‘PEOPLE-NATION’ AND SPECTATORIAL RIGHTS: The Political ‘Authenticity-Effect’, the Shiv Sena and a Very Bombay History

Ammamma, site-specific performance piece by Navtej Singh Johar with Ravinder Reddy s sculptures, a send-up on the entire question of authenticity. Media Gallery, Apeejay Group, New Delhi, February 2001

‘There is no doubt that the fundamental problematic of the postcolonial state… has given rise to numerous ambiguities in the legitimation process. In the field of economic planning, these ambiguities have surfaced in the debate over the relative importance of market signals and state commands, over the efficiency of the private sector and the inefficiency of the state sector, over the growth potential of a relatively ‘open’ economy and the technological backwardness of the strategy of ‘self-reliance’, and over the dynamic productive potential of a relaxation of state controls compared with the entrenchment of organized privileges within the present structure of state dominance. It is not surprising that in these debates, the proponents of the former argument in each opposed pair have emphasized the dynamic of accumulation while those defending the latter position have stressed the importance of *legitimation*… What should be pointed out, however, is… that these ambiguities are *necessary* consequences of the specific relation of the postcolonial developmental state with the people-nation’
– Partha Chatterjee (‘The National State’,)

> Their Eternal Pity no taller than the pimp on Falkland Road
> No pavilion put up in the sky for us.
> Lords of wealth, they are, locking up lights in those vaults of theirs.
> In this life, carried by a whore, not even the sidewalks are ours
> - Namdeo Dhasal, ‘Tyanchi Sanatan Daya’ (from *Golpitha*, 1975, tr. Eleanor Zelliot/Jayant Karve)

Beyond the State, Within the Nation: Outside the *Frame*, Within the *Fiction*

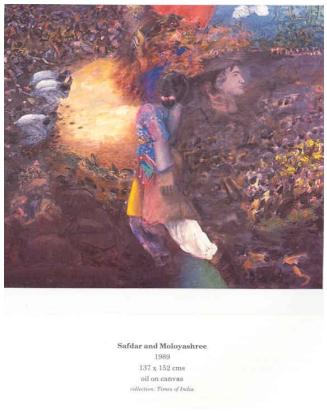
What happens when a presumed right is seen to be non-functional, when a citizen is denied or seen to be incapable of self-representation? When a form such as the cinema, with the full and awesome range of its apparatus, suddenly finds that its key faculty, of using that apparatus to produce authoritative symbolic representations, is found to be incapable of doing that work? When its capacity to authorize is *withdrawn*?

All of these crises typically arise, when they do in India, in the light of a particular *history* of post-Independence cinematic enablement. In an earlier section I have shown how a model had been instituted in the inter-War period and then in the first years after Independence by the Indian state by which to administer the Indian cinema: one that critically depended on the presumed ability of the cinema to produce a particularly significant *reading* competence. Such a presumed ability on the part of the Indian cinema went alongside, and in fact further illuminated, a developmental economic system that the Indian state also sought for the cinema. I believe we can excavate, from the early 1950s, something of a model by which the Indian state sought to qualify the film industry for support under the broad rubric of the early Five Year Plans that had, in Sukhamoy Chakravarty's words () called for an 'increased commodification under the aegis of the state'. The economic model, associated primarily with the 1951 S.K. Patil Film Inquiry Committee, is perhaps best seen in hindsight as an economic counterpart of a far more articulate *cultural* definition, within the same development rubric, under which the cinema received a privileged role in the propagation of state programmes. On many occasions, such a definition meant no more than straightforward state propaganda on behalf of the war effort. On yet other occasions, it meant something more complicated: the production of authorized symbolic formations on behalf of the state, and the further demonstration of how these formations may be put to use for larger democratic processes. In the instance of the cinema, this also required that the industry make widely available and easily usable the *implements* of such national-cultural functioning.

That the *economic* model didn't work is well known, given both the extraordinary set of economic crises that have beset the film industry since the war and the difficulties these have posed in imposing financial and legal regulation on the cinema. The argument has been occasionally made, however, that as with Indian democracy itself, the *political* model may have worked almost *too well*, given the cinema's spectacular success in disseminating textual competences on behalf of the state. A number of political theorists () who have noted the spread of cinema, and its role in incarnating a mechanism of democratic functioning, show the range of its operations as national-democratic political practice, as its dissemination of contestatory forms of state identity made it an instrument of political use far more effective than the impoverished economic status of the industry might ever reveal.

The economic failure of a successful political model, the failure to provide an industrial basis for something that has otherwise demonstrated both a remarkable durability and effectivity in a range of political-cultural practices, appears to echo a larger phenomenon of economic failure through political interruption, that has been seen to affect development planning as a whole when such planning is located within a broader democratic-political context. Chatterjee, for example, reinterprets Chakravarty's claim for planning failure – the periodic capacity for strategic disruption of key indicators by public and private agencies – to propose that planning involves an element of 'rational self-deception'. Chakravarty has claimed that writing up the story of India's planning process solely 'in terms of the logic of pressure-group politics alone is… a very one-sided projection of a multi-dimensional reality', given further that such an account constitutes an 'implicit avoidance of the dialectic of accumulation versus legitimation' (). In a long response that would appear as central to his formulations on the Indian state, Chatterjee contends that this was a *necessary* self-deception given that built-in conflict between accumulation versus legitimation would reveal that the 'rational consciousness of the state embodied in the planning authority does not exhaust the determinate being of the state'. Chatterjee suggests that 'Subject and object, inside and outside – the relations are reversed as soon as we move from the domain of rational planning, situated outside the political process, to the domain of social power exercised and contested within that process' ().

In the present chapter we shall investigate the textual consequences of such a 'rational self-deception' in the cinema. Our deception would function around reading competence; more particularly, it would further explore the precise paradox that Thackeray sought to exploit and mobilize against in the *Fire* instance: the *expropriation*, under the aegis of realism, of the 'speaking subject' (or the legal 'average viewer') of the spectator into the concept of the cinematic author. In fact, we shall – both here and in the later description of *Maabhoomi* and Telangana realism (#15 'Producing the Record: Economic Expropriation in Telangana') – move spectatorship practices precisely into the domain of what Chatterjee calls 'social power' exercised *within* the 'determinate being of the state'.



Politics as Spectacle, or The Demand for Visibility: (Left): Anand Patwardhan, *A Time to Rise*, a documentary made in Canada and supported by the National Film Board of Canada as part of its cultural mosaic programmes. TO CHECK.
(Right): Nationalism as pleasure. Supporters of the Indian cricket team with stickers of the national flag on their faces.

We shall thence look at the phenomenon of spectacular political action, a particular variant of spectator activity, as itself an important paradigmatic precedent for the cinema-effect.

