Complex Cosmopolitanism?: The Transformation of Public Space in Colonial and Postcolonial Bombay

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Map of Bombay printed in 1969 at the Printing Group of Survey of India. In this map we can see the Fort area at the southern tip of the city, where the majority of Europeans lived during colonial rule. In the North East, we can see Bhiwandi, which is a predominantly Muslim area, and Kalyan (today, Ulhasnagar), where Sindhi refugee camps were located after the Partition.
Introduction

In December 2019, the Lok Sabha (India’s lower house of Parliament) passed the Citizenship Amendment Act, which institutionalizes the exclusion of Muslims in India. This act, coupled with the National Register of Citizens, could result in the potential denial of citizenship for Muslims in India, as citizenship will now be based on the provision of documents, which poor people are often unable to furnish. Flouting as they did the principles of secularism enshrined in the constitution, the new legislations were met with mass demonstrations and dissent, turning violent with the intervention of the police in urban public spaces. The introduction of this legislation and the unceasing violence depicted on every news channel in Bombay left me feeling hopeless and disappointed in the government. The violence against students who attempted to resist the legislation, the swarms of police with threatening lathis and the increased agitations against Muslims in the city made me question the very foundation of democracy and the right to dissent in India, which are supposedly inextricable features of the Indian constitution. These thoughts led me to consider how interactions among individuals of various social classes and communities, in the arena of the city, have contributed to and shaped notions of urban citizenship in India, particularly in the city of Bombay, where I live.

India is characterized by a proliferation of religions, castes and sects, and India’s history had been marked by periodic strife between various communities, notably during the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. Despite being the contributing factor to India’s fissiparous history, India’s leaders recognized that religion was central to what it meant to be an Indian not only before and during colonial rule, but also after independence. As a result, the leadership of the newly independent Indian nation under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru sought to fashion a distinctive
polity that could accommodate the often-contradictory diversity of India, which by extension accommodated religion in public life. In his *The Idea of India*, Sunil Khilnani explains that Nehru’s “energies were directed not towards installing a doctrine of secularism, but against the uses of religion for political purposes, the dangers of what he called “communalism.”¹ This, then, was not a system where religion was divorced from the state, but rather one where the state maintained an equal and harmonious relationship with the various communities. The desired polity was thus not a typical secular society, but rather one where all religions and communities were acknowledged, equally treated, and lived more or less amicably with one another.

After Independence in 1947, Bombay was at once India’s most modern and diverse city. It appeared to epitomize this conception of Nehruvian secularism, with its mixed cosmopolitan neighborhoods and religious cohabitation. Although religion existed in public life, as the progressive journalist Darryl D’Monte noted, “in modern, prosperous Bombay… [Hindus and Muslims] existed in perfect amity.”² This liberal vision of Bombay and India in the 1950s, with its apparent cosmopolitanism and diversity, was a lot more complex than it appeared, as the constitution’s acknowledgement of religious diversity constituted the benign face of that communal division. As a result, the benign vision of cosmopolitan Bombay always also contained a malign potential, and the emergence of nativist groups in the 1950s and 1960s are testament to this. The balance between religion in public life began shifting over time, and gradually eroded over the 1960s and the 1970s with the emergence of the Shiv Sena. In December 1992, the violent riots in the city of Bombay after the demolition of the Babri Masjid Mosque in Ayodhya challenged

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the syncretic and cosmopolitan notions of the city. The Justice Srikrishna Commission, constituted by the Maharashtra Government to investigate the Bombay riots, wrote,

“For five days in December 1992 (6th to 10th December 1992) and fifteen days in January 1993 (6th to 20th January 1993), Bombay, prima urbs of this country, was rocked by riots and violence unprecedented in magnitude and ferocity, as though the forces of Satan were let loose, destroying all human values and civilised behaviour. Neighbour killed neighbour; houses were ransacked, looted and burned, all in the name of religion…” (Bombay Aman Committee, The Srikrishna Commission Report, 12)

The riots came in three waves, and police involvement only exacerbated the communalised factions of Hindus and Muslims in the city. In the words of Justice Srikrishna, “This situation was misdiagnosed, mishandled and turned messier.” How do we explain this violent communalisation of the public spaces of Bombay? Moreover, how can we explain the state’s active involvement in the marginalization of particular communities, exemplified in the recent legislations?

My thesis seeks to understand the origins and the exacerbation of religious and class-based segmentation in Bombay, with an emphasis on urban spaces and communal identities. For progressive observers such as D’Monte, cited above, the violence in Bombay of the 1980s and 1990s marked the end of the cosmopolitan Bombay of the 1950s. I argue, contrary to such liberal notions of India and Bombay in the 1950s, that communal division was at the very heart of the subcontinent’s foundation, rather than something that “erupted” in the 1980s and the 1990s. The caste system has been structurally endemic to India’s history and conception, and as a result, certain groups have always been prioritized over others depending on the caste and status they are born into. British rule in the subcontinent exacerbated the need for subjects to identify with their

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religious affiliations as the crux of their identity, heightening these religious-based differences. Recent historiography on the contemporary history of Bombay city places the blame for the violence on the rise of the Shiv Sena in Bombay and Maharashtra, and the subsequent formation and rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the predominantly Hindu nationalist party, in Indian politics; however, I argue that although these parties and their agendas have exacerbated the city’s segmentation, the very genesis of the Indian constitution and republic created the conditions of possibility for malign eruptions of communal violence, even though the constitution’s founders acknowledged religion with benign intent.

To understand the communally charged dimensions of space, citizenship and identity in Bombay today, it is imperative to delve into the colonial city, and explore the ways in which urban spaces were connected to the formation and consolidation of communal identities in India. The construction of colonial identities and communalisation of religious identities ensued from colonial practices of governance, especially the classification of persons into rigid, mutually exclusive categories that became politicized as the British gradually began ceding representation and other benefits to Indians from the late 19th century onward. One example of such a mode of perception, which in turn authorized certain kinds of governmental intervention, was the “communal riot narrative.” The latter involved the conflation, by the British, of quotidian rivalry between individuals into Hindu-Muslim conflict. Such broad classification of Indians into mutually exclusive and antagonistic religious communities, coupled with the normalisation of specifically urban stereotypes, exacerbated a political discourse of marginalisation that was reflected in the use of language. This endured well into the postcolonial period, where communities were stereotyped in the context of refugee housing after the Partition, with better standards of living afforded to

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4 Gyanendra Pandey, “The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India,” (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), xix
communities who were stereotypically associated with particular attributes. Increased citizenship rights were therefore afforded to communities that the state deemed worthy of these rights, and worthiness was often founded on increased access to capital and social mobility.

The use of public spaces in cities, and their subsequent communalization, has implications for how communities interact on the national scale. The National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship Amendment Bill today can be traced back to colonial urban practices- the colonial enterprise inflicted urban spaces with notions of community, which carried on over into independent India and its cities. How do public spaces become associated with these ideas of community in the context of democratic and supposedly secular societies? There exists an explicitly spatial dimension to the history of communal violence in the subcontinent, as urban citizenship tends to be largely dependent on the physical space that one occupies in the city. The city is the arena where ideas of citizenship are fashioned and asserted, the site upon which claim-making takes place. Both the colonial and postcolonial state created modes of exclusionary citizenship, where participation in civil society and political representation were inextricable from class position. I extend the claim that increased property rights were directly correlated with increased political rights, and property ownership granted the dominant classes in Bombay increased political freedom and the capacity to shape the urban landscape, even after freedom from colonial rule. I develop this argument by examining housing patterns after the partition and rise

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7 Holston and Appadurai, 191
of cooperative housing societies in Bombay, and how they were constructed on community lines, which often coincided with class and religious differences.

The rise of ethnonationalist parties such as the Shiv Sena in the 1960s transformed conceptions of urban space and citizenship in Bombay, while also catalysing the Hinduisation of the city. The Shiv Sena used violence and authority to render space in the city inaccessible to those who did not conform to their ideology, and subsequently leaving a stamp on the city. I examine the Sena’s organisational structure in relation to its neighbourhood presence, and how the group’s appropriation of public space was always at the expense of other communities, from South Indians to Muslims and later to North Indians.

The thesis consists of three chapters, each dealing with a different period of Bombay’s history, but each grappling with the same underlying themes of religious segmentation, habitation on the basis of communal lines, and changing discourses of urban citizenship. The first chapter focuses on the colonial city of Bombay, and shows how the colonial state categorized Indian subjects on the basis of religious communities. The colonial city promoted the British as the advocate for law and order through a number of “development schemes,” with the supposed intention of improving the city. These schemes of urban ‘improvement’ and ‘development’ also offered the colonial state new means to control and regulate movement in the urban landscape.

In the second chapter, focused on the years after the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, I examine how the partition changed the meaning of national and urban space in Bombay, and how the resulting movement of refugees into India from Pakistan and vice-verse brought to the foreground the question of how refugees transitioned into citizens in the postcolonial era. This

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chapter thus shows how even as the Indian nation appeared to endorse *jus solis* citizenship— which is essentially a territorial basis for citizenship rather than an ethnonationalist basis— the playing out of “events on the ground” such as refugee rehabilitation and housing patterns through cooperative housing societies, subverted this agenda, resulting in the emergence of a communalized citiescape and a dis-privileging of certain claimants to rehabilitation.

In the third and final chapter of this thesis, which focuses on the years after the partition— notably the period from 1947 until the rise of the Shiv Sena in 1975— I examine the heightened communal violence and emergence of ethno-linguistic groups in the city. This chapter attempts to piece together the final link in this ongoing process of democratic unraveling that India has been experiencing, using the city of Bombay as a simulacrum.
Chapter One: The Colonial City (1890-1947)

Introduction:

In this first chapter, I examine the ways in which the colonial state in Bombay privileged some subjects over others, based on the communities they were born into. This division rested on the caste, class and religion of the individual in question. My thesis focuses more on the class-based separation in the city, as class was extremely hard to discern. It must be noted, however, that caste too was extremely unclear and was only made a clear category by the effort made by the British to systematize and organise it.

This chapter begins with a study of urban citizenship in colonial Bombay, and how the city’s urban geography was constructed with categorisations of “natives” and “Europeans” in mind. Then, I introduce the ways in which the colonial state classified subjects reducing conflict into a narrative of Hindu-Muslim antagonism, and promoting the British as the sole advocate for law and order. Finally, this chapter looks at the ways in which the state promoted urban developmental projects, disguised as a means to “improve” the city but in reality a means through which the British could control and regulate the subject population.

Urban citizenship and the Colonial City:

Urban citizenship is alludes to an individual’s claims to the spaces and other amenities of the city. This form of citizenship is determined by territorial elements of birth, residence, and the duration of time spent in the urban landscape. In colonial India, and more specifically, in Bombay,

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1 This is a sociological term used by academics to describe people’s relationship to and rights within the city. This is not a political term.
2 Frazier, 11-12
all subjects were not granted the same rights. Citizenship involves membership in the national community, guaranteed by a republican state. In colonial India, a republican state didn’t exist as the nation was a colony, and therefore Indians were subjects, rather than citizens, and had limited autonomy. In discussions of colonial Bombay, I refer to this notion of urban citizenship, which involves the rights of subjects to city spaces during the British raj.

The Marshallian framework\(^3\) of urban citizenship classifies citizenship into civil, political and social categories. Civil citizenship involves property rights coupled with legal rights, with the latter involving “freedom of speech, freedom from assault… equal treatment under the law.”\(^4\) In Bombay, civil rights were granted from early on, as the right to property and the enforcement of contracts were seen as essential to promoting commercial growth. The political realm of citizenship, according to Marshall, involves the right to participate in the political sphere, and was only hesitantly granted from the late 19th century onward, in response to demands from nascent Indian nationalism. Finally, social citizenship involves rights to social welfare (through the State) as well as rights to work, and came into fruition in the years following the first world war.\(^5\) As a result, eighteenth and nineteenth century Bombay emerged as a limited civil society, as the central state and the British East India Company allocated rights on the basis of communities, with the intent of promoting commercial activity.\(^6\) Additionally, the colonial state would, despite postulating these notions of urban citizenship, attempt to withhold these rights. This is most evident in the right to protest, which although was granted superficially, was criminalised and communalised in practice. Any dissent against the colonial state was seen as a threat to hegemony.

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\(^3\) This is a reference to the political philosopher T.H. Marshall’s system.

\(^4\) Hazareesingh, 798

\(^5\) Hazareesingh, 798

\(^6\) Hazareesingh, 798
An individual’s membership in the city was more often than not determined by the community that they belonged to, which involved religious, caste, and class-based biases. Bombay, a burgeoning metropolis with a rapidly increasing population, grappled with overcrowding and a paucity of space, and as a result, having access and being able to regulate space became an essential indication of social status in the city. The dominant classes in Bombay were granted increased political rights by the colonial state, owing primarily to their ownership of land and property. It is for this reason that urban citizenship remained a point of contention in colonial Bombay, as the Indians and colonial authorities had competing ideas of what they would like the urban complex to look like. The ‘natives’ saw access to the city as a fundamental right of citizenship, while the state held implicit notions of which citizens were more entitled to the city as compared to others. These criteria were usually based on class-based and religious identities, both of which were often confused with one-another.

