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Making Men in the City: Articulating Masculinity and Space in Urban India

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Abstract

In my dissertation, I illustrate the way in which processes in contemporary urban India structure the making/ unmaking of gendered identities for young men in a working class, scheduled caste neighborhood in the western Indian city of Pune. Present day Pune, an aspiring metropolis, presents a complex socio-spatial intersection of neoliberal processes and peculiar historical trajectories of caste exclusion; this dissertation seeks to highlight how socio-spatial dynamics of the city produce and sustain gendered identities and inequalities in Pune, a city hitherto neglected in academic research. Also, my focus on young men's gendered identities speaks to a growing recognition that men need to be studied in gendered terms, as 'men,' in order to understand fully the dimensions of gendered inequalities and violence prevalent in South Asian cities today. I follow the lives of young men between 16 and 30 in a neighborhood in the eastern part of Pune, who belong to a scheduled caste called Matang. The historical incorporation of this caste group as municipal sweepers in the city's labour regime has had adverse implications for the young men, in terms of low levels of education and precarious chances of employment in an increasingly skill-based and informalized labor market. I explore ethnographically the deep sense of gendered inadequacy that this lack generates in the young men, articulated in explicitly spatialised terms: through the continuous dismissal by the young men of their neighborhood as 'backward' as opposed to the middle class 'standard' areas in the city; and through their aspirational struggles to master the new spaces of consumption in the city.

Relevant to my dissertation are the practices of local, exclusively male voluntary associations and of local electoral politics, which I argue constitute distinct subcultures shaped by and embedded in the historical, socio-political and spatial organisation of the city. I demonstrate in ethnographic terms how the membership of the neighborhood voluntary association and its activities enables the enactment of a 'moral masculinity' for the young men in the neighborhood, while simultaneously equipping them with the tools to acquire specialised knowledge about the informal, criminal city, itself a highly gendered terrain. The young men's participation in local political brokering is an expression of the peculiar culture of urban local politics that incorporated poor neighborhoods as vital nodes of populist political bargaining in post-colonial urban India. I show how the spatialized nature of these processes allow the young men temporary feelings of power and self-worth during these negotiations, thus constituting a sense of self which tightly binds location/ place with caste, class and a gendered identity. I also illustrate the role that women's evaluations and expectations play in shaping the gendered identities of men in the galli.

I conclude that the construction and enactment of gendered identities of young men in the neighborhood is intimately moulded by their multiple marginalisations from the city's economic, social and democratic political processes, a historical trajectory intensified in the city's current neoliberal ethos. At the same time, the possibilities of recuperating this gendered sense of inadequacy in the spaces of the neighborhood also ensures their being trapped in these very spaces, further entrenching them firmly in the geography of the city's caste and class based exclusion.

Making Men in the City

Articulating Masculinity and Space in Urban India

By

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Acknowledgements

The tiny bar on the left at the bottom of the MS Word document that now is my dissertation tells me that I have notched 128, 889 words in mapping men's lives in Moti Peth. Ironic then, that I should feel a sudden and irrecoverable lack of faith in words as I brace to map the trail of debts and inspirations and solidarities and failures which I have accumulated along the way in writing this and indeed, which have shaped fundamentally what I have written. Notwithstanding this mini-crisis with the stuff of my business, I go ahead with the hope that the words I write here are faithful in rendering my efforts at expressing gratitude as earnest and not as banal.

I dedicate this dissertation to my friends and acquaintances in Moti Peth and to the at times passionate, at times nonchalant ways in which they continue to script themselves in the narrative of the city. It has been a privilege to get access to their life worlds. Rekha, Jaya vahini, Didi, Puja, Kala bai, Susha kaku, Vahini, Abeda bai, Kanchan, Malan kaku, Pia, Bharati, Kalyani, our afternoon rendezvous are a permanent gift. Rakesh, Munna, Pawan, Askhay, Rahul, Krishna, Nagesh, Dinesh, Sanjay kaka thank you for letting me into your "secret" worlds. I am indebted to Nitin Tanksale, Abdul Sheikh, Raj Faiyyaz and Mama Ovhal for revealing to me a city and its spirit that I did not know existed. I hope that there is enough trust that they have in me and enough courage that I can muster, to go back to Moti Peth with my thoughts and analyses about their lives and their experiences. The mixture of surprise, anger, admiration, affection or disagreements that this "going back" might open up, will only make our relationship more real. It might or might not create safe space for me to reveal more explicitly my life and my emotional world in way that I have not till now. The resultant relationships might not be as coated with affection and happy memories as they are now, but they will be responsible, ethical relationships. The people in Moti Peth deserve that and so do I. *Baray tar mag.*