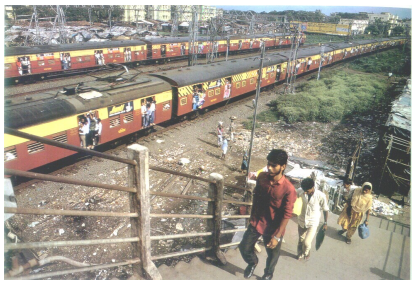
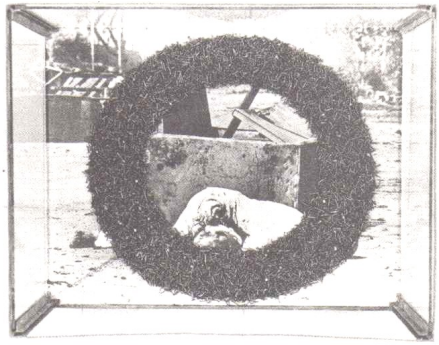
As I return to the question asked at the beginning of this chapter – what happens when a *citizen*, constructed supposedly by the state and in its self-image, is seen to be incapable of self-representation? – I am going to propose an interpretation of *hypervisible political action* in post-Independence Indian art, and indeed in much of its cinema, as itself a kind of cinema-effect mobilized, despite its oppositional content, on the template of the state's own production of symbolic action. In speaking of such hypervisible action – a kind of expressive political gesture to which, say, both Patwardhan and Sundaram refer in the works reproduced above – I want to propose that such a gesture too 'fills space' in a significant sense. This particular form of the political cinema-effect, so to say, is something of an avant-garde inversion of the modernist 'gesture fills space' symbolic we have earlier explored (#6 'Gesture Fills Space': Production of Symbolic Nationalism'), and bears the inheritance of the first avant-garde of Eisenstein, Brecht and Picasso[1]. But I propose that it derives its formal energy not so much from the radical-ecstatic self-description of the political gesture but rather from a somewhat specific history of a postcolonial crisis of spectatorial imbalance and anxiety arising from a *legitimation* crisis that the gesture directly addresses. We will explore this further from a rather particular location: the city of Bombay.

Territorial Realism: A Particular (Bombay) Example Around Legitimate Representation*

(*For Sudhir Patwardhan, Namdeo Dhasal and Saeed Akhtar Mirza)

[1] See as instances, Ram Kumar's remarkable review of the second International Art Exhibition organized in 1953 by the All India Fine Arts & Crafts Society (AIFACS) in *Indian Literature*, speaking about the European abstraction, the inspirational presence of Picasso for the Indian artist, and the tragedy of countries like Japan and Argentina discarding their own traditions to adopt abstract techniques that the French, having introduced these techniques, were now abandoning as outdated and old-fashioned. Repr. in . Also see Sudhir Patwardhan's brief note on Fernand Leger ('Leger', *Journal of Arts & Ideas* Oct/Dec 1982 72-73).

In defining the symbolic political thus, I need to further define what I propose are some explicit *rights-bearing* properties of the symbolic gesture. I shall try to inject through the gesture key elements of supposedly 'rational' state operation into the very domain of social power. The injecting process, similar to our 'outside the frame' productions, typically develops an *expressivity*, generated through its apparent ability to slice through ranged formal oppositions, and thus through the regulatory mechanisms of realism that would insist on such trans-historical representations being rendered both *impossible* and *illegitimate*.

Politics and urban space: Bombay.
The foreshortening of perspective, addressing a representational crisis as framed reality draws attention to an impasse by presenting flattened realist frames, to draw attention to the unavailability of interpretative, symbolic mechanisms.
(Left) Sudhir Patwardhan, *Shaque*, 1998 (acrylic on canvas), (Centre) From Raghubir Singh, *Bombay: Gateway of India* (1994). (Right): Vivan Sundaram, *Memorial*. A circular wreath of nails covers a news photograph of a man killed during the Mumbai riots of 1992-93.

My examples are drawn from a political practice in the Bombay of the 1970s and 80s: the Bombay directly relevant, as it happens, to Bal Thackeray's political/textual manoeuvres around *Fire*. I refer to a particular kind of realist art practice, well known in its literature, theatre, poetry, film and the visual arts[2]. While the city commonly produced the verisimilitude that liberal imagination required of it (cf. Raghubir Singh's photographs[3]), the realism commonly went further, reproducing the characteristics of rationality itself on a different, expressly political, dimension, even going so far as to reconstruct on different turf realism's capacity to embody and to disburse specific *rights*, meant for the use of a particular *kind* of citizen-protagonist-author.

The mode of description to which I allude has of course a specific political backdrop: the 1982 textile strike, first of the two defining political moments of contemporary Bombay (the other being the 1992-93 riots). While the 1982 general strike was the 'last stand' of Girangaon's (the mill-area neighbourhood) long history – since the collapse of the strike also

[2] This tradition was explicitly chronicled in the exhibition 'Bombay-Mumbai 1992-2001', part of *Century City: Art and Culture in the Modern Metropolis*, curated by Geeta Kapur and myself, at the Tate Gallery 2001. See , for more on this pictorial tradition.
[3] Raghubir Singh interprets spectatorship in the city as a 'pitiless eye' which became (in his instance) a part of 'your artistic equipment, your artistic sensibility', coming out of aspects of Bombay, the '*Mayanagari* or the City of Wealth', where 'optimism' equates with 'Dharavi… and other desperate places, seeing the people on the pavements' ().

effectively saw the dismantling of the industry itself – in many respects the event, as historian Rajnarayan Chandavarkar () narrates it, 'harked back to the solidarities demonstrated in Girangaon in 1928-29… A striker from 1928, parachuted into Girangaon in 1982, would have recognised the same massive, enthusiastic groundswell that drove the leadership forward'. Although the heyday of worker militancy had long passed – Chandavarkar locates the pinnacle of industrial action in the city between 1918-1940 – it would be consistently evoked in a range of art practices, particularly from music, poetry and theatre.

The form of realism to which I allude often derived directly or indirectly from these popular cultures that the working class cultures of Girangaon spawned; and their effort to usurp urban realism away from state authentication and into a strategy of *survival-through-description*, would sharply draw attention to the fact that illegitimate realism often meant the illegitimacy of citizenship, and the problem was a serious enough survival issue that one had to do something about it. In the reaction that ensued, the *primary* right underpinned by this kind of descriptive realism was commonly the pragmatic and concretely cognizable right to *shelter*[4]*,* further equating with the Fundamental Right to Livelihood[5].

