Recuperating Masculinity
Hindu nationalism, violence and the exorcism of the Muslim ‘Other’

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In a middle-class area in the centre of Thane City, an industrial suburb at the northern extension of Bombay, one finds a striking representation of the centrality of themes of physical strength and masculinity that pervade the contemporary surge of Hindu nationalism in India. In the shade of big trees in a bungalow area, one finds the training ground of the local unit of RSS, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (the National Volunteer Organization). RSS is a tightly organized and disciplined organization with approximately 2 million activists all over India. It is the central body in a vast network of organizations and branches of which the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, and the revivalist Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP, World Hindu Council) are the largest and most prominent. This combination has been the prime mover behind the recent surge of Hindu nationalism in India, which in 1992 culminated in the demolition of an old mosque in Ayodhya in North India and which has propelled the BJP to the position of the second largest political party in India. Every evening, 40–50 men dressed in khaki shorts meet at the training ground and perform a series of physical exercises and martial training with long sticks (lathis).

After the training they gather in the assembly hall in front of a large map of Akhanda Bharat (undivided India, i.e. pre-Partition India including present-day Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka), images of the god Ram, saffron flags and a statue of the founder of the organization. Here they collectively perform the patriotic Sanskrit prayer of RSS, promising life-long selfless service to the regeneration of a pure Hindu Nation, while standing in rows with their hands stretched in front of their chests in a sort of military salute.

A few hundred yards from this site, the local Maharashtrian organization Shiv Sena (Shivaji’s Army), runs a local branch. This organization,
which takes its name from the 17th century Maratha warrior-king Shivaji Maharaj, founder of the Maratha Empire, came into being in Bombay in the 1960s as a nativist movement, asserting the rights of the local Maharashtrians in the metropolitan economy and polity of Bombay. In the 1980s this organization embarked on a strategy of promoting Hindutva (Hindu-ness) while stigmatizing the Muslim minority. The Shiv Sena spread to the rural hinterland and became a significant political force that, since March 1995, in a coalition with the Hindu nationalist party BJP, has governed the industrially developed state of Maharashtra. Shiv Sena is loosely organized and is dictatorially run by its charismatic ‘Supremo’, Bal Thackeray, known among the rank and file as the Senapati (the Commander in Chief). The local branch is a building styled as a 17th century fortress en miniature, and just next to it the organization runs a body-building centre for its young activists. Inside the gym, young men ‘pump iron’ between walls decorated with portraits of the warrior-king Shivaji, images of the war-goddess Bhavani and saffron flags, mixed with pictures of glistening American muscle-men.

These two gymnasiums represent two rather different faces of current Hindu nationalism: the brotherhood of vernacular intellectuals in RSS, nurturing upper caste virtues, a revanchist political programme striving towards a revived Akhand Bharat through restaging of classical cultural themes; and Shiv Sena’s more ‘plebeian’ organization of aggressive, unemployed young men, seeking to assert themselves as a martial brotherhood in the modern metropolitan cultural economy of Bombay. I will, in the following, argue that the two gyms, in spite of differences, demonstrate that recuperation of masculinity is a common, deep-running theme in Hindu nationalist discourses and organizations. I will further argue that recuperation of masculinity, the overcoming of emasculation, lies at the heart of the quest for national strength and national self-confidence which has been a persistent theme in Hindu nationalist movements in India for a century. The following argument seeks, in other words, to identify how the metaphorical condensation of a myth of loss, or theft, of masculinity on part of Hindu males constitutes a crucial substratum of Hindu nationalist discourse, and that Hindu nationalist forms of organization and mobilization strategies in contemporary India, in crucial ways, are driven by an urge to overcome this perceived ‘effeminization’ by expunging the Muslim ‘Other’. Hindu nationalism’s promise of masculinity through collective and ideological exorcism of weakness may take one quite far, I venture, in explaining the attraction of the current Hindu nationalist upsurge to young men in India. However, the argument neither pretends to present any exhaustive account of the multiple social, political and cultural conditions creating the possibilities of Hindu nationalist mobilization, nor does it take into account the many regional and local differences in Hindu nationalist strategies and discourses.

Cultural nationalism

Cultural nationalism, as opposed to the notion of a ‘nation-state’ (état-nation), posits the core of the nation as constituted by one homogeneous culture carried by one organic popular community (Volk), a sort of emerging historical essence, which, in the face of historical decay or modern de-purification, needs to be both retrieved and purified. Cultural nationalism seeks, like other varieties of nationalism, to organically link death to the nation through the rites and discourse of patriotic sacrifice which posit national loyalty as the highest, ultimate and unquestionable identity of an individual. It seeks to suture the discrepancy between the imagining of modernity as a state of strength, security and plenitude and the actual painful social experiences of loss and conflict accompanying processes of modernization. These latter processes are characterized by erosion of social and cultural certitudes and by a continuous production of ambivalence, as well as strategies to control and eradicate these ambivalences (Bauman, 1991). Processes of democratization and liberalization in the public sphere do not mitigate the modern ‘horror’ of indeterminacy, but further contribute to it by instituting a process of constant questioning of social hierarchies and a concomitant stream of attempts at ‘fixation’ and hegemonization of meaning and social structures (Laclau, 1990). This contradictory democratic revolution thus renders open both possibilities of freedom and possibilities of its antithesis, the ultimate and totalitarian control project, as the French political philosopher Claude Lefort argues:

There is always a possibility that the logic of democracy will be disrupted in a society in which the foundation of the political order and the social order vanish, in which that which has been established never bears the seal of full legitimacy, in which differences of rank no longer go unchallenged, in which right proves to depend upon the discourse which articulates it, and in which the exercise of power depends on conflict... when power appears to have sunk to the level of reality and appears to be no more than an instrument for promotion of interests and appetites of vulgar ambition, and when, in a word, it appears in society, and when at the same time society appears to be fragmented, then we see the development of the fantasy of the People-as-One, the beginnings of a quest for a substantial identity, for a social body...
Hindu nationalism is, as any cultural nationalism, constituted by a fundamental ambivalence vis-a-vis modernity, and may fruitfully be seen as a way of ‘coping with modernity’. To cope means to the Hindu nationalists, as it did to the German cultural nationalists, to overcome and control what is seen as a dangerously fragmenting and challenging modern world, and to live in a full, deep and unique fashion, by reconstructing a national genius and the cultural roots of the people as the organic basis for social life (the ‘People-as-One’), hence ‘fixing’ meanings and social structures as manifestations of ostensibly timeless cultural essences.

There is an intimate connection between how a movement thinks and how it acts in terms of strategies and organization. The corollary of ideological organicism, rejuvenation and control, as it is found in, for example, Hindu nationalism, is, therefore, discipline and a tight corporate structure, bent on realizing the utopian organicism within the microcosm of the organization itself. Another corollary of such ideologies is the emphasis on physical strength and self-control: the ability to control one’s desires and libido, and to sublimate these urges to an unconditional dedication and service to an elevated cause.

All these organizational forms have historically been present in various ways from Turnvater Jahn’s gymnasiurns in 19th century Germany and Mazzini’s ‘Young Italy’. Patriotic uniformed corps mushroomed all over Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries, culminating in totalitarian obsessions with discipline, control and violence internally in the organizations.

In India, uniformed corps were quite common from around the turn of the century onwards. Arya Samaj had a certain dresscode, and from 1920 uniforms, drills and paramilitary schemes became still more common. The Muslim paramilitary Khaskars were uniformed and so were the Congress volunteer front organization Rashtra Seva Dal. The use of uniforms and paramilitary outfits virtually exploded in the 1940s in conjunction with war-mobilization and the disastrous communal tensions and clashes up to and after Partition (see e.g. Anderson and Damle, 1987: 26-38).

However, the projects of discipline and control did not necessarily put on a uniform. Gandhi’s entire project of Sarvodaya, of self-reliance, of ‘truth-force’ (Satyagraha), of ascetic control of desires and libido – acting symbolically on behalf of the entire nation – can also be read as a control-project, an attempt to cope with modernity, premised on the same ambivalence vis-a-vis the modern world, which he, like the RSS, inherited from the 19th century Renaissance in Bengal, Arya Samaj, Aurobindo and Tilak.

This heritage had posed the question of the construction of the nation in contradictory gendered terms: on the one hand, a gradual interiorization of Orientalist epistemology had rendered the nation as a feminine object, i.e. an object of worship, reverence and protection, most clearly articulated in the Bengali philosopher Bankim Chattopadhyay’s image of Bharat Mata, Mother India. The metaphoric feminization of the incipient nation was also boosted by the protracted Cow Protection agitation between 1880 and 1920, in which the worship of the gau mata, the mother cow, acquired new layers of meaning as a symbol of the Hindu nation, as it condensed essential elements of cultural nationalist discourse in a symbol of enormous popular, everyday ritual significance (van der Veer, 1994: 86-94). On the other hand, Hindu nationalists had embarked on a strategy of ‘semitization’ of Hinduism, i.e. a partial imitation of the features of Islam and Christianity, in order to create a modern, masculinized Hindu culture, capable of protecting Bharat Mata. The construction of motherhood in this discourse emerged as an articulation of the conventional worship of mother goddesses (mata), embodying the fundamental creative sexual power (shakti), protecting their human flock, with the new construction of the ‘Indian Woman’ in the emerging nationalist middle-class cultures in the major cities as a supreme sign of the nation, of the inner spiritual realm marked by devotion and purity in which the woman was mother and goddess (Chatterjee, 1993: 114-34). The Hindu nationalist construction of the nation as mother, sought, subtly structured by Victorian ideology, to sublimate the woman to mother. It sought to downplay and control the sexual and aggressive sides of womanliness, as they for instance were articulated by the goddess Kali, the destructive goddess worshipped especially in eastern India, or as they were expressed in the language and practices of ‘popular’, lower caste women. Hindu nationalism in India, and especially its militant incubations, sought, in other words, to posit a generalized Oedipal relation between the Mother-nation and her sons, the militant nationalists.²

