁹⁶ However, these details only reflect Bandodkar's participation in mass movements and do not establish how he appeared at the local level, or how he was perceived by the elite.

By the 1950s, Bandodkar made investments in mining and was emerging as a popular philanthropist. A more important development was Bandodkar's introduction to the Gomantak Maratha Samaj movement. It is important to note that Rajaram Rangaji Paiginkar, who had

⁹³ *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Kanara*. vol. XV, Part I, 312.

⁹⁴ *Hindu*, 21 January 1930, 7.

⁹⁵ *Pandravaya Maharashtra Sahitya Sammelan, 1930–Margao: Report* (Margao: Gomantak Sahityasevak Mandal, 1932), 82.

⁹⁶ *Bharat*, 14 September 1933, 4.

played a leading role in caste reform, was also a mine owner and brought Bandodkar into the fold of the caste reform movement, both in the city of Bombay as well as in Goa.⁹⁷ In the late 1950s, the Pragatik Maratha Samaj was reorganised with Bandodkar's efforts to such an extent that he was acknowledged as its founder.⁹⁸ He provided financial assistance for the Gomantak Maratha Samaj, both in Bombay and Goa, to construct its own buildings in Mumbai and Panjim.⁹⁹ Further, he patronised educational institutions for the children of the poor, funded scholarships and helped in other ways, thus gaining a reputation as a philanthropist—a power that would build his charisma and cement lower caste communities. The inability of different groups to unite had been an important factor that had affected the development of a Bahujan movement but Bandodkar's involvement with mass politics transformed it in different ways.

Bandodkar's charismatic leadership provided a new direction to the Bahujan through his strategy of patronage. He did this primarily through extending his activities beyond his caste. For instance, the newly established hostel and library of the Gomantak Maratha Samaj were opened to students of all castes. Bandodkar also appealed to various castes that had been making efforts to promote education through instituting scholarships to reach out to other castes.¹⁰⁰ In particular, the first scholarship instituted by Bandodkar at the Gomantak Maratha Samaj was awarded to a student of the Bhandari caste.¹⁰¹ The growing public profile of Bandodkar was indicative of fundamental changes in the structure of Goan society, in particular the emergence of a new social elite who would cut across networks of caste affiliations.

A key point about this project was that it sought to fashion a Bahujan ideology through aspects of local social structures and a Maratha ideology. This, in itself, was not a new kind of idea, but a sign of the times that seemed to identify the Bahujan as a distinct community, in and of themselves, and at least nominally linked together the various castes across Goa that were, in one way or another, claiming a Maratha caste identity. These aspirations had, since the nineteenth

⁹⁷ Rajaram Rangaji Painginkar, *Mee Kon?* (Margao: Gomant Chhaphkhana, 1969), 118.

⁹⁸ *Pragatik Maratha Samaj: Report (14 September 1959–31 December 1960)* (Panaji: Tipografia Prafulla, 1961), 45.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰⁰ *Gomantak*, 22 July 1963.

¹⁰¹ Vaman Radhakrishana, *Purusharth* (Panaji: Rajhauns, 1998), 72.

century, a tradition of tension with the GSBs. Bandodkar was one of the first to turn to the symbol of Shivaji and helped to give a new significance to the tradition in addition to its older reference to Hindu identity. In 1962, the statues of Portuguese icons were called into question and a movement was launched to replace them with the statues of Gandhi and Shivaji. A committee was formed with Bandodkar as the treasurer.¹⁰² Besides, there was also a demand to construct statues of Shivaji throughout Goa.¹⁰³

The Maratha ruler Shivaji was a traditional symbol around which various non-Brahmin communities could unite, and forced into consciousness the wider issues of how their long-term relationship was to be perceived. What is also striking about this aspect is its emphasis on the glorious exploits of Shivaji in the foundation of an independent Maratha state. Moreover, the Shivaji tradition was seen as a means of demonstrating the unity of the castes claiming Marathahood, rather than the idea of the Maratha king as a Hindu ruler. In the process, the Bahujan ideology questioned the very grounds on which a Hindu identity seemed to be constituted, as well as the legitimacy of the GSB claims for obedience from the lower castes. In other words, the symbol of Shivaji was an important means for the consolidation of lower castes who could assure themselves of an essential similarity of interests of various castes and this was to feed directly into the Bahujan ideology. With this argument, Bandodkar constantly invoked Shivaji in his talks and meetings, and carried his pictures during the 1963 election campaign of the MGP, appealing explicitly to social aspirations.¹⁰⁴ It was precisely the novelty of repositioning this very powerful symbol that gave Bahujan identity its great potential for the purpose of mass mobilisation. Furthermore, in 1962, the eleventh Gomantak Marathi Sahitya Sammelan was organised at Panaji and Bandodkar was not only its working president but also the highest donor.¹⁰⁵

Such attempts to articulate a collective self-identity of the people through a Maratha identity were part of the ambitious Bahujan ideology to assert its rights. It became an identity that was

¹⁰² *Gomantak*, 18 July 1962, 2.

¹⁰³ *Gomantak*, 14 May 1962, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Parobo, *India's First Democratic Revolution*, 123.

¹⁰⁵ *Akravya Gomantak Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, Panaji, 1962-Report* (Panaji: Gomantak Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, 1963), 19.

applied in practice to all castes in Goa, to the specific exclusion of Brahmins. The growth of the Bahujan movement in Goa reflected, at one level, the sense of discontent with the GSBs. At a more important level, it was an attempt to resolve, locally, the issue of caste inequality and to construct a Bahujan community. Another key difference was Bandodkar's mass politicisation and reshaping of Bahujan ideology into a doctrine of equality and rights. The political movement led by Bandodkar's MGP brought about an even sharper awareness of the long-standing question of GSB dominance. What was different and significant in political activity was the demand for the right to land that surfaced constantly after Liberation and became a major source of contention within political discourse. In a region where land was largely held by upper castes, *comunidades* and religious institutions, the demand for land ownership rights seemed radical.

This immediately prompts the question: what connection did the lives of *mundkars* (tenants) have with Goa's traditional society and culture. Until 1963, land relations in Goa were structured on a *bhatkar-mundkar* (landlord-tenant) relationship, where the major part of the land was operated by landless tenants having no statutory rights to land. While there existed the *Lei de Mundcarato* of 1901, subsequently amended in 1959, that protected the *mundkar* from an arbitrary eviction, its procedures and contents were pro-*bhatkar* and ironically placed the *mundkar* at the mercy of the *bhatkar*.¹⁰⁶ For instance, under the clause of *justa causa*, a *bhatkar* could evict a *mundkar* for any dishonourable behaviour or activities. Similarly, the *mundkar's* entire family worked at the *bhatkar's* house.¹⁰⁷ The exploitative land relations and the 'despotism of the *bhatkars*,' as Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai notes, forced the *mundkars* to migrate outside Goa for economic opportunities.¹⁰⁸ However, the *bhatkars* tried to discourage emigration through various means.¹⁰⁹ In particular, they forced the colonial state to impose a tax on

¹⁰⁶ *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, No. 76, 24 September 1901, 814; *Boletim Oficial do Estado da Índia*, no. 48, 26 November 1959, 662–63.

¹⁰⁷ Kashinath Damodar Naik, "Amchi Arthik Paristhithi," in *Gelaya Pavshatkatil Gomantak*, ed. Keshav Anant Naik (Margao: Gomantak Chapkhana, 1937), 87; *Report of the Committee of the Problems of Mundkars in the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu* (Panaji: Government Printing Press, 1966).

¹⁰⁸ Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai, *Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai (Bhai Desai): Smarak Granth* (Mumbai: Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai Smarak, Samiti, 1965), 222.

¹⁰⁹ José Inacio de Loyola, "Correspondencia Epistolar," *Portugal e Colonias*, 2 April 1938.

emigration.¹¹⁰ Further, when the *bhatkars* demanded adequate protection for their domestic rice through levies and duties, the Portuguese government went on to impose a super tax on imported rice.¹¹¹

It is striking that most explicit critiques of the *bhatkar–mundkar* (landlord–tenant) relationship came from the Goan communities in Bombay, more prominently from the Catholics and the Gomantak Maratha Samaj. Apart from the critique of *bhatkars* in the Romi Konkani press, there were dramas such as *Batcara* and *Kunnbi Jaki* and novels such as *Jacob e Dulce* and *O Signo da Ira* that capture life in Goa and cover this exploitative relationship.¹¹² On the other hand, although the Marathi periodical press discussed matters relating to social life in Goa, the privileges of *bhatkars* and the exploitation of *mundkars* were rarely addressed. No doubt this was related to the preponderance of upper–caste *bhatkars* in the Marathi press. Furthermore, the Marathi periodicals, particularly *Bharat*, were extremely critical of the efforts of Goan periodical presses in Bombay, both because of the uncomfortable demands regarding the exploitation of *mundkars* and because it viewed them as an attempt to build a conflict among the GSBs and the tenants.¹¹³

At the same time, disputes intensified and with Liberation the debates over secure land tenures were slowly gaining strength. However, the *bhatkars* made efforts to moderate the demand for land rights and made striking critiques of *mundkars*, even more than earlier. For instance, Jaywantrao Sardesai’s regular column ‘Bahujan hitaya bahujan sukhaya’ (welfare of the majority leads to happiness) in the *Gomantak* in the early 1960s, is one of the early articulations of this thinking. Although the prominent theme throughout Sardesai’s columns is his concern with the improvement of the Bahujan, ironically, he would mount his own critique of the Bahujan that

¹¹⁰ *Vidiaprassar*, 8 January 1921, 3.

¹¹¹ *The Goa Mail*, 3 October 1931, 4; T. B. Cunha, *Goa’s Freedom Struggle* (Bombay: T. B. Cunha Memorial Committee, 1961), 125.