For a number of political art practices working on the plane of the symbolic – recasting the state's declared 'authenticity effect' into a new register – the effort was to extend the description of oppression into that of describing a contentious objective urban reality. Perhaps the most spectacularly prominent example of this was the brutally direct Bombay writing of the founder of modern Dalit poetry, Namdeo Dhasal, and a new masculinist Dalit citizen-protagonist who *knew* the city, the 'Virgil' going through 'Central Bombay's Inferno' in Dilip

[4] Captured well in Sahir Ludhanvi's well known song in Ramesh Saigal's *Phir Subah Hogi* (1958): 'Chin-o-Arab hamara/Hindustan hamara/Rehne ko ghar nahin hai/Sara jahan hamara' (China and Arabia is ours/India is ours/No home to live in/The whole universe is ours')

[5] In the famous Olga Tellis Supreme court case, the right to shelter was equated with the fundamental right to life/livelihood, as 'the petitioners challenged the decision of the respondents to demolish the pavement dwellings and the slum hutments on the grounds (i) that evicting a pavement dweller from his habitat amounts to depriving him of his right to livelihood, which is comprehended in the right guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution that no person shall be deprived of his life except according to procedure established by law, (ii) that the impunged action of the State Government and the Bombay Municipal Corporation is violative of the provisions contained in Article 19(1)(3), 19(1)(g) and 21 of the Constitution'. [Olga Tellis & Ors. V. Bombay Municipal Corporation & Ors. Etc. July, 10, 1985. Y.V. Chandrachud, C.J., S. Murtaza Fazal Ali, V.D. Tulzapurkar, O. Chinnappa Reddy And A. Varadarajan, Jj]. The radical stance taken by the Olga Tellis case invoking Fundamental Rights was an issue of contention, with several slum rehabilitation organizations arguing against its uncompromising stance. However, as Justice Chandrachud's statement, that

> There is no doubt that the petitioners are using pavements and other public properties for an unauthorised purpose. But, their intention or object in doing so is not to "commit an offence or intimidate, insult or annoy any person", which is the gist of the offence of 'Criminal trespass' under Section 441 of the Penal Code. They manage to find a habitat in places which are mostly filthy or marshy, out of sheet helplessness. It is not as if they have a free choice to exercise as to whether to commit an encroachment and if so, where. The encroachments committed by these persons are involuntary acts in the sense that those acts are compelled by inevitable circumstances and are not guided by choice

shows, while the Olga Tellis contention may 'make sense' in a number of locations and judicial contexts, it was arguably only in Bombay that such a link between life and shelter could be so radically made. See, as a related issue about realism, the remarkable instance of Anand Patwardhan's *Hamara Shaher* (1985), a film that directly inherits the radical realist idiom of Sambhaji Bhagat's Dalit poetry, and the film's programmatic linkage with the Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti.

Chitre's words[6]. This protagonist not only knew, and defined himself by, the city, but could literally own it by the possession of this knowledge: own it, or rather *her*, as though she was his 'whore'. His famous 'Bombay' poem has him saying goodbye to 'her', 'But not before/I will take you/in multiple ways/Not before/I will pin you down/here and now/thus and thus'[7]. In fact in his introduction to Dhasal's landmark *Golpitha* (), playwright Vijay Tendulkar, himself an authoritative figure in producing a realism for the city[8], pays a lot of attention to precisely the administrative status of Dhasal's variant. He wants to know, as an anthropologist might, what several words precisely mean (having never heard that kind of Marathi before), then wants to know who uses them, where and under what conditions; he thereafter asks Dhasal to take him to these places and in the times when they are most alive, notes Dhasal's subtle change in demeanour from that of deference to a senior writer to swaggering confidence when Dhasal moves into the locale where he belongs.

Dhasal's use of what I want to call territorial realism, while spectacular, is by no means unique, and indeed access in Bombay to such insider realism becomes increasingly available to the artist (iconically Francis Newton Souza, but more recently and more directly Sudhir Patwardhan) or the filmmaker (an early example being Saeed Mirza, but now, via actors like Nana Patekar[9], in e.g. Vinod Chopra's *Parinda*, 1989, also to an entire 1990s generation of Bombay regionalism such as was presented in Ramgopal Varma's *Satya*, 1998). Access however to such realism continues to remain a tricky business, not least because of its entry into politically unstable areas (including compromises with the zones occupied by Bal Thackeray-type phenomena); but also for other, more complex reasons. In a context critical

[6] Dhasal's access to the city is legendary. Dilip Chitre recently captured some of this, in his descriptions of going through Bombay with his 'Virgil'. Speaking of the author of *Golpitha*, one of the 'literary landmarks of the 20th century', Chitre says:

> This is the area in which he grew up among whores and petty criminals, watching the lords of the underworld and their clients indulge in smuggling, drug-trafficking, loan-sharking, gambling, prostitution, and supari murders… Namdeo was a cabbie in Central Bombay when he was a teenager writing his first poems. He was a hustler here a little later... (His) simplistic, cynical rhetoric becomes transformed into something complex and profoundly disturbing in Namdeo's poetry. ().

[7] 'Mumbai, Mumbai, My Dear Slut', Tr. Vidyut Bhagwat and Sharmila Rege (in). In sharp contrast, Sudheesh Pachauri's description by Hindi writers of Delhi as a 'whore' has none of Dhasal's affection and contempt, but is an expression of alienation by writers who come from somewhere else, and who come to a city that belongs to no one. ('City in Literature' panel, *City One* conference, New Delhi: Sarai, 2001).

[8] Tendulkar, commonly considered Marathi's most significant modern playwright, claims his work to be consciously located in and about Bombay city. The earlier work, such as *Ratra ani Itar Ekankika* (1957) and *Shrimant* (first staged 1955, dir. Vijaya Mehta), was set 'in' Bombay and 'about' its middle class. From *Gidhade* (written in the early 1960s, first staged only in 1970: dir. Shreeram Lagoo) onwards, the theatre shifts into an exploration of a specifically Bombay realism, an expressionist address that also extends into a distinct performance style (*Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe*, 1967, *Sakharam Binder*, 1972, dir: Kamalakar Sarang). Some of these plays would attract major censorship controversy. See Ashok Desai's 'Censorship and *Sakharam Binder*', preface to . On the Sakharam Binder court judgement (Shri Pandurang Sawalaram Dhurat vs. Chairman of the Stage Performance Scrutiny Board, Govt. of Maharashtra, et al (1972) see the CSCS Media & Culture Archive http://www.cscsarchive.org:8081/MediaArchive/medialaw.nsf/(docid)/F1190F435A242E7C6525691A00448712

[9] Vijay Tendulkar's theatre came also to be associated with a specific kind of performative naturalism, inaugurated by Shreeram Lagoo's landmark embodiment of Ramakant in his version of *Gidhade*, but even more spectacularly by Nilu Phule's *Sakharam Binder*. Both Lagoo and Phule come together in Jabbar Patel's Tendulkar-scripted film *Saamna* (1975) in what is perhaps the only visual record of this style in its time. Numerous other actors influenced by the Lagoo/Phule style,, such as Vinay Apte, Ravindra Mankani and others, have made their own stamp on this tradition. The best known actor from this tradition outside Maharashtra is Nana Patekar, who began his career acting playing Babnya in Tendulkar's *Pahije Jatiche*, dir: Arvind Deshpande, 1976, and of course extended it in several Hindi films.

for comprehending Thackeray's intrusions into spectatorship, many of Bombay's realist practitioners would vociferously assert that – in startling contrast to a Haldankar, a Ravi Varma, a Mehboob, a Shantaram, a Benegal, and all the biographers of Susie Tharu's citizen-as-executive-authority, and contrary to the guarantees of nationalism – the state cannot be viewed as a benevolent 'authenticator' of symbolic productions, but that it can and does *retaliate*, sometimes viciously, with these very instruments[10]. And when it *does* retaliate, narrative as a means of self-representation and therefore of self-determination can suddenly and all-too commonly be demonstrated as both formally and technically unachievable.

