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MIGRATION AND DOMINATION

Gauda Saraswat Brahmanas
of South Western India

Nagendra Rao

Introduction

The concern of the present chapter is with the migration of a large number of Gauda Saraswat Brahmanas (GSBs) who settled down in coastal Karnataka after the arrival of the Portuguese in Goa in the sixteenth century, leading to the involuntary migration of this trading community.¹ It also deals with the argument of Tambs-Lyche who suggested that GSBs were considered as outsiders, subordinate to the host society, and had a subaltern status. It is interesting that the GSBs have been termed as capitalists on the one hand and subalterns on the other (Tambs-Lyche, 2011, 2018). Apparently, there is the intermixture of social and economic argument here, showing that the economically dominant group is not necessarily the socially dominant one. However, one needs to look at this problem in the light of the literature concerning the diaspora and migration theories. This chapter argues that the GSBs had a dominant economic position. As they had a dominant economic position, they need not be considered as inferior and having a subaltern status. On the other hand, the other migrant groups such as the Kharvis (the fisher folk) had an inferior caste status in coastal Karnataka (Rao, 2017).²

The GSBs as the Migrant Community

It has been suggested that the migrant groups generally bring with them the memory of the homeland, desire to return to the perceived homeland, speak a distinct language, thereby preserving its own cultural identity.³ While these features are generally found in transnational migration, they may not be apparent in the regional or internal migration. The GSBs, in their writings, recount their migration from Goa due to the atrocities committed by the Portuguese (for example, see Baliga, 2011, p. 24). This policy of the Portuguese could be one of the many factors that led to the migration of the GSBs from Goa and not the only factor responsible for this development. The present study deals with the internal migration and not international migration. It may be termed as representing the transregional migration as there is a geographical continuity between Goa and Karnataka.⁴ It is true that in the collective memory there is the image of Goa, the homeland of the GSBs. There is the memory of the circumstances under which the GSBs were "forced" to migrate from Goa to Karnataka. Also, every year, the GSBs visit the temples of Goa where their *kuladevatas*

(family deity) are placed. In the GSB writings, there is the image of Goa, as its history, ancient customs and traditions, Goan culture, folk practices, and so on, are recorded.

Even though one may consider migration of the GSBs as representing an involuntary migration category, one may also argue that this was a quasi-voluntary migration. This is because there were two simultaneous developments or push and pull factors. First, there was the emergence of the Portuguese in Goa who initiated the policy of conversion, discriminating between Hindus and Catholics, compelling the GSBs to migrate from Goa to Karnataka in large numbers.⁵ Second, along with the migration of the GSBs, there was a major development in Karnataka. That is the rise of the Keladi kingdom, which unlike its predecessor Vijayanagara, encouraged maritime and coastal trade.⁶ This was an important opportunity for the GSBs, the traditional trading community, which was encouraged by the Keladi kings, despite the fact that the Keladi kings were the Virashaivas. They despised the traditional business community of the region, the Jainas.⁷ The kings were looking for a business community to replace the Jainas, and they found the GSBs as the perfect replacement. There were the push and pull factors that led to the migration of the GSBs from Goa to Karnataka.⁸ The push factor relates to the Portuguese policy of conversion. The pull factor refers to the encouragement of the GSBs in Karnataka where there was the need for a "merchant caste," particularly in the coastal belt of Karnataka.

It has been suggested that the relationship between the state and the business community, which allowed the migrant community to emerge as the politically powerful group, having enormous powers should be studied (Chamie, 2008, p. 29). The migration of the GSBs may be deemed as a state induced migration as the Portuguese state in Goa forced the GSBs to migrate from Goa and the Keladi state in Karnataka induced them to consider Karnataka as their new homeland.⁹

Trade diaspora is the term used to refer to the migration of the large number of members of a trading community and their dispersal in various regions of macro territory (Dale, 1994, p. 2). However, the diasporic community remains at the lower end of the social hierarchy, an example being the Jews in west Asia, who were considered outsiders. At the same time, as suggested by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, the politically powerful group cannot be considered as representing a trade diaspora (Subrahmanyam, 2000, p. vi). The community that became part of the trade diaspora had minority status and lacked the political and social powers. The Christian, Muslim, and Jewish migration to India may be considered as a part of a trade diaspora. In this sense, the GSBs may not be considered as the diasporic group. However, when Indians cross the border and reach an alien land, it may be considered as a diaspora, where they generally have a subordinate position. However, the GSBs in Karnataka did not politically and economically have an inferior position. Indeed, they had political authority backed by the local population, which supported the GSBs for their construction of Venkataramana temples in coastal Karnataka. This is proved by an inscription which refers to the Venkataramana temple built by Narayana Mallya in the service of the king Adashiva Nayaka. The king gave a grant to the temple constructed by Narayana Mallya. The inscription dating from 1674 ce was found in Partagali *matha* of Goa (Jois, 2011, pp. 294–296). It shows the continued relationship between the GSBs of Karnataka and Goa.