Inversion of Orientalism and semitization

The Orientalist imagining of India – especially in its influential Romanticist variety – saw India, first and foremost ‘as irrationality and superstition, the predominance of imagination and fantasy over thought and reason... as a feminine sponge or jungle’ (Inden, 1990: 96).
Romanticist Orientalism depicted an ontological difference between the East and the West, within which Hindu spirituality, philosophical holism, and civilizational antiquity and depth were praised by Schlegel, Schopenhauer and others (as a critique of Anglo-Saxon utilitarianism) and depicted as the gift of India to the world. There was, in other words, a European tradition for criticism of utilitarian rationality and universalism, with India in the role as the spiritual heroine, which was ready to be acquired and ‘re-occupied’ by nationalist discourse. In this early nationalist discourse India was first and foremost spirituality, plurality and tolerance (which had eroded and degenerated from a Golden Upanishadic Age to contemporary disarray), constructed as the antithesis to a materialistic, individualized, calculating West. India versus the West was posited as culture versus politics, or, metaphorically, as femininity versus masculinity. Ronald Inden regards the transmission of a part of Orientalist scholarship into Indian nationalism as crucial in the subsequent formation of state and polity in India:

Nationalists could replace the idea of a civilisation divided by caste, that is racial, religious and linguistic conflict [as depicted by mainly Anglo-Saxon Orientalists, TBH] with the idea of a civilisation united by social harmony. . . . What the Indian nationalists substitute for the transcendent divine kingship of the British Raj is the equally transcendent idea of Indian unity. The more religious minded found that idea in a non-sectarian transcendent Dharma. Secularist, modernist thinking claimed to discover the underlying unity in a neo-Bergsonian national ‘vitality’ or ‘spirit’ . . . the nationalists have Indianised that old religious and scientific dream of so many Europeans and Americans – a ‘society’ that would be free of politics because it hung from some immobile point in heaven or rested on an indisputable foundation. (Inden, 1990: 197–8)

India became through Western scholarship and transmitted myths and knowledge a locus of pure essences, of immobility, of high spirituality and an embodiment of an organic, feminine, unfragmented community, whose very existence was posited as a critique of the rational (masculine) West, and therefore an important repository for Western radical dreams of pristine existence and the whole and healed self.

The Indian nationalists not only inverted Orientalist epistemology, they also internalized the ontological difference vis-à-vis the West. They set out to create a modern Indian nation, employing an inverted Orientalist thematic, revolving around the imagination of a supremely spiritual culture.

In the nationalist movement, and especially in Tilak and Gandhi, the ontological difference between East and West was reformulated as an antagonism, that is depicting the West as blocking the full realization of India’s true character, which could only become a negotiable difference again when India acquired independence. This nationalist interpretation of the Indian past may, in Chatterjee’s (1986) terms, be seen as an instance where the logic of the problematic, that is the possibility of national sovereignty and modernity, forces the thematic, i.e. the nationalist discourse of historical reconstruction, to position itself in a relation of antagonistic difference vis-a-vis the Western world, in order to justify its own nationhood. A nationalist discourse must, logically, claim that the culture and people for which it speaks live in a social and cultural world which is fundamentally, maybe even ontologically, different from that of the dominant people, and whose deep meanings, its ‘inner domain’, in any case are inaccessible to outsiders. It is these differences which justify its right to self-governance and sovereignty. Simultaneously, a nationalist discourse must claim an equal capability of self-rule, and even claim superiority in certain cultural fields, in the Indian case its spiritual antiquity and profundity.

The most prominent and influential drive to reform Hinduism by emulating elements from Islam and Christianity was undertaken by Arya Samaj (the Aryan community/people). Arya Samaj was founded in 1875 by Dayananda Saraswati on a reformist programme far more radical than its Bengali precursor, the Brahmo Samaj, in its critique of caste, idolatry and popular ritual traditions. Arya Samaj was strongly revivalist, proselytizing and nationalist – opposed to colonial rule (especially Christian proselytization and English education) – as well as to Islamic influence in education, language and social life.

Dayananda’s semitizing intentions were clear: a canonical text was to be reconstructed, the Aryans were to be identified as the chosen people, there should be egalitarian access to religious knowledge, strong and visible institutional structures, and not least, the Shuddhi movement, a movement for ‘purification’ of the faith, was launched. It was a front organization, attempting to stem the tendency of conversions of low-caste Hindus to Islam or Christianity, promoting reconversion of Christians back to the Hindu fold (Jaffrelot, 1994).

The emergence of the Arya Samaj must be seen as a specific articulation of cultural nationalism in a situation of fierce symbolic contestation which produced Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs as clearly bounded cultural communities in Punjab. The contestation took place as systematic construction of temples, mosques and gurdwaras. In the public sphere(s), Urdu, Hindi and Gurumukhi were competing to become the dominant script language. All communities strove to achieve numerical dominance in the province as
such, or in certain districts, through conversions of low-caste and poor peasants and agricultural labourers. It was, as Prabha Dixit notes, a situation vastly different from that of the undisputed Hindu hegemony in which the Bengali Bhadradaok was situated, allowing for spiritual and intellectual deliberations over the true spirit of India, etc. as found in Vivekananda and Aurobindo:

This was not the case with the Punjabi Hindus. They were outnumbered by their Muslim rivals. The latter were also not illiterate, poor and docile like the Muslim peasants of Bengal. It was, therefore, not possible for the Punjabi Hindus to entertain the fond dream of assimilating or absorbing the non-Hindus or equating Indian nationalism with Hindu-nationalism. (Dixit, 1986: 126)

In the communalized climate in Punjab, semitization, proselytization and physical strength were responses to perceived challenges from other communities (Jones, 1976). The entire accent of Arya Samaj and its political offshoots became sharply communal and confrontationalist. The religious idiom was downplayed, and reform and purification, etc. now became instruments in the direct confrontation with especially the Muslim community. Shuddhi now started to signify conversion and cultural purification of Muslims in order to reconquer the entire Northwest and Afghanistan for the Hindu Nation (Dixit, 1986: 129).

The methods and outlooks of the Arya Samajists were gradually appropriated by more directly political forces. In 1907, the Punjab Hindu Sabha was formed (framed as a direct counterpart to the newly formed Muslim League), and similar organizations emerged in other parts of North India in the following decade.

**Recovering masculinity (I): cultural strength and organization**

The 1920s was a crucial decade in the development of mass politics and in the production of popular national identities in India. The Khilafat movement and the first massively successful Satyagraha organized by Gandhi were followed by the crucial Montagu-Chelmsford electoral reforms which expanded the popular franchise and made provisions for separate constituencies for Hindus and Muslims. With the publication of Veer Sarvarkar's book Hindutva in 1920, the synthesis of a range of Hindu organizations and associations (Sabhas), mainly in North India, under the political umbrella of Hindu Mahasabha, and the creation of RSS in Maharashtra from 1925, the 1920s saw the emergence of two distinctly different *political* interpretations of the connotative space created by Orientalism and cultural revivalism in the previous decades. With Gandhi, the glorification of the Golden Age, of the purity of the people, of the Hindu cultural spirit, etc. took a populist, syncretic, yet distinctly Hindu, anti-colonial direction. Gandhi personally employed the techniques of renunciation of desire, of celibacy, of fasting, etc. as, according to Gandhi's interpretation of the devotional tradition of Hinduism, real power is generated through renunciation, through retention of semen. This spiritual power (which really is the female *shakti*) was, through the techniques of passive resistance and non-violence, turned into an instrument of collective political action (Nandy, 1980: 70–99; van der Veer, 1994: 94–9).

Though heirs to the same 19th-century Hindu cultural revivalism as Gandhi, Sarvarkar and RSS interpreted cultural nationalism in a more masculine and openly anti-Muslim direction, articulated within the reformist discourse inherited from Arya Samaj. Militant Hindu nationalist discourse was from the outset premised on a tension between a glorification of Hindu culture *in abstractum* and a drive to reform and rationalize the same culture. This came out clearly in the essays of RSS chief ideologue M.S. Golwarkar. One of Golwarkar’s central ideas, directly inherited from Arya Samaj, as well as from the German cultural nationalism he admired so much, was that the Hindu Nation only can be realized through cultivation of strength, physical and spiritual:

*The first thing is invincible physical strength. We have to be so strong that none in the whole world will be able to overawe and subdue us. For that we require strong and healthy bodies . . . [but] character is more important. Strength without character will only make a brute of man. Purity of character as well as the national standpoint is the real life-breath of national glory and greatness.* (Golwarkar, 1966: 65–6)

Here Golwarkar vacillated between, on the one hand, a notion of will and character of the individuals as the building-blocks of the nation – an idea inherited from Fichte and Mazzini, and a 19th-century inverted Orientalist glorification of the spirituality of Hindu culture. On the other hand, physical strength was promoted as a path to national regeneration to counter the 19th-century British notions of the ‘effeminate Hindu’, so deeply internalized in the Hindu nationalist philosophy and organization. However, the Fichtean axiom of national ‘will’, rendered as Orientalist ‘spirituality-as-culture’, continues in Golwarkar’s writings to dominate over the articulation, of mere physical manliness of Hindus. This was expressed clearly in Golwarkar’s rather jingoistic commentary on the deeds of Indian soldiers in the war with Pakistan in 1965, under the headline ‘Potent Men Versus Patton Tanks’:
It has once again given glowing evidence for the irresistible valor and virility of the children born and bred in the bosom of our great Motherland: The way our jawans crushed scores of Patton-tanks – considered invincible – as so many empty match-boxes and reduced the much-vaulted armoured divisions of the enemy to shambles has made many, even its Western masters, sit up and ponder. . . But they have ignored the fact that it is the ‘man’ and not the ‘machine’ that counts. Our superior ‘man’ has proved to be far superior to the ‘machine’ of the enemy. . .