I am grateful to my advisor and mentor Prof. Cecilia Van Hollen for her guidance and all her intellectual support in shaping my project. As I shifted continents in between writing, losing focus, momentum and motivation alternately, her unwavering presence has been a huge support. The fact that my project took an entirely new direction post-fieldwork would have been far more anxiety inducing had it not been for Cecilia's equanimity in encouraging me to do what it takes to finish, even if it meant another round of fieldwork. I have felt our connection strengthen over the past three years of virtual contact and hurried catching up sessions in Delhi. Thank you for everything, Cecilia! I also thank my committee member Prof. Susan Wadley for her welcoming presence, right from when I was a new international student, a bit stunned emotionally when faced with the combined assault of desolate wintry landscape of Syracuse and the mad pace and pressure of graduate school. As I made a huge turnaround in my dissertation topic from public spaces to masculinity, I remembered Sue's anticipatory remark in my defense, "but what about masculinity?" Thanks Sue for your relevant questions and for your continuing support for my project.

Prof. Don Mitchell, also a committee member, holds a special place for my project. He made it possible for me to enjoy some of the most intellectually stimulating courses in graduate

But perhaps my richest writing "community" came from Chris Kurian, my partner and companion. In hindsight I feel like we both navigated the question of place at several levels: vis-à-vis my dissertation, vis-à-vis my struggle to belong to her city which now seemed strange and hostile to me and vis-à-vis her constant questioning of the "place" of academic endeavor in the question of justice. Chris has shared my agonies, not so much of writing, but of navigating the difficult ethical questions my work threw back at me at times, without warning. Her ability for empathy and her sharp political insights have made their way unmistakably into my writing and my insights. It is our shared political utopias which continue to drive my project of knowledge making. Thank you Chris, for stubbornly insisting on the possibility of the utopia, and for putting your weight behind our ability to achieve it. I look forward immensely to our journey.

As this chapter comes to an end, I sorely miss Bill Kelleher and Sharmila Rege. Bill demanded out of us and brought back ideas of justice and politics in a real way into our classroom, which was often saturated only with anxieties of performance. I believe he demonstrated what a safe and caring academic space could look like and I am indebted to him for getting that space of safety and care. Thank you Bill, and I hope my writing reflects some of the passion and earnestness that you brought to your teaching. I will miss you when I stand to defend my dissertation. Sharmila Ma'am's earnest and critical questions about politics of representation have been my radar as I navigated uncertainty about my own privilege during the writing process. Her belief in critical pedagogies helps me imbue my own project with a deeper sense of meaning, beyond academic excellence and I miss her, as I seek to take my work ahead.

This project has had a tortuous trajectory, geographically and emotionally. Syracuse, Pune, Delhi. There have been reassuring continuities and violent disruptions. Love, care, laughter and emotional support have followed in the wake of neurosis, bitterness and enmeshed mixed-up messes, or vice versa. As I finish this chapter, I want to acknowledge this dense mesh and those who featured in it. Chris, Carolina, Meghana, Linh, Ketki, Kasturi, Vasudha, Mitul, Shambhavi, Sandeep, Shiladitya, Roopa, Nitin, Revu, Deepra, Abhijit, Shweta, PD, Zarin, Rubina, Ashutosh, Himanshu, DJ, Ivy and Jenny. Thank you. I am grateful for those times when our lives intersected/ continue to do so. I specially want to thank Dr. Neha Pande, who supported me through the crazy emotional roller-coaster of Syracuse, Pune and Delhi, who I know I can always reach out from the brink. A big thank you to Mamtaji, Anju, Amu and Reshma, who have made my life in Pune and Delhi immensely comfortable. My Ph.D. is sustained by your relentless labor. Unnu, Kittu and Billu, thank you my dears, for ensuring that life in O15A is full of furry kind of joy (if only I could say it in cat language).