Most of the migration studies have looked at the lower caste labour groups that migrated from one region to the other (Mishra, 2016). Such groups, even in the modern urban centres, have a lower position in the society, unlike the GSBs. Such studies differentiate between outsiders and insiders, blaming the migrants for the increased crime rates and social problems (Scambler, 2020). The emergence of such groups of people from villages to the towns within India resulted in the migration of the subordinate groups (Kadri & Datta, 2023). However, this trend is not noticeable in the migration of the upper-caste groups such as the Brahmanas. Here we may note that the GSBs have a Brahmanical status, which allowed them to migrate.

Brahmanical rituals, even though they belong to the lower hierarchy of the Brahmanical communities of Southwestern India.

It is true that in the initial stage of migration of an individual or a group, there is a possibility of the conflict between the migrants and the host society. However, over a period they are likely to understand each other, leading to the emergence of a composite and multicultural society, that speaks different languages and belongs to different cultures. In the case of the GSBs they were traders. It has been suggested that the traders had the inclination to accommodate and accept alien culture more than non-traders. This is because the traders aim to enhance their profits and seek for customer satisfaction. In such a situation, there is a greater possibility of assimilation of the traders as the migrant community with the host society (Swain, 2006, p. 10; see also Tambe, 2018). It is suggested that the three stages of the migrant and the host society's relationship are represented by "conflict, accommodation and assimilation" (Swain, 2006, p. 11). It is also suggested that "... migrants who have passed through a cycle of contact, competition, and conflict worked out their way to accommodation, assimilation and finally merged into the receiving group" (Swain, 2006, p. 11). If one applies this theory of migration in the context of the GSB migration to coastal Karnataka one can suggest that there was the adjustment and assimilation with the host society. Consequently the GSBs who migrated and settled in coastal Karnataka hundreds of years before the present time cannot be considered as outsiders, as they have become part of the local society.

It is true that the GSBs did remember their homeland, and return to Goa every year to visit their temples. They have the opportunity to return to their homeland Goa. It is true that there is occasional relocation of the GSBs from Karnataka to Goa. At the same time, there are not large number of instances of the GSBs leaving Karnataka and returning to their homeland in Goa.

Konkani, and not the Kannada and Tulu the languages spoken by the majority population in coastal Karnataka, is the language of this migrant community. By speaking Konkani and consuming fish, the GSBs maintain distance from other social groups in the host society (Bairi, 2010, p. 194). At the same time, it would be problematic to suggest that this identity is imposed on them by the host society. It is the decision of the GSBs to remain aloof from other social groups.

The GSBs are connected with their homeland in terms of remembering their stay in Goa 500 years before the migration to Karnataka. At the same time, there are some discontinuities. For example, in Goa they have built temples for the deities such as Shantadurga, Mahamai, Rawalnath and other local deities. Shantadurga represents the transformation of the anthills into a puranic deity (Xavier, 2010, p. 35). This cult also represents the amalgamation of the Brahmanical and non-brahmanical elements. In fact, one can argue for sanskritisation of the non-brahmanical deities here.¹⁰

The GSBs in Goa took the lead in the "flight of the deities" (Axelrod & Fuerch, 1996) when they migrated from the Old Conquest Goa to the New Conquest region which was free from Portuguese rule. There is not much distance between the Old Conquest and New Conquest regions of Goa,¹¹ as a river or any other natural boundary could separate them. It was in Ponda that there was the emergence of a large number of temples in Goa. However, what is interesting is that the GSBs who took the local deities with them within Goa, did not seem to have continued the worship of such deities in the temples when they migrated to coastal Karnataka.

In Goa, there are not many Venkataramana temples. One temple, which is located in Ponda, has been a modern creation and it seems to be dependent on funds from the migrant GSBs and other Konkani-speaking individuals. It might have emerged due to the patronage given by the GSBs who settled in Karnataka and other parts of South India. However, in Karnataka they constructed a large number of Venkataramana and Padmavati temples, as they were influenced by the Madhwa Vaishnavism, thereby showing a break between the GSBs in Goa and GSBs in Karnataka. It also

shows that they had adapted the local non-Brahmanical deities in Goa but there was no compulsion in Karnataka to patronise such deities. Moreover, it was also an attempt to enhance their social hierarchy in their adopted land. Thereby, they competed with the local Brahmanas.

Even though the GSBs speak Konkani in Karnataka, they also frequently converse in Kannada and Tulu, to the extent of producing stalwarts such as Manjeshwara Govinda Pai, Girish Karnad, and Jayant Kaikini and others who have contributed immensely to the growth of local literature and culture. They have also participated in the local political and social movements. For example, the GSBs have participated in the freedom struggle. They have been the beneficiaries of colonial modernity, as they received education and established their enterprises.¹² In fact, they were one of the first to establish banks in this region, the Canara and Syndicate banks being the most important examples.