¹¹² Francisco João da Costa, *Jacob e Dulce-Scenas da vida Indiana* (Margao: Tipografia do Ultramar, 1896); Orlando da Costa, *O signo da ira* (Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 1962); João Agostinho Fernandes, *Batcara*, Part I (Bombay: L. M. Furtado and Son, 1909); João Agostinho Fernandes, *Batcara*, Part II (Bombay: Victoria P. Works, 1916); João Agostinho Fernandes, *Kunnbi Jaki* in *Tiatrancho Jhelo II*, ed. Felício Cardoso (Panjim: Goa Konkani Akademi, 1998), 1–52.

¹¹³ *Bharat*, 1 May 1947, 2; *Bharat*, 8 May 1947, 2.

reflected increasingly common attitudes of the elite towards *mundkars*. Sardesai's critiques of the *mundkars* were shaped by his own experience as a landlord, and they were very similar in tone and content to those of the *bhatkars*. Sardesai began his diatribe by asking, "Are we bound to destroy landlordism?"¹¹⁴ He believed that if landlordism is a bad practice, it would be destroyed under its own contradictions rather than a demand to abolish it. In fact, Sardesai argued that the poor condition of the *mundkars* was not the product of exploitation, but the result of careless behaviour on the part of the *mundkars*. Thus, he targeted various aspects of *mundkars*' life and contended that they had become lazy, no longer willing to work. Yet, when Sardesai discussed Catholic *mundkars*, he boasted about them, and this was ironically seen to 'prove' that the Catholic *mundkars* were better than the Hindu *mundkars*.

It is against this background that the first election to the Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu was held in 1963 and the MGP, a political party formed only a few months before the election, claimed to speak for the Bahujan. Further, unlike other political parties, the MGP fielded candidates largely from the Bahujan samaj. On the other hand, the Indian National Congress in Goa was characterised by the dominance of the GSBs. In the Congress style of politics that Rajani Kothari has termed the 'Congress system', the party in Goa accommodated the dominant and upper castes, perhaps too generously.¹¹⁵ In fact, drawing on the legacy of Nehru and his role in Goa's Liberation, the Congress was confident of winning the election and fielded candidates who were mostly from upper castes and landlords. Similarly, the other regional party, United Goans Party, was also dominated by upper-caste Catholics and landlords and campaigned on the uniqueness of Goa.¹¹⁶ The early years of politics in India were characterised by the dominance of the Congress and the upper castes. However, a great upheaval occurred in Goa, where the massive electoral participation of the Bahujan, who voted for the first time, led, for the first time in India, to the formation of a government that was centred on a Bahujan ideology.¹¹⁷ Thus, political power came to the Bahujan at the very first election in Goa. Importantly, the general lack of success of the GSBs on the Congress ticket at elections and the continuing appeal of

¹¹⁴ Jaywantrao Sardesai, "Bahujan hitaya bahuajn sukhaya," *Gomantak*, 28 August 1962, 2.

¹¹⁵ Rajni Kothari, "The Congress System in India," *Asian Survey* 4, no. 12 (1964): 1163–73.

¹¹⁶ Ram Joshi, "The General Elections in Goa," *Asian Survey* 4, no. 10 (1964): 1093–101.

¹¹⁷ Parobo, *India's First Democratic Revolution*.

Bahujan ideology suggested that this ideology had struck a certain chord amongst the important sections of the Bahujan population.

In the decades since Liberation the MGP emerged as the preferred electoral choice for many of the poorest and most marginalised sections, and there have been good reasons for their support to Bandodkar. As the founder and leader of MGP, Bandodkar made much of his humble origins, drawing particular attention to his caste background and cultivating a charismatic style. Moreover, he emerged as the champion of the Bahujan who demanded land reforms—land to the tiller—and also invoked the tradition of Shivaji and Maratha identity. As such, Bandodkar's actions were specifically seen as oriented towards the Bahujan and this contributed to a radical realignment of social forces, creating an autonomous political identity among the Bahujan for the first time. In other words, Bandodkar emerged as a cementing force for the communities claiming Marathahood, a fundamental change from the past, and they identified themselves with the MGP.¹¹⁸

It is important to note that a close relationship between caste and politics existed even before the first election held after Liberation. Caste had played an important role in Goa's politics since the nineteenth century and, as such, this was not a new phenomenon which had come into play during the early decades of Liberation. However, what made it different was the political mobilisation of the Bahujan. Such consciousness became a major feature of Bandodkar's politics. More importantly, during the 1960s and the 1970s, in the era of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, Bandodkar was able to challenge Congress by building on the Bahujan factor and winning the first three elections on the basis of a Bahujan assertion. What is noteworthy is that immediately after the results of the 1963 election, and even before the formal swearing-in ceremony of Bandodkar as Chief Minister, he promised relief to the *mundkars* through a tenancy legislation.¹¹⁹ In 1964, the Agricultural Tenancy Act was enacted.¹²⁰ Further, during his tenure as Chief Minister, Bandodkar pushed forward programmes and projects of Marathi primary schooling and primary health care centres that were both symbolically and practically relevant

¹¹⁸ G. S. Halappa, *The First General Elections in Goa* (Dharwad: Karnataka University, 1964), 43.

¹¹⁹ *Navhind Times*, 20 December 1963, 1.

¹²⁰ *Boletim Oficial*, Gazette, Government of Goa, series I, no. 52 (Supplement), 24 December 1964, 591.

to the Bahujan. More importantly, through his policies, Bandodkar contributed further to the construction of a wider and more self-confident Bahujan identity across the state.

However, Bandodkar's death led to the fragmentation of the Bahujan movement and the politics over the 1980s and the 1990s witnessed a bipolar contest between the Congress and the MGP, with a significantly reduced vote share for the latter. During the 1980s, the political pendulum began to shift towards the Congress. The reasons for this were complex and were derived from two quite separate sources. One explanation for this shift is that with access to education and land rights, a distinctive caste as well as class identity took over the Bahujan identity. And, with the advance of class politics, the construction of alliances disappeared, abandoning the commitment to a Bahujan identity and politics. As a result, the Congress, by encouraging defections among the Bahujan leaders of the MGP, developed its support bases. While the Bahujan movement was fragmented, caste identities had not entirely receded but evolved in a different way under the influence of Congress politics. Moreover, the Congress cultivated a clientelist *modus operandi* by encouraging the MGP legislators to join, through which it maintained electoral domination. In fact, the Congress managed to retain power, or to stage repeated comebacks in the 1980s and the 1990s, not by opening up to the lower castes but due to its capacity to co-opt MGP legislators. Although these leaders employed Bandodkar's charisma and made claims to carry his policies by joining the Congress, they saw their role narrowly, as representatives of their caste, rather than in more extensive terms of a Bahujan identity. Consequently, a new political representation evolved in terms of caste orientation and sectarian caste identity emerged as the stronghold of this politics, giving rise to very specific political arrangements. A need was felt by the lower caste communities to add caste to their demographic strength and they competed among themselves in order to play a more effective role in the political arena, especially at the time of elections. The earlier sense of a Bahujan community had been eroded by single-caste activities.

In other parts of India, the post-Mandal context witnessed a peak of lower caste mobilisation. However, the post 1990s saw further fragmentation among the Bahujan in Goa. One of the reasons was the impact of the Mandal reservation policy that aggressively pitched lower caste communities against each other. Gradually, individual castes acquired political dominance, which is largely the result of their numerical size. Secondly, liberalisation of the India economy led to the arrival of new leaders who introduced new political rules—a change towards the

increasing influence of money power in electoral politics.¹²¹ Money emerged as a political resource and these leaders patronised village temples and raised the lifestyles and culture of the people. Further, with the inability of the Congress to achieve any radical social agenda, what seems to hold sway over Goa's politics is the ability and style of new leaders—their influence in reshaping power and prestige. However, this new political class still relies on caste identities to organise its power at the local level. Thirdly, the ascendant Bhartiya Janata Party, in contrast to its traditional attitude of developing its base around upper castes, has paid more attention to the Bahujan Samaj in Goa, partly to build on their assertiveness. It is perhaps important to note that while the increase of the Bahujan in the BJP has been endowed with visibility, they are not at the centre of decision making in Goa.

This does not mean that these communities are not concerned about fragmentation. In 2015, leaders of around twenty-four different communities from the Bahujan Samaj came together to establish the Gomantak Bahujan Mahasangh in order to fight for the rights of the Bahujan.¹²² It is important to note that the organisation was supported by Brahmeshanand Swami of Padmanabha *sampradaya*.¹²³ However, the Gomantak Bahujan Mahasangh's fragmented concern served no purpose. On the one hand, the organisation declared itself apolitical, while most of its prominent leaders were from different castes, but divided along party lines. Secondly, although the organisation behaved like a collective enterprise which tried to negotiate with the government, it was more like an interest group—the aim of its members was purely political and often as ambitious as the political entrepreneurs. Further, its appeal and campaign resulted in a changed focus towards claims. They were more concerned about political representation rather than with issues relating to caste oppression, and thus, appear to be far more class oriented than caste based. As a result, with its restricted support bases amongst the lower castes, the organisation failed to have any political relevance. This suggests that it is difficult to talk of Bahujan ideology working and behaving according to a coherent set of principles.

¹²¹ For more details see Parag D. Parobo, "The State, Networks and Family Raj in Goa," *Studies in Indian Politics* 6, no. 2 (2018): 168–79.

¹²² *The Navhind Times*, 11 May 2015, 2.

¹²³ <https://www.lokmat.com/national/brahmanand-blesses-brahman-mahasangha/> 5 May 2015 (accessed 10 May 2021).