Our jawans have in these few days smashed the myth assiduously built up by the British, and believed by the world and by many of our countrymen, that we are a meek and weak lot who have always been at the mercy of any and every freebooter who chose to trample on us. (1966: 414–15)

The ultimate strength of the Hindu – what makes him a real man and not a machine – is, Golwarkar asserts, his ‘national will’, i.e. his character and devotion to the motherland, rather than his physical strength per se.

This emphasis on education, character-building, and on inculcation of individual selfless service to the nation, still runs through the entire RSS strategy and organization. The essence of this strategy for national re-awakening is to keep a spirit of devotion and brotherhood vibrant and never rely on institutionalization, formalism or brute power. Golwarkar propagates a truly romanticist/Fichtean substantialist notion of social and interpersonal relations, i.e. of the centrality of Innerlichkeit: only when a social institution or an organization is pervaded by a common spirit carried by devoted individuals can it constitute a true human bond. In the national regeneration the RSS worker, the swayamsevak, must be the relentless missionary of the national spirit, as the survival of the nation entirely rests on the daily and constant emotional attachment to the nation. This commitment must pervade everyday activity, every thought and every sphere, and become an integral part of personalities and the national culture. This Golwarkar asserts, is the only way to serve the nation, the Mother. Under the headline ‘Mother Wants’, Golwarkar concludes in an almost Oedipal idiom:

Let us shake off the present-dayemasculating notions and become real living men, bubbling with national pride, living and breathing the grand ideas of service, self-reliance and dedication in the cause of our dear and sacred motherland. . . Today more than anything else, mother needs such men – young, intelligent, dedicated and more than all virile and masculine. And such are the men who make history – men with a capital ‘M’. (1966: 587–8)

The organizational strategy of the RSS is a simplified version of the Arya Samaj strategy of organization of the Hindu community vis-a-vis the perceived threats from colonialism and Islam: the creation of a numerically small, but devoted and efficient organization of patriotic men, who could provide leadership for a progressive organization of the entire Hindu community. The instrument for this endeavour was the shakha: the volunteers meet for one hour every day for physical exercise, semi-military drill, inculcation of ideals and norms of good and virtuous behaviour (samskars) and ideological training (baudhik) in order to impart a national spirit in them as the ultimate and supreme loyalty, and to build up a strong fraternal bond between the volunteers, the swayamsevaks. The RSS shakha combined elements drawn from various traditions such as the traditional akhara, that is the wrestling grounds where young men would gather for physical training and games common in Bengal, Maharashtra and North India (Alter, 1992) and already incipiently politicized and militarized by Congress around the turn of the century (Freitag, 1989: 225). One of the most popular games in the shakha is the physically demanding kabbadi, played for centuries in akharas in western India. Another source of inspiration was the traditional Hindu sects which developed a closed brotherhood and close devotional ties between young disciples and the teacher (guru). A final source of inspiration was the Western and colonial military discipline and collective choreography. The uniforms and equipment of RSS activists, khaki shorts and cane stick, are strikingly similar to those used by the colonial police force.

RSS wishes to create a ‘new man’, i.e. patriotic selfless individuals (cf. Fichte), loyal to the nation and the RSS, physically well trained, ‘manly’ and courageous, self-disciplined and capable of organization. Historically, the RSS swayamsevak was to be the Kshatriya antithesis to Gandhi’s non-violent, ‘effeminate’ Bhakti-inspired Hindu. The ideal swayamsevak was supposed to be a Karma-yogin (an expression inherited from Vivekananda), a selfless activist in the active, outwardly service of the nation, thus not merely preoccupied with a search for truth and perfection of the soul, as emphasized in the traditional Hindu sects.

The organizational discipline, and disciplined behaviour of swayamsevaks, distinguishes the RSS from most other Indian organizations and movements. The discipline and orderly conduct vis-a-vis elders and women, and the nurturing of a certain civic sense (although often confined to matters connected to RSS activities) is an object of inordinate pride in the organization, as it serves to project the image of a collective ‘grandiose self’ and project every individual swayamsevak as unique and special in relation to others. Its most important function is, however, to consolidate the commitment of the members by eradicating the fear of betrayal of the brotherhood, and by reassuring the members of the unquestionable truth and grandiosity of their collective pursuit. Further, highly choreographed discipline and celebration of form is more than crystallized ideology. The
'ritual of sacrifice' bestows on its subjects a certain elementary existential pleasure of being able to 'continue to walk straight in one direction' (Zizek, 1989: 82). Finally, harsh discipline seems to invest a cause and a mode of functioning with a corresponding air of importance, strength and a certain fear on the part of its surroundings.

Another crucial function of the discipline is the physical self-discipline and the worship of strength so pronounced in the RSS. I have mentioned the sublimation of sexual energy as one aspect of the cult of masculinity and strength, through which RSS tries to semitize itself, overcome the 'effeminate' Hindu man and emulate the demonized enemy, the alleged strong, aggressive, militarized, potent and masculine Muslim. Another aspect is the exclusion of women, or rather the exclusion of the ambiguities of female sexuality from the movement, in order to create a pure brotherhood, undisturbed by female sensuousness. The RSS strategy of managing Hindu male sexuality is thus to place men in a purified, desexualized space exclusively for men, where their symbolic renunciation of the flesh serves to generate power for the national cause. Hence, RSS created from 1936 a branch exclusively for women, the Rashtriya Sevika Samiti, whose prime function has been to organize wives, sisters and mothers of RSS men in a sort of auxiliary support structure, and to recruit women through discourses of 'patriotic motherhood' for the nationalist cause (Hansen, 1994; Sarkar, 1991).

This merging of practices of the traditional sect and the martial Kshatriya-ized brotherhood of the akhara serves, thus, to encourage a systematic sublimation of sexual energy into ideologically purified services to the Mother – the nation. This takes place, as I have observed, with great passion, and in a language of almost Oedipal qualities, i.e. a language whose power and persuasiveness derive from the ambiguity of desire and devotion in its sexual metaphors. Significantly, the conquest of India by Muslim invaders is in the RSS discourse portrayed as 'rape of the women through discourses of 'patriotic motherhood' for the nationalist whose power and persuasiveness derive from the ambiguity of desire and passion, and in a language of almost Oedipal qualities, i.e. a language 

Communal violence: exorcizing of the Muslim ‘Other’

To understand the links between communal violence and cultural nationalism, one has to delve into processes of nationalist and communal identification and of subject constitution at the popular level. One needs to recognize that communal identities are not just effects of momentous 'poisoning' of the people by manipulators or criminals. They are widely existing forms of subjectivity, based on widely disseminated 'mythical knowledge' of the Other, often originating in nationalist discourses and the colonial production of objectified and self-objectified communities with clear boundaries of earlier epochs, as the works of Freitag and Pandey have pointed to in the context of 19th-century North India (Freitag, 1989; Pandey, 1990). Communal knowledge is amplified by the perpetuated 'back-to-back intimacy' marked by mutual misrecognition and suspicions which characterize the coexistence of Hindus and Muslims, as well as caste groups, in so many places in contemporary India (Pandey, 1991: 566). The common sense in many places in India has in the last decade grown still more communal, and therefore receptive to Hindu nationalist discourses. What I suggest is, in other words, to understand communal identities as effects of everyday suspicions and misrecognitions, as mythical knowledge inherited from colonial practices and reproduced and aggregated by cultural nationalist discourses in a society characterized by radical and continuous dislocations and ruptures in the socio-cultural field.

The national community is an imagined entity. Its substance is elusive, but very 'real'. It is ultimately undefinable and only manifestable through symbolic representation. As Slavoj Zizek argues:

National identification is by definition sustained by a relationship towards the Nation qua Thing. ... It appears to us as 'our Thing' as something only accessible to us, as something 'they', the others, cannot grasp, but that is nonetheless constantly menaced by 'them'. It appears as what gives plenitude and vivacity to our life, and yet the only way we can determine it is by resorting to different versions of an empty tautology: all we can say about it is, ultimately, that the Thing is 'itself', 'the real Thing', 'what it really is about' and so on. ... All we can do is to enumerate disconnected fragments of the way our community organises its feasts, its rituals of mating, its initiation ceremonies – in short all the details by which is made visible the unique way a community organises its Enjoyment. (Zizek, 1990: 52)

A nation, like other objects of ideology, is an imaginary cause – paradoxically produced by its effects. It only exists as long as its subjects believe in it. Yet, the nation can only proliferate at a mass level if tangibly crystallized around a non-discursive kernel of social practices, such as rituals and festivals, i.e. enjoyment. 8 But the nation is not identical with enjoyment as such. The nation is the 'Thing' that endows this enjoyment with its meaning, with its significance: 'The national Cause is ultimately nothing
but the way subjects of a given ethnic community organise their enjoyment through national myths (Zizek, 1990: 53).