It has been suggested that the diasporic group generally establishes its own cultural identity, which enables it to distinguish itself from the host society (Bala, 2015). This is generally done as a conscious defensive exclusionist strategy. Marriage within the migrant community is one way of preserving their identity. In this case, if the GSBs maintain distance from the host society, it is a voluntary decision, not something, which is imposed on this migrant group by the host society.

Apparently, the GSBs have a socially inferior status, but so do also many other Brahmanical groups in the region, which have been termed fallen Brahmanas. These consist of the dominant Brahmanical traditions such as *Sahyadri Khanda*, an example being the Sthanika Brahmanas, who had a higher status under royal patronage in the pre-modern period and lost their caste status due to the loss of royal patronage and the emergence of colonial modernity, leading to the rise of different traditional elites. If the GSBs have an inferior social position, this is not something found only with reference to their case. Many other groups such as the Havyaks and Karad Brahmanas, for different reasons, have inferior status, mainly because they are not priestly communities (Pereira, 1973, p. 13).

The GSBs were also not the priests, even though they fought to obtain such a right with the Keladi kings. Eventually, they failed to obtain the right to act as the priests of other Brahmanical groups. But there is no objection for them to provide priestly services to their own community. The Shenvis, among the GSBs were considered the priestly group. There are linguistic and dietary differences between Konkanis, as the GSBs are called in Karnataka and the local Shivalli and Kota Brahmanas, the most dominant Brahmanical groups of the region. The Konkanis are despised because they eat fish, while the local Brahmanas do not.

Migration of social groups in India is not a modern development (Chatterji & Washbrook, 2013; Divekar, 1984, p. 83). People have migrated within India in the past. The GSBs, in this sense, were not the exception, as there are many other groups that migrated from one region to the other. For example, we find the migration of the trading groups such as the Gujarati banias and the Rajasthan Marwaris from their homeland to a new settlement, in search of green pastures. Several artisan groups such as the Devangas migrated (Ramaswamy, 2016a, p. 175). In the same way, we find the Telugu Komatis migrating from Andhra to Karnataka and Tamil Nadu (Srinivas, 1976, p. 164). It has been shown that in Maharashtra there were no dominant Indigenous mercantile communities. In Mumbai, this led to the rise of the Gujaratis and Parsis as the major trading group (Palsetia, 2001). The GSBs, even though they migrated to Maharashtra, could not compete with these dominant trading groups.

Another important question is regarding the Brahmanas acting as traders, in contravention of the traditional caste system rules of India (Yashsuri et al., 2022, p. 67). Brahmanas performing business functions could be found in not only South Kanara but also in other parts of India such as Gujarat, and we may cite the example of the Nagar Brahmanas who acted as traders, bankers,

and businessmen (Roy, 2018, p. 112). In Kerala, there were the Payyari Brahmanas, who originally came from Karnataka, and they functioned as moneylenders (Singh, 1975, p. 40). While a rigid caste system, having different watertight compartments, is considered a colonial construction, scholars have attempted to represent caste system of India as moulded by regional pressures, cultures, and lifestyles (Dirks, 2001, p. 5). Consequently, the GSBs were not the only Brahmanas who functioned as traders. In the ancient and medieval period, the Brahmana traders were active in the trans-south Indian trade guild Ayyavole Five Hundred which originated in Karnataka and spread to Tamil Nadu (Abraham, 1988; Champakalakshmi, 1996). We find the Tamil Pattar traders who were the Brahmanas and they functioned as traders in Kerala (Malekandathil, 2022, p. 258). In fact, the Brahmanas functioned as the administrators, traders, officials, clerks, farmers, artisans, and so on. It shows that all the Brahmanas could not function as the priests. Not all Brahmanas had a superior economic and social positions. A poor Brahmana, who acts as a priest, may have higher social status, while a rich Brahmana who acts as a trader has a lower social status. However, there is one difference between other Brahmanas and the GSBs. Generally, the Brahmanas in South India did not consume fish, while GSBs were in fact accused of consuming fish, considered as a non-vegetarian food by the local society. The GSBs were not the only Brahmana community to consume fish. We find the Bengali Brahmanas also consume fish. Some north Indian Brahmanas may in fact consume non-vegetarian food, and at the same time maintaining their Brahmanical status.

There have been a few works that discussed the migration of the Brahmanas and the challenges that they faced in the host society. Frank Conlon, for example, discussed the Saraswat unification movement and the attempt made by them to deal with conflicts among the various Brahmanical groups (Conlon, 1974).¹³ Tambs-Lyche argues that the GSBs had an inferior status as they were outsiders and they were the only bourgeoisie group in this region (Tambs-Lyche, 2018). In fact, he compares them with the Jews, who were displaced from their homeland. While the Jews faced far more severe challenges, the GSBs did not experience such dangerous situations. They have established themselves eternally in coastal Karnataka and have become a part of the host society. At the same time, in any region one can find competition between social groups to achieve domination. The exclusive caste identity, has in fact, allowed the GSBs to establish an efficient commercial network, which enabled them to hone their commercial skills. At the same time, there is no institutional force that prevents them from becoming part of the mainstream society.