Despite the colonial state’s attempts to promote elements of secularism and liberalism, India grew increasingly divided as colonial rule progressed. Divisions rested at the heart of the subcontinent, as the caste-system was a permanent structural undertone to relations between individuals and the ways in which they interacted in the city. The colonial state’s introduction of separate electorates in 1909, through a series of legislative reforms institutionalised the idea that nationalist interests were second to religious interests. Elections, usually the institutional backbone of a democracy, were consequently communalised.

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8 Hazareesingh, p. 800
Cities in colonial India, although similar in many ways, were defined by the distinct publics and the public spaces that they inhabited. Older cities such as Delhi, Lucknow and Lahore predated British rule but became part of British India. These cities were defined by the upper-echelons of society and wealthy elites, very often Muslim. Mysore and Hyderabad, however, were cities that never formally became a part of the colonial enterprise, but rather were part of the formally independent “princely states.” In these cities, the elite were composed of upper caste Hindus and upper-status Muslims. On the other spectrum of urban development were the relatively young cities- cities such as Bombay, Calcutta and Madras- which were inherently colonial cities from birth, as they had been founded by the British and remained under unbroken British control from their founding in the 17th century. Due to the youth of these cities, a large proportion of their populations were relative newcomers who held large amounts of land elsewhere. The elite in these younger cities were more likely to be Hindu, because Hindus benefitted much more from colonial education and were more likely to enter the “modern” professions such as law and medicine.

In Bombay, specifically, landholding was extremely unequal. By 1910, almost half of the land in Bombay belonged to landlords, while the remainder was owned by the government of Bombay and its associated organisations, ranging from the Municipal Corporation to smaller enterprises. This privatised land ownership underscores the local colonial state’s (the Government of Bombay Presidency) prioritisation of market activities, resulting in a selective urban development in the city, which was based largely on property ownership. Urban civil society was subsequently dominated by property rights, and class privilege directed the amount of land individuals owned, influencing their rights to city spaces. This increased emphasis on capitalist rights to property surpassed the notions of political and civic rights, and formed the

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10 Hazareesingh, 801
11 Hazareesingh, 799
foundation of class hierarchies in Bombay. These classes formed by the end of the nineteenth century, and were composed of merchants, industrialists and landowners.¹²

Bombay’s port layout rendered the city an important nexus of trade and commerce in India, and made it home to a large number of migrants. Despite being under colonial rule since the 17th century, the city’s first step into urbanity was the construction of the Fort in 1769¹³, which soon came to encompass the more expensive area of the city due to its strategic positioning and safety. When constructed, the Fort too was divided along racial lines, with the wealthy Indian population in the north, and the British in the South.¹⁴ Additionally, colonial maps would frequently illustrate a binary and somewhat reductionist understanding of Bombay, dividing the urban complex into “native” and “European” neighborhoods. The “native” or “black” town was was usually used to describe the area north of the Fort, “beyond the Esplanade, and extended up to Grant Road,” while the lofty “European quarter” rested beyond the bazaars of Bombay, nestled in the sprawling northern suburbs of Byculla, Tardeo, Mazagaon and Parel.¹⁵ Malabar Hill was considered a sort of melange between both towns, resting west of the city, it became a residential place for wealthy Indians and Europeans alike by the end of the nineteenth century. These divisions were not rigid, and were far from absolute. A number of British and Indian scholars alike have often postulated Bombay’s colonial historiography in terms of two, separate “black” and “white” entities in the city. My argument, however, conforms to the more contemporary Indian histories including those by Preeti Chopra and Swati Chattopadhyay, and moves away from the absolutist dichotomies of

¹² Hazareesingh, 799
¹⁵ Ibid, 88
segregated towns. Chattopadhyay, a historian of Calcutta, explains in her research that despite notions of dichotomy, the quotidian lives of Indians and Europeans in Bombay were subject to vast intersections and overlaps, far more complex than what maps can illustrate.

An important caveat to note is that by the 1910s and 1920s, increased municipal power was afforded to Indians. This was exemplified by the Government of India Act of 1919, which involved the withdrawal of the British state from urban development.¹⁶ This legislation also introduced the system of diarchy, which mandated the presence of a dual form of government in the provinces, separating the provincial governments from the center, as well as separating British and Indian jurisdictions. This afforded the provincial heads full discretionary authority to make decisions without the intervention of the colonial state.¹⁷ As a result, the seemingly dichotomous units of the state and the locals grew blurred, as the colonial enterprise was no longer unitary in nature. The British state had multiple sectors in the government, each of which acted as separate entities with different notions of colonial rule.¹⁸ Similarly, as Nikhil Rao explains,

“the meaning of “indigenous” was constantly changing as the city grew. Traditional indigenous elites such as landowners, industrialists, and big merchants vigorously engaged in competition for power with new groups such as the emerging upper-caste lower middle classes, and all these groups colluded with one another against the city’s underclasses.” (Rao, 9)

It is for this reason that the heterogeneity of the city cannot be oversimplified into the “native” and “European” parts of Bombay. Bombay was a city in motion, grappling with significant income

¹⁷ Ramu Bagri, “Development of Indian Federalism and Role of President’s Rule in the Light of the S.R Bommai Case (1994),” The Indian Journal of Political Science 73, no. 3 (2012): 444
¹⁸ Rao, 9
inequality that would usually leave the lower classes stranded outside of urban interactions. Despite the common historiographical narrative that the colonial enterprise oppressed its subjects, which might be true at one level, it is important to note that wealthy Indians were very much complicit in orchestrating projects with the colonial state that often excluded poorer citizens.

Fig 1: Map of Bombay in 1914

The map above illustrates the “native city” as a separate entity from the rest of the city. Within these demarcated areas, class as well as caste were the determining factors in the
organisation of space. The native town, for instance, thrived on market-related activities between the various religious and ethnic identities in the periphery, including Marwaris, Gujaratis and Maharashtrians. Different ethnicities had no reluctance in working with one-another; however the social standing of these individuals played a role in the ways in which they interacted with each other. Historian David Arnold explains, “In a caste-divided society, working alongside each other on the street was no guarantee of occupational solidarity.” As a result, the lower castes were increasingly excluded from market-based transactions, resulting in a classist and casteist segregation of the city. In general, the state’s tendency to only partially and selectively extend participatory rights culminated in exclusionary as well as inclusionary modes of identification within the city. In Bombay, this failure culminated in a form of exclusionary citizenship, which had its objective in creating areas that “kept the undesired out.” More often than not, the undesired were the poor, correlated usually with the lower castes. As Historian Sandip Hazareesingh explains, participation rights and political representation in the city were inextricably linked to class dominance.

**Categorising subjects and the Communal Riot Narrative:**

In theory, a citizen is defined by their rights to the city. In India, and more specifically, in Bombay, citizens of some communities have fewer rights than others. Muslims, especially, are classified/ categorised as lesser citizens, with only an attenuated right to the city. In order to privilege one group and marginalize another, the colonial power collectively classified people into

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20 Holston and Appadurai, 191
21 Hazareesingh, 803
group identities. In colonial cities, additionally, the logic of urban development was dependent on a communally-inflected understanding of Indians. Rather than building streets, parks, hospitals, housing, and other amenities for potential “citizens,” each of whom were potentially equivalent and attribute-less, such urban development works were always undertaken with an awareness of communities and their supposed inherent qualities. This was not exclusively a colonial attitude. The British executed this agenda with the collusion and support of elite Indian communities, as Preeti Chopra shows. The distribution of amenities were regulated on the foundation of the categories of religion and class. By categorizing subjects into religious and class-based groups in their policing, they were able to assert more control. As a result, public spaces became spatially significant in the mobilization of communal dissent against the state. “Public” institutions- like hospitals and meeting halls among others- were always already inflected with communal identity because they were endowed and supported by communal groups. Preeti Chopra’s idea of a “joint public realm,” includes the theoretical Western understanding of how “the public” played out in South Asia, with alliances of race, class, caste and religion fracturing the universality.

This reductionist classification of Indian subjects emerged out of the ways in which the colonial enterprise discussed Indians as well as colonial discourse, which postulated that Indian history could be divided into Hindu, Muslim and British periods. These “watertight compartments,” not only influenced how the British ruled the subcontinent, but also shaped Indians' notions about themselves, resulting in divisions within the national vision of an India.

Historian Francis Robinson, explains that as a result of these categorisations based on religion, “... men and women, whose Muslimness might not have been prominent in their consciousness of themselves, came to find it increasingly to be so.”

At the same time, the colonial enterprise did not itself create a separate Muslim identity, as there emerged a series of revivalist movements that accompanied the colonial categorisation of the Indian population. These Muslim revivalist movements were not limited to the subcontinent, but in fact were to be found in the entire Islamic world, accompanied with not solely cultural transformations such as the arabicization of Urdu to deepen its contrast to its Hindu counterpart, Sanskrit, but also the emergence of Jihad movements and Wahhabi groups. The danger of speaking in terms of collective identities as opposed to individual identity rests in the inevitable emergence of stereotypes. This was most prominent when Muslim separatists were being spoken about, with terms such as “fanatical” frequently dispersed in the surrounding discourse. The British particularly propagated this discourse, and a notable example of this is evident in a letter written by Sir Antony Macdonnell, a prominent Irishman involved in Indian administration under the British, to Lord Curzon, the viceroy and at the time foreign secretary of India. Macdonnell wrote, “We are far more interested in [encouraging] a Hindu predominance than in [encouraging] a Mahomedan predominance, which, in the nature of things must be hostile to us.” This statement is one example of many that shows how Muslims were gradually isolated as a discrete entity. Being Muslim was no longer seen as a religious identity but rather a political one, which was proposed

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25 Robinson, 274
26 Robinson, 278
27 Robinson, 276
28 Robinson, 277
as diametrically opposed to the ambitious and idealistic notion of a single national Indian identity.\textsuperscript{29}

The street in Bombay housed the subaltern population, who consisted of the poor, the physically compromised and the socially marginalized. In a way, the street created a sense of “subaltern solidarity,” despite the effect of this resulting in exploitation.\textsuperscript{30} The street was also significant in the state’s response to dissent, which was usually police intervention, as the British created a narrative of communal violence to rationalise their involvement to “restore” law and order and further control the population. These narratives marked the genesis of the “communal riot narrative”, which was a mode of thought crafted by British colonial officers in the 19th century that ascribed all conflict into communal categories. The effect of this discourse was the construction of a colonial interpretation of Indian history that presented Hindus and Muslims as “antagonistic communities, whose history consisted in periodic bouts of bloodletting.”\textsuperscript{31}

Newspapers from the 1930s further propagated the communal riot narrative through an inherent communalisation of public space, especially through the state. Minor instances of rivalry and arguments on the streets were inflated into communal conflict, turning a particularly violent shade when the police were involved. In Bhendi Bazaar, a predominantly Muslim area in Bombay, an argument between a police sergeant and a Muslim man over a dog escalated when the street was engulfed with police armed with “lathies,” or heavy sticks usually used to ward off stray dogs.\textsuperscript{32} The police felt threatened by what they deemed a violent mob and shot several Muslim

\textsuperscript{29} Robinson, 237
\textsuperscript{30} Arnold, 10
\textsuperscript{31} Pandey, xix
\textsuperscript{32} “Tense Situation in Bhendi Bazar.” The Bombay Chronicle. May 27, 1930, p. 1
bystanders. A witness present at Bhendi Bazaar that day was quoted to have expressed disenchantment with the state:

“Government always talks patronizingly of Mussulmans. They have always professed to be extremely anxious about the interests of minorities. But with all that it seems that the life of a dog is more precious than those of hundreds of the Muslim subjects of His Majesty.”

This instance is one among many such that took place in colonial Bombay. The police were present at every significant occasion, usually in large groups. When describing such incidents of violence in the newspapers, the use of the word “mob” is used when speaking of Muslim bystanders, as a substitute for crowd. This strategic use of language when discussing the urban landscape normalises the Muslim as a marginal group, inclined toward fanatic and criminal behavior. The documentation of communal conflict largely influences the ways in which historiography is constructed, and even in the 1893 Bombay riots, the term “riot” itself was usually used by the British to conflate dissent with fanaticism. Conflicts were abstracted into religious categories, either Hindu or Muslim, criminal categories, such as “badmashes” or “mad” groups or reduced entirely to fanatics, mobs or “ruffians.” Frequently, these three terms would be used simultaneously, which rationalised police involvement as the only possible means through which the state could quell the violence.

These arbitrary categorisations of certain individuals who were perceived as dangerous to colonial law and order were in fact institutionalized in parts of the subcontinent. The result was the appropriation of subjects who failed to conform to the state’s notion of a productive citizen,

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33 “Tense Situation in Bhendi Bazar.” The Bombay Chronicle, p. 1
36 Masselos, 186
and in the case of colonial Bombay, resourceful subjects, which usually involved a firm financial
standing. As a result, class-based distinctions were pivotal in the regulation and occupation of
space, and poverty impeded an individual’s access to active citizenship, as Patrick Geddes37
explains: “not only were the urban working classes excluded from any public civic voice, but their
condition also impeded the development of a sense of their own rights and entitlements.” 38 This
“condition” was poverty.