Zizek's analysis is based on the Lacanian concept of the 'lack' (of fullness in life) as constitutive of identity and the social as such. It is the striving of human beings to fill the fundamental 'void' (to become real, i.e. to 'be' fully in society) which constitutes the basic social impulse at the root of social life as such. But this void can never be filled because of the Other, who prevents us from becoming fully what we really are, the Lacanian argument goes. The Other constitutes Us because we can never positively express what we really are; we can only express what we are not, and we can thus only project our enjoyment onto an undefinable thing (the Freudian Ding) that always exceeds and escapes any ostensibly self-evident social positivity. Therefore, Zizek argues, the essence of the nation-community qua enjoyment can ultimately only be expressed through ascribing to the other (nation, group, community) an excessive enjoyment, which steals 'our enjoyment' and prevents us from fully enjoying our national way of life. What is concealed by this construction of 'theft of enjoyment' is the fundamental 'lack', namely that we never possessed what was allegedly stolen from us. In other words, the basic impulse in any ideological cause and, for that matter, cohesion of any imagined community — in casu the national community — is the search for fullness. This search, in turn, constitutes the community, which only can exist as long as this fullness is not achieved. Once the fullness is achieved, and the Other is eradicated — there can be no cause and hence no community.

Hindu nationalist discourse reflects this paradoxical ideological structure by posing the other as Muslim, Christian — as extra-territorial by origin and loyalty. The RSS ideologue Golwarkar refers to the Hindu as 'undefinable' and identifies the 'Hindu Nation' only as the feeling of being one while serving the nation. The coherence and unity of the Muslim community is, on the contrary, assumed without hesitation and exaggerated as 'excessive enjoyment'. The search for fullness, the overcoming of the 'lack' of being a full community, constitutes the national cause to Golwarkar. It is precisely the 'service to the motherland', the 'making of the nation' the recuperation of the not yet full-fledged national spirit, which makes the Hindus a community at all.

Yet, the constitutive role of the Other in nationalism, or even his 'theft of [national] enjoyment' cannot in itself explain the intense hatred which erupts as ethnic/national mass violence in Yugoslavia or in India. The fundamental reason behind ethnic hatred and violence, Zizek argues, is the lack of self-esteem, lack of self-respect in a community because of its perceived lack of self-discipline, i.e. strength. The image of the strong and lustful other, he argues, is always characterized by the fascination of his excessive enjoyment. Communities always fantasize about the special and inaccessible ways in which the other enjoys life — how others 'have more fun' — ultimately revealing to themselves ways in which they also could enjoy themselves and their ambivalence towards these — forbidden — enjoyments.

The inability to control oneself, to discipline one's enjoyment and fantasies and to fully unfold one's enjoyment — and individual 'fullness' — by being part of a nation or community, institutes self-hatred and castration. The community is weak, sinful and unfilled. The only way to remedy this is by destroying the Other, whose very presence (as temptation and fascination) weakens and prevents the inherent discipline, strength and manliness in the community from blossoming. Again, Hindu nationalism is illustrative. The myths of the lustful, wily and over-enjoying Muslim with many wives and secret links to rich Arabs are widespread in India. Not that anybody in fact knows such persons — it is an entirely 'abstract Muslim' — but he is surely there in the popular imagination among Hindus. This 'abstract Muslim' is the object of intense communal hatred. Similarly, the hedonistic Westerner — the excessive, intoxicated and immoral consumer — is an established and fascinating Other, not hated intensely, but somehow ambivalently admired for technical capability, while ridiculed for lack of self-control. Both represent 'excess' in various forms, an excess which has to be controlled and mastered in the Hindu himself in order for Hindu culture to become strong, pure and full. And this is where cultural nationalism has an elementary appeal as an ideology of control, able to control and discipline the weak and undisciplined Hindu. Since excess is tantamount to the fascination of the alien, the Other, causing cultural displacement and imbalance, only self-purification can deliver the ultimate national fullness.

The processes of attaining self-respect, of overcoming the fundamental lack, are general in nature, but become problematic and antagonistic — and thus potentially violent — in situations of rapid social displacement and cultural dislocation. To individuals experiencing social mobility, or loss of socio-economic status produced by, for example, urbanization, the issue of identity — the urge to fill the 'void' keeping one from 'fullness' — becomes
These groups are in a process of abandoning old values, indulging in new
and availability for discourses of cultural purification and social harmony
such as Hindu nationalism are thus conditioned through these large processes
involved in capitalist development. The logics of 'theft of enjoyment' and
recuperation of discipline and self-restraint are particularly relevant in
periods and areas of rapid political and cultural change, where values are
depurified, and where enjoyment (as a locus for identification) in general
is in short supply, unstable and indeterminate in meaning and form.
Religious festivals in urban India have become condensed displays of the
problematic of the community as enjoyment, and enjoyment as the
expression of the national 'Thing', which never can be fully possessed or
grasped. At religious festivals, it is possible for thousands of frustrated young
men to organize their enjoyment and to momentarily manifest themselves, that is feel themselves as a community. Significantly, it is
exactly at these junctures that violence often occurs. The frustration of
being neither 'full', strong, nor sufficiently manly; and the experience of
the festivals as not really being the 'real thing' anyway, because of lack of
money, cultural restrictions on conduct and, perhaps most of all, sexual
frustrations on a massive scale, sometimes explodes in collective rage
which is let loose on Muslim neighbourhoods as representations of the
'theft of enjoyment' by a more or less abstract Muslim. This concept may
also explain why Hindu nationalism in these years seems particularly
attractive to newly mobilized lower-caste groups in rural and urban areas.
These groups are in a process of abandoning old values, indulging in new
forms of enjoyment and in search of identities which can suture the acute
voids in their identity. Hindu nationalism's promises of mastery of
modernity's bewildering diversity, of self-restraint in the face of hedonism
and of delivery into a corporate national mainstream corresponds to these
subjectively perceived needs. The identification of the Other as Muslim is
instituted and repeated endlessly by Hindu nationalism. So are the myths
of the excessive desire of Muslims in popular discourses (four wives, too
many children, easy divorces by a threefold Talaq). The myths of Hindu
weakness, un-manliness and lack of discipline correspond neatly to myths
of the manliness, secret organization and corporate strength of the
Muslims. It must be added that these stereotypes also flourish among
Muslims, not least in situations of sharpened communal antagonisms
where, for example, young equally deprived Muslim men assert this
mythical knowledge to consolidate their own pride, their sense of
community cohesion and to reduce their fear in the face of the threat from
the majority Hindu community. To young Hindu men without steady jobs,
deprived of a chance to support a family, and thus deprived of an essential
part of their manliness, the Muslim other becomes an object of intense
hated: stealing his jobs, stealing his pride as a man, his enjoyment of
community, and his self-identity. To join the Hindu nationalist band-
wagon, to attack Muslim houses and shops, to burn, kill, rape and loot,
becomes a way of shedding this perceived humiliation, and a way of
recuperating masculinity. The fact that women during riots are often seen
distributing bangles to men who do not participate in the rioting, ridiculing
them for their effeminacy, indicates that the theme of recuperating
masculinity has long been a central component in the popular communal
common sense. At the popular level, the theme of proving one's
masculinity is less couched in Oedipal metaphors than in the RSS discourse
and more directly linked to sexual prowess. The causes of communalism
may thus, in an imprecise sociological sense, be said to lie in the general
processes of unequal growth, social dislocation and cultural displacement
characteristic of capitalism and cultural globalization — processes which
have affected India more intensely than ever before in the past decade.
However, these processes may only produce violent potentials when
experiences of theft of enjoyment, and frustrated desire at the individual
level, are ideologically constructed as caused by the communal Other.
Situations of rapid social change leave the stage open for the articulation
and mass reception of a variety of discourses. It is, in other words, the
discourses of cultural nationalism (not confined to the Hindu nationalist
organizations) which ideologically shape the specific forms and targets of
communalist violence into ethnic dyads claiming to be able to purify,
strengthen and deliver the 'fullness' of the nation. They promise in a sense
to control the erosion and contamination of cultural values and social
cohesion in the face of capitalist development, and to deliver 'modernity
minus excess of enjoyment'.

The Ram agitation and the demonization of Muslims
One of the most crucial layers in RSS's agitation from 1985-92 over the
disputed Mosque in Ayodhya in North India, and the demand for
construction of a magnificent Ram temple on the site, was the discourse on
the danger and demonic character of the Muslim Other: both as a
geographical Other (Pakistan and the Muslim world), and not least the
internal Other, the Indian Muslims with extra-territorial loyalties. The
cutting edge of the Ram agitation which seeks to create a collective Hindu
subjectivity as it speaks, lies exactly in the constant drawing of external
boundaries of the 'Hindu community-becoming-nation'. It is the Muslim
negativity which ideologically engenders a Hindu communal positivity as
a self-conscious culture (blocked by the permanent ‘insult’ of the Babri Majeed in Ayodhya); as a territorially bounded state (threatened by Pakistan); as a cohesive state unit (threatened by Kashmiri separatism); as a continuous historical entity (mutilated by Muslim invasions); as an underlying inclusive, syncretic culture (threatened by Muslim exclusiveness and proselytization); as a modern, homogeneous nation (threatened by Muslim resistance to a Common Civil Code). In this discourse, Muslims are inherently and essentially intolerant and unfit to live under the conditions of democracy. Columnist V.P. Bhatia writes in the RSS magazine Organiser:

Democratic and secular India have gone soft in the face of Islamic subversion. They [Muslims, TBH] use the secular pretext to strike at India's very cultural roots. . . . Muslim society here has failed to imbibe the Indian spirit. Thus secularism for their leaders is only a one-way traffic, a system to promote separatism and secessionism so that they can destroy the very system ultimately. (Bhatia, Organiser, Republic Day Special, 26 Jan. 1993)