5.5 Maharashtrawad and cultural politics

Soon after Goa's Liberation a demand for a merger with Maharashtra began to gain momentum. The issue became more important when the MGP, a party having its base in the ideology of Maharashtrawad—Goa as an extension of Maharashtra, both culturally and politically—came to power in 1963. This led to the opinion poll in 1967, and Goa voted against the merger.¹²⁴ The idea of Maharashtrawad breaks down into the simplistic and seemingly self-evident cultural positions between the Catholics, the GSBs, and the Bahujan, and is often posed to call attention to the Bahujan's problem with Goa's independent identity, reflected in the Konkani language. However, existing identities based on Konkani and Marathi are evidently insufficient to understand the Bahujan, and the answer has to be sought in the nineteenth and the early half of the twentieth centuries, rather than in 1967. It cannot be assumed that the realm of Maharashtrawad is necessarily that of the Bahujan, and, of course, the social history of language formation cannot be divorced from questions of power.¹²⁵ How did Maharashtrawad come to be associated with explicitly Bahujan concerns? In order to understand this, it is necessary to go beyond an understanding of Bahujan as objects of Maharashtrawad and examine the question of Marathi language—voices and interests of the Hindus, more particularly the GSBs, that had loomed large since the nineteenth century. The significance of these struggles, especially the role of language in constituting a new politics, is central to our understanding of cultural identity and is complicated by debates about caste, nationalism and colonialism.

¹²⁴ For more details on the merger issue and the Opinion Poll, see Maria do Ceu Rodrigues, "Opinion Poll in Goa: An Evaluation of the method to settle the controversy," (PhD diss., Goa University, 1996); Arthur G. Rubinoff, "Goa's Attainment of Statehood," *Asian Survey* 32, no. 5 (1992): 471–87.

¹²⁵ Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu see languages as a means of control in society. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1973); Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavostock, 1972); Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew A. Damson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

It was during the South Konkan Silahara rule in Goa that Marathi epigraphs written in the Nagari script began to be issued, at least from the early eleventh century.¹²⁶ Scholars exploring the social life of the Deccan have pointed out the role of the Deccani Sultans to the development of regional languages such as Marathi which had led to the appointment of local Brahmins who soon acquired a great influence on the government.¹²⁷ In 1535, Ibrahim Adil Shah I, upon succeeding to the throne, replaced Persian with Marathi as the language of administration.¹²⁸ The relationship between Marathi and its scripts—Nagari and Modi—was extremely complex. On the one hand, most of the epigraphs found in Goa record grants of land from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries and are in Marathi, written in the Nagari script.¹²⁹ On the other hand, it appears that for all kinds of business and bureaucratic writing and correspondence, Marathi in the cursive Modi script was deployed, at least from the late thirteenth century onwards, until as late as the early twentieth century.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ V. V. Mirashi, ed., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. VI: Inscriptions of the Śilaharas* (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1977), 193–95.

¹²⁷ Sumit Guha, “Transitions and Translations: Regional Power and Vernacular Identity in the Dekhan, 1500–1800,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2004): 23–31; Sumit Guha, “Serving the barbarian to preserve the dharma: The ideology and training of a clerical elite in Peninsular India c. 1300–1800,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 47, no. 4 (2010): 497–525.

¹²⁸ Richard M. Eaton, *A Social History of The Deccan, 1300-1761: Eight Indian Lives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 91.

¹²⁹ P. S. S. Pissurlencar, “Inscrições Pre-Portuguesas de Goa,” *O Oriente Portugues*, no. 22 (1938): 387–97; S. G. Tulpule, *Prachin Marathi Koriv Lekh* (Pune: Pune Vidyapith Prakashan, 1963).

¹³⁰ Prachi Deshpande, “The Marathi Kaulnāmā: Property, Sovereignty and Documentation in a Persianate Form,” *The Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 64 (2021) 583–614; E. Strandberg, *The Moḍi Documents from Tanjore in Danish Collections: Edited, Translated and Analysed* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1983); Nikhil Bellarykar, “Two Marathi Letters from the Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia: A Snapshot of Dutch-Maratha Relations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Coromandel,” *Itinerario* 43, no. 1 (2019): 14–31; Tulpule, *Prachin Marathi Koriv Lekh*, 52.

Though it was faster to transcribe the spoken word in the Modi script, the religious texts that required a precise pronunciation were written in the Nagari script.¹³¹ The extensive use in inscribing religious scriptures perhaps explains the addition of the prefix Deva to Nagari—hence Devanagari.¹³² The Modi script was largely employed in the administration of the Deccani Sultanates, while the Maratha ruler Shivaji is credited with popularising the Devanagari script as the standard written form during his reign in the seventeenth century.¹³³ However, a substantive usage of Modi also occurs under Shivaji in the seventeenth century—it was used for writing on paper, while the Devanagari was exclusively used for inscriptions as it involved lifting of the pen more often, making it much slower to write than the Modi script.¹³⁴ As a result, the writing systems were more rooted in political geography, and the greater familiarity of the Marathi–Modi at the village–level in the New Conquests, tied it to the scribal world in this region. The large collection of Marathi documents in the Goa State Archives that involve village community records are almost exclusively in the Modi script.¹³⁵

With the expansion of the Portuguese state to the New Conquests in the late eighteenth century, the practical needs of administration made Marathi the language of power and authority. They continued to use Marathi for administrative purposes and deployed the Modi script for maintaining the revenue and administrative records. As a result, the GSBs gained prominent presence in all segments of the state structure in the New Conquests. Moreover, the scribal culture in the nineteenth–century New Conquests flourished among a predominantly higher *jati* of the GSBs—the Shenvis, who traditionally formed the administrative corps and whose knowledge of Marathi–Modi had enabled them to build substantial fortunes through landholding,

¹³¹ Pushkar Sohoni, “Marathi of a Single Type: The demise of the Modi script,” *Modern Asian Studies* 51, no. 3 (2017): 667.

¹³² Pushkar Sohoni, “Colonial and postcolonial debates about polygraphia in Marathi,” *South Asian History and Culture* 9, no. 1 (2018): 2.

¹³³ Sohoni, “Marathi of a Single Type: The demise of the Modi script,” 666.

¹³⁴ Sohoni, “Colonial and postcolonial debates about polygraphia in Marathi,” 2.

¹³⁵ The website of Goa State Archive states that, “Most of the records are in Portuguese and Marathi (Modi),” accessed 23 January 2022, <http://daa.goa.gov.in/en/home>. For more details see, A. R. Kulkarni, “Marathi Records on Village Communities in Goa Archives,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 19, nos. 3–4 (1982): 377–85.

trade and commerce. Not surprisingly, even around the 1870s, the Modi script was clearly the more commonly used, and widespread, of the two scripts for writing petitions, government documents and keeping accounts in the New Conquests.¹³⁶

A curious dichotomy existed in Goa for a very long time, more particularly since the sixteenth century, where Marathi was used for writing and religious purposes while Konkani was the language of conversation in the daily intercourse of life.¹³⁷ In a competitive colonial environment, Marathi offered opportunities to the emerging GSB middle class, a development analysed in Chapter Two. However, what needs to be emphasised is that apart from the demand for Marathi schools, the Devanagari script was also a vital instrument for consolidating power and crafting social identities in colonial Goa. As early as 1826, Marathi was fixed in the Devanagari script in the Bombay Presidency and henceforth it would be the standard script used for Marathi print.¹³⁸ The growth of Marathi in Goa was heavily dependent on the availability of Marathi typefaces, and their introduction in the government press in 1853 was an extremely important development of this time.¹³⁹ Before the Portuguese rule, Marathi–Modi was widely used as an administrative script, and while the move of deploying the Devanagari script for Marathi was to facilitate the ease of reading, it was also to put the Shenvis to disadvantage, who were the professional writing caste and had a real hold on scribal employment.¹⁴⁰ In 1877, *Dexassudharanetxo* highlighted the fact that the poor handwriting of Shenvis had an adverse impact on administration and that most of them refused to give up their monopoly.¹⁴¹ Against conflicting interests and cultural competition between the traditional GSB elite and the GSB

¹³⁶ Yeshwant Phondoba Naik Danait, and Ramchandra Govind Wagle. *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas* (Mumbai: Asiatic Chapkhana, 1873), 83.

¹³⁷ P. S. S. Pissurlencar, “A Propósito dos Primeiros Livros Maratas Impressos em Goa,” *Boletim do Instituto Vasco da Gama* 73 (1956): 55–79.

¹³⁸ Veena Naregal has recently shown that ‘official convenience and economy’ were the motivations for this move. See, Veena Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere: Western India under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), 167.

¹³⁹ *Boletim do Governo do Estado da Índia*, no. 21, 27 May 1853, 166.

¹⁴⁰ Sohoni, ‘Marathi of a Single Type: The demise of the Modi script,’ 672–73.

¹⁴¹ *Dexassudharanetxo*, 10 October 1877, 1.

middle class, Marathi in the Devanagari script became a chosen language of political and literary expression—a symbol and a means to advance or defend their position in the hierarchy.¹⁴²

Another new influence in the nineteenth century, Brahminical ritualism, began to impress itself visibly on temple rituals. In its very early stages, Marathi began working its way into the everyday life of the temples. Attitudes towards the Marathi language were also embedded in wider religious traditions. One of the key aspects of the change was the new importance accorded to the appointment of Brahmin priests from Maharashtra. Its everyday presence in temples, through rituals and stories about God and saints, made it an excellent means of easily relating with people across social boundaries. While the cultivation of Marathi as a standard language for regular worship was achieved, it stamped its authority over the colloquial language of the non-Brahmin priests. The period also witnessed a growing recognition of *kirtankars* from Maharashtra who were paid by the temples for their performance in Marathi, and who emerged as a vital component of social discourses. The *kirtankars*, with their knowledge about Marathi and sacred scriptures, invited a dialogue with their audience, both male and female, explained philosophical concepts dear to their hearts, sang verses by poet-saints, narrated stories from Hindu epics and the Puranas, and were an effective medium for the propagation of ideas on ethics and morality. In 1851, when Richard Francis Burton visited Goa, he noticed a Brahmin from Ratnagiri, learned in the Vedas, performing *kirtan* in a temple at Shiroda, and lecturing his audience upon the relative duties of parents and children, who had cast a spell over people's minds.¹⁴³ In the 1880s, Atmaram Buva was the prominent *kirtankar* regularly invited by the temples in Goa. In 1892, he stayed in Goa for twenty-two days and performed nineteen *kirtans* at different locations.¹⁴⁴

It is important to remember here that Marathi-Devanagari opened up new employment opportunities, not just in Portuguese Goa, but in British India as well. As a result, the mid-nineteenth century onwards, Goa saw a remarkable preoccupation with the spread of Marathi. Realising the need to create a sufficiently large literate audience in Marathi, there were demands

¹⁴² *O Goatmá*, 27 September 1886, 2.