In Calcutta, the Goondas Act of 1923 enabled the police to decide, according to abstract
notions of potential safety, if a person was a goonda, and if they were, the police could deport
them out of the city without a trial.39 A goonda is a term used in Hindi that is roughly synonymous
to the British term hooligan, and is used to describe the archetype of an urban criminal. Historian
Sugata Nandi explains- “The Goondas Act, eloquent and unambiguous in matters of how
punishment was to be meted out to the person charged under it, deliberately kept the word Goonda
undefined.”40 As a result, the term goonda was far from a distinct category that could be decided
upon a set series of criteria; it was, rather, left to the discretion of the colonial state, the police, the
middle classes and the elites41 of Indian society to decide if a petty criminal was a goonda or not.
Another such term was the notion of rowdy, which plastered media coverages of communal
squabbles in the city-space. The term rowdy, used interchangeably with the word goonda, has an
interesting life as it evolved from an adjective into a noun, reducing individuals associated with

37 Geddes was an unconventional Scottish town planner who played a significant role in advising
on urban planning issues in India in the 1910s, keeping in mind the connections between
individuals and the spaces around them.
38 Hazareesingh, 804
37
40 Nandi, 37
41 Nandi, 40
“rowdy-ness” to the identity of being a rowdy. This evolution of amorphous adjectives into tangible urban categorisations of a criminal underclass facilitated dialogues about communities as inherently inclined to certain behaviors. Newspapers would document rowdies as individuals or communities who were predisposed to crime, according to the colonial state\textsuperscript{42}, usually involving differentiation on the basis of religion, caste and tribe. As a result, reports of violence in the city were permeated with terms that previously were used as adjectives, and over time became a “matter-of-fact style” of describing whole communities, rationalising the intervention of the police. This, in a sense, was similar to the communal riot narrative, as it reduced conflict to antagonism between the colonial conception of law and order and the “uncivilised” conception of a very specific Indian subject population. The fact that terms associated with rowdyism were more often than not used to describe conflict in slums had the effect of “tainting entire parts of a city with delinquency.”\textsuperscript{43}

The urban street life of Bombay during the 1890s posed a threat to colonial maintenance of social order. The outbreak of the plague epidemic coupled with the rise of immigration into the port city made the colonial officers label migrants as both ‘dirty’ as well as endemic with ‘criminal tendencies.’\textsuperscript{44} In general, the colonial state did not like people to move around, and subsequently, labelled groups of natives who did so as “criminal tribes,” to fix them in a particular location. The Criminal Tribe Act of 1871, an imperial India-wide legislation, gave the state full discretionary authority to declare a group as a criminal tribe.\textsuperscript{45} The act primarily targeted mobile communities, 

\textsuperscript{43}Sreenath, 394
\textsuperscript{45}“Criminal Tribes Act, 1871,” 1871.
\url{https://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/ambedkar/web/readings/Simhadri.pdf} p. 124
such as pastoralists or nomads practicing shifting cultivation, who were perceived to be impeding the commercialization of agriculture. Mobility was an important characteristic of deciding whether one would classified as a part of a criminal tribe or not, as the act stated-

“If such tribe, gang or class has no fixed place of residence, the report shall state whether such tribe, gang, or class follows any lawful occupation… and the report shall also specify the place of residence in which such wandering tribe, gang, or class were proposed to be made for enabling it to earn its living therein…” (Criminal Tribes Act, 124)

The British expressed concerns over a sudden ‘infestation’ of so-called ‘criminal tribes’ and ‘criminal classes,’ who were migrants from rural areas in the subcontinent. It was in this way that the poor, the migrants and the unemployed (or intermittently employed) were often characterised as inherently criminal in their behavior, simply because they were unable to conform to the colonial notions of law and order, which required a certain degree of monetary and physical stability.

A notable example of the state’s many civilising and improvement projects was its attitude towards the criminal tribes. A newspaper article published in 1923 concluded that criminal tribes “are capable of speedy reclamation under proper and humane treatment”46 under the condition that they completed a quota of social work, which in this article was described as agricultural and industrial production. This formed an implicit but reciprocal agreement between criminalised minorities and the government in colonial Bombay, under the condition of completing government-mandated work in order to be classified as a good citizen in the eyes of the state. Although the notion of “criminal tribes” became legally institutionalised by the colonial government, these groups were still spoken about as lesser citizens, with fewer rights to the city due to their apparent predisposition to criminal behavior.

46 “Social Workers: Need for Organisation.” The Times of India (1861-Current), December 3, 1923, p. 15
Thus, spatial segregation took place in the form of non-urban categories evolving into urban categories. An example of this was the Bombay Improvement Trust’s involvement in organizing housing settlements for the Manggarudis, who were identified as a criminal tribe.\(^47\) The Chairman of the Bombay Improvement Trust\(^48\) labelled these individuals as “gangs of squatters,” who “when ejected from one place [settle] on another.” These formulations are significant, as the use of the word “squatters” suggests that these individuals resided outside of the law, and did not have a permanent address in the city. The term “squatters” is usually used to describe migrants who historically occupied land on an illegal basis to assert their citizenship. Most significantly, “criminal tribes,” which is a category used in non-urban context to characterise nomads and pastoralists, were superimposed upon the term “squatter,” which became an important urban category, especially following the partition with the movement of refugees in and out of the subcontinent. These formulations once again delineate the negative connotations of movement in the city, which is a significant attitude that endured until after the partition, as we will see in the second chapter. Returning to the episode with the Bombay Improvement Trust, the Criminal Tribes Settlement Officer declared that “the policy in dealing with [the criminal tribes] is to remove the most criminal to a settlement at Ambernath. Those removed will however be the minority. The majority of them will be left in Bombay City on probation.” These arbitrary notions of “most criminal” were completely decided by the British.

With the rise of a secondary economy in the late nineteenth century, overcrowding coupled with a lack of available housing culminated in homelessness among the poor. The street became

\(^{47}\) I am grateful to Professor Rao for passing on this reference to me, and for advising me on the subsequent formulation of “squatter.”  
\(^{48}\) The Bombay Improvement Trust was an institution created in 1898 in response to the plague epidemic in the city. The objective of the Trust was to improve sanitation and living conditions in Bombay. The Trust will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.
the epicenter of Bombay urban life, and the bazaar, or marketplace, became reputed as a site of disorderliness as the poor would gossip ("bazaar gup")\(^4^9\) and criticise the government for their actions. This was considered a weak point of the "colonial information order,"\(^5^0\) as any form of transmission of dissent that had the ability to mobilise the population had, according to the state, the power to transcend barriers of caste, class and religion, forming a protesting Indian entity diametrically opposed to the state. British Police Commissioner S.M Edwardes dissociated the responsibility of the Municipal Corporation from urban disorder, instead blaming "the members of a lower stratum, which is rarely seen in society, is largely uneducated, but which controls the bazaar."\(^5^1\) This elusive description of the archetypical urban criminal and the spaces they occupy frequented reports on disorderliness in the city. Areas where lower-class subjects would congregate after work were also considered spaces of disorderliness, particularly the liquor stores, the empty streets, the gymnasia and brothels, which were perceived as centers of "potential violence" as a result of their "supposed culture of ‘roughness.’"\(^5^2\) Moreover, the process of law and order allowed the colonial enterprise to construct a distance between "us" and "them," suggesting that colonial law was the antidote to the religious bigotry in the country.

**The Developmental State:**

In colonial India, the British state used development projects to segregate individuals and regulate space. Development projects, which were projects proposed by the state for the supposed welfare of Indian citizens, offered a rationalisation for the British along with Indian

\(^4^9\) Arnold, 50  
\(^5^0\) Arnold, 16  
\(^5^1\) Kidambi, 133  
\(^5^2\) Kidambi, 121
elites to intervene in the processes of urban reordering and thereby regulate access to space. These projects were also significant in rendering colonial domination as an increasingly complex process that was not solely an instrument used by the British to assert authority and power, but also by Indian elites in differentiating themselves from their poorer counterparts, establishing themselves as having an increased right to the city, and by extension, increased status, recognition and privileges. Historian Malini Ranganathan explains:

“Urban improvement fundamentally entails enhancing the value of urban space through the mobilisation of corrective behaviors. In so doing, urban improvement subjectifies target populations, while eliding the structural causes of inequality. In this process, improvement grafts race, class, caste, and other forms of social difference onto urban space, which in turn provides the justification for more improvement. Improvement thus entails rule by difference.” (Ranganathan, p. 2)

The state, therefore, undertook urban “improvement” not on behalf of a general public but rather through the framework of a divided subject population. As a result, “urban planning” yielded an increased communalisation of space. A notable example of this was the orphanage scheme of 1910, proposed by the colonial administrator S.M Edwardes. Edwardes justified the creation of a private orphanage for Muslim girls by explaining that although Hindu children could be controlled, “it was always very difficult to know what to do with Muhammadan children.” This allusion to the criminalisation of the Muslim collective identity as troublesome allowed the state to justify the expenditure. These constructed stereotypes of different religious communities reduced individuals to their religious beliefs, and resulted in a classist urban planning that separated communities on this basis. Preeti Chopra argues that there was a “joint enterprise” between the colonial administration and South Asian elites—Muslim, Hindu and Parsi elites.

54 Chopra, 186
worked with the British to construct a “British Bombay,” in a collaborative enterprise. It was, therefore, the Muslim elites who financed the orphanage. A consequence of doing so was the gradual creation of a “Muslim Bombay.”

It is in this way that public space was appropriated and deployed by the state. This notion of a “joint enterprise,” was evident in improvement projects launched by the colonial government, resulting in “racialised improvement,” that targeted non-Europeans, notably the poor. After the plague epidemic, the poor who were dispossessed and displaced from their property were never rehoused, while improvement benefits were solely afforded to the British and upper-class Indians.

The plague epidemic of the nineteenth century brought to attention the public health crisis in Bombay. The failure of the city to efficiently and adequately remedy the spread of the illness was blamed on the poor housing conditions and overcrowding of the cityscape. Additionally, the poor were blamed as the primary vectors of transmission, resulting in a general hostility towards those who were unable to own their own private living spaces, and were victims to Holston and Appadurai’s notion of a “surplus of visibility,” as they resided on the streets. Despite the presence of the provincial Bombay government, headed by the colonial authorities, as well as the Municipal Corporation, the more Indian-controlled municipal body, there was a vacuum in the development and sanitation needs of the city. As a result, the Bombay Improvement Trust was formed in 1898, with the objective of not only improving the city’s sanitation, but also expanding Bombay’s positioning as the epicentre of commercial and imperial power. The Governor of Bombay, Lord Sandhurst, explained the objective of the Trust-

“The re-housing of the poorer classes is one of the most important and attractive provisions of the Bill. We do hope that by these particular provisions of the Bill we shall conduce to

55 Ranganathan, 9
56 Kidambi, 57
a higher state of civilization and of greater vigour on the part of these people who contribute so much to the material wealth of this city. These people deserve our sympathy and assistance. We desire to place them in better houses, so that not only will it let the sun into their houses but into their hearts and into their very existence, and thus terminate the sad state of things amongst them which at present cannot but be one of unhappiness, combined with toil.”57 (A Self Governing city, 147)

Without pretext, the state could not impose patterns of control and regulation upon specific communities. Under the guise of development and improving societal welfare for the poor, the colonial state would artificially carve out parts of the city and designate these regions to particular groups. Admittedly, this was possible due to the fact that specific parts of the city were specific to particular groups as well, which facilitated spatial stratification. Sandhurst’s words echoed this rhetoric of the state as a developmental entity; perpetually a work in progress and striving to better the subject population. The result of these projects, however, were often to further emphasise hierarchies of class and religion, which made it easier for the state to exercise control.

The colonial state’s processes of “development” and “improvement” inherently tended towards disciplining and controlling the subject population. Developmental projects culminated, consequently, in exclusionary urban planning, which involved collusion between the colonial state and Indian elites, as explained in Preeti Chopra’s notion of a “joint enterprise.” My argument follows that these projects contained a vision of India that transcended urban planning, and that mapped distinctions and exclusions onto the larger body politic.

In 1907, the Government of Bombay began formulating a blueprint for urban planning in the city. The government noted an urgent need to divide Bombay into distinct areas for accommodating the upper, lower and middle classes.58 This demand was exacerbated by outcries of the wealthy, who felt that collective housing of all classes in the same neighborhoods would

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58 Kidambi, 66
result in increased disease transmission. Their reason for this was that if the residential spaces of the urban propertied elite were encumbered with lower-class tenements, it would undervalue their own housing in the real estate market.\(^{59}\) The plague, essentially, became a common excuse to further spatially segregate the city on the basis of class.