The loss of three grandparents during my Ph.D was a lesson in the inadequacy of my own academic language. I wish I had the language to communicate to them what this work means to me. My Aai and Baba have been uncertain and anxious, yet unwavering in their support for me. This process has taken as much from them as much it has from me. Thank you Aai Baba for your faith in me, despite your anxieties. Thank you my dear Meghu and Mrunu for the incredible joy that you bring to me and one day I hope I will be able to share my passion with you. Thank you Dada and Snehal for all your support. This is also an acknowledgment of the unnerving fact that the geography of my work is in fact messily enmeshed with the geography of my relationships and my life experiences. I hope I am able to recover a language to share not just my academic work with you all, but to share how incredibly entwined this work has been with our shared yet unspoken intimacies and our distances. It is deeply personal, you know.

Table of Contents

Note on Translation

All interactions during the eighteen months of my fieldwork were conducted in Marathi, the native language of the western Indian state of Maharashtra. The bulk of quotes included in this dissertation have been taken from formal (recorded) interviews conducted with the residents of Shelar galli, the neighborhood in Pune, where my fieldwork was conducted. The Marathi text of these quotes has been included in the dissertation, along with my translation of the quotes into English. However, I also include an equal number of instances of direct speech from informal (non-recorded) conversations in my dissertation. I use Marathi quotes in cases where I was able to reproduce the words or sentences verbatim in my notes, based upon my memory; in other places I use English recapitulations of these conversations recorded in my field notes.

Preface

In June of 2012, Shailu, 23, who lived in the central-eastern neighborhood of Moti Peth,[1]

Pune, posted these lines on his Facebook wall:

> *"Dagdusheth[2] Pune…Tulshibag Pune…Parvati Pune…Hinjewadi Pune…J.M. road
> Pune…F.C. road Pune…Z bridge Pune…Amanora Pune…City Pride Pune…Tilak road
> Pune…Swargate Pune…Manapa Pune…Balgandharva Pune…Chandani Chowk
> Pune…Durvankur Pune…Shaniwar wada Pune…shant sundar Kothrud Pune…Pune
> tithe kay une…punyachi pahat, punyachi ratra…punyacha utsaha manaat sarvatra…I am
> loving you Pune, keep loving me back Pune"* (Dagdusheth Pune…[…] Shaniwar wada
> Pune, quiet, beautiful Kothrud Pune, what can one possibly lack in the city of Pune, the
> nights in Pune, the dawn in Pune, Pune's energy enthuses the mind, I am loving you
> Pune, keep loving me back Pune).

On the verge of wrapping up my ethnographic fieldwork in Moti Peth, I did not realize then that

Shailu's virtual ode to his city was to be my first signpost as I embarked upon the task of making

sense of eighteen months' worth of intense interaction with the residents of Shelar *galli*,[3] the

neighborhood in Moti Peth where Shailu lived. As the popular Marathi saying goes, "*Pune tithe*

kay une" (what can one possibly lack in this city of Pune!), Shailu's Pune had it all:

counterpoised beautifully to the Information Technology hub in Hinjewadi and the swanky

Amanora township (which promised to "…prepare Pune to become a global smart city"),[4] the

upmarket Fergusson College (F.C.) road and multiplexes like City Pride, was the simultaneously

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[i] Except for the identity of cities (Pune, Mumbai/Delhi), the names of localities and neighborhoods that appear in this dissertation have been changed (unless otherwise specified), in order to protect the identity of the interlocutors. Also all the names of the interlocutors have been changed, unless otherwise specified.

ii. All the references indexing the various sites in the city in this quote however, have been retained without masking their identity.

iii. *Galli* in Marathi, the native language of the state of Maharashtra, refers to a narrow alleyway. The older part of the city, divided into wards known as *Peths* are typically marked by thousands of narrow crisscrossing gallis. Most residents in Moti Peth where I conducted my fieldwork referred to their neighborhood simply as galli.

iv. There are several 'firsts' that Amanora credits itself with on its website: "Pune's first high-rise glass towers," "India's first Smart Township" and "World's first temple dedicated to environment" are a few of them. See www.amanora.com.

"local" essence of the city with its characteristic Brahmin eateries like Durvankur and Brahmin neighborhoods like (the quiet and beautiful) Kothrud, historical legacy of the famous Shaniwar wada, Parvati and Dagdusheth temples, and its city council building, abbreviated fondly as "*manapa.*"[5]Written in English, Shailu's closing lines were simultaneously a touching plea and an expression of faith: that his "city of no lacks" would or should continue to reciprocate his love in the same measure, the city's spaces giving him a reason to feel proud and to feel loved.