Islam, this discourse asserts, is essentially expansive, aggressive, intolerant and poses a latent threat to Hindu culture. By virtue of their faith, Muslims inherit and embody the doctrinal inflexibility and fanaticism associated with Islam. Thus, Muslims will always have a capacity and propensity for violence, secrecy and dominance. As in the writings of the earlier Hindutva ideologues, the tight-knit, corporate and secretive Muslim community is simply assumed to pre-exist, always-already constituted, as a far larger risk and danger than, for example, the Christian West (equally essentialized). Its demonic power not only disorganizes and divides other nations; its very existence prevents the enjoyment of Hindu nationality as it 'steals the national enjoyment', weakening Hindu nation-ness by the fear, envy, and 'perverse attraction' it engenders. The centrality of this 'perverse attraction' came out earlier in the 20th-century and before as the drive to semitize and organize Hinduism. Today, a similar trend articulates itself in the obsession with the strength and determination of modern Islamic fundamentalism: 'The only answer to Muslim fundamentalism is Hindu unity' (D. Singh, Organiser, 16 Oct. 1990) or in the following quote:

In a nutshell, Hindus and Muslims are two ideological groups and as supreme Islamic mission is to convert the Hindus, one and all. It is the ideological struggle for Hindustan, and it has grim lessons for the easy-going Hindu. As long as the Hindus do not believe in conversion it will be a one-way traffic. That only underlines the importance of a powerful Hindu

The obsession with fantasies about the brutality and evil ingrained in Muslims reaches a rhetorical crescendo in the speeches of Sadhvi Ritambra, a young woman who since 1986 has gained the position as one of the most effective crowd-pullers in the VHP. Ritambra is a sanyasin, who has sublimated her femininity into an inciting and immensely passionate rhetorical style in the service of the Hindu cause. Tapes of her speeches are widely circulated throughout the country, and they probably represent one of the clearest examples of how the discourse of Hindutva and Ram for mass consumption effectively recruiting a variety of fantasies of violent Muslim threats against the everyday existence of the ordinary Hindu.9

Ritambra’s ambiguous position as an ‘abstract Hindu woman’, both a sanyasin and a ‘hot’ unmarried woman, is capable of provoking and mobilizing the hurt and deprived masculinity — the lack of status, power and access to women — of her predominantly male audience, for the cause of Hindutva. Her speech is dramatic, high-pitched, intense and without breaks. She is able to speak continuously for hours, rhythmically, in verses and rhymes, employing all sorts of mythical metaphors. She uses her breath while speaking, she gasps, moans and works herself up to what sounds almost like orgasmic climaxes.

One of the favourite themes in Sadhvi Ritambra’s speeches is the Muslim menace, Muslim destruction, bloodthirst and brutality — epitomized in Partition (‘vivisection of Bharat’, ‘A country without arms’). Muslims ridicule the Hindu culture, they generate a latent fear of violence and general sense of insecurity. However, Ritambra goes further and employs sexual metaphors and connotations:

In Kashmir, the Hindu was a minority and was hounded out of the valley. Slogans of ‘Long live Pakistan’ were carved with red-hot iron rods on the thighs of our Hindu daughters. . . . The state tells us Hindus to have only two or three children. After a while, they will say do not have even one. But what about those who have six wives, 30–35 children and breed like mosquitoes and flies?10

The attractiveness of Ritambra’s oratory lies in its call for action — collective action — to overcome the weakness, impotence and fear of the demonic, stereotyped lustful Muslim. Here is a woman who challenges the Hindu man to protect Mother India, to protect the Hindu woman — and offers a vehicle for action — the VHP.
Shiv Sena started as a nativist movement in the 1960s and soon became a distinct, and at times influential actor in the theatre of urban politics in Bombay, both in the streets and in municipal politics. The Shiv Sena leadership shared with its substantial middle-class constituency the dream of a clean, orderly and 'civilized' city, freed from a constant overflow of slum-dwellers and migrants. However, the Shiv Sena neither have the capacity, nor a programme, for the development of Bombay in the desired direction. Despite an openly dictatorial and centralized leadership, the actual power of Shiv Sena is widely dispersed and localized in multitudes of informal networks in slums and middle-class areas, and does not easily lend itself to sustained political efforts within the institutions of civic administration. The Shiv Sena flows with, and lives from this diversity, and it only occasionally engages in concerted, often spectacular, agitational campaigns – according to the whims of its leader Bal Thackeray. These campaigns have in the 1980s contributed to the communalization of Bombay by transforming the floating and 'available' energies and frustrations of an ever-growing army of young, unemployed men into anti-Muslim aggression and communal populism.

The conditions rendering large-scale communal populism possible lie in the conjunction of several structural transformations beyond the control of Shiv Sena's leadership. The economy of Bombay has within the last decade increasingly become dominated by the service sector, by financial transactions, construction, real estate speculation and organized crime and smuggling. The character of Bombay as a centre for Fordist large-scale industrial production with a large organized labour force is waning. Instead a peculiar version of post-Fordist flexible specialization in small-scale, informal, subcontracting units in Bombay's slum areas has contributed to the transformation of the city. The steep increase in real estate prices has further compounded the transformation of Bombay, making real estate speculation and construction by far the most profitable sector in the city.

The social composition of Bombay has concomitantly been transformed from its erstwhile primary structuration by class – a large industrial proletariat, a middle-class, a small elite, and an amorphous slum population existing outside or on the fringes of the organized economy – to an incredibly complex mélange of social and cultural groups. The middle class has expanded rapidly. There are more affluent people than ever in Bombay. The working class is disintegrating both as a relatively homogeneous entity and as a political and social subject. And the unorganized, or informal, sector has grown enormously. One may argue, as Gérard Heuzé does in a thought-provoking paper, that the social world of Bombay increasingly is bifurcating: on one side, an organized world of the middle class and the elite, striving to retain the ideals and social parameters of civic order; on the other side, a 'popular' world of the slums and the chawls, employed at the fringes of the organized economy, in the so-called informal sector, self-employed, but living with unemployment, marginalization and exclusion as the fundamental social condition. (Heuzé, 1992b).

The strength of Shiv Sena lies in its ability to straddle – through communal populism – these two worlds. It unites a fearsome middle-class craving for security and protection with a still more assertive popular world, craving for self-respect, for prospects of employment and social mobility, and for social acceptance. The exorcizing of the Muslim Other promises, however temporarily, to reduce in both worlds the ambiguities and insecurities of a bewildering urban existence.

The fast-growing middle class encounters innumerable difficulties in the process of upward social mobility, and experiences the growing popular world as a threat. Hence, the self-assertion, which the democratic revolution continuously produces in this sector, mainly takes the form of an almost frenzied drive to secure education and employment for the young generation; a conspicuous display of consumption and status; and a pronounced fear and contempt for the popular world from which it so painstakingly has worked its way out. These compounded pressures on the social world of the Bombay middle class have therefore made it a constituency more receptive to communal populism than ever before.

For Shiv Sena the 'popular' world was part of its target and constituency from the outset. Shiv Sena's emergence in the 1980s as the most powerful and omnipresent force in the slum areas in Bombay was therefore premised on its peculiar entrenchment in the 'popular' culture in these areas, and its open and permeable character. As Bombay as a whole was popularized – or 'lumpenized' – Shiv Sena was also popularized.

In this popular world in Bombay, ideological fragments of the non-Brahmin ideology, Left discourses and quite active Dalit movements of former untouchables following B. Ambedkar's rejection of Hinduism and the caste system had for long firmly rooted a societal imagination bent on a paradigm of rights vis-a-vis the state and the elite. Government schemes, political concessions, and social assistance was for long expected and demanded by the slum-dwellers to be provided by local politicians, administrators, social workers and other brokers between the two worlds. The relation between the state and city elite on one hand, and the popular world on the other was, nevertheless, for decades primarily governed by a
certain kind of benevolent, condescending paternalism. This discourse and practice, which Gérard Heuze aptly calls Ma-Baapism (Ma Baap means elder brother), basically affirmed a hierarchical and unequal distribution of not only socio-economic assets, but also cultural appreciation, self-respect, ability to think and act, etc. Ma-Baapism did not seek to change social conditions, but merely to ameliorate prevailing social conditions, and to extend benefits to the poor through a network of local brokers. The Congress Party, the state administration, and most social and political organizations (from Gandhian humanists to the RSS) still approach the popular world within this discursive framework. The response from the 'popular world' to Ma-Baapism is contradictory:

In Bombay's popular districts, it [the state, TBH] is still today avoided (when it comes for taxes and control), constantly criticised, and considered the only agent for change, justice or betterment of life. These are contradictory apprehensions facilitating the persistence of political protection cum domination, economic stagnation cum exploitation, and authoritarian control from the top. (Heuze, 1992b: 10)

But the democratic revolution has gradually undermined Ma-Baapism: it has undermined the authority of politicians, government institutions, police force and judiciary in the face of their perceived - and real - corruption and criminalization; and it has compounded unchannelled social resentment, and frustrated hopes of social mobility into anger, defiance of authority and hatred among still broader sections. Meanwhile, the commitment to social service and to constant social work became still weaker as the Congress Party and the Left became entrenched in local structures of political power and administration. Ordinary political clientelism could no longer absorb the growing resentment. The new type of popular discourse which has emerged most clearly in Bombay in the 1980s is the so-called dada culture or 'dadaism' (dada means elder brother and dadaism means 'protection by the elder brother'). Dadas are far more numerous than Ma-Baaps, and are often persons from the popular world itself, with less social distance from those they claim to protect. Dadaism is a style of political and social power and protection which evokes images of a masculine, virile, assertive - and violent - local strongman (who himself is 'popular'), acting through a multitude of local, self-made networks of loyalists, and not through institutionalized action and discourse. It is a style of assertion which appeals particularly to young men from the popular world. It posits the brave young man - aspiring to dada status - as a protector of his family, and of women in particular. It is a culture which pervades the criminal world as well as the vast array of 'grey', semi-legal activities taking place in the slums. The 'lumpenization' or popularization of Bombay correlates, therefore, with the gradual emergence of dadaism and dadas in the public and political realm in the city.