The Bombay Improvement Trust has a controversial legacy, as it emphasised the creation of urban identities that were founded on class. The Trust was considered a failure because in the process of “improving” the city, it displaced more of the poor than it was able to offer homes to, worsening the housing crisis.\(^{60}\) The Trust was also used as a scapegoat for any unlawful activities that Europeans were associated with. For instance, in November 1921, a local man was attacked by a group “of European and Eurasians with lathies in their hands,” who were supposedly a part of the salvation army, according to the witness. *The Times of India*, however, published a letter written to them by a European by the name of Stanley R Ewens, who argued that the local who was attacked was “totally wrong,” as no one involved with the Salvation army, according to Ewens, would take part in assault. Instead, he placed the blame on anonymous *hooligans*. According to Ewens, the Salvation Army had vacated the building in question the prior year, but the Bombay Improvement Trust was at fault, as it must have left it open. This narrative postulates the notion that the Trust created spaces for hooliganism, incriminating the local population and shirking blame away from the British. Additionally, Ewens went on to underscore that The Salvation Army’s “international”\(^{61}\) spirit exempted it from being associated with unlawful activity, once again revisiting the notion that Indians were at the heart of colonial India’s problems, not the British.

\(^{59}\) Kidambi, 66  
\(^{60}\) Rao, 23  
\(^{61}\) Stanley R Ewens. “Hooliganism and the Salvation Army: To the Editor of the Times of India.” *The Times of India (1861-Current)*, November 25, 1921; p. 11
These public displays of conflict on the street promoted the notion of the street as “a site of political propaganda and recruitment,” with the protestors and the police in a constant flux of conflict. The street, therefore, became a site for nationalist authorities to educate the subject population and discipline the city. An article in the *Times of India* published on May 6, 1925 criticised the Trust for demolishing homes in Bhendi Bazaar, which, according to the writer, culminated in an opportunity for the Mavalis in the area “to make use of the vacant space as their rendezvous.” *Mavalis* was a term used to describe “people from the hilly regions of western Maharashtra in the Bombay Presidency… signified categories of people prone to create law and order problems for the colonial police.” Moreover, the article described the inhabitants as “ruffians,” who were involved in illegal activities, namely gambling and enjoying ganja or bhang (an edible preparation of cannabis). Most comically, the article wrote—“These groups, as a matter of fact, are changed into bands of thieves and robbers in the dead of night, and if at that time of the night any unfortunate pedestrian happens to pass by this side, he is attacked, hammered mercilessly and robbed of his moneys…” These statements reveal the working of stereotypes in the colonial city. Classifying individuals into boxes of attributes had the effect of preventing individuals from being seen independent of these attributes. These stereotypes allowed the colonial state to claim a superior understanding of the various communities in Bombay, and also demonstrate the complex effect of urban space in defining identities. The fact that these individuals were “changed” to criminals at night, and would deploy the context of darkness and isolated streets to attack an “unfortunate pedestrian,” further reinforces the categorisation of subjects in the colonial city and the ways in which public space is used to make violent claims; in the words of

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62 Arnold, 18  
63 Arnold, 18  
Holston and Appadurai- people “appropriate a space to which they then declare they belong; they violate a space which others claim.” 65 I select these newspaper accounts to underscore the narratives used by the colonial state to rationalise the involvement of the British in so-called “developmental projects,” that placed the local Indian population in the category of uncivilised and in need of direction by the greater, colonial government.

Conclusion:

In this chapter, I have examined the ways in which the state promulgated notions of urban citizenship, which although on the surface seemingly inclusionary, prioritized certain communities over others. These communities were usually based on caste, and over time were superimposed with class and religion. The country’s introduction of separate electorates under the colonial state communalized the very backbone of a secular democracy by rendering the process of elections as one inextricable from religious affiliations. The British state in India employed a communal riot narrative when confronted with conflict among its subject population, reducing clashes over economic, social and political differences into religious antagonisms, which usually segregated the marginalized castes and lower-classes. Under the guise of development projects, the colonial enterprise was able to control and regulate Indians and decide the urban planning of Bombay, which resulted in an increased spatial segregation in the city. It is clear from these discussions that discrimination on the basis of class was not altogether new, but rather an additional layer upon caste and communitarian differences that India has grappled with historically. As the next chapters will show, once India gained independence from the British, the phenomenon of the partition resulted in a demographic shock and a transfer of populations between India and the newly formed

65 Holston and Appadurai, 202
country of Pakistan. Under the Nehruvian state, notions of caste, class and community were called into question, particularly in relation to spatial belonging in the city of Bombay.

**Chapter Two: Public Space in Postcolonial Bombay (1947-1950)**

**Introduction:**

As Chapter One has shown, the colonial state classified the Indian subject population on the basis of community identity, usually founded on caste, religion and “tribe.” These categories grew increasingly nuanced with the introduction of class biases, which were implemented in specific policies among specific institutions, notably the Bombay Improvement Trust. The Bombay Improvement Trust had elite Indians among its Trustees, who would add on the class bias to a set of categories based on community which the colonial state would have usually introduced. This was a two-stage process, and by the late nineteenth century, these identities grew increasingly polarised and led to the emergence of communal identities, most notably a distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims. Although it would be reductionist to simply lay the blame for this polarisation on the British, it is important to note that the British maintained a simplified and archaic understanding of Indians based on their collective religious identity, and colonial discourse materialized these notions of identity by reducing citizens to their religious affiliations as an informal requisite for any interaction with the state.¹ These interactions involved quotidian tasks such as enrolling in school, visiting the hospital or even competing for jobs, which underscored religious differences among citizens that were previously not perceived as defining characteristics.

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¹ Robinson, 237
Historian Lucy Carroll\(^2\) explains that the British inclination to “describe, define, interpret, and categorise the social complexity that India presented to them,”\(^3\) stemmed from the fact that Indian society was alien to the colonial experiences of society in the Western world. The census itself was organized on this basis, and as a result day-to-day rivalries between persons were often conflated into rivalries between communities, which extends from the communal riot narrative discussed in the previous chapter.

In India, 1935 marked the end of diarchy and the introduction of provincial autonomy in the country. Firstly, this meant that the franchise was extended and a broader electorate emerged, resulting in an increasingly democratic process as far as voting was concerned. Secondly, this led to the emergence of an entirely autonomous sphere of Indian-controlled regional governance, which contrasted sharply with the previously federal structure where provincial subjects were completely under the control of the colonial state. This marked a shift into a seemingly more democratic and inclusive approach to citizenship in the subcontinent. After Indian Independence in 1947, rather than extending inclusive citizenship in the country, I argue that the postcolonial state failed to achieve its stated objective of creating a secular and democratic India.

This chapter examines the years following the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, in the context of spatial discourse, property ownership and how these claims to space translated into claims to citizenship, particularly within the context of Bombay’s urban geography. First, I examine the ways in which the partition changed how national space was constructed, and how the city of Bombay became an arena of struggle related to citizenship and ownership, due to the

\(^2\) Although Carroll’s article examines the functioning of colonial categories on the basis of caste, her arguments can be applied to religious-based distinctions.

\(^3\) Lucy Carroll, “Colonial Perceptions of Indian Society and the Emergence of Caste(s) Associations.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 37, no. 2 (1978): 233
large refugee influx into the city in 1947. Then, I examine the process through which refugees became citizens in the postcolonial nation, and how this was largely based on the community of the individual in question, and whether or not they possessed adequate resources to self-rehabilitate. This leads into a discussion of the tension between formal and substantive citizenship—although the poor were formal citizens, they were denied the benefits (the substance) of citizenship. Despite being counted as part of the population and society, they were unable to shape the urban landscape. Finally, this chapter examines the settlement patterns after the partition, and how housing and accommodation took place along community lines, especially with the formation of cooperative housing societies.

**The Partition and Space:**

The partition of India and Pakistan coupled with India’s independence from the British Raj changed the ways in which public space was constructed and connected with a national vision of the subcontinent.\(^4\) Historian Jim Masselos, whose work largely focuses on the city of Bombay, explains that the lack of alignment between the “imagined national space” and its inability to “conform to the physical realities of the partition,”\(^5\) lay at the heart of the Partition’s tumultuous legacies to date. This meant that although the concept of the Partition was idealised with the potential creation of two separate states, the reality was far more complex. The city served as a significant arena of struggle, both prior to Independence as well as in the post-colonial period. Colonial Bombay was an arena for resistance and the mobilisation of dissent against the British Raj. A notable example of Indian contestation against the Raj was the Satyagraha (non-violent)

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\(^5\) Masselos, 190
campaign that served as a defiance against and assertion of citizenship to the government. The Congress played an important role in orchestrating a series of campaigns in Bombay. The three main campaigns included the Non-Cooperation campaign in the early 1920s, the Civil Disobedience Movement in the early 1930s, and the Quit-India movement in 1942. The effect of resistance staged in the city challenged the assumption that the Raj had full authority over the organisation of the city and questioned the ubiquity of the British in the city, as Bombay and Delhi especially were home to a number of government buildings and predominantly European localities. Challenges to the British in the city took multiple forms, from parades and festivals to even meetings and rallies. These forms of resistance against the colonial state capitalised on the nebulous nature of the ownership of public space, as well as the contested meaning of “the public.” In many instances, the tricolor of saffron white and green was hoisted, to signify the Congress’s presence. These symbolic actions defied colonial authority, and the utilisation of public space as an area of dissent challenged the Raj’s control over these spaces.

Indian Independence, apart from resulting in the institutional decolonization of the subcontinent, also changed the claims to space in the region, with the creation of Pakistan and the resulting exodus of refugees within the subcontinent. This mass exchange of populations between India and Pakistan had an enormous impact on the meaning of citizenship in the newly demarcated countries. The influx of refugees into Bombay after the partition was accompanied by the exacerbating housing shortage in the city, which was a result of the rapidly rising urban population, which had increased from 16.6 lakhs in 1941 to 30 lakhs by 1947. By 1947, on an average, around 10 people shared a room with the size of 100 to 120 square feet, and over 400,000 people in

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6 Masselos, 197
7 Masselos, 199
8 Joseph Vaz, “Tardy Progress on Bombay’s Housing Front,” The Times of India, August 15, 1949, p. 15
Bombay were homeless.\textsuperscript{9} Indian Independence, therefore, was not as idealised as anticipated, as the newfound postcolonial Indian state grappled with a host of problems, all of which were complicated by this influx of refugees and the state’s inability to accommodate them. As a result, individuals asserted their citizenry in the urban geography through claims over space, which meant that the poor and homeless were denied the capacity to enact citizenship claims.

In total, the Partition resulted in the displacement and dispossession of almost ten million individuals\textsuperscript{10}, a majority of whom were left landless and devoid of capital. The transition from refugee to citizen was complex, as the state espoused contradictory notions of what a “good citizen”\textsuperscript{11} should embody. The archetype of what it meant to be a refugee in postcolonial India involved images of homelessness and plight, which profusely populated the media. The photographs below are from \textit{The Times of India}, and were published on August 15\textsuperscript{th}, 1948, a year after Indian Independence.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figures/figure1.png}
\caption{Photographs from \textit{The Times of India} on August 15, 1948.}
\end{figure}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{9} Joseph Vaz, “Tardy Progress on Bombay’s Housing Front,” \textit{The Times of India}. August 15, 1949, p. 15
\textsuperscript{10} Ravinder Kaur, “Distinctive Citizenship,” \textit{Cultural and Social History} 6, no. 4 (December 1, 2009): 432
\textsuperscript{11} Kaur, 442
\end{footnotesize}
The photograph on the left features non-Muslim refugees from Sind at Bombay Central Station and, according to the article, “seem broken and inured to being herded together like sheep in a pen.”

The photograph on the right encapsulates refugees at a railway station in North India, looking disoriented with their belongings strewn around them. These images of dispossession, confusion and poverty were invariably used when speaking about refugees and the legacy of the partition. The state was consequently projected as a guardian aiming to protect these refugees and facilitate their evolution into citizens. These two models - the state as the caretaker for all and refugees as self-reliant - rested in tension with one-another. The ideal refugee was expected to be self-reliant and capable of self-rehabilitation without depending on the state’s assistance. This premise automatically excluded refugees who lacked the capital to self-rehabilitate, and subsequently deemed them as liabilities. Class divides, therefore, was an important factor in whether an individual was fit to become a post-colonial citizen in India.

According to the postcolonial state, rehabilitation could be achieved by either being made a citizen, or becoming a citizen. The state encouraged the latter, as the former relied on the state to intervene and offer monetary assistance. Historian Ravinder Kaur, who has written extensively on the subject of urban citizenship in India, explains:

“While the first process suggests a set of transformative state practices to resettle the displaced populations, the second suggests an active effort by the displaced people themselves to gain resources and status by appropriating and redirecting those state practices.” (Kaur, 431)

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13 Kaur, 442
14 Ravinder Kaur, “Narrative Absence: An ‘Untouchable’ Account of Partition Migration.” Contributions to Indian Sociology 42, no. 2 (May 1, 2008); Kaur writes extensively on how caste influenced the ways in which individuals were rehabilitated after the Partition. ‘Untouchables’ migrants were deprived of sufficient housing, and were placed in shanty towns that never entered the upper-caste migrant neighbourhood’s line of sight.
This indicates the varied spectrum of refugees in colonial India, divided on the basis of socioeconomic status, gender, caste, demographic, age and physical stability. The state implicitly gendered the actors involved in the transition to the citizenry, as the state itself was patriarchal, and as a result, the state’s approach to refugee rehabilitation and accommodation was “primarily masculine in focus.” At the bottom of the social hierarchy rested the refugees who depended on the state, and lacked capital, were usually of a lower caste, disabled, poor and women. These groups were far from what the state envisaged as the ideal refugee, as these groups could never achieve social mobility, regardless of self-rehabilitation, due to the constraints and stigmas of Indian society.

