I'm A Gaudo

Me, a Gaudo....
And I won't rot
I'm the same today
As yesterday
And the day before;
That's how I always stay.
A thousand years
and more,
I've been this way

Parshuram's Brahmans....
What they were like
I cannot say.
But the Brahman's of today
Are of a different order
From those of yesterday
And yesterday's weren't like
Those of the day before....

For years you thrashed our folk
We feel your stroke
Right to this day.
But we never turned to powder.
Not we Gaudos.
But you....
You and your culture's way,
You've had your day;
You've gone to powder
We Gaudos stay;

We'll never go to powder,
We Gaudos.. never;
We Gaudos, never;
Because.. we're Gaudos!-

My words are the words of Gaudo

R.V. Pandit
Pale (1958)
I'M A GAUDO

You grains so smart!
Saraswat—you;
Brahman—you;
And the Goldsmith, too.
Husk takes pestle’s beat,
To keep the inner grain
Safe, clean, and pearly-pure;
Husk lends it heat,
While husk endures
The chilling rain.
Your soil rots all,
But not the grain,
That does the sprout contain—
Saved by the husk.
For this, who get the thanks?
Of course, the grain.
Nobody thinks
Of the poor husk;
The farmer throws
Husks to the swine
And the buffaloes.
You blokes so well-to-do!
You need us Gaudos
To make wealth for you;
To plant your orchard,
Till your field,
Bring your estate
A richer yield.
You need us Gaudos for your crop;
Otherwise—you’d gladly see us drop.
Now, back to the husk...
Husk holds the grain.
In return, does grain
Do anything for husk?
Nothing. Never.
When pestle beats husk,
The grain escapes,
Ignores the husk,
In a third one’s belly slips,
And leaves the husk
Hungry as ever.
So, once again,
We’re husks; you’re grain.
You let us Gaudos earn
For you,
And give nothing in return.
Now, what have we to do?
Plant the soil,
Grow the crop,
Thresh the corn,
All scorching summer toil;
And in the rains,
Stifling the hunger-pains,
Exhausted, worn,
Labour until we drop.
And what about you, my beauties?
What are your duties?  
Income to seize,  
And stuff each other;  
Eat till your bellies crack—  
Lawyer, physician,  
Editor, electrician,  
Be what you please.  
On us Gaudos turn your back,  
And then—fill pockets!  
Whose? Of course, each other's:  
Brahman, the Goldsmith's,  
Tailor and Goldsmith  
Both, the Brahman's  
Brahman and Mamlatdar,  
Police Commissioner,  
All, the Collector's fill;  
And the whole muster roll,  
Fill the pockets of the great  
 Officials of the State.  
And who fills our pockets?  
Not a soul.  
Did I say, You turn your back?  
You make us turn our back,  
To feel—whack, whack!  
Did I say, Your hand bestows  
Nothing on us?  
That's not quite true;  
One thing we get from you—  
Blows, blows...  

I heard a legend of Lord Parshuram  
(Who won our Konkan from the  
Western Sea  
By might of bow): he hither, long ago,  
Brought four and sixty Brahman families,  
And with them, tribes enough of us poor Gaudos  
To labour in their fields, in this our Goa—  
How many thousand years ago, I know not...  
Be't as it may,  
Right from that distant day  
You've raided on us your blows:  
And who did  
Beat us before you did,  
Who knows, who knows?  
So—I'm a Gauḍo;  
You, Brahman; you, a Goldsmith.  
And just because  
I'm this, you're those,  
You'll go on raining blows?  
I say, O.K.—  
Cudgel away,  
Night and day,  
Another thousand years.

But one thing don't forget:  
Nobody every yet  
Got powder  
Out of thrashing a Gauḍo.  
It's 't other way round:  
The thrasher himself is found  
Reduced to power...  

...Parshuram's Brahmans—  
What they were like,  
I cannot say,  
But the Brahmins of today  
Are of a different order  
From those of yesterday;  
And yesterday's weren't like  
Those of the day before.  
Then—Brahmans, Goldsmiths wore  
Dhotis with border  
Wide and red,  
Turban huge on head,  
Gold-threaded scarf on shoulder,  
Caste-mark on brow wide, bold...  
Then come new-fangled shirts,  
The head a red fez sports.  
Next, muslin dhotis came,  
With pleat and gold  
And the shirt tucked inside;  
Neckties were tied,  
Turbans to caps gave way.  
And now today,  
Those bags called "pants"  
All legs adorn;  
Nor cap nor turban's worn...  
Now take your women's case:  
They've done the same,  
One time, they'd pierce  
Their ears, their nose,  
And hang up jewellery of every sort, in rows.  
On body, what a load  
Of gold they bore!  
Arms, feet, neck, waist  
Practically gold-encased;  
And gold-thread dress they wore.  
Then—from the nose  
That huge ring goes,  
Slowly replaced by thin gold wire.  
Women's attire.  
Is fine and silken, now,  
Cunning embroidered.  
And on the brow  
That once broad kunku spot  
Shrinks to a wee red dot.  
Bangles grow thin,  
Of gold or glass.  
The generous nine-yard sari,  
At waist tucked in,  
To five is cut.
Hair's worn in plaits that trail.
Powder hides cheeks.
And now, today,
Your crazy fashion-freaks.
With lips and face
Like actress painted gay,
Wear hair in "pony-tail"!
No graceful buns are worn,
And all those trailing plaits
are shorn . . .
Now look at our example:
We've been the same always--
Men's loincloth simple,
Our women's changelss fashion,
Our long tradition
Of music, folk dance,
Folk drama, festal days--
Have stayed the same.
No Radio Ceylon,
With its Iggar-miggar-diggar
And its Ram-pam-pam,
Into our song finds entrance . . .
You don't grind us: to powder
(We're husks--remember?)

Just one more minute!
I'm a Gauo, yes?
You're a Brahman, Goldsmith, Tailor?
Yes, I'm a Gauo--
And I glory in it!
For years you thrashed our folk;
We feel your stroke
Right to this day.
But we never turned to powder,
Not we Gaudos.
But you . . .
You and your culture's way,
You've had your day;
You've gone to powder.
We Gaudos stay;
We'll never go to powder,
We Gaudos--never;
Because--we're Gaudos!