Shiv Sena did not create the dada culture, but boosted this culture of popular, manly assertiveness, and brought it into the public and political realm as a discourse of protection and power, as dadaism. Shiv Sena built upon, internalized - and twisted - this emerging socio-political form in a variety of ways: it provided a historical legitimation to manliness and violence (Shivaji and Maratha bravery); a populist political idiom of defiance of public authority in order to protect fundamental cultural values and the chastity of women (whom the state fails to protect); a vehicle for collective action, i.e. the networks of shakhas; a generalized cause; and a charismatic leader, who, in dramatic and colourful language, converts the feeling of marginalization to a feeling of power and potency by virtue of numbers, and by virtue of being 'popular', i.e. muscular, determined and brave. Shiv Sena has, in other words, become still more 'dadaized', while its political dadaism at the same time has added a distinct flavour to various aspects of the popular world in Bombay. The institutions of Mitra Mandalas (friends' associations) constitute one of the important elements in the popular culture of Bombay. These Mandalas are found all over the city (there are round 5000 in Bombay), a substantial part of them influenced by Shiv Sena. The mandal is often just a small house or room where young men meet, play cards and chat on a daily basis. Around religious festivals the Mandalas are busy organizing local functions and collecting funds for the festivity - in the style of the Shiv Sena shakhas. The Mandalas function as a sort of free space, a refuge from the compulsions of everyday life, and they nurture a masculine culture of self-assertion, ideals of brotherhood, loyalty and honour. The Shiv Sena, shakhas and Shiv Sena's communal populism has aggregated and politicized these ideals, which the organization had already helped institutionalize in an earlier phase. The vast number of young men participating in the life of Mitra Mandalas - be they unpolitical or not - forms a huge potential reservoir of recruitment and a receptive audience for Shiv Sena. There has, in other words, developed an intricate interpenetration between Shiv Sena and the popular world of Bombay. The shift from Ma-Baapism to dadaism may thus be seen as a step in the larger process of democratic revolution, which Shiv Sena in decisive ways was able to capture and twist for its programme of communal populism. This achievement of Shiv Sena, and its successful straddling of different social worlds, was a central precondition for the success of the party in expanding and acquiring an unprecedented following and electoral success from 1985 to 1991 in Maharashtra.
Recuperating masculinity (II): Shiv Sena’s communal populism

Shiv Sena’s ideology is almost exclusively produced and articulated by the ‘Supremo’, Bal Thackeray. Speeches and articles of other Shiv Sena leaders and legislators are more or less imitations of Thackeray, both in themes and style. The basic format of Thackeray’s and Shiv Sena’s discourse is populist. It seeks to construct the ‘people’ as an active, robust, male collectivity, in the 1960s articulated around a militant interpretation of the Maharashtrian ‘ethos’ it inherited from the regional struggle for creation of Maharashtra as a unilingual state in the 1950s, while similar themes in the 1980s were re-articulated around a militant anti-Muslim discourse.

Many Shiv Sainiks refer to Thackeray’s personal, rhetorical style, his charisma and his ‘straight language’ as major reasons for their attraction and loyalty to the movement. Thackeray’s discursive style is characterized by some fundamental features: it is conversational, i.e. entering into an imaginary discussion – in a fairly ordinary language without too many difficult terms and expressions – with a predominantly male audience. Most of his discourse is based on rhetorical questions – or reference to accusations and questions from his opponents – and replies to these questions. In keeping with his conversational style, Thackeray rarely develops an argument logically, but constantly jumps to conclusions and to associated themes and questions in the kind of ‘connotative leaps’, so typical of everyday conversations. His discourse is sprinkled with small anecdotes, jokes and historical myths – twisted or exaggerated for the given purpose.

His discourse is highly metaphorical, i.e. constantly evoking powerful images of his opponents, of the threats facing Hindus and of historical-mythical imagery. His metaphors mostly evoke either connotations of violence, bravery and manliness, versus cowardice and betrayal; or connotations of weakness, impotence and ridiculous conduct in the case of the Congress Party and the government. His command of the Marathi language is extraordinary. He is famous for his innovative twists of phrases, a play on the ambiguities of meanings in certain phrases which he dissects and reassembles for new purposes.

Finally, he is known for his constant normative trespassing, that is, his use of street language, slang expressions, and for his extraordinarily abusive language concerning opponents and favourite targets such as Muslim leaders and the Congress leaders in Maharashtra. Thackeray routinely abuses Muslims in a language which normally would only be used in highly informal settings (calling them ‘rats’, ‘poisonous snakes’, ‘landyas’, ‘traitors’) and he openly advocates that Muslims should go to Pakistan. In later years, Thackeray’s defence of Mahatma Gandhi’s assassin as a hero in the election campaign in 1991, and his admiration for Hitler’s so-called ‘determination to oust “anti-nationals” from Germany’, has been widely discussed. However, a glance through editorials in the Shiv Sena mouthpieces Marmik and from 1989 the daily newspaper Samna, as well as election speeches, reveals that such trespassing is a regular feature of Thackeray’s writings and utterances. Many of these populist techniques are employed by other political forces as well. The originality of Thackeray lies, I believe, in his combination of these techniques with a normative trespassing which sets him somewhat apart from other politicians in Maharashtra as well as India as a whole. Thackeray’s peculiar populist technique seeks to transmit an intimacy and confidence in the ‘people’ which entails a basic acceptance of popular idioms, prejudices, mythical knowledge and commonsensical truths about the world. Thackeray never asks people to change their ways or embark on something new. He merely asks people to be proud of what they are, to assert themselves, to accept themselves as they are, namely Hindu men, who are strong because of their numbers and their superior culture. This request for self-acceptance is underscored by his use of street jargon, abuse, etc. on which Thackeray, by virtue of his position in the political elite, bestows a certain legitimacy.

Most Indian politicians, including many BJP politicians, address their audience as Ma-Baaps, i.e. the ostensibly humble meaning as parents, patrons and well-wishers of the humble politician in front of them. They ask for votes, they promise to do a number of things, and they disavow power as a goal in itself. Thackeray, by contrast, always starts his addresses with ‘Brothers (dadas), sisters and mothers’. He makes it a point never to be humble, and he ridicules hollow promises. He portrays himself as a proud man, who speaks his mind. He asks his audience to do the same: to stand up as men, to be proud of what they are, to believe in themselves. Shiv Sena is helping and protecting women (sisters and mothers – wives are never mentioned), while men must get up themselves and join the Sena (the Army). Shiv Sena does protect, but only those worth protecting: the proud, bold and assertive men.

This dada discourse is to some extent supported and validated by the loose and informal character of Shiv Sena. Everybody is free to call himself a Shiv Sainik, to start a shakha. A Shiv Sainik merely has to do two things to qualify: he needs to blindly accept the leadership of Thackeray, the Senapati (the Commander in Chief) and the power he deputes to
pramukhs at various levels, and he needs to demonstrate his own aggressiveness and assertiveness to be accepted among other Shiv Sainiks.

The power of the Shiv Sena discourse is, however, also in vital ways supported by its content, which, like its form, circles around similar themes of popular pride, self-respect and aggressiveness. At one level, Thackeray articulates communal common sense. He portrays minorities, especially Muslims and to a lesser extent Dalits, as dangerous, conspiring against Hindus, anti-national, violent, etc. At a deeper level Thackeray speaks about sexuality, i.e. the creation of self-respect, masculinity and strength among Hindu men. He ridicules the effeminacy of Congress and intellectuals, he demonizes Muslim potency and challenges young Hindu men to ‘get on their feet’.

In this interconnection between politics and sexuality, as in the case of the communal discourse of the RSS, lies an important dimension of the appeal of communal populism. The main difference between the Shiv Sena and the RSS in this respect is not the demonization of Muslims, but the remedies: the RSS speaks at length in a high-caste idiom of ‘purification’, ‘character-building’ as the sublimation of mental energy into physical strength. Shiv Sena speaks, as I will show, in a more popular idiom of physical violence as a means to purify society, and as means to recuperate masculinity.

Muslims, and especially Muslim leaders, are ridiculed and abused by Thackeray in a language not used by any other Indian politician. The persistent themes revolve around Muslim population growth, appeasement of Muslims, anti-national activities, and the secretive, conspiring and violent nature of Muslims. On this account, Thackeray presents a cruder and more hard-hitting version of RSS’s more convoluted communalism:

In this country only Muslims have been given the right to utter the word religion. In every word the Muslims can chant ‘Muslim’. But Hindus do not even have the right to spell ‘Hindu’. . . . Along with Jinnah’s Pakistan, Pandit Nehru created an internal Pakistan within this country . . . . the poisonous snakes [Muslim leaders, TBH] who under the name of religion like rats nibble at our country, and like snakes bite the stone of liberty . . . . by tightening the ropes around their necks we do not show them their place, then after 50 years no Hindu will remain on the world map. (Marmik, 26 Feb 1986)

The ‘eunuch’ government does not dare to control the Muslims but gives them free rein, Thackeray alleges:

If armament is found in a mosque, or out of Gulf money marble stones decorate their walls and silver ornamentation takes place . . . . the Government does not dare to question where the money comes from. The registrar of religious institutions dare not to step inside a mosque to find out what exactly happens there. (‘Because they are Muslims’, Marmik, 31 May 1987)