Much of the work we are describing therefore is required by its very location to address, almost as a first step, the anthropologically driven question of realism: the one Tendulkar asks Dhasal, of whether the authentic 'object' of investigation is to be found in objective circumstances at all, and if so, where. Or does it now only permit exploration through existential inquiry since the object has become too internalized (or in Nandy's famous sense too 'intimate') to be ever capable of, or allowed, objective existence? Feeding such a practice of an impossible realism has also been the untenable nature of state support: and the consequent role of politics as the only way left of breaching the barricades around state-endorsed realism. Given that objectivity could only be enabled through realism, and realism was proving to be a double-edged sword, any sort of realist representation has always had to *first* overcome the risk of replaying the dubious history of state control-through-authentication (and in this even risking replaying an imperial strategy, especially palpable in elite South Bombay dominance, of possession-through-knowledge): the risk posed by the very location of representation as reproducing an ex-colonial hierarchy of investigator and object of investigation, forcing all knowledge to first theorize upon the very status of that knowledge as social practice[11].

It is in this backdrop that Bombay's territorial realism must be seen having produced its own valid variant of the 'national realisms' that this book explores – from Madgulkar's Maharashtra to the Punjab of *Nai Kahani* and the 'Telangana Realism' of *Maabhoomi* – from many Indian regions post Independence. It has been commonly argued that Bombay's reasons for being a part of India, and therefore also the interpellative mechanisms of its realism, have

[10] See especially in the inaugural narrative of Bhalchandra Nemade, *Kosala* (originally published 1963). Also see Baburao Bagul's short stories (especially the famous 'Yethe Maran Swastha Hota Aahe', 1969: 'Death is Getting Cheaper', translated in).

[11] Kumar Shahani on 'we are ultimately the oppressed…'

run along lines of capital[12] and class[13] rather than around regional territoriality, leading to some distinct variations to the national imaginary, and the role of realism in constructing such an imaginary. The political articulations of territory (and the bounded realism policing that territory) has therefore been rather more strident in drawing attention to the ambitions of hypervisible, spectacular political representation as also the reclaiming of realism for other purposes. This aspiration, battling the many crippling difficulties of producing 'proper' indigenous realism, descriptively encroaches on and possesses key public spaces in Bombay; indeed, the very spaces that Article 15 of the Indian Constitution names in its prohibition of 'discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth' with regard to access to '*shops*, *public restaurants*, *hotels* and *places of public entertainment*; or the use of *wells*, *tanks*, *bathing ghats*, *roads* and *places of public resort*… dedicated to the use of the general public' (Constitution of India, Part III, Fundamental Rights: The Right to Equality, 15/2). If the ambitions of territorial realism are any indication (and we may now no longer limit the instance to Bombay alone), it would appear that political realism would also then test out, every step of the way, the rights that such territory embodied for the postcolonial citizen.

Marginal Data and How to Deal With It: Accumulation versus Legitimation

We may now return to the problem of the 'postcolonial' with which we began this section: the zone 'beyond the state, within the nation' that the cinema so clearly traverses. This is a zone occupied by a particular kind of spectatorial practice: a practice of spectatorship as spectacle, a condition of viewing that has evidently been difficult to capture in legal discourse. Such a practice draws from the fact that it exists discursively beyond the aegis of the state even though it adheres to a nationalism that the state itself typically cannot recognize, cannot admit to, or cannot control. Continuing our earlier argument about the redefining of 'culture' as a space for negotiating rights between what was left behind by the end of colonial domination and what came to be occupied by new state formations – the postcolonial 'surplus' – we might now come to perhaps our most precise naming of the gap between what we have

[12] Cf. Bombay's contribution to nationalism in the famous 'Bombay Plan', or the *Plan For The Economic Development of India* assembled in 1944 by some of India's foremost industrialists at the initiative of J.R.D. Tata. This plan, which was a set of commitments that Bombay's industrial elite would make to the nation, may also be read as providing the ground reasons for why Bombay should be a part of India at all, as against being – along the Hong Kong model – an 'offshore' city-state or Export Processing Zone with its own laws and its own barricades, a privileged state that many still vociferously argue for (at the time of writing, after the disastrous floods that hit suburban Mumbai in 2005, for which 'unrestricted growth', read immigrants, was typically held responsible). That Plan had state action in planning equitable growth, protecting national industries against foreign competition, recognized the dangers of a free-market approach in India's development and concentrated on developing heavy industries. The standard Left attack on this 'sham' nationalism was largely on economic grounds (see Prabhat Patnaik on the mode of inflationary deficit financing 'highly favourable to the propertied rich',)' rather than on its role in defining territorial control over the city.

[13] Rajnarayan Chandavarkar () forcefully argues for understanding Bombay's working class culture as a modern industrial entity, despite the strong rural roots of many workers, and their production of social networks and institutions in the city reflecting these rural ties. This particular kind of industrial identity, which has seen numerous sustained industrial strikes, also developed a classically Bombay cultural identity around its Girangaon area, in poetry (famously Narayan Surve), theatre (the city's loknatya) and music (the Shahirs in the tradition of Amar Sheikh and Annabhau Sathe). See .

explored as the physical frame/first look and the frame of attention/second look: the gap that exists between everything that is *in* the frame but which may not be noticed by the state's diktat: all that the 'restrictive reading' eliminates. And we find, unsurprisingly, that the cinema exists here too: more, *here it is that the cinema comes into its own*.

The postcolonial has, of course, been a difficult term to pin down[14]. Continuing however with our earlier 'inside-outside' metaphor for structuring narrative, I want to present my own working definition of the term: postcolonial 'India' is indeed substantially the space left behind at the end of British colonialism. However, while as geographical space it may be likely that successor national occupants can be made to fit precisely into more or less the exact space left behind, in *cultural* terms there is a deep incongruity between what the colonial system left behind and what the new states came to occupy. By one logic of narrative sequencing, the Indian state can be seen to form something of a *subset* of a much wider definition of the formerly colonized Indian *nation*. This means only a portion of its overall narrative content qualifies for symbolic representation under the aegis of the state. There is a connection between this and our conceptualization of the 'outer' frame of representation as a post-colonial representation of the nation, and the 'inner' frame as the equivalent of the state's imposition of a regime of intelligibility upon the larger context. This connection also then accounts for our description of the narrative pulls and pressures mentioned earlier: the state would always seek to hegemonically push outward, approximate to the scale and dimensions of the nation as a whole, while at the same time pulling all national symbolic meaning into its fold, *generating coherence* with its stamp of legibility and authority.