The omission of his own neighborhood from his tribute to the city's spirit was curious though; did it matter to Shailu that his neighborhood did not feature in the highlights of the city; or would he much rather have places other than Moti Peth make up the city of his imagination, I wondered. If his Moti Peth was not a part of the landscape of iconic spaces of the city, *whose* city and *what kind* of city was Shailu professing love for and hoping love from?

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v. Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) is called as (Pune) Maha Nagar Palika in Marathi. Manapa is the abbreviation of this Marathi term for PMC.

Introduction: Making Men in the City

In this dissertation I seek to illustrate the articulations between urban space and gendered identity, specifically in the context of young, working class, Mang[1] men in the western Indian city of Pune. The nature of relationship that Shailu and his neighborhood friends shared with Pune and the place of Moti Peth in it have decisively shaped this central question of my dissertation. In thinking more about the relationship that the young men in Moti Peth had with the spaces of their own neighborhood and their city, I discovered that this relationship molded in crucial ways their experiences of themselves as men. The social and spatial universe within and outside Moti Peth and the complex interrelationship between these two universes served as constant reference points for Shailu and his friends as they learned, enacted and consolidated behavior which would validate their identities as men. I document ethnographically and analyze precisely this interrelationship and the spatialized, embodied and discursive processes through which the young men's gendered identities are embedded in this interrelationship.

I did not, at the outset, intend to study the shaping of masculine identities in Pune's neighborhoods. My objective was to illustrate voluntary neighborhood associations in the city as sites of representational and material practices of place-making and the political relevance of these sites for the city's working class. In hindsight, it is now evident to me that this original proposal remained focused largely on the possibilities or strategies of countering an already assumed marginalization of vulnerable groups in the city, in a trifle hasty bid to examine "what can be done." In the course of my fieldwork however, I realized that marginalization is not a

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[1]Mang is a formerly untouchable caste in Maharashtra.

status, a snapshot of *what has happened* to vulnerable groups; as I engaged intensively with the lives of Mang, working class residents of Shelar galli in Moti Peth, I gradually came to recognize the deeply historical, ongoing process that marginalization is, a process sustained and perpetuated by social and spatial structures and one which continues to frame the everyday negotiations, aspirations, subversions and struggles in Shelar galli. Elaborating upon the modalities through which multiple marginalizations in the city (social, political and spatial) come to bear upon the gendered subjectivities and evaluations of self-worth of young men in Shelar galli constitutes the chief objective of my dissertation.

The use of the spatial metaphor of "margin" above is not unintentional. The location of Shelar galli within the social and spatial co-ordinates of Moti Peth, which in turn is embedded within the peculiar trajectory of Pune's urban history, is not merely a place marked by a high concentration of Dalit[2] and working class settlements; I argue that the gallis, alleyways, shacks and neighborhoods in Moti Peth and the meanings attached to them constitute collectively the fundamental spatial register through which processes of exclusion of its residents are realized and reproduced. In the context of young men who feature in this research, their caste and class-based exclusions are thus indistinguishable from their place-based marginalization, a context which shapes their gendered identities in crucial ways. In spatializing our understanding of gendered identity-formation my work attempts to not just underscore the role of urban space in molding masculinity but also to arrive at a more robust insight into what the urban itself means in the context of contemporary India.

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[2] Dalit ("crushed" or "broken" in Marathi) is now the preferred term while referring collectively to formerly untouchable castes in India. I elaborate upon the genealogy of this term in the next chapter.

Caste and classbased vulnerabilities resulting from the city and region's peculiar economic, social and political processes frames the lives of the galli's male (and female) residents as well as my own analytical lens; this frame of vulnerability however, hardly exhausts the repertoire of embodied practices and shared meanings that constitute everyday life of the men and women in the galli. A significant part of my dissertation focuses on the discourses and subcultures which underlie these everyday practices in the galli in order to examine how the latter constitute a site for fashioning a gendered self-identity especially for the young men here. I examine closely the practices of the galli's neighborhood association and practices of local political brokering, as highly gendered and spatialized terrains, in order to demonstrate how these spaces allow their young male participants an opportunity to reclaim their sense of manliness, as they strive to counter their marginal status in the cityscape. However, the possibility of recuperating this gendered sense of inadequacy in the spaces of the neighborhood, I argue, ensures their being trapped in these very spaces, further entrenching them firmly in the geography of the city's caste and class based exclusion.