¹⁴³ Richard Francis Burton, *Goa, and the Blue Mountains; or Six Months of Sick Leave* (London: Richard Bentley, 1851), 131–32.

¹⁴⁴ *O Goa Panch*, February 1892, 3.

for formal Marathi schools in addition to domestic or home-tutoring in households of the traditional GSB elite. This was certainly an important change from earlier times when elementary domestic instruction of *shenoimama* represented a lifestyle of the traditional GSB elite.¹⁴⁵ The nineteenth century marked the beginning of the cultivation of a standard Marathi language that employed Devanagari and was governed by the opportunities of social mobility. Compared to only a very few scions of landed families, comprising the traditional GSB elite, now the GSB middle-class was actively involved with Marathi.¹⁴⁶ The sudden growth in Marathi schools, libraries and bilingual periodicals in Marathi and Portuguese, established through donations, public subscription and patronage of prosperous families, was a noticeable phenomenon.¹⁴⁷

By the late nineteenth century, almost all Marathi print employed the Devanagari script, and a substantial number of bilingual periodicals in Marathi and Portuguese, largely established by the GSBs, suggests that they had been successful in spreading Marathi to wider social groups. More importantly, this display of bilingualism suggests that the GSBs were at ease in both languages. The columns of the periodicals and the letters and essays from the readers did not just serve as a debating ground on Marathi and Konkani language and literature, but also recognised the role of these cultural exchanges in shaping the minds of readers. More importantly, Marathi emerged as the public language objectified as the mother tongue to be used beyond religious traditions: in the indigenous Marathi schools, in public meetings and public lectures and in print. In 1890, when Goa Hindu Sarvajanic Sabha, one of the first associations established by the Hindus, held its first public meeting, most of the speakers spoke in Marathi and relatively few in Portuguese.¹⁴⁸

By the early twentieth century, Marathi was identified as the main avenue of activism. What was demanded was political rights through the Marathi language and the construction of a Hindu identity. Marathi literary clubs and societies mushroomed all over Goa. Conferences at the annual anniversary celebrations of cultural and literary associations, elocution competitions and other events regularly featured discussions on the cultural legitimacy of Marathi language and

¹⁴⁵ *Gomontoc*, March 1890, 3.

¹⁴⁶ António Lopes Mendes, *A India Portuguesa*, vol. I (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1886), 106–7.

¹⁴⁷ *Gomontoc*, 31 March 1891, 4; *Satsang*, August 1904, 70–4; *Chittakarshan*, April 1909, 155; B. D. Satoskar, *Gomantakache Saraswat* (Mumbai: Self-published, 1945), 2.

¹⁴⁸ *O Goatma*, 02 July 1890, 3–4.

ranged from education to religion to political rights to nationalism, thus raising public interest in it. In some ways, nationalism was set in the cultural realm of Marathi, and this was a turning point for the language. With the development of the idea of Indianness, Maharashtra inspired the ideology of nationalism in Goa which proved to be one of the most enduring and emotive of all forces in which nation and religious identity was talked about since the nineteenth century.

With attention usually focused on Marathi culture, one might be tempted to conclude that Maharashtra was imposing its cultural identity on Goa. But the evidence betrays no such easy solution and points in a different direction. In reality, the GSBs' critical role in this project of imposing Maharashtra on Goa right from the start is beyond doubt and traceable in their works and lives. Not only Brahmin priests, and *kirtankars* and Marathi teachers from Maharashtra, but Marathi intellectuals were also regularly invited to give public lectures under the aegis of various schools, libraries and other cultural associations on subjects concerning Goa–Marathi culture, and they ended with an appeal for Goa's unity with Maharashtra.

In 1928, Gomantak Sahitya Seva Mandal was established under the leadership of Ramchandra Waman Nayak Karande, the editor of *Satsang*, for inclusion of the Konkani phrases, words and proverbs in Maharashtra–Shabdakosh.¹⁴⁹ A year later, Gomantak Sahitya Seva Mandal decided to organise the sixteenth Marathi Sahitya Sammelan in Goa.¹⁵⁰ The sammelan was held in 1930 and was more or less aimed at tracing the cultural uniformity of Goa with Maharashtra.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, the other noteworthy sammelans: the Gomantakiya Marathi–Shikshak Sammelans, the Gomantakiya Marathi–Shikshan Sammelans and the Gomantak Marathi Sahitya Sammelan from the 1920s onwards, not only standardised teaching in Marathi but also defined Marathi to be a distinguishing mark of cultural identity of the Hindus. For instance, at the first Gomantak Marathi Sahitya Sammelan held at Margao in 1935, Shambarao Sardesai, who presided over the welcome committee, analysed the self–representation of Goa's identity with Maharashtra in his presidential address under the theme 'Gomantakache Maharashtratriyatva'.¹⁵² The result was that

¹⁴⁹ *Hindu*, 18 December 1928, 7.

¹⁵⁰ *Hindu*, 23 July 1929, 2.

¹⁵¹ *Hindu*, 29 April 1930, 4.

¹⁵² *Gomantavani*, May 1964, 27–8.

he projected Hindu identity as being essentially the same as a Marathi identity.¹⁵³ Such an ambitious programme presumed Goa to be an extension of Maharashtra through a pre-colonial social reality, both culturally and religiously. In fact, a whole range of Marathi periodicals and texts published by the GSBs since the late nineteenth centuries demonstrate how a specifically common Hindu identity was being articulated through the medium of Marathi culture. Marathi and Maharashtra fostered a strong emotional link that inspired nationalists—a crucial symbol in the formation of this cultural identity and a powerful vehicle for reconfiguring modern Hindu identity.

Among the Hindus, Marathi, rather than Konkani, was acknowledged as the pre-eminent language, but the presence of some writings in Konkani Devanagari suggests that it too had importance, especially beyond the Marathi educated GSBs. While the sight of Konkani written in Devanagari was not common, in 1885 *Jornal das Novas Conquistas* carried an interesting correspondence giving direct evidence of a far more living image of the spoken form of the language.¹⁵⁴ This perhaps is the earliest evidence of Konkani in Devanagari, where a lower caste chose to complain about the discriminatory treatment towards them at the hands of ‘Bhat-Bamon’, even during critical times such as cholera, an epidemic disease that threatened all communities. It is worth asking to what extent the writer, referring to himself as Kulvadi, might have been familiar with reading and writing in Konkani. Yet, without the ability to write, the style of the language is not the one spoken by the non-Brahmin communities but rather of the GSBs. Moreover, at times when the lower castes expressed themselves in Konkani at public meetings, they were mocked and stereotyped to define the GSB respectability.¹⁵⁵ Much of the prestige, moreover, derived from the caste status of the GSBs and what we see here is a peculiar tension which bestowed great authority upon Marathi. As a result, while Marathi enjoyed a wider recognition of prestige and status in public life, Konkani was stamped as vulgar and uncivilised.

¹⁵³ N. R. Fatak, “Introduction: Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai,” in *Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai (Bhai Desai): Smarak Granth*, Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai (Mumbai: Yeshwantrao Suryarao Sardesai Smarak, Samiti, 1965), 11.

¹⁵⁴ *Jornal das Novas Conquistas*, 17 May 1885, 3.

¹⁵⁵ *Bharat*, 31 May 1928, 3.

Of course, Konkani as a widely spoken language pre-dated colonial times; however, there were dynamic processes since the sixteenth centuries by which social groups identified their interests with language. Around the fifteenth century, Konkani enjoyed lesser clerical and commercial value. With the Portuguese conquest of Goa, Konkani was patronised by the Church which encouraged the production of first grammars and vocabularies, catechisms and theological treatises in the Roman script.¹⁵⁶ These early missionary exercises were an attempt to translate Christianity in Goa that led to standardising a loose and undefined language with grammars and orthography.¹⁵⁷ Subsequent prohibitory edicts of the state and Church on the Konkani language in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries posed a distinct challenge to the position of the language. As the colonial state expanded, the social and political stakes involved with languages in the nineteenth century were enormous. As the officially blessed language of the New Conquests, in the new aspirational landscape of the nineteenth century, Marathi and its literary traditions emerged as a focal point of nation and community building.

In the nineteenth century, Marathi as a language, reached wide groups of literate people through the indigenous school system and print. While Marathi found written representation in Devanagari, Konkani, that did not have a system of writing in Devanagari, was pushed to the status of a dialect. In 1851, Richard Burton observed that the spoken language of Goa is Konkani, a corrupt form of Marathi.¹⁵⁸ The notion that these languages were, in fact, one, was a characteristic feature of this historiography of the nineteenth century; however, Konkani had been downgraded to the position of a dialect of Marathi.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, Marathi was mostly confined to the Hindus, whose extravagant claims about this language caused resentment among

¹⁵⁶ J. H. da Cunha Rivara, “An Historical Essay on the Konkani Language,” trans. Fr. Theophilus Lobo in *The Printing Press in India*, ed. A. K. Priolkar (Bombay: Marathi Samshodhana Mandala, 1958), 149–236; José Pereira, *Literary Konkani* (Dharwar: Konkani Sahitya Prakashan, 1973).

