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There is a sharp turn of events in the Parasurama tale that the old citpavan bhat from Chiplun narrated to Crawford. "The whole of the hard won Konkani was still but sparsely populated when Shri Pareshram, then in distant Burmah, received constant reports from the birds of the air, ever his messengers, that it were well that his godship should visit the region he had won from Samudra which sadly lacked governing and guiding, especially a guiding priesthood." Parasurama quickly wended his way back, and deeply moved by the plight of the people, got some dry foam of the ocean brought to him, and cast it over the ground around him. "Handsome young men, fair in complexion, with green grey eyes, clad in saffron coloured robes, arose miraculously from the ground and prostrated themselves before him." Parasurama gave them a command, a land to possess and prosper and a promise: "Ye are to be the spiritual guides of the Konkani people, to teach them and to protect them from other gods. To you I give these seven meadows of rich soil and seven lakes from which to irrigate them. Obey my behests religiously, honestly, and ye shall never die." But Parasurama, Crawford continues, soon regretted his doing. The birds brought him intelligence of the oppressions and licentiousness by the citpavan he had created and set over Konkani, 'making of themselves a nuisance to mankind'. They began to doubt Parasurama's promise and sought to test him. That enraged the latter and he cursed them to die. [Crawford, 1909: Legends of The Konkani, 30]

Two bramhانا feature in the old bhat's tale: the desastha and the citpavan; the latter are also known as konkanasth. The desastha bramhانا are clearly those who hail from Deccan across the Sahyadri; the bhat categorically calls them 'Deshast Brahmins from above the Ghauts'. These are the bramhانا who migrated into the Deccan crossing the Vindhya, having moved into the Indo-Gangetic plain at an earlier date. Surprisingly, these seem to have been the first to come down into the newly formed coastal Konkani. Probably they were already serving the inhabitants of the trans-Sahyadri

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Konkan and followed them to the coast. Such a hypothesis seems rather inconsistent, as we would expect those who sailed to Konkani directly from their homeland in the Sarasvati valley to have reached there first.

Their 'from the foam of the ocean' origin seems to be a clear indication that the citpavan bramhانا reached Konkani through the sea; but there is no clue in the story as to the time of their arrival there. But the closeness of their advent in Konkani to its conquest by Parasurama, seems to put a limit on the time that could have passed between the two events. However, it does leave sufficient time for the desastha bramhانا to have come and 'failed'. We still do not know what seven meadows refers to; it could hold a clue to the place where they originally settled. From the current distribution it appears that the citpavan predominate in the northern Kon-

kan and the sarasvat in the central Konkani.

The old citpavan bhat from Chiplun does mention the sarasvat bramhانا, but with contempt; he calls them shenvi, which word he derives from sheni, that is dry cow dung cake used as fuel, and therefore 'do not have any sort of claim to Brahminism'. [Crawford, 1909: 23] Citpavan and sarasvat were probably two different waves of bramhانا arriving in Konkani through the sea. Their arrival could have been more or less at the same time, but their origin was most probably different, as they display clearly different physical features. From which different places they came is a matter for investigation.

Sahyadri Khanda is the most commonly cited source of the pancha gauda - pancha dravida classification of bramhانا; according to it those living to the south of the Vindhya are called

pancha dravida and those living to the north of it are called pancha gauda (verses 16 and 17); it places the sarasvat among the pancha gauda. Though it describes the creation of seven Konkans by Parasurama, and the settlement of particular bramhانا communities in these regions - bhargava, nagara, citpavan, karhade, sarasvat, havik and nambudri, the list of the pancha dravida does not include the citpavan and karhade; nor are they included in the list of the pancha gauda; sarasvat alone are found in it. Though the citpavan and karhade are conventionally placed in the pancha dravida list. [Deshpande, 2010: Pancha Gauda and Pancha Dravida - Contested Borders Of A Traditional Classification, Studia Orientalia, 108, 33]

The Konkani sarasvat call themselves gauda sarasvat. And it is traditionally held that gauda points to their origin in Bengal; but this seems to have no histori-

cal backing. Colebrook categorically states that the term refers to north India as a whole, rather than Bengal: "although Gaura be the name of Bengal, yet the Brahmanas who bear that appellation, are not inhabitants of Bengal ... they reside chiefly in the suba of Delhi". [Colebrook, 1801: On the Sanskrit and Prakrit Languages, 223] The same view is reiterated by Vaidya based on a copper plate (5th century CE) found in the village of Indur in Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh; this is the first instance of the use of the term gauda to refer to a bramhانا. [Vaidya, 1920: Madhyug in Bharat, Part I, 87] According to Raychaudhari the term designates "a territory embracing Northern India as far as Kanauj (Uttar Pradesh) and the river Sarasvati." [Raychaudhari, 1953: Political History of Ancient India, 633] Referring to the Prince of Wales Museum plates of Govindraja (810 CE) and the Rashtrakuta king Indra II's grant of 926-27 CE, Datta opines: "Gauda in those days comprised a geographical region covering a larger section of North India". [Datta, 1989: Migrant Brahmanas in Northern India, 100] A recent genetic study traces the route of migration of Lotli (Loutulim) kaundinya gotra bramhانا with surname Pai from Saurashtra to Goa. [Mascarenhas, 1915: Genetic and Cultural Reconstruction of the Migration of an Ancient Lineage, 11]

Could it be that the Konkani sarasvat bramhانا acquired the prefix gauda after they came to Konkani? Gauda meant 'chief' or 'headman' or 'wiseman' in Konkani. For instance, Derret uses the term gavunda for 'a respectable farmer having many tenants under him and wielding authority in the hamlet' in the Malenadu plains. [Derret, 1957: The Hoysalas, 7] The word gamunda was commonly used in Kannada to mean a headman in and around the 6th century CE. [Dhume, 2009: The Cultural History of Goa, 68] The kunbi have their wise man called the budvont or gaudo. [Dhume, 2009: 66] So, could that prefix gauda be a symbol of the hegemonic position the sarasvat bramhانا acquired on their settlement in Konkani? Just like senai, which became senvi later - meaning a teacher or wise man. In fact in the earlier records we find senai rather than gauda sarasvat.



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