A chasm however now develops between the two frames: between the developmental state that argues, as Chatterjee shows, for *accumulation*, and a 'people-nation' that is fighting a quite different battle of *legitimation*. Dhareshwar () shows how, in the very process by which the 'history/subject of Indian sovereignty' fashions itself, it has ceaselessly had to 'exclude and delegitimize other idioms and agencies'. Taking both exclusion and delegitimization seriously as *formal* practices, we may now be in a position to contrast the possibilities for the administration of symbols of nationalist authenticity on behalf of the state – and their apparently seamless presencing, their easily made link between production, display and signification to be reproduced almost at will – with its opposite condition, of a 'people-

[14] Stuart Hall asks: 'When was 'the post-colonial'? What should be included and excluded from its frame? Where is the invisible line between it and its 'others' (colonialism, neo-colonialism, Third World, imperialism) in relation to whose termination it ceaselessly, but without final supercession, marks itself?' (). Does post-colonial refer to some people, or some societies, and not others, who can then describe their condition using that term – as something like a 'badge of merit' () – or does it signal something more abstract? Much literature tends to effectively include as postcolonial all nations that had once been colonized, so as to 'cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day' (according to one such survey on its literature, *The Empire Writes Back,* 1989); and in the process 'collapses', as another writer has it, 'very different national-racial formations – the United States, Australia and Canada, on the one hand, and Nigeria, Jamaica and India, on the other – as equally "post-colonial"' ().

nation' fighting a legitimation battle and for whom all this can be explicitly declared impossible.

A recontextualisation now of what we have called the 'authenticity-effect', and our successor for it, the cinema-effect, on this wider ground – something that would allow the Indian nation to be viewed as a wider entity than the territory directly controlled by the sovereign state – now also throws up the longer-term career of the production of such an 'effect', not least because a great deal of the mainstream Indian cinema exists precisely in such a space: the space *within* the national but *outside* the state's ambit. On the one hand a new possibility opens up for replicating the mechanisms of statist authenticity production on other terrains, even name *competing formulations* for the authenticity-stakes. On the other hand, repressive mechanisms emerge that disqualify, on political, administrative and aesthetic grounds, other cultural formations from producing their own assets, their narratives of self-authentication. This stamp of the political upon the incomprehensibly transgressive gesture, the symbolic *act*, the iconic site of a meaning production – all of which now become integrated into what we are naming here the cinema effect – becomes in one sense among the more difficult-to-accept consequences of the political resolution to the crisis of legitimation that the narrative now faces.

Spectatorial Representation and Spontaneous Action

Perhaps a more promising line of argument will therefore open up if we re-phrase the very question that brought us here. Instead of asking the question of citizenship with Hidayatullah's 'average man', or Sabhyasachi Mukharji's 'common man' or 'the man on top of the Clapham omnibus' – the 'reasonable, strongminded, firm and courageous man' who is to become his spectatorial standard; instead of producing such a fiction of wishful thinking, perhaps we could now put forward another premise in constructing our spectator-at-large.

Such a premise would have to start with radically different material about spectatorship than what is usually available to us. It would open up the underside of the citizenship argument by taking it beyond the 'rational consciousness' of the state and its realist imperative. It would have to acknowledge and to work with a particular *political edge* that the Indian cinema brings to the production of subjectivity in the cinema[15]. I am thinking here of Indian film spectators bringing unexpected evidence to an old and famous formulation about a distinct form of consciousness for the non-elites of history: a 'negative' consciousness that expresses itself through certain kinds of action, defines its domain in ways that include those of 'analogy' and 'transference' (). The articulation of such subaltern history is at once *present* in

[15] Or more precisely what constitutes the jump from character to spectator, and how it may be thought through. On this issue, see the famous debate between and (repr. in).

all elite discourse such as for instance in colonial records (and for us in cinematic realism), but is at the same time *elusive* to that discourse, so that it is only with some serious textual work that one can 'read the presence of a rebel consciousness as a necessary and pervasive element' in it.

Ranajit Guha shows that subalterns – our spectators – do act, and act with violence, but often in ways that tend to confound any analyst trying to figure out just *how* their actions might have furthered their political self-interest. On the other hand, for reasons including both geographical and class heterogeneity, the subaltern classes also tend to elude coherent political representation. The further claim that *any* kind of apparently progressive representation 'on behalf of' the peasantry ends up only charging old feudal formations with new social responsibilities[16] clearly has this virtue that, regardless of whether it is true or false, it points up to the political but also *formal* pressures to which the practice of representation is itself subject.

In her well known commentaries on the Subaltern Studies project, Gayatri Spivak has revealed the possibility of *two* distinct forms of representation being involved. One is chaotic, typically resisting a speaking source. And a second, involving the political representative of the subaltern as much as it does the historian of this phenomenon, functions as the site of representation: the representa*tive* standing in for the represen*tation*: a crucial substitute, or slippage of some sort[17].

Can such a slippage account for the elusiveness of the subaltern figure, and can this throw further light on our equally elusive spectator? In speculating on the elusiveness of spectatorial rights to legal definition – and in further exploring the centrality of the cinema, and of cinematic spectatorship, in Thackeray-type political action – let us see how the necessary prior articulation of *re-presentation* works in the cinema. Indeed, this specific faculty, as a foundational attribute of the cinema, may also help us ask just why the cinema proliferated so quickly among the very same colonial non-elites of whom Guha speaks politically. There may be other answers to be found that might also explain the cinema's centrality to freedom of expression in Indian law, but the one that I would like to bring out is the difficulty, the

[16] Dipesh Chakraborty (), asking the question of the jute workers of Calcutta, of how there could be so much militancy but so little organization, says, 'There was more at work here than the historians have cared to admit or explore. The solution to the paradox of jute workers' organization is usually sought in economic (or 'structural') explanations or arguments about political repression by the colonial state. Yet surely no amount of economic reasoning or evidence of state-repression will ever explain why even the socialist message of democratic representation was ultimately translated and assimilated into the undemocratic, hierarchical terms of the babu-coolie relationship…'.

[17] The instance in Marx of the stand-in is of course the French peasant's belief that 'a miracle would occur, that a man named Napoleon would restore all their glory' substituting for the failure of that community to behave as a class which can represent its interests politically. The small peasant proprietors 'cannot represent themselves; they must be represented. Their representative must appear simultaneously as their master, as an authority over them, as unrestricted government power…' .

anxiety, that such a 'consciousness' imposes upon whoever is mandated to speak for or represent it.

And so: In the cinema this anxiety is incarnated by the deeply insecure, vulnerable, presence of an authorial third look: one perennially under the threat of subordination to a far more dominating and pervasive set of *spectatorial* transactions between second and fourth looks between spectator and screen. I have already suggested that these transactions may be understood as constituting some kind of traffic between the viewer's second look ('I see') and the fourth (where the exchange, between what I see and how I am seen, trafficks over the film narrative, the screening conditions of a movie theatre, and the film frame). I am arguing that such a traffic, which the Indian cinema demonstrates more strongly than any that I know, also allows a rethinking of the very status of diegetic action within the cinema as a whole.