Interestingly, even though the GSBs did enjoy a dominant economic position in Goa, they had to struggle to obtain a higher social position. This is because they dedicated themselves to agriculture and trade, while ignoring their religious function, thereby reducing their position in comparison to other Brahmana categories that performed the priestly functions. In fact, as discussed by Angela Barreto Xavier, in Chora village, Goa, the GSBs were accused of losing their caste status for marriage with a non-Brahmana. (Xavier, 2022, p. 305). The presence of a large number of stories concerning the fallen status of the Brahmanical groups including the GSBs in the Brahmanical text *Sahyadri Khanda* shows the lower social position of at least a few GSB groups in Goa (Levitt, 2017b, p. 10). Lack of inclination on the part of the GSBs to perform the priestly function was mainly responsible for their comparatively lower status within Brahmanical society. At the same time, when the Shenvis, who belonged to the GSB community, performed the priestly functions including teaching students in the traditional *pathashalas* or schools they obtained a higher social position (Keni, 1998, p. 64).

One also notes a few connections between Goa and Karnataka. In the pre-Portuguese period, Goa was ruled by the dynasties that trace their origin to Karnataka, such as the Goa Shilaharas, Goa Kadambas, and the Vijayanagara (Moraes, 1990). Naturally, they preserved their records in

Kannada, which was used by the Goans for their land records and village community documents. For example, this is found in the records of the village community of Doncolim. It is said that the Goans used the Goykannadi script or the Goa Kannada version of it.¹⁴ However, today the GSBs use Devanagari script to write Konkani in Goa. At the same time, the GSBs use Kannada script in Karnataka to write Konkani, thereby showing their assimilation with the local society. Consequently, when they were expelled from Goa, the GSBs chose Karnataka as their new home. Considering the long-term association of the GSBs with the Karnataka and the political powers, it is not entirely correct to suggest that they were outsiders with a subaltern status in Karnataka.

In Goa, studies by Teotonio R. De Souza, Panduranga Pissurlencar, and M. N. Pearson have shown that the GSBs had a dominating presence particularly in the economic sector (de Souza, 2009; Pissurlencar, 1936; Pissurlencar, 1933; Pearson, 1981). This is because the Portuguese, though insisted on the conversion of the non-Christians to Christianity, had to depend on the Hindu traders, as the Portuguese who had settled on the coastal regions of Southwestern India could not reach the hinterland to obtain supplies of pepper, rice, and other commodities essential for their survival in their settlements both in India and West Asia.¹⁵ In this situation, it was inevitable that the Portuguese had to accept the assistance of the GSBs who were allowed to practise their religion. The Portuguese records inform us that the GSBs represented Portuguese interest in Malabar and Kanara when they went there as the traders to procure commodities needed by the Portuguese. Second, the GSBs also acted as diplomats of the Portuguese as they bargained with the Keladi king and the king of Mysore.

The GSBs as the Dominant Community in Karnataka

The GSBs were hired not only by the Keladi kings but also by a local chieftain named Bangas of Mangalore to represent him while negotiating for support from the Portuguese (Pissurlencar, 1953a, p. 99).¹⁶ The close proximity with the ruling authority enhanced the status of the GSBs in Goa. At the same time, the GSBs in Goa did not act as priests. They were content with their performance as the traders. As they did not function as the priests, the GSBs found it difficult to obtain highest social position even in Goa. We should also note that the GSBs claimed that they had migrated from Eastern India to the western coast and to Goa. It shows that Goa is also not their original home, where they had settled on a permanent basis (Pereira, 2008, p. 29). The GSBs faced issues with other Brahmanical categories that claimed that they were superior as they had knowledge of the Vedas and did not consume fish. It shows that the GSBs did not have a very high social status in Goa, their homeland before they migrated to Kanara (Levitt, 2017a, p. 154). They attempted to improve their social status by writing *Konkanakhyana* (Anonymous, 2001).

The proximity of the GSBs to the ruling authority is found not only in Goa but also in Karnataka. It was under the Keladi kings that the GSBs obtained this significant position. The Portuguese sources and the foreign travellers' accounts mention this dominating position of the GSBs. The *Livro de Cartazes* or the book of permits available in the Goa archives provides information regarding the GSBs and their role in inter-regional and international trade. They owned the ships, even though they cannot be compared with those owned by the Gujarati merchants. The records mention a few traders such as Custa Paddiar, Babu Hegado, Rama Poy, Ganay Sinay, Bapaya Sinay who had settled in the regions such as Kundapur and Basrur. Some of these traders have been specifically labelled as Brahmanas. At the same time, we find some GSBs who had operated between Goa and Kanara. The GSB traders also maintained a trade relationship with the Gujarati traders and ports such as Surat. Furthermore, they exported pepper to international trade centres such as Mecca.