¹⁵⁷ Rochelle Pinto, *Between Empires: Print and Politics in Goa* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 84.

¹⁵⁸ Burton, *Goa, and the Blue Mountains*, 125.

¹⁵⁹ Erskine Perry, “On the Geographical Distribution of the principal Languages of India, and the feasibility of introducing English as a *Lingua Franca*,” *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 4 (1853): 289–318.

the Catholics.¹⁶⁰ At the end of the nineteenth century, cheap printing techniques and the spread of basic literacy had combined to produce a sizeable body of Konkani periodicals and pamphlet literature, written in the Roman script in Bombay. They enjoyed a large and popular readership, significantly among the lower caste Goan Catholic migrants in Bombay.¹⁶¹ This new urban literature was largely produced by lower caste Catholics and was intimately related to the culture of Bombay city, and the everyday social problems in Goa, for which Konkani became important.

One of the key aspects of the rapid spread of Konkani print in Bombay was the new importance accorded to Konkani in identity formation.¹⁶² In the early twentieth century, there were frequent complaints in public debates about Konkani being the language of the Catholics.¹⁶³ In the 1920s, Konkani in the Roman script was seen more of Portuguese than Konkani.¹⁶⁴ Accordingly, there began a long-drawn out controversy between the defenders of Marathi and the supporters of Konkani. More probing questions about the purity and respectability of Konkani, wedded to the idea of nationalism, were opened up. Marathi identity, as it manifested itself in the political language since the nineteenth century, was a much more widespread force than historians have hitherto supposed. As Indian nationalism found its earliest expression in Goa through the Marathi print, the Marathi supporters claimed greater antiquity and the advantage of 'Indianness' and dismissed Konkani written in the Roman script for its foreignness.¹⁶⁵ To further highlight notions of purity, the increased prevalence of Portuguese loanwords in the Konkani of Catholics was emphasised. As such, Marathi intellectuals reacted to the emergence of Konkani print in Bombay rather negatively, which transformed the way their work was evaluated. Accordingly, the notion was popularised that Marathi and Konkani were actually two different languages; one for the Hindus and the other for the Catholics.

¹⁶⁰ *Vidiaprassar*, 13 September 1920, 3.

¹⁶¹ Rochelle Pinto, "At Home in Bombay: Housing Konkani print," in *Founts of Knowledge: Book History in India*, vol. III, eds., Abhijit Gupta and Swapan Chakravorty (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2015), 74–105.

¹⁶² *O Povo Goano*, 21 September 1895, 3.

¹⁶³ *Bharat*, 6 May 1920, 3; *Bharat* 4 April, 1935, 2; *Bharat*, 1 August 1940, 4; *Prabhat*, March 1938, 8.

¹⁶⁴ *Hindu*, 12 March 1929, 5.

¹⁶⁵ *O Luso-Concanim*, 18 August 1893, 2.

Despite the GSBs taking the lead in the nineteenth century in developing models of Maharashtrian culture, they were also instrumental in promoting Konkani as a marker of their caste identity. In this, not only the GSBs themselves, but the role of the British and Portuguese scholars was fundamental. They were only part of the larger story of the intersections between the GSBs and Sanskrit. There is evidence that in the sixteenth century, GSB intellectuals had been familiar with Sanskrit reading and recitation. In fact, under the impulses of the *bhakti* tradition, they were copying and translating scriptural Sanskrit texts into Marathi.¹⁶⁶ These developments show that despite a stagnation of Sanskrit, its authority was perpetuated.¹⁶⁷ By the end of the eighteenth century, GSB Konkani had developed in the shadow of Sanskrit. In the nineteenth century, major Indian languages had come to be seen as derived from Sanskrit. This relationship of Konkani with Sanskrit, and the discrete selfhood of GSBs, has been highlighted by many and has influenced the tendencies towards the hierarchisation of language. More significantly, surveys conducted by the British and Portuguese officials in the nineteenth century supported the assumption that ‘pure’ Konkani came exclusively from the GSBs.

Dominant contemporary ideas of language were built upon the influence of Sanskrit and caste identities. In 1851, Richard Burton referred to Konkani as the corrupt form of Marathi and was perhaps one of the first to contrast the influence of Sanskrit on Konkani—a development that had led to two distinct styles of language.¹⁶⁸ Another British civil servant in India, Robert Xavier Murphy, the chief interpreter of the Supreme Court, when requested by Erskine Perry to examine the Konkani language, observed: the grammar of Konkani is that of Marathi and bears the stamp of a peculiar Brahminical influence, with Sanskritised Konkani pronounced ‘purely’ by the Shenvis, while Catholic Konkani was deemed corrupt.¹⁶⁹ This was a common perception among contemporary Portuguese administrators and scholars. In 1856, J. H. da Cunha Rivara, the Portuguese Secretary to the Governor General, agreed to the Brahminical influence along with

¹⁶⁶ Panduranga S. S. Pissurlencar, *Goa Pré-Portuguesa através dos Escritores Lusitanos dos Seculos XVI e XVII* (Bastora: Tipografia Rangel, 1962), 54.

¹⁶⁷ This aspect has been highlighted by Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere*, 21.

¹⁶⁸ Burton, *Goa, and the Blue Mountains*, 125.

¹⁶⁹ Perry, “On the Geographical Distribution of the principal Languages of India,” 300.

Brahminic morality in no uncertain terms.¹⁷⁰ Among the earliest GSBs to strongly reiterate these features of the Konkani language were Yeshwant Phondoba Naik Danait and Ramchandra Govind Wagle, who were the first to write a history of Goa in Marathi.¹⁷¹ Such was the demand for the history of Konkani that Dnyanavardhak Sabha organised lectures on the language at Cumbarjua in 1878. And, more importantly, Ramchandra Govind Wagle, who deliberated on the antiquity of Konkani, presented Brahmins as the only bearers of the language.¹⁷²

At the end of the nineteenth century, as the contest over the Brahminical status of the Shenvis grew stronger, a GSB identity was being constructed in the growing urban centres, more prominently in Bombay, that attracted the community members from Goa and South Kanara in large numbers. Consequently, living in a city environment, when efforts were made to absorb the differences of various social groups that were spread across western India within a broader GSB identity, Konkani emerged as the medium to forge solidarities, along with strong village and clan affiliations.¹⁷³ At the centre of this process lay the efforts of the urban GSB intellectuals to create a new identity for Konkani to distinguish it, not just from Marathi, but also from the Konkani of other communities which they saw as loose, colloquial and allegedly polluted. It was this emerging corporate identity, with its overtones of conflict with the Maharashtrian Brahmins, that the GSBs from the 1870s seized upon Konkani and sought to push it as a language of community—one of the crucial distinctions out of which the GSBs defined their identity.¹⁷⁴

Accordingly, there was a deliberate attempt in the late nineteenth century by the GSBs based in Bombay to fashion Konkani according to certain standards, and thus was opened the way for Sanskrit to develop a new significance. Sanskrit began to impress itself visibly on the GSB

¹⁷⁰ J. H. da Cunha Rivara, “An Historical Essay on the Konkani Language,” in *The Printing Press in India*, ed. A. K. Priolkar (Bombay: Marathi Samshodhana Mandala, 1958), 150–51.

¹⁷¹ Yeshwant Phondoba Naik Danait, and Ramchandra Govind Wagle, *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas* (Mumbai: Asiatic Chapkhana, 1873), 77–83.

¹⁷² *Dexassudharanetxo*, 14 May 1878, 2.

¹⁷³ Frank Conlon, “Caste by Association: The Gauda Sarasvata Brahmana Unification Movement,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 33, no. 3 (1974), 353.

¹⁷⁴ Bhavani Vishwanth Kanvinde, *Saraswat Brahman urf Shenvi Kiva Konkani Brahman* (Mumbai: National Chapkhana, 1870).

vocabulary and demonstrated how the purity of language could be negotiated to produce notions of a standard language different from its polluting others. A crucial step in the formation of Konkani was the creation of myths of antiquity around Sanskrit and GSB history by attaching value to Konkani as a symbol of caste identity—a characteristic examined in the first chapter. This historicisation of Konkani, both, required and produced boundaries between languages and communities. The loosely structured syncretic language, widely spoken by various communities in Goa, came to be structured and nurtured along Sanskritic lines.¹⁷⁵ Thus, the efforts to produce a pure language resulted in the Sanskritised Konkani of the GSBs that was far from the current speech of the other communities.

It is interesting that in the nineteenth century, the language that the GSBs employed in their writings was always Marathi, but efforts were made to Sanskritise Konkani and the new ‘pure’ Konkani became the hallmark of the GSBs. This influenced the tendencies towards refashioning of Konkani as Gomantaki, a Sanskritised name.¹⁷⁶ In 1884, Ramchandra Bhikaji Gunjekar clearly stated that although the GSBs use the Marathi language in public, Gomantaki is their language at home.¹⁷⁷ The emphasis on Gomantaki was apparently a common feature in Marathi periodicals and textbooks.¹⁷⁸ This resulted in the construction of Gomantaki as synonymous with Konkani, an identification reflected in the census of India, 1911.¹⁷⁹ At times, Konkani was seen as the corrupt form of Gomantaki.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵ This was the case with other languages as well. For a very sharp and penetrating recent study on Bengali language, see Anindita Ghosh, *Power in Print: Popular Publishing and the Politics of Language and Culture in a Colonial Society, 1778-1905* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁷⁶ Naik Danait, and Ramchandra Govind Wagle, *Gomantakacha Prachin ani Arvachin Itihas*, 77–83.