The Illegality of Poverty and Refugee Camps

In the cities of postcolonial India, especially cities like Delhi, Calcutta, and Bombay, a tension emerged over who had access to public space. After the Partition, the majority of refugees were housed in state-funded refugee camps. These were usually the poorer refugees, as the wealthier were able to find accommodation elsewhere. The Bombay Refugees Act of 1948 permitted the state to evict and control the directions of movement of the refugees in camps. The lower and middle class citizens were the target of this act, as the rich seldom inhabited these camps. This delineates the fact that from the first encounter between the refugee and the state, the government

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16 Kaur, “Distinctive Citizenship,” 431
constructed a filter using the guise of administration to distinguish the “socially weakest”\textsuperscript{18} groups of refugees from the economically resourceful. Additionally, the state offered two forms of refugee housing- the self-supported housing invited the most financially-secure refugees, while the state-supported housing\textsuperscript{19} attracted refugees who lacked wealth and resources. In the invitations for applications for housing in Ulhasnagar, a Sindhi refugee camp, the government reserved an order of priority for prospective tenants based on whether they intended to purchase the flat or rent it.\textsuperscript{20} These applications were to be directed to the Director of Rehabilitation.\textsuperscript{21} Ownership, therefore, was considered superior to renting out flats, which was dictated by the tenant’s possession of resources and money. This underscores the classist nature of habitation within the refugee camps, despite being promoted by the postcolonial state as sites of rehabilitation.

Refugee camps are a significant aspect of the discourse surrounding the partition and space, as they represent the liminal space between being a refugee and a postcolonial citizen. These camps were both celebrated and stigmatized by the postcolonial state. In the case of the former, refugee camps were seen as spaces of transformation and rehabilitation for “recharging the broken spirits and incarnating a new citizenry.”\textsuperscript{22} At the same time, refugee camps were seen as a place of refuge for those who were stagnant and unable to stand on their own feet, and instead depended on the government for aid and support. As a result, physical distance from these camps was seen as an ascension of social mobility and a potential for becoming a proper citizen\textsuperscript{23}, in the eyes of the more affluent refugees who sought to live away from the camps as well as in the eyes of the state.

\textsuperscript{18} Kaur, p. 435
\textsuperscript{19} Kaur, p. 435
\textsuperscript{20} “Tenements for Refugees: Applications Invited,” \textit{The Times of India}, May 18, 1950, p. 3
\textsuperscript{21} “Tenements for Refugees: Applications Invited,” \textit{The Times of India}, May 18, 1950, p. 3
\textsuperscript{22} Kaur, p. 433
\textsuperscript{23} Kaur, p. 433
In Bombay, the largest refugee camp was Ulhasnagar, which was 40 miles from the city. These refugee camps were spoken of as “townships,” which echoes sentiments of warmth, homeliness and community, unlike the contrastingly clinical notion of a refugee camp which signifies temporariness and a transitory space. In Ulhasnagar, barracks were divided into six units, and each unit had a significantly better standard of hygiene, amenities and aesthetics than the previous one. The better units were inhabited by influential and socially mobile Sindhi refugees, underscoring the distinctions between groups even within communities. An article in *The Times of India* explained the significance of the government’s efforts in constructing these townships for the displaced—“these townships will eventually grow into largely self-sufficient units and bring prosperity to surrounding neighbourhoods.” This suggests that the intention in creating these camps was to allow refugees to assimilate into them, and form their own towns and areas of residence, rather than assimilating with the already established citizenry of Bombay. The map below illustrates the proposed plan for townships created by the government after the partition. It is clear from the map that Ulhasnagar was proposed to contain the largest population of refugees, probably because of the dearth of housing and accommodation in Bombay.

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25 Trisha Lalchandani, “Alienation, Displacement and Home in Mohan Kalpana’s Jalavatni,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 39, no. 4 (October 1, 2016): 807
27 “Ulhasnagar.” *The Times of India (1861-Current)*, August 9, 1949
An interesting aspect of the refugee camps was that when the camps failed in catalyzing the rehabilitation of refugees and their transition into citizens, the refugees were blamed, and the postcolonial state claimed that this was the result of an erroneous “refugee character,” which was associated with ideas of danger, poor health, and being a perpetual hazard to society. Joya Chatterji’s oft-cited article on the state’s policies of dispersing refugees in West Bengal delves into this notion of refugees as occupying clusters and therefore forming “dangerous and combustible

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concentrations,” by dispersing these populations, according to Chatterjee, the postcolonial state was spreading the refugee problem into more manageable and diluted units that could be confronted.

**Settlement patterns after the Partition:**

The creation of the separate Muslim-majority state of Pakistan by carving out a portion of the Indian subcontinent culminated in the deeply politicised mass exchange of populations between Independent India and Pakistan. The refugee influx into postcolonial Bombay disrupted the urban landscape due to the already urgent housing shortage that needed to be addressed. The postcolonial Indian state, following suit of the Colonial Enterprise, viewed town and city planning as a means to organise and exert control over the city through rehabilitation projects, in order to assert a sense of legitimate governance following Independence. The Nehruvian state, in fact, borrowed the already carved out categories of urban improvement coined by the British, from sanitation, public health and road organisation to improvement in a more general sense.

Independent Nehruvian India preached ideas of a liberal democracy and secularism, however the largely Hindu nature of politics and the population resulted in an underlying hostility towards minorities, most notably Muslims, in India. This was evident in the way refugee resettlement worked, as although there might have been a discourse of “India for all” at the top levels, the policy on the ground enforced a notion that Hindus were automatically Indians, while Muslims had an extra burden of proof to establish themselves as rightful citizens in postcolonial

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29 Chatterji, 1006  
30 Chatterji, 1006  
31 Anjali Bhardwaj Datta, “Genealogy of a Partition City: War, Migration and Urban Space in Delhi,” 2  
32 Datta, 3
India. In Delhi in 1947, the government began organising refugee camps distinct from one-another, each for different communities of refugees. The fact that the refugee population was segregated on a community-based basis suggests an underlying understanding of refugees in relation to their religion and community, resulting in discrimination among these camps. For instance, the camps that housed Muslim refugees were “heavily fortified” while over 50,000 refugees that lacked income, capital and resources were left outside of these camps and were forced to illegally squat on government land and encroach on public property. Delhi was not unique to these discriminatory housing accommodations. The Pimpri Colony, a Sindhi refugee settlement alongside the Bombay-Poona railroad, implicitly operated on the basis of caste in accommodating refugees, despite outward denial of caste recognition. Barnouw explains, “Despite the Sindhi’s usual dismissal of caste as a matter of no importance, there seems to be a certain amount of correlation between housing units and caste groupings. This has not been due to any government policy but has simply “worked out” that way.” This suggests that individuals tended to gravitate towards others of similar caste-backgrounds, which often overlapped with similar access to resources. This resulted in the formation of groups within communities, usually decided by caste and class.

Residential patterns, therefore, took on a discriminatory shade in the early twentieth century. Around this time, a new mode of residential patterns emerged in the form of cooperative housing societies, which Historian Nikhil Rao argues became the institutional locus around which the city was divided into communally distinct spaces. In framing the legislation that undergirded such societies in India in the early 20th century, the British built on the ill-founded notion that the

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33 Chatterji, 1065
34 Datta, 13
subcontinent was composed of communities, not individuals; the legislation thus gave these societies carte blanche to “discriminate on the basis of community.” Colonial cooperative housing societies had the objective of leveraging the power of the collective to acquire land and then renting out the land at affordable rents to members of the community. This notion changed after the Partition, and cooperative housing societies became a means for individuals to exercise ownership rights.

Ownership of tenements was considered superior to renting out flats, and the Report of the Housing Panel in 1947 found that owned homes were looked after better than rentals and consequently made “for better citizenship.” The emphasis on ownership as a form of occupation following the Partition is in fact reminiscent of the colonial attitude towards land ownership, which “made no allowances for the rights of those without a secure title to their land.” This underscores the priority given to refugees who were already on the trajectory to social mobility and had the necessary disposable income to purchase dwellings, emphasising the state’s failure to accommodate those “left on the margins.” The ownership of flats resulted in a new form of occupation that was more permanent than rentals and also a tangible presentation of entitlement over a specific space. In terms of cooperative housing societies, residents’ objectives changed from renting to ownership, and subsequently communities were seen as occupying entire buildings, changing the morphology of the residential patterns in the city and creating distinctions among different societies and different communities. Although this wasn’t always linked to communal violence, it catalysed the discourse around the communalisation of urban space in postcolonial

37 Rao, 2
38 Rao, 6
39 Datta, 5
40 Kaur, 444
India, despite the Nehruvian insistence upon secularism. As a result, citizenship was not only mediated through community, but it was also propertied. This emphasises the idea that from the very start of the creation of the Indian republic, communal notions of the national community underpinned the state discourse of secularism.

The nuances of the terms “community” and “communal” are inextricable caveats of the discussion on how the state leveraged the refugee population in the process of self-rehabilitation and in accepting them as citizens. In an article\footnote{“Transfer of Population No Remedy: Nariman Suggests Creation of Communal Zones.” \textit{The Bombay Chronicle}, September 18, 1947.} in \textit{The Bombay Chronicle}, K.F Nariman discussed the plight and trauma that refugees have grappled with since the Partition, and their displacement and dispossession from their homes. In confronting this problem and thinking about measures that the government could take to enhance the rehabilitation and relocation of these refugees, he suggested the creation of “communal colonies”:

“it would be easier and more practicable and less disastrous to create communal zones or regions in each state, wherein all the members of minorities concerned should be accommodated and concentrated in safe, secure, exclusive, self-contained and well-provided colonies. There should be no localities, as hitherto, with mixed populations of both communities in the same area…”\footnote{“Transfer of Population No Remedy: Nariman Suggests Creation of Communal Zones.” \textit{The Bombay Chronicle}, September 18, 1947.}

He went on to elaborate that these regions should be protected by the police and military, and that the administration of the colony in question should be staffed by members of that minority community. In his thought process, he mobilised the positive aspects of the term “communal,” suggesting that the creation of communal areas would create safe spaces for communities and make individuals more likely to aid their peers along community-lines. Thinking and recruiting in
terms of communities also decreases the burden on the state to act in favor of every individual citizen and is a critique of the liberal individualism model that existed at this time.

“Communal,” here, is antithetical to its more recent connotations associated with communal violence. The postcolonial state sought to reframe the meaning of “communal”- rather than purely negative, as traditionally viewed, it sought to mobilise the communal bonds- the power of the collective as perhaps a way to more effectively achieve results rather than the traditional liberal emphasis on the individual.\textsuperscript{43} The postcolonial state employed the positive connotations around the term “communal” in order to encourage citizens to work together, and essentially not rely on the state’s resources and aid. In a newspaper article published in August 1950, the Minister of the State for Rehabilitation Mr Ajit Prasad Jain celebrated the development and efficiency of the Nari Seva Sadhan Camp in Bombay, as the camp was “buzzing with life,”\textsuperscript{44} which was a complete shift from its underdeveloped and marsh-like state less than three years prior. The article explains why these transformations in Bombay camps were so significant- “It exemplified what the refugees had achieved through their own efforts. The 500 houses, built at a cost of Rs. 18 lakhs, and accommodating about 5,000 refugees, the roads, underground drainage, street-lighting etc. had all been paid for by refugees without any outside aid.”\textsuperscript{45} This statement is a testament to the fact that the postcolonial state not only celebrated self-rehabilitation, but also encouraged it with a set of incentives, all of which led up to becoming a postcolonial citizen. These incentives were informal and took various forms, however the reward of property is among the more significant

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\textsuperscript{43} I’m grateful to Professor Nikhil Rao for suggesting this formulation during one of our thesis meetings. \\
\textsuperscript{44} “Refugee Eviction Supported: Minister’s Visit to Bombay Centres.” \textit{The Times of India (1861-Current)}, August 25, 1950. \\
\textsuperscript{45} “Refugee Eviction Supported: Minister’s Visit to Bombay Centres.” \textit{The Times of India (1861-Current)}, August 25, 1950.
\end{flushright}
offers made by the state. The photograph\textsuperscript{46} below illustrates a “self-help squad” at a Refugee Relief Camp in Delhi, working on a scheme implemented by the government for building 2,000 houses for refugee accommodation.