Congo, and Ormuz. By dominating the pepper trade, the GSBs were able to enhance their prosperity (Historical Archives of Goa, *Livro de Cartazes*, MS no. 1363; Rao, 2006, p. 151).

Based on the wealth that they accumulated, the GSBs demanded a better social status in the Keladi kingdom. In fact, if we accept the authenticity of the Shringeri temple records as studied by A. K. Shastri, there was a tussle between the GSBs and the local dominant Brahmanas regarding the right of the GSBs to perform various Brahmanical ceremonies. It is shown that the king Venkatappa Nayaka, in the early seventeenth century, granted the right of worship to the Konkans. However, this decision was severely opposed by the local Brahmanas. The king succumbed to the pressure applied by the local Brahmanas. It was argued that the GSBs or the Konkans acted as the Vaishyas. However, in one instance, a GSB was allowed to become a disciple of a religious leader or swami of a leading *matha*. This was challenged by the local Brahmanas. Consequently, the GSB in question Ramakrishna Seni was summoned and the Konkans were asked to pay a fine. At the same time, we may note that the GSBs had approached several *mathas* in an attempt to secure the right to perform puja like the *pancha dravida* Brahmanas (Shastri, 2009, p. 91).¹⁷ It is also claimed that the Keladi king Shivappa Nayaka issued an order stating that the GSBs should be treated like other Brahmanas of this kingdom (Shenoy, 1977, p. 11).

There is not much difference between the GSB political status in Goa and Karnataka. In both regions they acted as the traders and diplomats. In the process, the GSBs must have earned huge political clout and wealth. Consequently, they constructed a few Vaishnava temples in Karnataka. The rise of GSBs in Kanara is also due to the change in the ruling dynasty from the Vijayanagaras to the Keladis. The Vijayanagara tolerated the Jainas in Karnataka, who had to put up with anti-Jaina movement in northern Karnataka (Devadevan, 2016, p. 34). In south coastal Karnataka, it was the minor local ruling families such as the Pandyas of Karkala, Bangas, Chautas, and the Ajilas who supported the Jainas (Bhat, 1998, p. 24). However, the Keladi kings were able to emerge as the most dominant political authority in this region. The Keladi kings were the Virashaivas who had taken an anti-Jaina stance, which led to the decline of Jainas who previously provided service to the state as the trading community.¹⁸ We may consider the Jainas as the merchant community or the bourgeoisie. The Keladi kings needed a trading community to replace the Jainas. They found the GSBs as the convenient replacement. In fact, the Keladi kings tolerated the GSBs even though they were mostly Vaishnavas. The ability of the GSBs to interact with the traders and the political authority in Goa also helped the enhanced status of the GSBs. During the period between sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the GSBs in Karnataka emerged as major business elite thanks to royal patronage. This shows that on the one hand, the GSBs were forced to leave Goa and on the other they found the support of the Keladi kings. The GSBs earned enormous wealth and invested their capital in land and trade. What the GSBs lacked was the social status. They yearned for equality with the local Brahmana priests. However, as the GSBs functioned as traders they were regarded as performing the function of the Vaishyas. On the other hand, the Shivalli and the Kota Brahmanas who performed the priestly functions obtained a higher social status than the GSBs and other Brahmana categories such as Havyaks, Sthanikas, Karad, and Chitpavans. The Havyaks speak their own form of Kannada called Havyak Kannada. Karad and the Chitpavans speak a form of Marathi. The latter are the migrants from Maharashtra. Compared to the Karads and Chitpavans, the GSBs have a much better political and economic position. The Karads and the Chitpavans generally functioned as the agriculturists and never ventured into the field of trade (Siraj, 2012, p. 178). We should also note that the Sthanikas, a local Brahmanical community, have a low position in traditional Brahmanical society (Vasanthamadhava, 2003). The Shivalli Brahmanas do not enter into marriages with the Sthanikas, Karads, Chitpavans, Havyaks, and the GSBs.¹⁹ It shows that the GSBs were not alone in being refused the highest social status. The Shivalli Brahmanas have

the highest social status because they function as priests in eight *mathas* that were constructed by Madhwacharya.²⁰ Like the Madhwa brahmanas, the Shivalli Brahmanas have obtained the highest position. At the same time, economically the GSBs have a significant position.

Konkani is the mother tongue of the GSBs and they are fluent in Kannada, their adopted language. There is no restriction on the GSBs to invest in any sector. Their presence is found generally in the car streets of Udupi, Mangalore, and other towns. Among the GSBs, there are large business leaders, middling traders, and small traders.