The Shiv Sena Constructs the 'State'

> 'While Shivaji looted the (colonial forts of) Surat, the Shiv Sena loots vegetables in an Udipi hotel' – *Navakal* editorial (October 30, 1966).

Let us, for one last time, return the question of spectacular politics and the symbolic dependence of such political action on the cinema back to the *Fire* controversy. Let us explore what the categorization of the spectator as a subaltern figure in Guha's sense does to our debate. The issue was one of Bal Thackeray's seemingly effortless ability to appropriate often contradictory resources to make a primarily *spectatorial* case not only for an alternate system of censorship but, virtually, for an alternate (and I think very *Bombay*) definition of the state itself as primarily a spectatorial construct. We have argued that legal precedent for deploying the freedom of expression doctrine to the Indian cinema consistently invokes the spectator as many shades of 'public'. However, such a 'public' in its abstraction is almost inevitably concretized, *made real*, as a simulated author-figure, given that only such a figure appears qualified to attract that particular right. What has ensued has been nothing less than an expropriation of a key right to the cinema, a right admittedly difficult to bring to legal visibility, but a central right to the cinema as we have known it in India and, as earlier discussed in the instances of FEPACI or FNCA, in much of the larger non-Western world as well.

Thackeray's political strategy has historically exploited the precise loophole provided by the inadequate and underdeveloped conception of the spectatorial right to free speech in Indian law as it has applied to the cinema. This does go a long way to account for why the cinema

remains so central to his political functioning[18] and why the the *Fire* instance, like the earlier instance involving the censoring of Mani Rathnam's *Bombay* (1995) [19] remains so central to his manoeuvres. But there is more. *The loophole is also to do with a hiatus in realist representation itself*: the difficult link between illegitimate realism and pornographic action, repeatedly evidenced in the Shiv Sena's own production of obscenity in the *Fire* agitation as much in pointing to the 'obscene' object (the film, the relationship in the film), as in *producing* on their own the object of obscene attention.

Fire, by one argument, simply falls within a long line of Shiv Sena attacks on (and productions of) obscenity: through the 1990s these included the Tuff shoes advertisement (which had naked supermodels Milind Soman and Madhu Sapre entwined by a snake), the films *Dil Ka Doctor* (Avtar Bhogal, 1995) and *Main Solah Baras Ki* (Dev Anand, 1998), the M.F. Husain painting of the nude Saraswati, the nude cover of Pooja Bhatt on a film magazine, the Savage Garden rock show, the Maharashtra Stage Performances Scrutiny Board's revoking of performing licenses for nine plays[20], and the Mumbai municipal corporation's policing of bus stops and Chowpatty beach to 'clear it of beggars, homosexuals, masseurs, commercial sex workers and homeless people' in the words of the Shiv Sena government's Maharashtra Minister for Culture, Pramod Navalkar. The notion of 'harm' that the Sena invokes has little to do with more standard concerns of censorship: it is seldom claimed that sexual explicitness may cause harm to actual individuals, even to children, seen as most requiring of protection. Instead, it is important to note, the claim that this moral right makes is a somewhat complex one: what is seen as pornographic is precisely the underside of realism, that which modern society in its alleged 'blindness' has considered acceptable or even worthy of emulation. Indeed, as the seminal writings of Pramod Navalkar on Bombay city show[21], territorial realism is repeatedly invoked as he takes his reader on tours pointing out whorehouses, bars and gambling joints in apparently respectable neighbourhoods and points out 'empty' flats in elite highrise buildings, hints at what might be going on there and asks his 'dear reader' to shake his head at such degradation, the issue is usually less the

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[18] The Shiv Sena works through several specifically film -related units, the most prominent being the Chitrapat Shakha, to 'organise' the workers of the film industry, to address ownership disputes amongst producers, to enforce debt repayment and to ensure the cooperation of recalcitrant stars. A related enterprise is the Cable Sena, to address the volatile issue of cable television in Mumbai. See . There is of course, additionally, the financial investment of several members of the Thackeray clan in both Hindi/Marathi film exhibition and production.

[19] Speaking of the complicated encounter between *Bombay* and the Censor Board, Ravi Vasudevan shows, in their engagement with documentary-style realist data, the symmetry between Thackeray's emphasis on facts and the Censor Board's 'respect for realist representation', both integrating political contingency with the presentation of such data ().

[20] The plays, practically all low-brow sex comedies, are *Saali Poori Gharwaali*, *Parayi Nari Lage Pyari*, *Pati Anadi Devar Khiladi*, *Pati Ke Premi*, *Ladki Jawaan Padosi Pareshaan*, *Pati Naram Naram Patni Garam Garam*, *Circus*, *Bambai Ki Hava Kargayi Tabah* (all Hindi) and the Marathi play *Baiko Peksha Mehuni Bari*. (Indian Express, April 17, 1998).

[21] Pramod Navalkar is in fact an important writer and columnist on Bombay. While politically the most representative face of the Sena's moral brigade, Navalkar's own barely pornographic tendency in his writings is to invoke a Marathi middle-class moralism while resolutely sexualizing all 'covert' reality around him. See as a representative his essay 'Juhu, Santacruz, Khar, Veshyanchi Vakhar', in .

allegedly pornographic material itself and more the production of specific spectatorial ability, to 'know' a morally superior position from where to view the decadence of the contemporary.

What this now allows the moral censor is significant. Once the mechanisms for such looking are in place, it is obvious that a *split* of some sort can be located pretty well at will between what we could call the benevolent modern, or the patriarchal familial modern endorsed by tradition, which becomes the site from where the look emanates, and the more malevolent depraved modern – of advertising, bars, cabarets, discotheques, live bands and modern art – to which the look is directed. The introduction of a spectatorial distinction between the viewer/censor and the participant covers over a chasm that is unambiguously modernity itself, its very experience rendered pornographic to the viewer. And in turn, this reverse usurpation, returning an authorial right back to the spectator, apparently allows for a confident depiction of, commentary upon, and transactions over, a modernity at once obscene and desirable: transactions constituting the very experience of contemporary urban reality.

Navalkar's literature, which informed all his activism in his capacity as Maharashtra's Culture Minister at the time of the *Fire* controversy and as India's leading moral censor, therefore injects a third category of 'individual' into the fray, the category of *viewer* – his morally upright reader who now 'looks at' the degradation around him – even as 'consumer' and 'performer' increasingly merge into an amorphous and threatening mass, antagonistic 'others' separated from 'us' by class and language. Further, in introducing an element of perversion into the gaze of people encountering familiar spaces: the gaze, in short, incarnated by literary realism whose conventions are constantly invoked in his writings – *in showing realism to be a cover-up for something far more sinister going on beneath* – Navalkar also defamiliarises, even reverses, the standard links between the content of perception and the act of looking. The 'knowing look' is attributed a new responsibility, but the perversion that should have been present in the *look itself* if his writing had admitted to being the pornographic literature that it undoubtedly is, is attributed to what is being looked *at*. It is no longer the look but the reality that is perverse.