¹⁷⁷ Ramchandra Bhikaji Gunjekar, *Saraswati mandal athava Maharashtra deshatil Brahman jatiche varnan* (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1884), 49.

¹⁷⁸ Tatyaji Sitaram Patkar, *Goa Prantatil Todkyat Mahiti* (Mumbai: Telgumitra Chapkhana, 1890), 14; *Gomontoc*, March 1890, 3; Sebastião Rudolpho Dalgado, *Diccionario Konkani–Portugues* (Bombay: Indu–Prakash, 1893); 146.

¹⁷⁹ L. J. Sedgwick, *Census of India, 1921. Vol. VIII: Bombay Presidency: Part I: General Report* (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1922), 155.

¹⁸⁰ *Bharat*, 5 February 1925, 4.

It is important to note that just as many GSBs were demanding a wider access to Marathi, there was a resurgence in support for Konkani in the 1910s. Two factors played an important role in the ways that Konkani came to be shaped in the early half of the twentieth century. First, the colonial experience played an important role. In the period since the setting-up of the republican government, the colonial state, conscious of an emergent nationalistic spirit through the Marathi print, began to make advances towards Konkani that would eventually pave the ground for new possibilities. In 1920, an editorial in *Bharat* was critical about the favourable attitude of the government towards Konkani, at the cost of Marathi.¹⁸¹ These implicit tendencies towards Konkani had made some visible forays in the discussions of *Congresso Provincials*, the inclusion of Konkani in the census, and the government notices in the 1940s.¹⁸² These aspects were prominently highlighted at the Gomantak Marathi Sahitya Sammelan held at Bombay in 1943.¹⁸³

Second, for the GSBs arriving in Bombay in the early twentieth century, contemporary debates on caste and identity determined their assessment of language and saw the emergence of Konkani as the mother tongue among disillusioned GSBs who preferred to return to a unique identity of Goa. These developments pushed GSB intellectuals such as Vaman Rangunath Varde Valavalikar to the forefront of the politics of Konkani.¹⁸⁴ On the one hand, Valavalikar and other GSB intellectuals tried to downplay the cultural similarity between Marathi and Konkani by proving the antiquity of Konkani through a GSB heritage, which would culminate in its acceptance as the mother tongue.¹⁸⁵ And, on the other hand, in his writings, Valavalikar emphatically upheld

¹⁸¹ *Bharat*, 6 May 1920, 3.

¹⁸² *Primeiro Congresso Provincial da India Portuguesa* (Nova Goa: Imprensa Nacional, 1916); *Nava-Jivana*, 28 April 1920, 2–3; *The Goan World*, January 1940, 26; *Bharat*, 26 September, 1940, 2; *Bharat*, 6 March 1941, 1; *Bharatmitra*, October 1940, 273–74; A. K. Priolkar, *Gomantakachi Saraswati* (Mumbai: Self-published, 1934), 20.

¹⁸³ *Gomantak Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, 1943–Mumbai: Report* (Mumbai: Sagar Chapkhana, 1943), 9.

¹⁸⁴ Jason Keith Fernandes, “Bridging the Centuries: A Brief Biography of Wamanrao Varde Valavalikar,” *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais* 115 (2018): 183–204.

¹⁸⁵ Valavalikar, *Kahi Marathi Lekh*, 135–37; V. P. Chavan, *The Konkani and the Konkani Language* (Bombay: Self-published, 1924), 25; S. S. Talmaki, *Saraswat Families: Part I* (Bombay: Self-published, 1935), 15; Ganesh Ramchandra Sharma, *Saraswat Bhushan* (Mumbai: Ganesh Ramrao Bhatkal, 1950), 85.

the spread of the Devanagari script and tried to make Konkani the language of regional identity. It was on this fragmented and contested terrain that Konkani took shape as an independent language, especially in the years since the 1910s. What had been thus far a contest between the Catholics and Hindus for Konkani and Marathi, now became a matter of caste and regional politics among GSB intellectuals. More importantly, the growing support for Konkani in Devanagari, and its politicization since the 1910s as a symbol of GSB heritage, changed the context of the language issue quite dramatically.

Among other factors, the prevailing critical attitude of Maharashtrian intellectuals towards the Marathi literature produced in Goa, which they considered inferior, tore them apart. Moreover, literary traditions were claimed to distinguish Marathi literature from Goan literary culture—what was identified as inferior and allegedly polluted by an abundant sexuality. A consistently Maharashtrian rhetoric of refinement in linguistic cultures and aesthetic appreciation of literature is also evident in the debates of the period. The Gomantak Marathi Sahitya Sammelan of 1943 exemplifies, quite perfectly, the tensions underlying the application of the new standards. The sammelan was aimed at getting a literary acceptability and recognition for Goan Marathi literature and an enhanced social role.¹⁸⁶ Paradoxically, the sammelan expressed disgust at Goan Marathi literature for its lapse in standards, and the targets of the attack were invariably the GSB intellectuals.¹⁸⁷ The social ramifications of such differences within the Marathi intelligentsia, which identified Maharashtrian Marathi literature as standard, were enormous. These literary debates between the intelligentsia created and perpetuated a schism among GSB intellectuals, and Konkani, therefore, had to be made fit for its new and enhanced role.

It is important to note that the interrelations between language and social identity were shifting and deeply contested. In the twentieth century, Konkani became important as it served the new needs of the GSBs in the changed colonial context. Attitudes towards Marathi and Konkani language, and literature, need to be located within these complex cross-currents of social conflict and shifting literary values. Post-Liberation Konkani gained much ground and was ultimately able to stake claim as the state language and the mother tongue. However, the recasting of Konkani in a Sanskritic mould under the influence of the GSBs forced the language to look

¹⁸⁶ *Gomantak Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, 1943–Mumbai: Report*, 9.

¹⁸⁷ *Gomantak Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, 1943–Mumbai: Report*, 5–7.

distinct and witnessed furious debates in the 1920s. Further, as nationalism influenced contemporary notions of literary and cultural propriety, Konkani written in the Devanagiri script with a Sanskritic influence, rather than in the Roman script, came to be regarded as the standard language. It was this rhetorical effort to create a 'pure' Konkani, mediated through the GSB identity, which was at issue. In some ways, this was a turning point for the Bahujan Samaj.

Although language was a major symbol of identity, attitudes of the Bahujan Samaj towards Marathi and Konkani came to be shaped by two completely different contexts: the colonial experience and the outcome of social changes. It is important to note that Marathi had not only secured an economic advancement among the Hindus of the New Conquests, but had also meant espousing a sense of identification with the Hindu community and adhering to the nationalist project.¹⁸⁸ Nationalism brought Marathi and Hindu communities closer together and allowed a significant amount of overlap.¹⁸⁹ Konkani written in the Roman script justified the divide between Marathi and Konkani and helped coalesce a separate cultural identity. Besides, the hostility between GSBs and the lower castes and the wider extension of a Maratha identity in Goa opened the way for the Marathi language to develop a new significance, in addition to its older reference. Self-assertion by the Bahujan in public life took the route of a Maratha identity, and further, through their active participation in popular dramas that centred around Maratha history, they progressively merged in the spread of the Marathi language. The growing importance of Marathi in public life, thus, became a medium through which cultural nationalism could challenge the colonial system and also imposed rigid linguistic boundaries that continued after Liberation. Language, thus, served as an arena for various competing interests around social agendas and the legitimacy of a cultural identity. Consequently, the centrality of Marathi in the cultural life of Bahujans was a product of negotiations of many difficult ideological questions.

¹⁸⁸*Pandravaya Maharashtra Sahitya Sammelan, 1930–Margao: Report* (Margao: Gomantak Sahityasevak Mandal, 1932), 1.

¹⁸⁹ *Hindu*, 6 June 1924, 2.

Conclusion

This study has explored the construction of identity by the Hindu non-Brahmin communities of Goa as an important site of struggle between different social groups. These processes came to shape social and political hierarchies and were invariably linked to the wider political aspirations of the communities, both above and below. The GSB intellectuals, in their pursuit of self-fashioning, increasingly demonstrated the power of the colonial apparatus and fixed all dominance on the colonial state. As colonial force has thrived as a vital political concept, the attention given to colonialism works only to mystify local dominance. Indeed, one of the objectives of the work is to explore indigenous dominance and the resistance of non-Brahmin communities in the mediation of domination.

In the nineteenth century, in a milieu of growing tensions and competition among the social groups, Marathi printed texts represented an important site for emergent debates and struggles among the Brahmin castes. With the writing of history lying at the heart of GSB identity in the nineteenth century (and even today), these texts provide vital entry-points on their concerns and political contexts. Most noticeably, this literature is largely focused on their self-image of a Brahmin identity and continued to supply new symbols. In the eighteenth century, as new employment opportunities were created by the British rule and as the Portuguese expanded their territory in Goa, ideas about Brahmin caste identity became crucially linked to these opportunities; also, internal struggles arose between the Brahmin communities. As the Maharashtrian Brahmin communities refused to acknowledge the GSBs as equal Brahmins, the latter were caught up in some of the most critical and politicised cultural debates of the times. One point that remains central to their identity is the account of the creation of Goa by god Parshuram and its subsequent settlement by the GSBs. Added to this is the importance of the Sanskrit language towards the Brahmin identity. It is important to note here that the GSBs had difficulty in gaining access to a Sanskrit education through *pathshalas* controlled by the other

Brahmin groups.¹ Subsequently, the Brahmin identity of the GSBs made it possible for them not only to learn Sanskrit but establish themselves as powerful sources of influence. These processes are self-evident in the life and work of prominent intellectuals such as Bhau Daji Lad, Kashinath Trimbak Telang and Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar.