Even though the GSBs originally came from Goa, they have become part of society in Karnataka. This assimilation of the GSBs is revealed by their assumption of the place names in their names. For example, they have adopted the place names such as Ammunje, Tonse, Ammem-bala, Padukone, Karnad, and so on. This may be the continuation of their practice of taking place names as their surnames. For example, in Goa there are names such as Salgaonkar, Bambolkar, Raikar, and so on, depending on the place where they settled in a particular region for a longer period of time.

GSBs as Outsiders and Subalterns?

Tambs-Lyche argues that the GSBs have been regarded as outsiders. Thereby, the argument is that the GSBs have a subaltern status. At the same time, they are considered as the bourgeoisie and they are not integrated with the mainstream society.

In the traditional varna hierarchy, the Vaishyas were considered as the merchant caste while the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, and the Sudras performed priestly, warrior, and service functions respectively. However, such rigid adherence to the varna rules is not observed by most Hindus. This is because over a period, they were compelled to take up occupations that did not suit their varna status. The Brahmanas participated in non-Brahmanical activities, so the Brahmanas acting as the traders is not a new phenomenon.

There is evidence to suggest that the Brahmanas indulged in non-Brahmanical activities. The text *Sahyadri Khanda* has several stories about fallen Brahmanas (da Cunha, 1877). In the context of Goa, there is reference to a category of GSBs losing their caste status due to marriage with a non-Brahmana (Xavier, 2022, pp. 211–12). The inscriptions of Karnataka refer to the Ayyavole Five Hundred, which comprised the Brahmana traders (Abraham, 1988). It also questions the argument of Max Weber that the Indian caste system did not allow the emergence of capitalism in India (Weber & Mills, 2009, p. 96). Consequently, the Brahmanas' participation in trade did not affect their caste status. The GSBs continue to remain as Brahmanas. Consequently, it is not proper to state that the GSBs are the merchant caste, which affects their Brahmanical status. On other hand, the GSBs have been demanding equality with other Brahmanical groups that functioned as the priests. Furthermore, before the emergence of the GSBs in the region, it was the Jains who acted as the trading community. The Muslims also provided services in the coastal regions as merchants trading with overseas trade centres. The Bunts, in the modern period, have emerged as a major business group. It is true that most of the GSBs function as traders, but a few of them work as priests and provide service to their own community. The GSBs have their *mathas* and autonomous religious identity. The distinct ethnic identity has in fact allowed them to maintain unity.

The GSBs of Goa and Karnataka continue to maintain a relationship with each other as they are part of the religious institutions called *mathas* or the monasteries. There are three *mathas*, Kaivalya *matha*, Kashi *matha*, and Gokarn *matha*. Kashi *matha* has followers in Kerala and south

coastal Karnataka. Gokarna *matha* has followers in Goa and coastal Karnataka. Kaivalya *matha* caters to the needs of people of Goa and Maharashtra.²¹ The GSBs attend the meetings of the *mathas* and exchange information concerning the problems faced by their communities in their regions. Through this process, the GSBs are able to maintain an element of unity and remain unaffected by the challenges that they face in the host society.

Unlike many inter-regional migrations seen in comparatively small number, the GSBs migrated in large numbers to coastal Karnataka, thereby emerging as an influential social group in this region. We should also consider the distribution of the Konkani-speaking population in urban and rural centres of South Kanara. Generally, “outsiders” and the “bourgeoisie” live in the urban centres. However, in 1951, around 170,000 Konkani-speaking people lived in rural areas while only 66,000 of those who spoke Konkani lived in towns in South Kanara. While 230,000 people in South Kanara spoke Konkani, around 300,000 spoke Kannada (Census Handbook, 1953, pp. 150–151). Based on this data, it would be difficult to consider the GSBs as minorities. At present there are more than 780,000 Konkani speakers in Karnataka who form the second largest Konkani-speaking population in any state after Goa. According to 2011 census, the Konkani-speaking population in Karnataka has not decreased (Shenoy, 2018).

Khandeparkar (2018) argues that the GSBs in coastal Karnataka were called Konkanis, based on the language that they spoke. He suggests that the GSBs were considered as outsiders and having inferior caste status among the Brahmanas. However, he also suggests that the GSBs faced similar problem in Maharashtra where the Deshastha or the local Brahmanas claimed a superior caste status (Khandeparkar, 2018, pp. 19–20). It shows that Kanara is not the only region that differentiated between different Brahmanical groups. It has been shown that the GSBs had to struggle for a dominant caste status in Goa, their homeland (Patil, 2010, pp. 184–185). The differentiation between the GSBs and the local dominant Brahmanas is also due to the difference between *pancha gauda* and *pancha dravida* (Deshpande, 2010). The GSBs, as members of *pancha gauda* Brahmanical community did not obtain the treatment that they would have had in North India. However, the distance between the GSBs and the local Brahmanas contributed to the GSB unification movement not only within Karnataka but also in the western coast from Maharashtra to Kerala (Conlon, 1974, p. 359). It shows that the GSBs did not have a subaltern status in coastal Karnataka as they strengthened their relationship with other members of their community.