The cancer of Pakistan has spread. . . . Hindus live in their own country as refugees in a transit camp . . . . an international plot is being hatched in some Muslim countries to inflame hatred against India under the name of Islam. But the wirepuller is of this very country – Imam Bukhari – grown arrogant under the aegis of Jama Masjid [in Delhi, TBH]. Jama Masjid has become a den of conspiracy. (‘Hang Bukhari’, Marmik, 3 Jan. 1988)

Concerning Muslim population growth Thackeray alludes to two prominent myths of Muslims, namely as primitive and culturally backward, and as obsessed with sex:

They have gone beyond 150 millions now. Why so much is our question? Go to cinema. Go to drama. What are you doing, sitting at home? We go to cinema, everything is in order, that is a fine family-planning. . . . They do not have any other work! . . . You asses, haven’t you been given Pakistan? Then go there! Lessen the burden on the land. (Speech at Dombivli, 6 Nov. 1989)

The worst part of the assumed Muslim conspiracy seems to be the myth of the innate self-confidence and unity of the Muslim community. This self-confidence is, according to Thackeray, the ultimate insult to the Hindu majority population. Commenting upon the ease with which a ban on the Satanic Verses was imposed in India, months before it became an issue in the rest of the world, Thackeray alleges that this was a result of Muslim ‘shouting’:

But I think for Muslim fanatics, mere shouting is a sign of effeminacy. Therefore, slogans such as ‘We got Pakistan by fighting, we will take Hindustan by laughing’ are to be heard in various places in India. (Samna, 16 Feb. 1989)

The sexual undercurrents are noticeable throughout the attacks on Muslims, who obviously figure as the obstacle to a full and proud Hindu manliness. The Muslims are obviously ‘stealing the national enjoyment’. The remedy Thackeray is prescribing all through is to recuperate Hindu aggressiveness, to recuperate the martial spirit of the Marathas. The central references to Shiv-shakti (Shivaji power), to the myths and anecdotes of Shivaji, and the recurrent references to the worship performed before the war-goddess Bhawani, all work to that effect.

In an election speech Thackeray is referring to the legendary martial traditions of the Sikhs, and narrates the story of a historical hero of Punjab,
Aurangabad in central Maharashtra in 1988, Thackeray re-invoked these part of the 19th century, have become a staple in the inventory of manner:

fearlessness, Maratha men (used as a metaphor for Maharashtrian, historical battles, and equated Muslims and Aurangzeb in the following Shiv Sena's victory at the Municipal Corporation elections in the city of the Mughal emperors (especially Aurangzeb) and the Maratha empire· back to a set of actual historical battles: the innumerable battles between centrality of the martial qualities of Marathas. In an editorial written after Thackeray refers extensively to these myths and seeks to underscore the of Shivaji's deeds and adventures, since their popularization in the latter remnants of fortresses and tombs constructed during this period of founded by Shivaji. The entire landscape in Maharashtra is filled 
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ning, constructed the 'Ram versus Babur' antagonism, Shiv Sena went back to a set of actual historical battles: the innumerable battles between the Mughal emperors (especially Aurangzeb) and the Maratha empire founded by Shivaji. The entire landscape in Maharashtra is filled with remnants of fortresses and tombs constructed during this period of culmination and eclipse of both Maratha and Mughal power. The myths of Shivaji's deeds and adventures, since their popularization in the latter part of the 19th century, have become a staple in the inventory of historical myths circulating among ordinary people in the state. Thackeray refers extensively to these myths and seeks to underscore the centrality of the martial qualities of Marathas. In an editorial written after Shiv Sena's victory at the Municipal Corporation elections in the city of Aurangabad in central Maharashtra in 1988, Thackeray re-invoked these historical battles, and equated Muslims and Aurangzeb in the following manner:

For three hundred years the ghost of this thirsty soul [Aurangzeb] has harassed this country. Barrister Mohammad Ali Jinnah was the last incarnation of this ghost. He succeeded in his plot and divided this country into two parts. On that occasion, Aurangzeb must have scornfully laughed underneath his tomb in Aurangabad ... After three hundred years, history has been repeated, and the Mard [virile] Marathas have buried the ghost of Aurangzeb in the very soil of Aurangabad. ('Aurangzeb's Ghost buried', Marmik, 1 May 1988)

Hindutva is nationalism, and given their historically proven courage and fearlessness, Maratha men (used as a metaphor for Maharashtrian Hindus) should be in the forefront of the nationalist ‘resurrection’ – the Hindutva wave – Thackeray asserts.

We are asked, why did you turn to Hindutva? We did not turn! It was in our blood from the very beginning. He who is Maratha, who is Margathya [stubborn, staunch] for Shivrajya [rule of Shivaji], is a nationalist. It is in our blood. Each and every cell in our body talks of nationalism [addressing opponents threatening to assassinate him, Thackeray says: ] Hey, if you have courage then come, come on such an open ground [like here]: Why aim arrows from behind the skirts of your wife? These are Shiv Sena’s mards [virile men], believing in face-to-face confrontation. (Speech at Nagpur, 19 Aug. 1989)

As I have tried to demonstrate in these examples, the stylistic elements of Thackeray's discourse underscores the construction of Hindu masculinity which lies at the heart of Shiv Sena's ideological and practical strategy. The Hindu man – who is a dada and not a pitiful object of benevolence – comes into being as he starts to talk straight, act radically and violently, and when he starts to constitute his own will through the organization led by Thackeray and his lieutenants, and as an active and enterprising individual. Commenting upon the economic promises issued by Congress, Thackeray derides the general dependency on the government. 'Do something! Start a shop or a business!' he challenges his followers. The passive, unassertive Hindu man is an effeminate weakling, who lends himself to exploitation by Congress leaders and renders Hindu society open to the expansion and violence of the Muslims, the argument goes. Hindu society (and the Hindu male) creates itself through violent action. In that sense, Muslims are merely an ‘operational enemy’, i.e. a community and a myth blocking the full development of Hindu masculinity, and blocking the economic and political development of Hindu society (India as Hindustan) towards becoming a great and strong nation in the world.

Middle-class harmony versus 'plebeian' confrontation

Shiv Sena shares several things with the RSS: first, the idea of Muslims as the ‘operational other’ blocking national development, by their ‘theft of national enjoyment’, i.e. Hindu potency. Second, the idea of activism, unity and discipline as the road to a recuperated Hindu masculinity.

While the RSS promises harmony, cooperation, collective organized activism and reconciliation, Shiv Sena promises violence, strife and conflict. Only through sacrifice for the nation (Thackeray speaks of Dharmayuddh, i.e. Holy War, or crusade), through the demonstration of individual courage and aggression, can Hindu masculinity – and hence
Hindu society — be recuperated from its present stage of effeminacy, ridicule and disarray. The major difference between the Sangh Parivar and the Shiv Sena, at this level of deep ideological structures, can be condensed into different attitudes to masculinity in Hindu society.²⁰ The Sangh Parivar basically accepts the traditional Hindu notions of sexuality and power and prescribes organizational discipline and collective assertion under appropriate moral guidance (the RSS) to be the way in which the still more problematic sexuality increasingly liberated as family authority and traditions erode can be controlled and sublimated into national strength and glory. Shiv Sena is more radical, as it seeks to transgress and expand the boundaries of male sexuality. Shiv Sena merges a more unequivocal masculine Kshatriya tradition with a certain ‘semitization’, i.e. emulation of the images of strong, active, conquering men nurtured in Islam. It offers masculinity through violence, i.e. through annihilation and humiliation of the Muslim Other who for so long deprived Hindus of masculinity. And it offers an ‘army’, i.e. a leadership under whose demanding, yet comforting, orders one can recuperate masculinity, act assertively, subvert authority, etc. — without being rendered alone in the world bereft of protection against retaliation from those one has attacked. Shiv Sena offers to young, powerless and insecure men, a self-image of being (or becoming) strong, enterprising men, accepting their male desires, and controlling countless women tantalized by the masculine power they derive from their association with the Shiv Sena. Shiv Sena’s discourse offers, in short, a route by which young men can become dadas.

However, some of the attraction of this identity-construction probably lies in the fact that acquisition of this identity will not necessarily entail a full break with societal and moral authority, as, for example, joining a criminal dada culture would. In Shiv Sena, one can become a political dada under the (absolving) canopy of Thackeray’s leadership, and assert oneself couched in a rhetoric of honesty, social work and protection of cultural virtues. In spite of all its violent and ostensibly amoral features, Shiv Sena is built on a rather altmodisch ethic of chivalry and a set of rather unquestioned cultural values, carried by the parent-generation and the established cultural institutions. In spite of similarities, there is thus a significant distance between Shiv Sena’s ethics and the nihilistic amorality and cult of violence nurtured in right-wing and fascist groups in Western Europe.²¹

Similarly, the RSS and related organizations seeks to build a constituency for itself on a promise of defending the family and a certain cultural ethos, moral standards in the public sphere, etc. Though anti-Muslim violence, or rather fantasies of violent ‘retaliation’ against the Muslims, constitutes a crucial underlying force in the RSS, the desire for social respectability, harmony and the vision of a healed, and full social world, are probably as important motive forces in the work of the RSS. One may say that the latter presupposes the former as the Muslims in the RSS imagination serve as a generalized metaphor for the evil, the dark and impure in the world, whose constant exorcizing imbues the imagined Hindu community with harmony and fullness.

Young men come to RSS to acquire a ‘surrogate family’, a protective ideological canopy, and a brotherhood under stern, yet mild, fatherly guidance. Here they can recuperate a sense of strength and masculinity while collectively and imaginarily exorcising the traces of effeminacy implanted in them by the Muslim Other. However, the actual physical confrontation with the Muslim Other is still mainly left to organizations like Shiv Sena or specialized lower-caste subdivisions within the RSS family.