On the other hand, the biographies of officials in pre-colonial and colonial times, scholars and generals, formed yet another crucial dimension. History provided a significant motivation for their life-writings, and arguably, this was not just about individual lives but expressive of a deeper social agenda. More importantly, the invention of tradition and life-stories suggests that there were two processes at work. Firstly, these were employed to validate historical claims when counter claims by other communities posed a distinct challenge to their entrenched position. Secondly, through this literature, the GSBs were successful in stamping their cultural authority over the rest of the indigenous society. A conservative GSB rhetoric lay at the heart of the discussion on Goan culture, which mediated its authority by producing an idea of the backwardness of other communities. Preoccupied with accounts of the pre-eminence of GSBs and the primitive nature of other social groups, they generated contrived images of impure, backward and unrefined others, both in terms of occupations and ritual practices. By taking to the writing of a traditional past, whereby myth, lineage and the temple developed as a language of argument, the social groups were making efforts to produce their corporate historic pasts. In a crude sense, then, these writings of caste employ elaborate symbolism in order to establish the founders of village communities, deities and temples.

The elites had the most opportunity to develop the ways of exploiting the written mode, and the development of bureaucracy, the control over scribal skills, and the accumulation of landed property widens the gap between social groups.² The Marathi print was also a means to power and influence. The GSB intellectuals ingeniously wrote histories of other communities that devalued their modes of struggles and thereby produced local archives. It is striking, however, to see the ways in which crime was reported in Marathi periodicals and its subsequent influence

¹ Madhav M. Deshpande, "Pune: An Emerging Center of Education in Early Modern Maharashtra," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 19, no.1-2 (2015): 65.

² Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organisation of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

on historiography. Special attention was given to the crimes committed by the marginal communities and they were glossed as naturally predisposed to crime. In other words, the crime committed by a GSB was located as an act of the individual, while in the case of others, there is namelessness—individuals are not singled out, but attention is given to impute a criminal character to a community. This study has highlighted the importance of a critical reading of the local archive in reconfiguring the struggle and agency of the non-Brahmin communities. By digging deep into the imperial and local archives, and in reading “upper-caste sources upside down,” that erased the facts of dominance, we have sought to read the salt robberies of the 1880s as acts of political subversion. Similar is the case with the Bhandari strikes that were frequently staged in the 1920s–30s. Such analyses shows that the Marathi periodicals that had the power to record strikes were a charged site—producing, distributing and consuming information about it. The challenge to locate these strikes as modes of resistance continues to critically stretch the scope of the archive as they bear the material stamp of GSB concerns on the confrontation. There is yet another strategy of resistance seen through Rajaram Rangaji Paiginkar’s staging of an attack on his house, a medium through which the unspeakable dominance of the GSBs was spoken.

In charting some of the social processes behind the power of the Brahmin castes, historians have recently begun to show that far from a continuation of Brahmin dominance since precolonial times, their power was consolidated within the new institutional structures of colonialism.³ This work unearths some of these aspects in the context of the changing nature of the colonial state in the nineteenth century. So far, historians have not addressed the full significance of the New Conquests when crucial political transitions were taking place in ways that were soon mobilised to define categories for patronage and avenues of mobility. Investigating the wider impact of the establishment of new government offices and institutions, such as *administradors* of *conselhos*, headquarters of *conselhos*, courts, municipalities, and a system of political representation, revises our understanding of the power and politics of the GSBs.

³ Veena Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites, and the Public Sphere: Western India under Colonialism* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001); Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts: Historical Memory and Identity in Western India, 1700-1960* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007).

An additional dimension to the study is afforded by analysing the expansion of the colonial state and the development of a distinct public life that opened new employment opportunities, leading to the emergence of the middle-class among the GSBs. The GSBs offer an opportunity to explore the relationship in a new setting, and amid a community whose Brahmin caste status had often been questioned. The study has demonstrated the entanglements between the local elites and the colonial power, and the complexities that their relationship entailed in the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, in what concerned the GSBs of Goa. This period mirrors the aspirations of the emerging middle-class that questioned the dominance of the traditional GSB elite—the Shenvis, whose position in society was based on scribal skills, wealth and education. More importantly, the traditional GSB elite were directly associated with the colonial administration—at times they financed it, acquiring considerable material advantages, even receiving decorations and European titles of nobility. Through a curious interplay of politics at different levels of the colonial state, they reinforced their authority and their patronage networks.

The process of the emergence of the middle-class was strengthened with the demands for equal employment opportunities by the other GSB *jatis*, and that too, through the conduct of examinations. The Shenvis saw themselves as an independent caste and, hence, the other GSB *jatis* who were not considered to be their equals had difficulty in gaining access to a Marathi education through domestic schools controlled by the traditional GSB elite.⁴ The policies of the Portuguese Crown towards the New Conquests and its populations, the establishment of private Marathi schools and the founding of a Marathi press—social and political competition—led to the appearance of the new elites as the main interlocutors of the Portuguese Crown in those territories. In terms of consolidating a caste identity, it was the middle-class who really drove the controversies about a Brahmin caste identity and led the efforts for the unification of the *jatis*, a move resisted by the Shenvis. Caste politics at the local levels could therefore acquire a political significance. The dominance of the GSBs was not because of their caste position alone; it also

⁴ Recent scholarship has highlighted that reading and writing are not universal; they are historically situated cultural practices. For an overview on the historiography of literacy, see Charles F. Briggs, “Literacy, Reading, and Writing in the Medieval West,” *Journal of Medieval History* 26, no. 4 (2000): 397–420.

had much to do with their socio-economic position which was largely related to land and employment, and which received a boost after the New Conquests.

Access to political influence at the local level was necessary and the local political activities help us to understand how the traditional and the new elite responded to these developments. These internal tensions and conflicts within the GSB society are most obvious with the founding of associations like the Goa Hindu Sarvajanik Sabha (for the old elite) who took inspiration from the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha, and the Hindu Club in Panjim (for the new one), and these had more clearly contained assertions of a Hindu identity. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Hindu Club made attempts to broaden political influence through the notions of a Hindu identity for the middle-class—the goal was to fight for the rights of the Hindus, largely through the government policy on education and public employment.

Equally important was the Portuguese regime change—establishment of the Republican government in 1910—that was more significant to the new GSBs than to the old ones, helping to unleash a quest for a Hindu identity. The quest for a Hindu identity counted on some important players, namely, the doctor Purshottam Waman Shirgaonkar, who was fundamental to the process of creating a sense of a natural Hindu community, and the Pragatic Sangh, an association founded in 1920, inspired by the Indian National Congress, which intended to unify the old and the new GSBs as a single caste. The attempts made to promote a progressive electoral politics were important to the emergence of the GSB elite in Goan imperial and local life and politics.

More importantly, the politics of the new players was allied with the local Catholic elite, rather than the Luso-*descendentes*, unlike the traditional GSB elite. One of the most important concerns of the Pragatic Sangh was the elections to the *Conselho do Governo*, an important institution through which the GSBs defended their cultural symbols, such as temples, that merited state protection against the rising claims made by other Hindu communities. Further, in order to build patronage networks and assert political authority, a religious idiom was used to define a Hindu identity that could paper over the differences of caste. This new attention to a wider Hindu identity had a point of reference to new symbols and ideas such as cow protection, the Maratha ruler Shivaji, public *poojas* and *shuddhi*, each influencing the other in their symbolic meaning.

It is clear that as the new elite (the GSB middle-class) sought the support of the Portuguese for their own interests at the local level, they had mobilised the setting up of political associations and Marathi institutions—primary schools, libraries and literary associations. As a result, they were well represented in the bureaucracy and continued to play a significant role in politics. This was partly enabled by the emergence of professions such as printer-publishers, editors, educators, lawyers and writers; they, thus, came to control the content and its dissemination. Their currency lay in the vital role they played to have access to the state framework and influence policy, which, in turn, had empowered the GSBs to articulate caste interests in an organised manner, and to set a cultural and political agenda. My conclusions point to the fact that the GSB middle-class derived its political legitimacy not only through a wide distribution in government service and their emergence as professionals, but also from the articulation of a Hindu identity. Consequently, the relative numerical weakness of the GSBs was compensated by their ritual and socio-economic status.

At the other end, the non-Brahmin communities employed cultural resources in their social struggles with notable success, just as the dominant groups legitimised their own social and political control with religious and caste rhetoric. Historical writings on Goa have not paid heed to the Bahujan Samaj and their struggles; they have been treated as passive viewers who had neither the power, nor the will, to transform their ascribed position or the peripheries that they were thought to inhabit. The present study, however, brings the Bahujan Samaj to the centre stage of South Asian historical narratives and establishes their agency as political actors. It helps us understand the processes that drove the construction of identity and claims to an upward mobility at a time when the common notion among the Brahmins of the region was that there are no true Kshatriya and Vaishyas in the Kaliyuga. They invoked the authority of texts, such as the *Shudrakamlakara* of Kamlakara Bhatta to delineate the rights of Brahmins and the Shudras. Such understanding meant that there were only two castes, Brahmins and Shudras, and this added to the difficulties of the non-Brahmin communities. This work offers important insights into the social world of the Bahujan Samaj and focuses on the intersection of caste identity with political and social change. Dominant ideas on caste were challenged by the non-Brahmin communities.