The GSBs have been accepted in different parts of South India, particularly in Karnataka and Kerala (Keni, 2008; Moore, 1905, p. 7). Today, it is not possible to consider them as outsiders. One may note that there are different categories of insiders and outsiders. One such category belongs to the linguistic category. As the GSBs could speak the local language and they lived for several generations in Karnataka and Kerala, they cannot be considered as outsiders. Indeed, in Kerala, in the pre-colonial period the GSBs were termed Kannada traders and some of them used Kannada script in their writings (Shenoy, 1944).

One doubts whether Tulu society considers them as outsiders or not Indigenous. Today, GSBs have become a part of Tulu society. Coastal Karnataka has welcomed so-called outsiders and assimilated them with the Indigenous culture. There has been Kannadisation of Konkani, which explains the reason for the links between Goan and Kanara Konkani (SarDessai, 2000, p. 46). A few of the major social groups have been immigrants. For example, Shivalli Brahmanas, the most dominant Brahmana community of the region, claims that they migrated from Ahicchatra in North India (Liceria, 1974). The GSBs, writing about themselves, do not seem to think that they had an inferior status in coastal Karnataka. For example, the work of Chandrakant Keni, mentioned

earlier, does not mention such status (Keni, 2008).²² In fact, there is an element of pride among the GSB authors concerning the achievements of the GSBs in coastal Karnataka.

Integration of the GSBs with the Host Society

Various methods have been used by the GSBs to become part of the host society so that they would become acceptable to the majority of the population. As they were the business community, it was important for them to obtain such an acceptance. First, the GSBs use Kannada in their conversation with the non-GBSs. Second, the GSBs have given land and money to the temples of Udupi and other regions. By doing so they were able to obtain the support of the local Brahmanas. Third, the GSBs have used local place names along at the cost of their surnames, which was the custom in Goa.

A grant given by a GSB merchant is mentioned in a seventeenth-century inscription in Udupi in Karnataka. The inscription refers to Lingapaya who belonged to Sankuvali *agrahara* of Kolapi *grama* (village). His father is mentioned as Saudeya Chinnavara. Here we find the source of migration. The GSB belonged to Goa and an *agrahara* or a Brahmana settlement in Goa and due to some reason, he migrated to Sode or Sonda in the northern part of coastal Karnataka. He visited the Krishna temple, Udupi, in the seventeenth century and donated 100 gold coins or *gadyana* for the performance of daily rituals (Aiyar, 1932, no. 301). We can mention that the grant of 100 gold coins is a significant number. The inscription shows the Brahmanical status of the donor. As it was given to a premier temple of south coastal Karnataka, the donor was able to obtain acceptance by the local society. Further, it also ensured that he obtained the support of the royalty. In the seventeenth century, the region was ruled by the Keladi kings. The financial importance of the GSBs is also proved by another inscription, which mentions the grant of 160 *dodda varaha* or big gold coins by another GSB named Damarsa Prabhu. He originally belonged to Mathagrama (Madgaon) of Sasashti, which had several Brahmanical villages (Aiyar, 1932, no. 302). The grant was handed over to Vedavadya Tirtha Sripadangal, the seer of the *matha*. Through this donation, the GSB could demand acceptance from the local society. As the Brahmanical status of the GSBs is clearly evident here, one cannot accept the argument that the GSBs, migrants from Goa, had an inferior status in Karnataka.

Another method used by the GSBs to integrate with the local population is by temple construction. While they donated to the large number of temples of other Hindu social groups, the GSBs built their own temples dedicated to Anantashayana, Venkataramana, and Padmavati. We may also note that the local Brahmanas had also built Vaishnava temples in Udupi and other places. The Krishna temple in Udupi is the classic case. It also shows that the migration of the GSBs began after the emergence of Vaishnavism in the region particularly with the rise of Madhwacharya who also visited Goa with a view to convert the Shaivites into the Vaishnava faith (Pereira, 2008, p. 29).

Attempts have been made to write and rewrite the history of migration of the GSBs, their origins, their settlement in Goa and migration to various parts of India. However, nowhere do we have the impression that the GSBs were felt alienated in coastal Karnataka (Keni, 2008; Kudva, 2010; Kamat, 2003).

Conclusion

We have shown that there was not much difference in the status of the GSBs in Goa and Karnataka. The GSBs claimed that due to the Portuguese policy of religious persecution they were forced to migrate from Goa to Karnataka. However, this does not mean that they had an inferior position in

Karnataka. Indeed, they were given exalted positions by the Keladi king and even attempts were made to allow them to indulge in priestly occupations, thereby challenging the dominant position of the local Kota and Shivalli Brahmanas. The GSBs could not marry dominant Brahmanas. However, they were not alone in belonging to this category. Several other Brahmanical groups such as the Sthanikas, Pancha Gramas, Havyaks, Karads, and Chitpavans could not enter into marriage with the Shivalli Brahmanas. In fact, this exclusion allowed the GSBs to strengthen their relationship with GSBs in Goa and Maharashtra. The GSBs, apart from being the dominant group in the local society, made significant contributions to growth of the society and economy of Karnataka. The GSBs assimilated with the society of coastal Karnataka.