The prerequisite for eligibility for a house was for the family in question to lay 6,000 bricks, underscoring the direct reward system associated with refugee families taking agency in their rehabilitation. Additionally, the action of laying bricks for the government emphasized that it was the postcolonial state that was facilitating this transition from refugee to citizen, regardless of how absent they were in the physical process of it all. This meant that even when refugees took agency in self-rehabilitation, the postcolonial state was to be applauded for permitting them to be active agents.

The series of photographs below are revelatory of the state’s effort to present the rehabilitation of refugees and the creation of refugee camps as a “communal” effort, in the positive connotations of community effort. The photograph on the left paints a scene where the Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation in Delhi, working with a self-help squad that he has organized, is

\textsuperscript{46}“Bombay’s Garbage-Littered Streets.” \textit{The Times of India (1861-Current)}, July 4, 1948.
using a pickaxe to build houses for homeless refugees. In the photo on the right, a young girl is seen carrying bricks to the refugee camp site in Delhi. The caption reads, “With every member of thousands of refugee families pulling their weight, a new town is growing up.” Very often, these photos would populate the media in association with terms such as “self help” and “social workers.” These would have the dual effect of both showcasing allegiance and nationalism to the postcolonial state through service, while also in the self-empowering agency of transitioning into a “good citizen,” in postcolonial India, namely through being resourceful and independent.

Conclusion

From the conception of Pakistan and the partition of 1947, Indians grappled with the changing meaning of citizenship in the subcontinent, particularly in relation to public space. In Bombay, citizenship rights were often linked to the ownership and possession of property in the city, which was complicated with the influx of refugees into Bombay in 1947 and the exacerbating housing shortage. The dispossession of citizens as a result of the partition was not arbitrary, and usually impinged upon class, as those who possessed financial capital to begin with were able to self-rehabilitate and transition from refugee to citizen with increased ease. The state romanticised self-help, particularly in the case of refugee camps in the city, and by extension failed to help the citizens who truly needed the state’s help - the subaltern population consisting of the poor, women and the handicapped. Discrimination on the basis of class was not restricted to refugee camps, and the formation of cooperative housing societies in the early 20th century encouraged the buying and selling of property on religious lines. The result of this was increased communitarian segregation in the city in the realm of residential patterns, with different religious communities of different class standings congregating in areas of the city on community and class lines. The next chapter will examine how this spatial segmentation was exacerbated in the 1950s and questions the existence of cosmopolitanism in Bombay, with the emergence of a number of regional groups in Bombay, and the rise of the Shiv Sena.
Chapter Three

Introduction

On December 6th 1992, members of a right-wing Hindu group, the RSS, demolished the Babri Masjid Mosque in Ayodhya, arguing that the mosque was built on the site of an ancient Ram temple. The media chronicled these atrocities in an endless loop, with images of the RSS members celebrating their violence alongside the remnants of the mosque. The destruction of the mosque constituted a rejection of Muslims in India, as limiting access to religious space is a means through which the citizenship, and by extension, legitimacy, of the religious community in question is challenged. The Babri Masjid massacre was also a rejection of the Muslim past in India, as the mosque symbolised the way in which Islam had made itself an Indian religion and an integral part of the Indian cultural fabric. The destruction of the mosque culminated in a series of disturbances in Bombay that have constituted the city’s most violent instances of communal conflict. Historian Gyan Prakash writes:

“... in Bombay, jubilant Shiv Sainiks celebrated the demolition by holding a rally in Dharavi, twisting a knife in the wounded Muslim psyche. The city, already on edge with months of Hindu nationalist propaganda and the retaliatory calls to defend Islam, exploded in bloody violence.” (Prakash, 299)

Eyewitness accounts described the riots in Bombay as “police-Muslim riots”¹ rather than “Hindu-Muslim riots,” as police intervention in these riots predominantly targeted the Muslim population of the city, and over 50% of the 1100 deaths following these communal clashes were caused by the police. Additionally, from the casualties caused by police firing, over half of the victims were innocent bystanders, not a part of the “mob,” and more often than not simply in their

¹ Prakash, p. 299
homes.\textsuperscript{2} This is suggestive of the state’s complicit role in deciding which communities constituted the more “useful” and rightful citizens of the country, and underscores the fact that religion was far from divorced from the state; rather, that the state viewed its subjects through a religious lens.

Three years later, in 1995, the Shiv Sena\textsuperscript{3} caused the city’s name to be changed from Bombay to Mumbai, in a symbolic move that changed the meaning of space, the city, and how it is remembered. Today, the city of Bombay is adorned with saffron flags that indicate the omniscience of the right-wing presence in India, situating the city in a context where religion is so closely linked to the state that one’s citizenship status in India today is based on this premise.

\textbf{We arrive then at the main question that this thesis has sought to examine; how did the complex dichotomy of seeming cosmopolitanism coupled with sectarian strife coexist and evolve in Bombay in relation to the city’s urban space? How did a city, where public space was accessible to every citizen, regardless of caste, class and community, transform into an arena where only a certain type of citizen, predominantly Hindus, had increased rights?} In responding to this question, this last chapter examines the rise of the Shiv Sena in the 1960s, and the ways in which the organisation changed the conceptions of urban space in the city, while catalyzing the “Hinduisation” of Bombay.

This chapter examines the increasingly complex ideas of religious, class-based and ethnic cohabitation in the city from 1947 until the 1970s, along with the lack of alignment between the liberties that Bombay claimed to promise to its citizens, and the reality of who had rights to these liberties. The previous two chapters have examined how communities were formed and polarised in the city of Bombay, on the basis of class, caste and religion. This chapter examines the


\textsuperscript{3} The Shiv Sena has been alluded to a number of times throughout the thesis, however this chapter will examine the organization in more depth.
consolidation of community identities in Bombay in the 20th century, with the increased migration of various groups into Bombay in the 1940s and 1950s, changing the demographics of the city and resulting in rising resentment among Maharashtrians who felt that their identity was being threatened. Although linguistic regionalism emerged in a number of cities in India after the Partition, Bombay in particular is an interesting case as the rise of the Shiv Sena and its militant nativism was unique to the city, and can be attributed to Bombay’s history of complex cosmopolitanism that the previous two chapters have examined. The chapter then examines the ways in which public space was appropriated and mobilised to religious ends, and finally situates how accessibility to space is indistinguishable from asserting citizenship in Mumbai.

**Marathi Regionalism in Bombay**

The decade of the 1950s was a significant period in India’s history as it arrived in the wake of Indian independence and the partition of India and Pakistan. As early as the 1920s, the Congress Party had transformed its organizational structure away from the British administrative structure to reflect the reality of regional linguistic particularities. The acknowledgement of linguistic states was a variant of Nehru’s “complex cosmopolitanism”- just as the system allowed for religious particularities, the acknowledgement of linguistic states was an acknowledgement of linguistic and regional particularities. Once political independence from the British rule had been won, other particularisms, such as linguistic regionalism, asserted themselves in the 1950s. These groups demanded for the creation of linguistic states, thinking that this would increase political participation and strengthen the newly founded liberal democracy that the country claimed to espouse after subjugation under colonial rule. The reality, as we will see, was far removed from...

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these idealistic notions of a strong democracy, as linguistic regionalism also contained the potential for regional nativism.⁵ K.M Munshi, an acclaimed Congress politician and historian, believed that Bombay should be an autonomous city and not be restricted within the territory of Maharashtra, as the formation of a unilingual province would be a cause of intimidation and concern to the non-Marathi speaking populations of the city. This notion of linguistic exclusion was a primary caveat of Munshi’s discourse, as he believed that “the political ambition of a linguistic group can only be satisfied by the exclusion and discrimination of other linguistic groups within the area. No safeguards and no fundamental rights can save them from the subtle psychological exclusion which linguism implies.”⁶ In Munshi’s words, linguism involved the appropriation of language to express group-identities and was an important instrument of power politics.⁷ This meant that individuals who were not a part of the linguistic groups in question were automatically excluded, and underscores Munshi’s argument that linguism allowed for increasing demands for the annexation of territories⁸ on the basis of the predominant language being spoken, reiterating the exclusionary impact of such practices upon urban populations.

It is important to note, however, that linguistic-based organisation was not a novel concept and even the Congress Party was reorganised along linguistic lines in 1917. The Congress pioneered an altogether new way of carving out administrative and provincial units on the basis of language. The Bombay and Madras presidencies were unique in that no single language

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⁵ Verma, p. 749
⁷ Munshi, p. 6
⁸ Munshi, p. 12
dominated, as Bombay had Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Konkani, Punjabi, and Sindhi speakers, while Madras had Telugu, Oriya, Malayalam and Kannada speakers.⁹

In cities like Calcutta, linguistic regionalism did not have a fissiparous effect as the city was dominated by Bangla speakers, and as a result seamlessly belonged to West Bengal. Bombay, however, was a lot more complex as it was dominated by two linguistic groups, Marathi speakers as well as Gujarati speakers. As a result, linguistic regionalism in the Bombay State could not culminate in a single self-evident linguistic state, unlike in the cases of West Bengal or Kerala. The effect of linguistic regionalism, therefore, were waves of public spectacles organised with the objective of consolidating support for the dominant linguistic group- in the case of Bombay-Marathi speakers, who constituted 44% of the population.¹⁰ While Marathi speakers constituted much of the working classes and the middle classes in Bombay, the city was dominated by Gujarati speakers, usually traders, landowners and industrialists. The pioneer of mass spectacles and public performance, Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1859-1920), was known for his use of ostentatious iconography and flamboyant festivals that occupied public spaces in the city of Bombay. Tilak also happened to be among the first Congress leaders who advocated for the formation of linguistic provinces¹¹, claiming that this would offer minority communities a voice to cohabit spaces with other communities while remaining allegiant to their language and culture. Although his approach was seemingly founded upon inclusion, the reality was far from this, as he promoted the establishment of a militant Marathi identity, contingent on violence and street politics. According

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⁹ Salil Misra, “Along Linguistic Lines...The Drawing of the Map,” The Deccan Herald, October 23, 2016. The Deccan Herald. [https://www.deccanherald.com/content/577196/along-linguistic-lines.html](https://www.deccanherald.com/content/577196/along-linguistic-lines.html).

¹⁰ Prakash, 220

to Tilak, linguistic states were an important requisite to build nationalism in the country, as linguism formed the building blocks of a national identity.\textsuperscript{12} He also advocated for public festivals, to encourage all Maharashtrians, regardless of their class, caste or creed to involve themselves in their heritage and form bonds with their community.\textsuperscript{13} The symbolic result of this was a neighbourhood sorting on the basis of community, overlapped with intersections of class, religion and linguistic groupings. Maharashtrians had previously populated the central provinces of India, but with this increased focus on Maratha identity, urban spaces in Bombay grew increasingly marked with this singular identity. Tilak was a significant individual in this Maharashtrianization of urban public spaces in Bombay, as a lot of the tactics that he used were later recycled by the Shiv Sena in the 1960s.

In Bombay, a number of Marathi linguistic groups emerged, most notably the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement. This movement was the most important in securing the creation of the state of Maharashtra, and its advocates used iconography and images from Maratha history in a romanticised way to emphasise the need for a linguistic state.\textsuperscript{14} Although this thesis examines the Shiv Sena as a primary case for the emergence of a militant Maratha identity, it is important to recognise the significance of the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement, especially in its fight for the creation of the state of Maharashtra, which came into existence on May 1st, 1960.

The creation of Maharashtra led to a series of debates regarding the ownership of Bombay. It was first and foremost a question of whether Bombay belonged to the Marathi speakers or to the Gujarati speakers. If it remained autonomous, then control would continue to be exerted by the 

\textsuperscript{12} Palshikar, p. 85
\textsuperscript{13} Oliver James Godsmark, “Citizenship, Community and the State in Western India: The Moulding of a Marathi-Speaking Province, 1930s-1950s.” The University of Leeds: School of History, 2013, p. 57
\textsuperscript{14} Palshikar, 6
Gujarati elites; if it became part of Maharashtra, then the Marathi-speakers would have a chance to exert dominance over the city. Dhananjay Ramchandra Gadgil, a prominent Marathi-speaking economist and political scientist, firmly advocated that Bombay had always belonged to Maharashtra, and must remain a part of the state.\textsuperscript{15} His argument stemmed from the fact that the majority of individuals in the city spoke Marathi, and that it rested at the center of the everyday lives of Maharashtrians- “It should thus be unthinkable to form a State of Maharashtra which has not Bombay as its capital and it would render impossible the working of a State of Maharashtra, if any, attempt was made to separate the City of Bombay from it.”\textsuperscript{16}

**The Shiv Sena and the “other”**

In the 1960s, Bal Thackeray, a prominent cartoonist and the son of an important leader in the Samyukta Maharashtra movement began using his weekly cartoons as a means to expose the corrupt bureaucracy, scorn at the rich and illuminate the injustices that he felt were being perpetrated against the Marathi people.\textsuperscript{17} He would usually depict an “othered” target, which oscillated between the South Indians, the communists and the Muslims, to advocate for a singular Maratha identity. His cartoons resonated with the majority of the population in Maharashtra, and in 1966, his agitations culminated in the formation of the Shiv Sena. The Shiv Sena was a movement founded on protecting the allegedly threatened rights of Marathi “sons of the soil” in Bombay, who, according to Thackeray, were being excluded by nonnative elites in the context of employment, housing, and state patronage.\textsuperscript{18} The organisation was intended to be portrayed as an army inspired by Shivaji, the 17\textsuperscript{th} century Maratha ruler and supposed defender of “Hindus” against

\textsuperscript{16} Gadgil, p. 7
\textsuperscript{17} Prakash, p. 229
\textsuperscript{18} Frazier, p. 6
the Mughals. Shivaji’s militant legacy afforded the organization, from its genesis, an aura of violence and militancy. Bal Thackeray advocated for an increased emphasis on Maharashtrians in the city, considering that Bombay was the capital of Maharashtra and by extension, that Maharashtrians deserved priority and reservations in 80% of the jobs and economic opportunities in the city. Bal Thackeray’s idea of Maharashtrians was the *Marathi Manoos*, or the “sons of the soil” who comprised educated, Marathi speaking youths who were allegedly excluded from employment. He mandated that Maharashtrians could not sell property to non-Maharashtrians, and demanded that only those who spoke Marathi be offered jobs. Prominent Goan writer and poet, Dom Moraes, wrote in a *New York Times* article in 1970, “[The Shiv Sena’s] thesis was that all those who were not Mahrattas had no business living in Maharashtra. They ought to leave, and if they declined to do so, they ought to be made to leave.” This powerful statement encapsulates the Sena’s attitude towards what Bombay was expected to evolve into- a city for Maharashtrians, who were the rightful residents of this capital city of the state of Maharashtra.