The creation of a positive self-image and a respectable identity were at the heart of the identity politics of the Sonar, Vani, Devadasis, elite Maratha, Bhandari, Gabit/Tari, Nabhik, Mith-Gaudas and Hindu tribal communities. Strong in numbers, they often combined their ‘traditional

occupations' with agriculture, took hold of the new opportunities and services produced by the colonialisms, both British and Portuguese. In addition, the rise of urban centres outside Goa, such as Bombay, and Panjim, Margao and Mapuca in Goa, were also a means of influence and formed an integral part of mobilisations towards caste identities. This newfound influence is what enabled them to mount the claim that they were not Shudras. At the same time, the histories of caste contests demonstrate two important general features. On the one hand, despite the fact that the Brahmins in Goa and Maharashtra campaigned to limit the authority of Vedic ritual to Brahmins alone, social groups such as the Sonars and the Vanis were expressing their power through the manipulation of the right to perform these rituals. There are recorded instances of the disputes between such castes from the seventeenth century. At times Sonars and Vanis petitioned the Shankaracharya of Karveer–Sankeshwar matha and the colonial state in asserting what they considered to be their established rights and prerogatives according to the *shastra* and Vedic customs. More importantly, as they were economically powerful, they could legitimise their claims not only through the *shastra*, but through their ability to utilise the colonial administration as a major resource.

On the other hand, a striking feature of the other social groups of Devadasis, elite Maratha, Bhandari, Gabit/Tari, Nabhik, Mith–Gaudas and the Hindu tribal communities, was the refashioning of themselves en masse as Marathas. This was accomplished by the writing of histories with a new vision of the past that asserted Maratha origins in ancient times. History served to establish identity; all that was required was a familiarity with Maratha history, especially the life of the Maratha ruler Shivaji, and the ability to apply it to present–day identities in a language that everyone was sure to understand. It is important to note that writing histories was not a purely random process. The acknowledgement of historical events and the association of the communities to them had come down as a collective memory—a means of preserving the past for communities without writing skills. Social groups consolidated themselves by acquiring memories of the collective past, thereby constructing a social identity.⁵ Print technology and the rise of local publishing houses played an important role in history writing, literary production and the representation of socio-cultural identities through the articulation of a noble Maratha past. And, in order to sustain that claim, annual or periodic caste conferences were held, and

⁵ This has been argued elsewhere, see Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

periodicals published. Movements for a Maratha identity, or the Marathisation of Goa, were by no means restricted to these social groups alone but included other less populous communities.

In proposing an ambiguous and an alternative model of the social world, efforts were made to gain a numerical strength through the consolidation of *jatis* into a single caste, and the insistence on the dignity of physical work and education. What emerges from the writings, notably, is the assertion that these communities were originally from Goa; however, they cite the Portuguese atrocities, particularly, as the sole reason for their flight and disarray into *jatis* and forge a rueful account of social degradation. Under the circumstances, caste conferences, where leading members of respective communities from Goa and Maharashtra gave speeches, highlighted past glories, passed resolutions for education and made efforts to mobilise funds to establish schools and scholarships, played an important role in a new vision for the future. Fresh perspectives of the kind discussed above, help us to rewrite the cultural history of Goa more as a struggle for upward mobility among different social groups. Additionally, the ambiguity over the Maratha category's content and meaning was a source of both strength and weakness, a process also evidenced elsewhere.⁶ Further, the attitudes of the colonial state which introduced significant aspects of martial caste, and its interventions in the organisation of the army, added to social divides.

Arguing against the conclusion that temples were historically always concerned with worship, the very point of my work has been to show, as Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge urge, how temples produce a capacity in which power lies—the outcome of social changes, which they both reflect and shape.⁷ This shift in perspective helps us to see how communities defined their caste identities by making claims to a village and temple. They are regularly reminded of symbols of caste identity, often on a daily basis, through media coverage, participation in festivals, and other events and activities that channel their attention in particular ways. By closely examining the temple as the central institution of social life, we have placed temples and villages within

⁶ Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict, and Ideology: Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Low Caste Protest in Nineteenth-Century Western India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 275–77.

⁷ Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge, "The South Indian temple: Authority, honour and redistribution," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 10, no. 2 (1976): 187–211.

their larger contexts: myths, histories, innovations in rituals, material resources and patronage. All of these become recognisable as important forces in our study.

The argument put forth by this work demonstrates that the transformations taking place in the day-to-day life of temples were accomplished through two processes. On the one side, while making claims to a temple deity as a *kuladevata*, a new world-view was produced through the invocation of texts such as the *Sahayadri Khanda* and *Konkanakhyan*. More importantly, these narratives were given a historical status. This understanding was further foregrounded in the colonial text of the *Foral* of 1526 and memories of patronage to temples by prominent GSB individuals were organised in relationship to different claims. Under the colonial conditions these texts produced a basis for rethinking of the pre-colonial past and the present. There is much ethnographic evidence on the transformation of local folk deities into Brahminical or 'sanskritised' deities. These transformations included dramatic changes in naming of the deity, introduction of new rituals, historical narratives, subtle but important shifts towards an image and a corresponding change in the appointment of Brahmin priests.

On the other side were the interventions of the colonial state through temple legislations. Although the 'invention of tradition' had a long history, this process of theological choreography, whereby local deities were subsumed under a Brahminical pantheon and given histories as Puranic divinities, was still underway. This work systematically builds the case that without these ongoing transformations, the temple conflicts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and even until the present, would undoubtedly have taken a very different direction. Especially important was the way in which the colonial state intervened. The colonial state was concerned about the material resources of the temple and the frequent complaints about the mismanagement of the temple properties by the *mahajans* invited the attention of the administration. In 1851, the first temple commission, headed by the prominent GSB, Purshottam Shenvi Kenkre, was appointed to suggest measures to administer the temples. These efforts led to the first temple law of 1858 that privileged the *mahajans* as the founders of the deity and transformed their role from individuals in-charge of the temple administration to 'owners' of the temple and its material resources, with the claims firmly established in lineages. In 1866, the second temple legislation was enacted, with temple administrative structures defined, rights of *mahajans* codified and their authority consolidated.

During the major part of the nineteenth century, although the colonial state made attempts to bring discipline and order to the administration of temples, the rules were regularly flouted. More importantly, as the temples failed to draft the *compromisso*, perhaps due to the competition and conflicts over the position of *mahajans*, the attitude of the colonial state towards this was a pragmatic one. Ad hoc decisions were made concerning the temple's administration and GSB individuals were increasingly appointed over various temple committees. It will be easier to understand this representation if we better understand colonial conditions. As the laws accelerated the process of record-keeping and the expansion of paper use, it was the GSBs with their writing skills who benefitted. Besides, it involved an economic advantage for the state as temples had to pay taxes. Subsequently, these new mechanisms were portrayed as historical features. They placed the GSBs in an unprecedented position within the society as one of the most important individuals and played a central role in establishing their right over the temple.

In 1886, the third temple law was formulated with a clear policy, and its subsequent amendments were framed in the context of a deepening concern that the temples were losing material resources. It led to a firmer jurisdiction of an administrative authority on the *mazania*. Further the rights of the *mahajans* could be inscribed only through the *compromisso* and communities were encouraged to formulate their *mahajan* rights in a mutually antagonistic way. Any claim points to an awareness of how important it was to draft a *compromisso*. These new interventions converged with caste identities, in which the temples played a central role, and together they served as one of the most important foundations for the assertion of socio-cultural and political identity. As part of this transformation, the temples were recognised by all communities as essential organs of influence and they began to be refigured as the inalienable attributes of community identities. Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century, the temple and the village were mobilised to act as the fundamental basis of a caste identity. An additional dimension to the study is afforded by the temple conflicts. Of special interest, therefore, are the Shantadurga temple of Cumbarjua, Rudreshwar at Arvalem, Ananta at Savoi-Verem and Mahalaxmi of Panjim, that help to make more visible these historical processes. In a society constituted of unstable hierarchies under a colonial dispensation, their account is therefore a paradigmatic one.

All of these processes have indirectly shaped the Bahujan Samaj in post-Liberation Goa, and with the success of the MGP in the 1963, 1967 and 1972 elections, Bahujan ideology emerged as a new foundational category. By tracing the specific processes through which Bahujan

ideology came to be available for reorganisation of interests, I have made clearer the historical shifts. The work has argued against the idea that there is a natural alliance between lower castes. While the ideology of the non-Brahmin found its prominence in the early decades of the twentieth century, these new assumptions failed to converge into a political identity. Especially important was the way in which differences between the non-Brahmin castes, brought into play through claims for an upward mobility, led to growing expectations and irreconcilable splits among these communities. As a result, the issues of 'dominance' took a back seat to the central use of the Bahujan ideology, and claims for caste mobility emerged as the principle around which mobilisations took place.

However, even with these limitations, the argument put forth by this study is that without the construction of identities that had already occurred, and subsequently, the charisma of Dayanand Bandodkar, the first elections to Goa would have taken a very different direction. It was important, the way in which Bandodkar deployed the symbol of the Maratha ruler Shivaji and Maratha identity towards consolidation of these communities and pushing forward the idea that they existed not in hostility, but more or less in parallel with one another. Bandodkar's other transformations included dramatic changes such as land reforms, establishment of schools and the rise of the new middle-class among these non-Brahmin communities. More importantly, the aspirations and assertions of the non-Brahmin communities, in turn, further helps us to see how the rise of the Padmanabha Sampradaya and other orders, the transformation of village deities, the claims to temples and Maharashtrawad are historically situated. Such a perspective draws attention not only to the rise of the Bahujan as a foundational category for political and cultural organisation, but also to its potential decline.

What is obvious, however, is that once the Bahujan ideology had demonstrated its success as a method of political mobilisation, the newly emerged middle-class leaders were quick to adopt this ideology. However, their caste identity became just a convenient foundation for their political assertion. Thus, Bahujan ideology has not always been empowered as a foundation for identification in quite the same ways that it had been during Bandodkar's period. Indeed, recent evidence suggests that Bahujan ideology is closely related to 'class' interests and may well be beginning to see its legitimacy wane slightly. This has forced these communities to form the Gomantak Bahujan Mahasangh. It is only by tracing the multiple historical forces that have

helped to produce the identities that we can fully understand the process of the making of the Bahujan Samaj.

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