We also need to note that the GSBs were not the only community that migrated from Goa to Karnataka. There was also the migration of the Kharvis, goldsmiths or Sonars, and Christians. Compared to these groups, the GSBs enjoyed a better social status. This is due to the Brahmanical status of the GSBs on the one hand and their economic position on the other. Perhaps one of the greatest achievements of the GSBs in coastal Karnataka has been the establishment of the medical college in Manipal, which is at present managed by Manipal Academy of Higher Education. It shows that the GSBs have been at the core of the society and economy of coastal Karnataka and the attempt to marginalise and peripheralise them is likely to fail.

Notes

1. Regarding the Portuguese policy of conversion, see (de Costa 1965; de Mendonça, 2002; Borges, 2002; Henn, 2014).
2. The Kharvis, like the GSBs claim that they migrated to coastal Karnataka due to Portuguese oppression. However, they have lower social and economic positions in coastal Karnataka when compared with the GSBs who have the Brahmanical caste status.
3. Some of these features are listed in N. Jayaram (2004, p. 16); see also Rai and Reeves (2009, p. 1); Chatterji and Washbrook (2013, p. 4).
4. Regarding transregional migration, see Upadhyay, Rutten, and Koskimaki (2018).
5. Regarding such discriminatory laws, see Priolkar (1998, p. 114).
6. Regarding the rise of the Keladi kingdom in Karnataka, see Shastri (2000).
7. For the attitude of the Virashaivas towards the Jainas, see Glasenapp (1999, p. 72).
8. Regarding push and pull factor of migration see Jayaram (2004, p. 24).
9. Regarding state induced migration see, Ramaswamy (2016b, p. 4).
10. Some of the non-Brahmanical deities were Kalapurush, Betal, Vetāl, Ravalnath, Santeri (also called Shantadurga), Ksetrapal, Gramapurush, Karya Santeri, Kukumb, Goapurush, Kulapurush, barajan, and so on, see Keni (2008, pp. 393–396).
11. Territories such as Ilhas, Salcete, and Bardez of Goa, which were conquered by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century were called Old Conquest area, while the regions beyond them such as Bicholim, Canacona, Sanquelim, which were conquered by the Portuguese in the eighteenth century were called the New Conquest area. It shows that the GSBs had the opportunity to migrate to the New Conquest area. However, as they were looking for new commercial opportunities, they decided to migrate to coastal Karnataka in large numbers.
12. Regarding colonial modernity, see Barlow (1997).
13. He shows that the GSB was not a monolith and a homogenous group as the Sasasthikars and vaishnavites were more prosperous due to trade. However, they presented a unified face when they dealt with the non-GBSs (Conlon, 1974, p. 354).
14. The Mhamai records were written in the Modi Kannada script. See de Souza (1980, pp. 435–445); Regarding Goykanadi records see Ghantakar (1993).
15. For example, in 1631 a GSB Vithula Naik was sent to the Bijapur kingdom to obtain the supply of salt-petre. See HAG, *Assentos do Fazenda*, III, f. 36–37. Rama Keni was another GSB who was involved in the supply of 1200 khandis or 2,64,000 kgs of rice from Kanara to Goa. Due to the scarcity of rice, Goa depended on Kanara for rice supply. See HAG, *Assentos da Fazenda*, IV, f. 170. The trade relationship

- that existed between Goa and Kanara further strengthened the relationship between the GSBs in those regions. It also led to marriages between the people of these regions. Consequently, the GSBs are not completely helpless or without support when in difficulties in coastal Karnataka. Also see HAG, *Assentos do Fazenda*, V, f. 155 for 1641. This situation is found in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as revealed by the archival sources. Also see Biker (1884, p. 281).
16. There is a reference to Ishvara Sinay, the ambassador of the Banga king. Also see Pissurlencar (1953b, p. 456). There is a reference to Vitula Sinay as the ambassador of the king of Keladi.
 17. In this chapter, the Brahmanas of Goa are addressed as Saraswata.
 18. An inscription mentions that the due to harassment by the Keladi officials, the Jaina traders had to leave Modabidure, an important Jaina settlement in the region (see Jois, 2011, p. 138.).
 19. They have been considered as endogamous Brahmanas. See Rao (2012, p. 296).
 20. Regarding Shivalli Brahmanas, see Rao (2005).
 21. GSB Konkani, "Maths and Shri Swamijis." Retrieved on 20/01/2021 from <http://www.gsbkonkani.net/>
 22. Further the author, who is from this region, during the course of his interaction with the local GSBs did not perceive such an opinion.

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