NOTES

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1. Most of the information and sources upon which this paper is built were collected during my field work in Maharashtra from Jan. 1992 to April 1993, where I undertook a comparative study of Shiv Sena and the RSS family of organizations in urban and rural areas in Western and Central Maharashtra. All the points made in this paper are unfolded in greater detail in my doctoral work ‘The Saffron Wave: Democratic Revolution and Hindu Nationalism in India’, Roskilde University (1996). All translations from Marathi and Hindi to English have been done by Mahesh Gavarskar.

2. I perceive the Oedipus complex as a structure not confined to Western societies, which in any case cannot simply be essentialized as a homogeneous ‘Christian’ ‘patriarchal’ block. To my mind the power of the Oedipus myth derives from the ambiguities it ascribes to female sexuality as both destructive/demonic and protective/nurturing. The whole point is that Oedipus’s mother is both a sexually attractive and a protecting mother at one and the same time and, hence, that an Oedipal discourse is articulated around metaphors bent on this ambiguous tension between desire and devotion vis-a-vis the mother-symbol. The distinction in traditional Hindu worship between unmarried, sexually frustrated, ‘hot’
and destructive goddesses, and the serene, fertile, 'cold' and yet powerful position of married mother goddesses (see Fuller, 1992: 29-56), testifies that goddesses need marriage to control their demonic side. Further, at the level of family construction the relation between sons and mothers in most Hindu families is inordinately close and not without sexual ambiguities. Finally, I believe that the sublimation of motherhood in what Chatterjee calls 'the dominant middle-class culture coeval with the era of nationalism' (Chatterjee, 1993: 131), that is, a middle-class culture wherein gender and sexuality were constructed around nationalist appropriations of Victorian ideals of purity and chastity, and the mother- whore dichotomy, over the last century, has modified the construction of femininity and masculinity so much that derivation of their cultural meanings from religious traditions and practices at best provides only a part of the framework of their articulation. My contention is that the dominant, nationalist middle-class culture communicated for decades through educational systems and official discourse, and the contested representations of gender in the public sphere not least in Hindi films, provides images and models of gender constructions which are more powerful than those flowing from religious narratives.

3. In a recent work, Christophe Jaffrelot has traced Golwarkar's reliance on German cultural historians in his first publication 'We - Our Nationhood Defined' from 1939. It is in that work that Golwarkar praises the discipline, consistency and coherence of the German nation and culture under Nazi leadership. It is, nevertheless, misleading to call Golwarkar and RSS fascist, Jaffrelot concludes in his balanced account. Golwarkar's Hindu nationalism and RSS share several features with varieties of European fascism but they are first and foremost Indian and nationalist (Jaffrelot, 1995).

4. The writings of especially the Italian nationalist Mazzini, a student of Johann Gottlieb Fichte whose philosophy Mazzini took over, were a 'big hit' in India in the 19th century, and were translated into several Indian languages, first by Sarvarkar, who translated Mazzini's autobiography into Marathi in 1906. Other militant nationalists like Bipin Chandra Pal pointed to Mazzini as a major source of inspiration (Fasana, 1994). I have explored in an earlier work the structural affinities between the writings of Herder and Fichte and the writings of V. Sarvarkar and Golwarkar (see Hansen, 1992).

5. In his comprehensive account of the birth and development of RSS, Jaffrelot aptly characterizes shakhas as 'ideological akharas' which due to their peculiar upper-caste style and rituals were particularly attractive to Brahmans and other twice-born castes (Jaffrelot, 1995).

6. In Johan Gottlieb Fichte's famous Rede an die Deutsche Nation, published in 1808, it is suggested that the nation cannot fully develop organically by itself. The modern nation must be a 'synthetic' entity, what in the German Idealist tradition means a product of Wille, the organized and rational intervention of enlightened human beings. In his sixth speech Fichte suggests that the moulding of perfect national citizens as holistic personalities integrating both mind and body, must be thoroughly organized and supervised by enlightened men in educational institutions. In these institutions young boys would be the raw material for moulding the 'new man' (Fichte, 1922). These notions are discussed by Hans Carl Finsen (1944).

7. The mutual fears and suspicions between Hindus and Muslims are neither natural nor inevitable, but specific and contingent products of the long historical production of these communities as well-bounded and antagonistic entities since the 19th century and maybe earlier. The naturalization of the Hindu-Muslim antagonism and the demonization of Muslims among Hindus have struck deep roots in popular consciousness. In his interesting study of spirit possession in rural north India, Sudhir Kakar found that in 15 out of 28 cases the malignant spirit possessing Hindu men and women was through exorcism rites identified as Muslim. According to the cured persons these evil spirits had attempted to make them eat beef, kill family members and commit other unspeakable acts (Kakar, 1990: 136-7).

8. 'Enjoyment' is Zizek's translation of Lacan's expression jouissance which stands for the paradoxical pleasure, or fascination, derived from the encounter with something unknown, disturbing, undefinable (the Real in Lacan's terms). Jouissance is curiosity and attraction towards exploration of something which is 'in us more than ourselves', a knowledge of which would close the constitutive gap in being (manqué à d'être), which constitutes human beings as subjects (Zizek, 1989: 87-120).

9. A fine analysis of the multiple strategies and mobilizational techniques employed by VHP in the agitation for construction of a temple for Ram in Ayodhya is given by P.K. Datta (1993: 46-73). In the same volume Anuradha Kumar (1993) analyses how the VHP and RSS have transformed the iconography of Ram from that of an innocent child or mild world renouncer, to a belligerent crusader of the Hindu nation.


11. The two best works on the birth and early trajectory of Shiv Sena are Katzenstein (1981).

12. In Heuze's formulation of Ma-Baapism 'the People is normally considered inferior, but kind, needing protection forever ... elites are inviting the People to put their fate into the hands of bureaucrats, politicians and other well-wishers from the top' (Heuze, 1992b: 10). Ma-Baapism as a control strategy is in a sense both driven by the fears of the popular world, and by the utopian Gandhian view of the popular world as a site of a more authentic, pure popular culture. Unselfish work in the service of this people can purify the rich. This version of paternalism can also be found in the Sangh Parivar.

13. It should be added that Shiv Sena has gained considerable popularity among young men due to its rather non-hypocritical acceptance—sometimes publicly—of prevailing social norms in the 'popular world' such as drinking, gambling, visits to prostitutes, etc. Thackeray has repeatedly shocked the middle class by admitting that he drinks—and likes—beer and liquor. And it is a well-known fact among Bombay-ites, that Shiv Sena leaders are not exactly ascetics.

14. The following analysis is built on translations of 15 editorials in Marmik and

Furthermore I have used transcriptions of video-recordings of a Shiv Sena rally in Narsi, Nanded District on 4 Feb. 1990, showing speeches by Thackeray and Chagan Bhujbal; and transcriptions of the Shiv Sena propaganda video Avhan ani Awahan used in the State Assembly election campaign in February 1990. Both the latter transcriptions in English were used as evidence (exhibits 'D' and 'I') in the Election Petition no. 8 at the High Court, Aurangabad Bench, where a group of Congressmen sought to have the election of D.R. Deshmukh as MLA for Shiv Sena de-recognized on the basis of illegal and corrupt election practices, including the use of religious propaganda. Another source used is the transcription of a speech by Bal Thackeray, and a speech by Moreshwar Save, Shiv Sena MP from Aurangabad, in May 1991 at the sports stadium in Aurangabad, during the Lok Sabha election campaign. These transcriptions were used in a similar de-recognition suit against Moreshwar Save at the High Court Judicature at Bombay, Aurangabad bench. In both cases the elections were de-recognized and the mentioned Shiv Sena legislators lost their right to vote in Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha, respectively.

15. Thackeray very often refers to the government as a Shikandi government. Shikandi is a cowardly eunuch, a man dressed and behaving like a woman, figuring in the epic Mahabharata, where this person among other things attacks an unequivocally manly hero from behind.

16. One example is Thackeray's derision of socialists, termed samaj-wadis in Marathi (samaj means community, while wadis means adherents, or followers). Thackeray calls the socialists 'majwadis', i.e. removing only the sa-, Maj means arrogant. Hence socialists are arrogant, i.e. intellectuals despising the common people they claim to represent. See for example the editorial in Samna, 11 April 1989 titled 'Hundred Blows of a Sonar (goldsmith). One Blow of Lohar (ironsmith)'. In this editorial socialists are alluded to as Sonars, while Shiv Sainiks are alluded to as Lohars, i.e. masculine, fearless, real men.

17. In Marathi Landya means something which has shrunk and become too small. The expression refers to the fact that Muslim men are circumcised, and seeks metaphorically to reverse the myth of Muslim virility and sexual prowess by turning circumcision into a sort of castration.

18. A similar kind of 'Dada populism' which does not promise equality for all through the rule of the party (as Left and Congress politicians have promised for decades), but addresses its audience as equals (however imaginary) has also arisen in certain parts of north India, e.g. in the peasant leader Tikait's discourses in the style of Kanshi Ram, the maverick leader of the Bahujan Samaj Party in north India.

19. For the history of the reinvention of Shivaji, and especially Ranade and Tilak's role in that endeavour, see Cashman (1975).

20. I refer here to the many analyses by Sudhir Kakar, who in a variety of ways has demonstrated the fundamentally ambiguous construction of male sexuality in Hindu society. Male sexuality is, on the one hand, constructed in a void between notions of women as either adorable mothers, or as threatening, lustful women whose sexuality must be controlled through marriage. On the other hand, the brahminical idea of sexual abstinence, of detachment between husband and wife, and the sublimation of bodily desire into spiritual energy as the highest mark of masculinity, also contributes to the ambiguity of male sexuality.

21. A similar point is made by Gérard Heuze (1992a).

REFERENCES