Ironically, it was this communalism that Thackeray criticized in the South Indian community, who, according to him and his fellow Shiv Sainiks, were stealing the jobs of innocent Maharashtrians and were complicit in “rampant communalism,” in the form of helping other South Indians within the employment realm and in building colonies. The Shiv Sena would habitually change its targeted “other,” and over the years and decades the targets included first the South Indian population, then the communists, then North Indians and almost always Muslims,

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20 Gupta, p. 114
22 Gupta, p. 119
who were, according to Thackeray, “agents of Pakistan,” who had an ulterior motive to create turmoil in India. Despite the fact that the Shiv Sena emerged as a nativist organization, it is important to note that Thackeray’s targets included communities who weren’t necessarily Muslim, and his stance was not primarily about religion. It was based more heavily on increasing the Sena’s electoral popularity, which would involve shifting the “other” group over time to garner popularity through a mutual sense of excluding a community. This, when combined with politics, culminated in a violent crusade against minority communities in Maharashtra. In a speech in 1990, he said:

“I am only saying one thing: Those who utter insulting words about Hinduism and our Gods and Goddesses- remember, we will cut off his tongue and his hand… What the government is not able to do, you must do. You will have to do it. Otherwise, don’t take the name of Shivaji in your mouth. Don’t celebrate the birthday of Shivaji!” (Speech in Marsi, 4 February 1990)

The “it” in question referred to the extreme measures the Shiv Sena would go to in order to ensure that Maharashtrians were given more opportunities relative to other groups in the state. This would involve violence against minorities and “other” groups. S.A Dange, the Chairman of the Communist Party and the leader of the Sampoorna Maharashtra Samiti argued that the Sena used “the grab of protecting the rights of Maharashtrians [in order to spread] hatred towards non-Maharashtrians in general and South Indians in particular.” He even explained that the problems associated with unemployment were not linguistic in nature, despite Thackeray’s attempts to make it appear so. Unemployment problems were the consequence of the capitalist nature of society, and required a joint effort among all communities to resolve.

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23 Gupta, p. 126
Despite the Shiv Sena’s oscillating targets of “other” groups, the most consistent was that of Muslims. It is important to note that the Shiv Sena’s targeting of Muslims in India was not solely the product of anti-Muslim rhetoric that permeated the subcontinent after the partition, but also a strategic element in increasing the organisation’s popularity. At the same time, it would be inaccurate to claim that this was solely a strategic tactic, as Bal Thackeray was a staunch critic of Islam and Muslims in the nation, often referring to them as diseases such as cancer, that were spreading throughout India and needed to be dealt with accordingly. He also infamously stated in a speech that Muslims in India should feel like Jews in Nazi Germany, which is another illustration of not solely his violent anti-Muslim stance but also his extreme rhetoric in garnering the attention of the illiterate and lower classes who responded to such incitements. Dom Moraes continued this metaphor in comparing the Sena to the Nazi party, writing in a newspaper article in 1970- “The Shiv Sena is in many ways a ludicrous organisation, but people thought that the Nazi party was when it first started. The Shiv Sena, like the Nazi party, was bred out of chaos, economic instability, confused theories of race and a sense of defeat.”

The Sena’s marginalisation of Muslims in the late 1960s and 1970s was accompanied by a revivalist stream that questioned the essence of being a Hindu in India. The Shiv Sena espoused notions of what a good Hindu should embody, and these notions were diametrically opposed and incompatible with tolerance towards Muslims. Sociologist Dipankar Gupta explains:

“A good Hindu for the Shiv Sena is not necessarily a person well-versed in Hindu scriptures, but one who is ready and willing to go out and attack Muslims. A Hindu for the Shiv Sena is not defined in terms of features specific to Hinduism, but in terms of the

28 Prakash, p. 299
person’s striking power against Muslims. To be a good Hindu is to hate Muslims and nothing else.” (Politics of Majoritarianism, Dipankar Gupta, p. 37)

The strategic importance of shifting its target from South Indians to Muslims afforded the Shiv Sena an implicit form of “national legitimacy.” Anti-Muslim discourse in South Asia grew increasingly radical by the late 1960s, with Hindu nationalist groups seeking to “essentialise” Muslims as aggressive, threatening and primitive populations of Indian society, perpetually on the edge of fanaticism and hypermasculine in nature. This essentialisation of Muslims catalyzed the construction of religious stereotypes, to the extent that when people caught sight of young, bearded, Muslim men in Bombay, usually dressed in traditional attire, they crafted unfounded notions of religious fanaticism, “[reactivating] well-established myths of the Muslim threat to India.”

In Bombay, the Shiv Sena’s ascent was monumental. In the 1968 Municipal elections, the Sena won 40 seats in a house of 140 members. A year later, after the split in the Congress party, it became the majority-party in the state. Bal Thackeray grappled with an electoral dilemma; how could the Shiv Sena strike a balance between advocating solely for the Maratha cause without “alienating the rest of the electorate”? As a solution to this problem, the Sena broadened its audience by appealing to the young and the poor, regardless of whether these groups were Maharashtrian or not. This resulted in the Shiv Sena not only offering a voice to the socio-economically compromised population of the state, but also assimilating “the depressed and the

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30 Gupta, p. 37
31 Hansen, p. 178
32 Hansen, p. 75
34 Abraham, “The Tiger That Didn’t Roar.”
neglected sections of society,” particularly the unemployed. These bitter and resentful youths considered themselves on a crusade for social and economic equality and opportunities, charging the Shiv Sena with a sense of urgency and a notion of working towards a better good, and subsequently justifying the violent means through which the group organised. The Sena’s readiness to be violent and present during times of conflict had the effect of establishing comfort to the unemployed, who depended on the Shiv Sena to find jobs for them, act as a security in the neighborhood and do favors for its clients even if it meant bullying the opposing group through “its spectacular displays of violence and its increasing access to state power.” These traits all consolidated into an unsaid offering of citizenship to the disenfranchised working class. The fact that a political organisation was able to offer increased citizenship rights to a majority-population of Maharashtrians in Bombay is monumental and significant of the power that the Shiv Sena held in the urban geography of Bombay.

It is important to note that the city of Bombay, as we have seen in Chapter One as well, was sorted increasingly on the basis of socioeconomic class within the urban political landscape. This sorting underwent a marked increase in the years following the partition in 1947, with the influx of refugees into Bombay. This meant that different group, social and community identities were ascribed specific territorial elements that mapped these individuals to specific parts of the urban geography, exacerbating hierarchies in Bombay. For instance, the wealthiest individuals settled in the southern tip of the city, and had ready access to the Fort, which itself symbolized a Western liberal and eclectic part of the city given its colonial legacy. The middle class were

35 Abraham, “The Tiger That Didn’t Roar.”
37 Frazier, p. 171
38 Frazier, p. 13
scattered along the north of Bombay and would use public transport such as the train to arrive at Fort, while the poorest classes would live alongside the mill areas of the city. Among these mill districts in Bombay, Nagpada, Mominpura, Kamathipura and Madanpura, are synonymous today with conflict, crime, prostitution and a very negative connotation of Muslims, usually the Muslim badmash. The 1992 Bombay riots exacerbated this neighbourhood sorting, as violence in public urban spaces of Bombay resulted in transfers of populations of Hindus and Muslims within neighbourhoods in the city, where they were the dominant religion. Nagpada and these aforementioned neighborhoods were Muslim-majority neighborhoods that consolidated its Muslim presence after the riots, changing the notion of mixed neighborhoods in the city. Although the riots were temporary, this settlement pattern was permanent. and, in the words of anthropologist Thomas Blom Hansen, “The highly differentiated Muslim sects and communities in the city have undoubtedly become more spatially concentrated today than ever before.”

**Spatial Segregation, Pavements and the Poor**

Spatial segregation of the city predated the Bombay riots, and was a significant strategy used by the Sena decades earlier, in the 1960s. The Sena’s ascent, in fact, rested in their ability to “[weave themselves] into the urban fabric,” which in a city like Bombay translated into claims over urban space. An important example of how the Shiv Sena used space to organise its members as a part of the local Maharashtrians in the city was the Shakha system. Shakhas were neighbourhood outposts, which meant that in the neighbourhoods where the Sena staked its claim,

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39 Frazier, p. 40  
40 Hansen, p. 160  
Badmash: South Asian term borrowed from Hindi, Urdu and Persian to signify “bad,” or “evil,” and in the more casual sense, a group of “ruffians” “rogues” or “miscreants.”  
41 Hansen, p. 160  
42 Prakash, p. 239
they had outposts through which they extended services and patronage, and recruited support when needed. Additionally, these were buildings that housed members of the Sena, and usually followed the similar layouts of simple rooms, iconography of Shivaji in the form of a photograph or statue and a saffron flag outside the building to denote allegiance to the Shiv Sena.\textsuperscript{43} The shakha was a place for individuals to hold daily meetings that dealt with organising activists and religious festivals, which is significant in understanding how belonging in a Shakha afforded individuals in question the power to orchestrate religious celebrations and festivities and consequently ameliorate the politics of representation that the Shiv Sena has historically employed.\textsuperscript{44} Moreover, the shakhas represented the Sena as the heart of the neighborhood, “and, by implication, the Sena as a representative of ordinary, local people.”\textsuperscript{45} When conflicts would arise, or incidents with corruption would ensue, individuals would approach the shakhas to seek the mediation of Shiv Sainiks. Consequently, the shakhas became a central unit in the urban landscape of Bombay, and by extension, the Shiv Sena, by occupying these units, became an integral mediator in the functioning of city-related activities.

As mentioned previously, the Shiv Sena’s use of violence and authoritarianism was the organisation’s primary means to assert control over Bombay. \textit{Dadagiri}, the hindi-equivalent term that involved both intimidation as well as protection, was the Sena’s most common tactic, as members of the group would use violence to invoke fear in innocent bystanders to elevate their own status in relation to the public. Mark Frazier explains:

“A central part of this appropriation of the city was how the Shiv Sena adopted the long-standing “dada [strongman] culture” of the street, and exercised dadagiri, or bullying through the use of informal, veiled, or actual violence, in the name of social service provision.” (Frazier, 179)

\textsuperscript{43} Hansen, p. 53
\textsuperscript{44} Hansen, p. 53
\textsuperscript{45} Hansen, p. 54
In the nascent years of the Shiv Sena, while Bal Thackeray was in the process of consolidating his prominence, he wanted to construct a building to house the offices of Sena which would overlook Shivaji Park, where the Shiv Sena was launched in 1966, and through the name itself a legacy of the Maratha warrior. In the process of constructing the building, later named “Sena Bhavan” or *Sena House*, an Irani restaurant was displaced. A newspaper article from the time wrote that “the restaurant owner has “agreed” to go somewhere else.” The effect of this statement is twofold: not only does the use of scare quotes around “agreed” emphasise the absence of agreement on the part of the Irani restaurant owner, and more generally the lack of negotiation between the Sena and the public; it also delineates the lack of space, quite literally, for any community other than Maharashtrians in Bombay. In his seminal essay, “Dining out in Bombay,” Conlon dedicates a section to the symbolic significance of Irani restaurants in Bombay, which were quintessential images of cosmopolitanism. This legacy of cultural diversity in association with Iranian restaurants was inherited from the idea that Iranian culture signified an entrance from the outside, as Iranian restaurants were usually founded and run by Persians and Zoroastrians. Additionally, these restaurants notably had visible signages that welcomed people from all walks of life, regardless of caste, class or religion. As a result, the symbolic action of the Sena displacing this restaurant in constructing their own *bhavan*, and by extension, a homogenous Marathi identity, rested in direct opposition to the notions of cosmopolitanism that Bombay previously seemed to uphold.