I

Location/s

I place this research within the context of two overlapping streams of discussion on contemporary urban India, one with gender as its focus and the other centered on urban space. More than two decades after India liberalized its economy in 1991, Indian cities (big and small) have undergone fundamental spatial and social reconfiguration which is pegged onto class,

gender and caste differences. A major highlight of this transformation has been the recasting of the definition of "public" in the exclusive image of the urban, middle class consumer-citizen in globalizing India (Lukose 2009; Fernandes 2004). This revised image is manifested in the realm of the public in its spatial and social manifestation. Thus public space has become increasingly privatized via the mushrooming of exclusive consumer spaces, malls, multiplexes and gated communities (Athique and Hill 2010; Falzon 2004; Waldrop 2004) and contests over existing urban spaces have sharpened acutely (Desai and Sanyal 2013). A new brand of middle class civic activism is asserting its presence in the governance and management of urban public life, edging out the imagination of an inclusive city via its subscription to neoliberal notions of efficiency, "world-class"- ness and most recently "smart cities" (Srivastava 2015; Ghertner 2011; Fernandes 2004), which views the presence of urban poor as a nuisance (Ghertner 2013) or as hostile bodies (Phadke 2013).

The furious debate on women's safety which was triggered off in the wake of the brutal rape and murder of a young paramedical student in Delhi in December of 2012, has to be located in the larger context of neoliberal urban India elaborated above. The outrage expressed in large scale public demonstrations in the capital city and in national print and social media following the incident made way for larger discussions surrounding linkages of power, violence and masculinity and the institutionally entrenched misogyny in Indian public life. However, with the media giving disproportionate coverage to instances of lower class men's attacks on middle/ upper class women, the discussion around women's safety was subtly framed as middle class women's increasing vulnerability to the violence of lower class masculinity[3](Phadke 2013;

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[3]It is important to say here that lower *caste* referent is often implied in allusions to lower class/ working class in debates/ discussions in popular sphere. The largely prevalent intersection of class marginalization with caste-based

Tiwari 2012). Thus though the increased discussion around notions of manhood in the public

sphere was welcome, the terms of this discussion were questionable.

This is amply illustrated by the spate of recently released videos /advertisements issued in

public interest addressed explicitly to men, emphasizing their duty to respect and "protect"

women and prevent gendered violence. Most of these videos, anchored by middle class, urbane

men who spoke in English, addressed an imagined audience of men like themselves, in their

entreaty to respect women's rights. What is implied in covert and overt manner is the fact that

the task of women's "protection" (in itself a problematic formulation) has to be performed vis-à-

vis precisely that group of men who are *not* middle class, Englishspeaking and urbane, who

would most likely violate women's dignity and rights.[4] In contrast, the masculinity of middle

class, male consumer-citizen, who represents the aspirations of neoliberal India, is constantly

celebrated in popular culture through advertisements and television shows, portraying him as

trendy, ambitious and, as portrayed in the above videos, liberal protector of women's rights.[5]

Phadke (2013) traces the progressive consolidation of the image of lower class men as

violent "lost causes" (51)and as obstacles to progress in the development discourses of 1970s to

their contemporary portrayal as dangerous, "unfriendly bodies" (52) in discussions of urban

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disempowerment in Indian context meant that constructed fears of a violent lower class masculinity also thinly disguised similar reservations about a lower caste masculinity. I address the question of caste and masculinity in detail in the final sections of the introduction.

[4]See, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdPqGLB18js and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4aiso6pvRE to illustrate this blending of class and masculinity in the question of women's safety.

[5]See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcUYQ_YRxy0for an advertisement campaign titled "Raymond: the complete man" or the series, "Chivas Studio: Gentleman's Code" which showcases itself as exploring the modern Indian man, with episodes dedicated to style, sex, clothes, anxiety, and role of work in men's lives. The men referred to in this show are decidedly upper class/ caste; the aesthetics of the show, its background music, visuals are highly evocative of North American shows showcasing lifestyle, fashion or cuisine. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTg-aAUfbn0 for an episode of this show, which focuses on the place of luxury in men's identities in modern India.

women's safety. In the distinctly neoliberal ethos of contemporary urban India, Phadke argues

that, "Women's safety, or to be more specific, middle and upper-class women's safety, is [ ]

premised on the removal of lower class and minority men from public spaces." (55) The above

developments point towards the contradictory ways in which masculinity has come to occupy a

space in public discussions on urban India: while the sensitivity towards the gendered nature of

urban spaces and the need to look at dominant meanings of masculinity is no doubt welcome,

these discussions seem to highlight a disturbing alignment of class, masculinity and violence as a

singular concern within the larger realm of masculine identity, pitting the former against middle

class women's respectability.