It is this 'knowing' spectator that Thackeray sought translate into spectatorial activism, seeking to uncover the obscenity that *Fire*'s realism, and all that was going on beneath. In further advancing such 'knowing' spectatorial activity, the seemingly successful *transference* (in the Guha sense as much as in the psychoanalytic) of a perversion from the action to the reality, Thackeray too deploys the elusiveness and spontaneity of subaltern action that Guha had noted in his explorations of subaltern insurgency. This move on his part is worth exploring over time, especially his discursive construction of Bombay's territorial realism, to effectively produce an alternative postcolonial state.

Our exploration of this begins with the more general history and with an issue of *Marmik* in 1966: two years before the Abbas judgment and the Khosla Committee but within the same political context of a widespread anti-censorship move in Bombay. Thackeray virtually defines a Constitution for *his* new citizen-protagonists:

1. The Marathi man shall help other Marathi men and ensure their prosperity.
2. A Marathi man shall never sell his goods to a non-Marathi, and if any one comes to know that this is happening, he shall inform the nearest Shiv Sena shakha.
3. The Marathi shopkeeper shall buy his supplies only from Marathi suppliers.
4. Marathi employers shall only hire Marathi employees.
5. All young Marathi children shall learn excellent English, and shall learn English steno-typing.
6. All Marathi festivals should be vigorously celebrated by Marathi men and their friends.
7. Udipi hotels should be boycotted and no Marathi man shall take his custom to a non-Marathi shop. (etc). (*Marmik*, 19th July 1966, quoted in).

Notwithstanding these diktats, a central feature of the Shiv Sena's functioning from its inception (in its first-ever public meeting at the Shivaji Park on the 30th October, 1966) has been the incitement to random violence, explicitly endorsed by Thackeray. That very October evening there was an apparently 'unplanned' attack on Udipi restaurants owned in Dadar and assaults on pavement food vendors, setting in place an unfailing routine for SS rallies ever since.

Parallelly, and important for our argument, were what we might call 'spectator courts' in the *shakha* – alternative locations, if you like, to those set up by the official locations for debating the impact of Article 19 on the cinema. In 1995, indeed after he became Chief Minister, Manohar Joshi still defended such kangaroo courts and accompanying random mob action, saying:

> Where justice was not available, the Shiv Sena had no alternative but to start their parallel law courts. Now that there is a (Shiv Sena) government that will offer justice to the average janata, the question of running courts in shakhas does not arise…
> Question: Are you claiming that the Shiv Sena has never indulged in goondaism? There is a general fear that, now that the Shiv Sena has come to power, goondaism and dadagiri will only increase.
> Manohar Joshi: The Shiv Sena has occasionally, when the situation demanded it, indulged in goonda acts, I don't deny this. But I would call that 'rebellion' (bandakhori). Once the limit of injustice is reached, even the cat retaliates by grabbing your throat…The conditions in the state so far have been so extreme that it was inevitable that the Shiv Sena would rebel. Our

opponents later described this rebellion as goondaism (*Maharashtra Times*, March 19, 1995, repr. in)

An apparently important consideration for such courts, presumably necessary for dispensing the sort of rights we are speaking of, was that the two initiatives undertaken by the Sena – the one of endorsing 'spontaneous' violence, the other of formalizing the law-dispensing authority of this subaltern – be seen not to contradict each other. A question perhaps worth asking might be whether *all* alternate systems of dispensing law, of alternate dispute resolution, from those set up in CPI-led insurrections in the 1940s to the 'People's Courts' of the CPI-ML, have functioned by *keeping intact* the necessary *randomness* of subaltern violence – that elusive subaltern claim to self-representation to which Guha points – as scrupulously as the Sena shakhas did; and if not, if they *did* seek to impose an alternative rationality then whether they found means of dealing with the problem of spontaneity.

Let us continue the argument, having made the premise that Thackeray maintains, keeps alive above all else, the twin conditions of subaltern action in Guha's work: the failure of the subaltern to perceive itself, for whatever reason, as a class, and as a consequence the necessarily dispersed and, to the outsider, unpredictable nature of its self-representation. Let us move on to the second area, where Thackeray seems – and with greater success than anybody else in recent Indian politics – to trace onto this first category of re-presentation an explicitly Bonapartist dimension (*L'état, c'est moi*).

mage 1: Chandrakant in Chhatrapati Shivaji (1952)

Image 2: Statue of Shivaji (by the sculptor N.M. Pansare, 1966) at the Shivaji Park, Mumbai.

I am here suggesting that the particular innovations that Thackeray brings to his reconstitution of spectatorship – what we may call militant spectatorial action – derives from a specific history: one associated with a tradition of state formation and also, therefore, associated with Thackeray's own subaltern reconstruction of the state through Sena operations on the symbolic of Shivaji, and that of 'Maharashtra-ness'.

In both definitions, presaging the sort of spectatorial action that Thackeray was to assemble, there are startling changes in the very position of the spectator. Both symbolic constructs of Shivaji and the 'Marathi manoos' have been, since Independence, unassailable in Maharashtra. The Shivaji legend at its most popular is traceable mainly to the work of the filmmaker Bhalji Pendharkar, more than half of whose work dealt with life in the times of Shivaji and whose definitive biographical *Chhatrapati Shivaji* (1952) has been the main source of popular imagery of the 18th C. Maratha king. There is, for instance, the obvious resemblance of the Shivaji-on-horseback statue dominating Bombay's Shivaji Park to the actor Chandrakant in the movie. Other figures who have contributed immensely to this legend are the novelist Ranjit Desai (the novel *Shriman Yogi*, but also *He Bandha Reshamache*, *Garudjhep* and *Pavankhind*, the last named also filmed by Pendharkar in 1956), and historian Babasaheb Purandare, known for his two-volume biography *Raja Shivachhatrapati* (1965), and more so for his public discourses on Shivaji that often reached a near-devotional fervour[22]. A representation of the tenor of this literature features in Pendharkar's dedication at the opening of the film *Chhatrapati Shivaji*:

> This is not a demonstration of art, nor is this mere entertainment. To the original revolutionary (*adi-krantikarak*), keeper of the Hindu dharma, founder of our freedom, to Shri Shivaraya, this is a puja assembled in his praise (bhakti). How can I pretend to make the claim that I have picturised all of his pure character? Taking inspiration from the birds that search for an end to the limitless sky, this picture is dedicated to him of whom it speaks (Opening dedication signed 'Bhalji' to the film *Chhatrapati Shivaji*. This is only an approximate translation).