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As a part of the Shiv Sena’s larger program of “cleaning up” the city-of beggars, of hawkers, and ultimately of Muslims, it is important to consider the Sena’s efforts to purge beggars and hawkers in Bombay. Articles published in 1975 in the Times of India show that the Shiv Sena planned and orchestrated a series of “anti-beggar drives" which involved rounding up beggars in various parts of the city and sending them to police stations. Targeting beggars and hawkers shows how the Sena’s politics of ethnic cleansing to create space for the Marathi manoos was accompanied by and converged with a spatial cleansing of beggars, hawkers, and those who “illegally” occupied space in the city. The Sena’s actions imposed a certain vision onto the public spaces of the city through the literal “cleansing” of streets. A number of these beggars were female, suffering from diseases such as leprosy, and were usually above 30 years of age. These demographics reveal the lack of tolerance that the Sena maintained for individuals who they considered socially weak, and therefore unfit to partake in society. A Shiv Sena member, Mr. Manohar Joshi, even went so far to announce that he would take action against beggars and leprosy-affected individuals if the state failed to contain them, saying that “the continuous growth in the number of beggars, including those suffering from leprosy, had posed a very serious threat to the health of thousands of citizens.” He insinuated that these social problems were the result of “outsiders,” as 95% of the beggars were from outside Maharashtra, suggesting an effort to portray “outsiders” as somehow diseased, as poisoning the social body which should, according to the Sena, be solely composed of proper Maharashtrians. This was especially the case with South Indians, as the vast majority of hawkers who the Sena targeted included South Indians. An eyewitness present at an anti-hawker drive commented, “It is clear that the Shiv Sena volunteers

49 “Stir Threat against Beggar Menace.” The Times of India (1861-Current), April 25, 1975.
are fighting the hawkers only because most of them are South Indians.” This is suggestive of the inherent communalisation involved when dealing with these poorer citizens. Joshi’s emphasis on their “outsider” status reveals a pattern of victimising the “outsider,” ranging from beggars, South Indians, North Indians to Muslims. These attitudes point to the implicit importance of being fixed onto a spatial territory in order to assert legitimacy in the realm of urban citizenship. These beggars lacked residential stability, and as a result were criminalised.

A caveat that enhances this argument of criminalisation of the poor rests in the way in which the Shiv Sena involved the police in consolidating these beggars. In the anti-beggar campaigns of the 1970s, the Shiv Sena was reported to have “handed” over these beggars to the police or threatened to hand them over to the police if they entered the city. These were powerful claims that indicated that the Sena took up the role of the state, despite not being the state. In an article published by the Times of India in the 1970s, Shiv Sena leader Mr. Manohar Joshi, along with Secretary Mr. Datta Salvi, expressed that if hawkers were not going to be forced to leave the streets by the government, the Shiv Sena would be compelled to take up the task. They claimed that this was a necessary action in order to “maintain the city’s health,” suggesting that the very presence of hawkers and beggars tainted the city.

This action was not accepted with passivity, as a number of individuals were disquieted by this inhumane treatment of the poor. Prominent social scientist and researcher S.D Gokhale argued that rounding up the poor and “dumping” them at the police station was not a solution or even a

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50 P.N Karunakaran. “Shiv Sena War: To the Editor, the Times of India.” The Times of India (1861-Current), May 25, 1968.
52 A Staff Reporter, “Shiv Sena’s Civic Work Explained,” The Times of India (1861-Current), May 21, 1968
53 A Staff Reporter, “Shiv Sena’s Civic Work Explained,” The Times of India (1861-Current), May 21, 1968
step in a productive direction. He argued instead that “... a beggar cannot be labelled a criminal. Society cannot treat as criminals those of its citizens that it has failed to provide with a means of living and social protection.”

The photo above is from a *Times of India* article published in June 1975, depicting the Sena marching beggars in Bombay to a police station as a public show of the growing influx of “destitutes” into the city.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that the Shiv Sena had sufficient backing on their treatment of beggars and hawkers. A reader addressed the *Times of India* regarding the presence of hawkers on the streets, writing:

“As a citizen of Bombay, I have watched the tragic growth of a new class of unlicensed hawkers at vital business centres creating traffic problems. And I have watched the ever-

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54 “How to Put an End to the Beggar Problem.” *The Times of India (1861-Current)*, June 29, 1975.
55 “How to Put an End to the Beggar Problem.” *The Times of India (1861-Current)*, June 29, 1975.
increasing slum area causing health hazards due to the mushroom-like growth of unauthorised hutments by immigrants who for generations have never seen a decent house and who are now demanding concrete houses with water supply without any contribution from themselves.”

These were the arguments that the Sena made in attempts to eliminate the presence of the poor on the streets. They exploited the inactivity of the government to assert their claims and authority over the streets and access to public space. Not only did the Sena attempt to displace hawkers, but even attempted to loot and attack them in a number of instances. In these cases, no arrests were made despite complaints addressed to the police, emphasising the poor treatment that hawkers and beggars afforded simply by having no choice but to occupy pavements and sidewalks.

57 A Staff Reporter, “Hawkers’ Wares Looted: Shiv Sena Blamed,” The Times of India (1861-Current)
58 A Staff Reporter. “Hawkers’ Wares Looted: Shiv Sena Blamed.” The Times of India
The photograph above is from a *Times of India* article\(^{59}\) published 1974 depicting hawkers being forcibly grabbed and taken to the police station after a clash with the Shiv Sena.

**Conclusion:**

As this chapter has shown, the Shiv Sena deployed violence to assert their authority and decide whether an individual was to be recognized as having a claim to the city. The use of violence was not the result of the Sena’s organization of the city but rather a means through which the Shiv Sena established itself and represented itself as an entity dedicated to social action, in any shape and form.\(^{60}\) The organisation occupied and appropriated public spaces as a manifestation of legitimacy and assertion of authority, challenging pre-existing claims over space.

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\(^{60}\) Prakash, p. 237
Violence, when used in private, has a completely different tone to violence in public. Public violence has resonance with performance and spectacle, and this is precisely how Bal Thackeray and his followers deployed violence and riots as a tangible “enactment of the Sena’s claims.”

This ritualization of violence rationalized and explained the destruction of spaces and property, the defacement of walls with graffiti and slogans, the pelting of rocks on buildings that didn’t espouse Marathi names and the overall transformation of the cityscape into an orange frenzy encumbered with looming and threatening roaring tigers. Hansen explains:

“It is this “ritualised violence,” driven by the imperative of public assertion and performance, that is Sena’s raison d’etre; without the perpetual illusion of movement, action, and impatience, there would be no bond between Thackeray and the sainiks; indeed, the Sena would cease to exist.” (Hansen, p. 65)
The photograph above from is from a newspaper article published in 1970 depicting Bal Thackeray in the center, accompanied with two unnamed Shiv Sainiks at a rally in Shivaji Park. The Sena’s symbolic roaring tiger looms behind them.

This ritualised violence was largely performative, dispersed with images and symbols that defined the Shiv Sena and subsequently offered the poorer classes in Bombay increased access to civic spaces. It is important to note that from the conception of the Shiv Sena, Bal Thackeray described it as an army rather than as an organisation, and the crowds of over 500,000 people seemed to underscore this idea of authoritarian ubiquity in the city.

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63 A Staff Reporter. “Armed Police Posted at Strategic Points as Bandh Begins.” The Times of India (1861-Current), March 2, 1970.
64 Frazier, p. 171
65 Frazier, p. 173
Years later, in 1995, in a grand gesture of flamboyance and exuberance, the Shiv Sena catapulted the change of the city’s name from Bombay to Mumbai. This is perhaps the most significant manifestation of the power of space and its utilisation, as naming a space alludes to territorialisation and an assertion of claims over that space. The Shiv Sena and the BJP rationalised this decision as an appeal to recognise the local origins of the city, which, according to them, had been tainted with looming legacies of imperialism and colonial rule inherited from both the Portuguese and the British. The name “Mumbai,” borne out of the Indian goddess Mumbadevi, seemed a more appropriate name for the city according to them. The renaming of the city was not automatically accepted by residents of Bombay. A large proportion of the English-speaking population in the city resisted, as they felt that Bombay’s rich history was inextricable from its identity as “Bombay,” and changing its name would be akin to undoing the city’s dynamic cosmopolitanism and flurry of identities, which I have argued, had already begun to dwindle by this period. The institutional changing of the name only formalised the presence and heightened sense of authoritarianism that swept the city in the late twentieth century, one that suggested that the city and its new name were the possession of the Marathi population, as it existed within the territory of the newly formed state of Maharashtra. Gyan Prakash emphasises the symbolic significance of renaming the city, saying that this

“was not a simple matter of reclaiming the city from its colonial heritage. It was also an act of populist insurgency, a forcible takeover of state power to deliver the city to the people. Behind this story of the populist and communalist mobilisation of the street lies the broader narrative of the crisis of the liberal order. The state’s authority… stood hollow.” (Prakash, p. 302)

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66 Hansen, p. 1
67 Goddess Mumbadevi’s legacy is synonymous to her presence in the Koli fishermen community in the subcontinent. These fishermen inhabited the islands that later evolved into the city of Bombay.
68 Hansen, p. 3
A significant aspect of the renaming of Bombay to Mumbai rests in that this gesture, albeit exuberant, was essentially empty. It was not accompanied by any social change. We can conclude, therefore, that the changing of the name was not, as the Shiv Sena insisted, an attempt to commemorate the local origins of Bombay, but rather a means through which the organisation intended to assert a newfound ownership of the city within the confines of Maharashtra. The city’s new name was to represent a certain population in Bombay, which consisted predominantly of the Marathi speakers and primarily Hindus.
Conclusion

Bombay has grappled with complex notions of cosmopolitanism since its conception. The British Raj in India advocated for the colonial categorisation and communalisation of Indian subjects on the basis of religion, which often overlapped with class and caste-based distinctions. The city was the arena where claims to space were enacted; under the pretense of improving the city, the colonial state marginalised certain communities by limiting their access to public spaces.

After the Partition of 1947, the movement of refugees into Bombay transformed the demographics of the city, and exacerbated Bombay’s already urgent housing crisis. Claims to space transformed ideas of urban citizenship, as citizens with increased wealth and resources— which manifested in the form of property ownership— were automatically afforded increased citizenship rights. The poor were excluded from these evolving notions of urban citizenship.

The newly founded “secular” government under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru attempted in benign fashion to recognise religion as an integral part of public life while maintaining neutrality with respect to the various communities; however the very acknowledgement of these religions and communities in public life admitted the malign possibility of communalism. Public spaces in Bombay were communalised, with origins resting in the colonial era with the spatial segregation of the city on the basis of being European or Indian, and within that, class-based stratifications. The rise of ethnolinguistic groups in the 1950s and the formation of the Shiv Sena in the late 1960s transformed access to space in Bombay, as the Sena used violence to leave a stamp on the city, granting access to the Marathi-speaking population while othering various communities in Bombay, notably North Indians, South Indians, and later Muslims. The waves of riots in Bombay in 1992 as a result of Hindu fanaticism in Ayodhya brought to the foreground the
question of democracy and the right to dissent in India. Cosmopolitanism, therefore, was not something that simply failed in the subcontinent in recent years. From its very genesis, India’s cosmopolitanism had the potential for malign eruptions, and in the words of political scientist Farah Godrej⁶⁹,

“I have come to accept that the narrative of the ‘death’ of this cosmopolitan Camelot must be reexamined in favour of something that acknowledges how this city, like most others, is built on multiple forms of historical and contemporary violence. Our mourning, then, must not be for something that has recently been destroyed. Rather, we must look beneath the façade of cosmopolitanism to recognize the multiple forms of domination and silencing upon which it has always stood. (Godrej, 17)

This thesis has explored how class and religion in the subcontinent have influenced and communally inflected public spaces in Bombay. The analysis presented contributes to how both the colonial and postcolonial states in India operated on categorisations—religion, class and caste—to facilitate administration and at the same time reduce subjects, refugees and later citizens, into communities. The poor lack agency over their rights to the city; Muslims are considered lesser citizens as evident from recent legislations⁷⁰, and the caste system is still very endemic to how citizens are treated. The Partition, therefore, did not solely mark the formal separation of Hindus and Muslims as religious communities, but rather as politicised entities.

Today, the saffron hue on the Indian flag no longer denotes a unified sense of nationalism and patriotism for the country, but rather a mark of Hindu nationalism in India. The Shiv Sena’s nationalistic presence endures, however the BJP government’s attempted exclusion of Muslims in the country has brought to the foreground questions of who has right to citizenship, considering that public spaces are no longer available to everyone. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened

⁷⁰ See introduction
the inequalities faced by Indians, and the government’s advocacy of celebrating religious festivals and rallies in the midst of the pandemic underscores their commitment to religion in public space, as a priority over the health and safety of its citizens at large. This imbalance between religion in the private versus the public has been exacerbated in the past few decades, and contextualises Hindu ubiquity in India today.
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