The tradition of a spectatorial 'Maharashtra-ness' intersects with these symbols in part, at least, by stressing their *ruralist* content, the 'essence' of the State's identity being presented as its villagers. Vyankatesh Madgulkar's classic *Mandeshi Manse* (1949) comprises of a series of character sketches of marginalised peasants from the Mandesh region, and was written with the idea of inventing a Maharashtrian imaginary. The publisher's preface to Madgulkar's poetic non-fiction says:

> Of the Marathi prose literature coming out of the freedom movement, *Mandeshi Manse* is an important part. In these character sketches are present the old stories, but also the essence of life in the tradition of the 'new novel' (navakatha). As the dawn emerges from darkness, as the bud blossoms into a flower, with the same ease these stories blossom into the Marathi essence ().

This tradition, traceable to the late 19th C., implicates the state Congress (whose power base in Maharashtra has been the peasantry of Vidarbha and Marathwada) as much as it does the

[22] Babasaheb Purandare, *Babasaheb Purandare Yanchi Shivacharitravaril Vyakhyane*, 1969 and *Sivasahira Babasaheba Purandare yañci Sivacarita kathanamala*, ed. G.S. Khole, Pune : Indrayani Sahitya, 1987 (Marathi).

socialist tradition out of which Madgulkar, too, emerges. In 1956 Bombay, none of these traditions, nor the organisations that grew out of them, contributed much to Samyukta Maharashtra, to the urban situation, or to the face-off between the Communist unions and the Shiv Sena.

This entire tradition of Shivaji literature invokes a *devotional* relationship with the icon, for which the paradigm had to be – via Mahadev Govind Ranade and Tilak (notably the latter's instituting of the Shivjayanti festival) – that of the *varkaris*, pilgrim-devotees of the saint poets. Its political articulation through this century in Maharashtra has been the religious-nationalist Hindu Mahasabha, founder of the concept of the 'Hindu Rashtra', as against say the RSS, founded in Nagpur in 1935 by K.B. Hedgewar[23].

Notwithstanding the chilling precedent that Veer Savarkar provided for Thackeray's 1990s postures, Hindutva as such was only a recent development in the Shiv Sena's long career. Such a construction of the devotional spectator, which the Shivaji *utsava* of May 1906 had inaugurated, complete with icon and religious worship, was one to which popular Hindu-nationalism in Maharashtra was committed, and it is this tradition that is especially in evidence in Purandare's work. Nothing could be further in tone from the Shiv Sena's invocation of its patron saint. By 1956, these symbols were hardly useful to the particular issues that the city of Bombay posed to the Samyukta Maharashtra movement. In 1956 the dominant issue for State nationalism was whether Bombay, with its cosmopolitanism, dominated by Parsee industrialists, Gujarati and Bohra traders, and its huge white-collar class, should be a part of Maharashtra[24]. It is also worth remembering that neither then nor since have these minorities been politically mobilized; that the dominant feature of 'hurt Marathi pride' was portrayed in terms of *economic* job-opportunity; and finally that the dominant political presence in the city was its Communist trade unions.

In turn, Thackeray's bypassing of that entire legacy appears to have allowed him an access to Shivaji that needed no longer be one of respectful distance and devotion. The claim that Shivaji was accessible and fully realized in the masculinity of Thackeray's 'sainik' is contrary to the devotional tradition itself, marking for the first time in Maharashtra a political shift away from the peasantry as the state's bastion, marking also a move away from its founding

[23] Bhalji Pendharkar was a founder of the Hindu Mahasabha's Kolhapur office. The impact of the Mahasabha in Maharashtra has often deviated considerably from its 'Hindu-Hindi' framing by Madan Mohan Malaviya that had 'led to its specific appeal (being) largely confined to north India' () The direct impact of Malaviya's ideology here was the founding of the RSS in 1925. The Mahasabha's own territory has been a looser, less activist, cultural nationalism drawing as much from Tilak as from Tukaram.

[24] As Thomas Hansen () shows, the formation of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti in 1946 saw the replacement of Brahmin bhatjis with the Gujarati sethji as the primary enemy of the Marathi speaker. For the events that saw Nehru, under pressure from the city's business community, declare Bombay a Union Territory, to the killing of protestors in the Flora Fountain area that led to the city's central business district being renamed Hutatma Chowk (Martyr's Square), also see .

nationalist ideology of the *varkari*, and into a new urban space with a different possibility of subaltern spectatorial *action*.

> In the context of the development of a strategic, artificial, and second-level 'consciousness, Marx uses the concept of the patronymic, always within the broader concept of representation as *Vertretung*: The small peasant proprietors 'are therefore incapable of making their class interest valid in their proper name…'. [I]t is the Law of the Father (the Napoleonic Code) that paradoxically prohibits the search for the natural father. Thus, it is according to the strict observance of the historical Law of the Father that the formed yet unformed class's faith in the natural father is gainsaid ().

In the process of invoking this patronymic, in tearing the symbolic presence 'away from its own imaginary and to return it to it as a *look*' (), Thackeray – it is important to note – does not bypass the national, even if it is true that he bypasses its entire formative legacy in Maharashtra; indeed, to the contrary, I would suggest that what he invokes is, precisely, the *nation*.

This is of course a fundamentally different national construct to the one the Indian and Marathi state inherits, and yet its potential symbolic (and legal) viability on its own turf remains a significant appropriation. We are seeing here an extreme right-wing operation of a phenomenon of discursive re-territorialization, of the new construct of a citizen-spectator, that we shall more substantially revisit later in the book while discussing the Left, in the instance of Telangana, CPI(M)/(ML) politics and Gautam Ghose's *Maabhoomi* (1979).

Here, in conclusion, I propose the final bit of spectatorial slippage in the process of representation: in Thackeray's claim that he *is* the state. Right through the 1960s, he satirised the 'passive' Marathi people as incapable of action, implicitly also satirizing what Pendharkar for instance evokes as devotional distance. For instance, in 1965, *Marmik* had launched its hugely popular column, in which it would list by name and origin the (mostly South Indian) staff of large companies every week, which it had titled 'Vacha ani thanda basa' ('Read this and sit quiet').

The triple invocation, to the *true nation* rather than to given nationalism, to its *subaltern identity* ('Read this and take action as you know best'), and finally to the *patronymic* ('Do what 'I' tell you') was an address to which, it is well known, the government of Maharashtra simply has had no answer. And in what I suggest can only be seen as the flip side, the inverse POV, of the inscribed spectator to the absent all-powerful 'public' who come alive as a public only when it watches television, Thackeray too has inflated his authorial self and those for whom he speaks into extraordinary dimensions when he watches a film. In the 1960s his own

capacity for spectatorial action extended from attachs upon South Indians and Communists, then Gujaratis; in the 1970s he attacked Dalits; in the early 1980s it was modernists (Vijay Tendulkar, later M.F. Husain) and women's groups; in the 90s it has been Muslims, Bengalis and Christians. And, of course, he attacked *Fire*.