In the introduction to their edited volume titled, "*Young Men in Uncertain Times*," Vered

and Dyck (2012) argue that the figure of the idle male youth has come to represent deepening

social and economic inequalities, a consequence of shifts in the structure of labor markets the

world over. While education has continued to gain currency in the developing world as a panacea

to combat poverty and has thus raised aspirations, the authors point out that educational systems

have been critiqued for in fact reproducing the inequalities they are meant to ameliorate (10-15).

Failure, to get an education or to get employment after education, makes young men vulnerable

to narratives of moral panic, which portray them as "dangerous," thus making them scapegoats

of their own marginalization. Rather than paying closer attention to the contexts of their

marginalization, several studies and representations reduce this group to a "category" of

problems associated with crime and violence, which needs to be reformed and improved (3-7).

The above argument resonates with the trajectory of representation of working class

masculinity in recent years in India, one which is portrayed as violent and threatening to the

safety of middle class women. This representation however, begs critical examination in the

light of its underlying class and gendered politics. The attempt to question the essentialized

image of violent working class masculinity does not in any way imply condoning of gendered

violence against women (across caste, class or regional divides) committed by working class

men or denying its reality, as evidenced in Indian cities and villages alike. However, I believe

that any conversation on violence against women in urban India and on women's safety in urban

public spaces and emergent policies have to be necessarily located in the context of the stark

exclusions and vulnerabilities that urban processes in India today produce for its marginalized

male and female citizens.[6]

It is my contention that violence against women in urban India is but one aspect of a

specific deployment of masculinity impelled by the pressures that largescale social and spatial

changes in Indian cities exert on normative gendered ideals of manhood and men's negotiations

with these pressures. It is these pressures and negotiations that my ethnography illustrates in its

focus on the lives of young men in Moti Peth, in order to understand the contours of masculine

identity that gets shaped in these spaces. In the process, I seek to go beyond the loaded category

of "young, working class/lower caste, unemployed, dangerous men" and instead elaborate upon

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[6]There also have been critical voices in this realm, which have emphasized how unequal access to spaces in cities is mapped on to existent gendered and classed hierarchies in Indian urban milieux, and how these hierarchies are perpetuated by the urban context itself. In his insightful piece Kocchar (2012) focused on neoliberal Delhi as the site of production of new kinds of sterile urban spaces emptied out of an imagination of shared, meaningful interactions which constitute a place, thus creating a void which allows for manifestation of masculine violence in a particular way. Writing an opinion for 'The Hindu' immediately after the December 2012 gang-rape, Swami (2013) linked the gendered violence to growing inequality in Indian cities leaving young urban men without future prospects, simultaneously excluded from new cultures of consumption and sexual freedoms. More recently, Srivastava (2014a) has highlighted in an op-ed how dominant meanings of aggressive masculinity are harnessed in strengthening communitarian identities in areas on the urban periphery of Delhi as the latter struggle to hold out against the juggernaut of indiscriminate urban growth which threatens to overwhelm their way of life. These writings go beyond patriarchal ideologies and hegemonic constructions of masculinity in understanding gendered violence in urban areas and link the former with processes of social and spatial marginalization underway in this context.

the shaping of their masculine selves in response to their implication in contradictory urban

processes of inequality and aspiration, of gendered privilege and caste-based marginalization.

The pace and scale of transformation in urban South Asia and India specifically has

propelled an explosion of social science research in the realm of the urban, foregrounding the

urban and the spatial themselves as analytical categories in order to understand the making and

transformation of South Asian contexts. This research contributes in crucial ways to knowledge

production on cities which is rooted outside the unmarked context of Euro-American centric

urban theory, providing a far more situated analytical framework with which to understand the

dynamics of cities in the global South.

Indeed, most of what are considered as definitive theories of the urban havecome

disproportionately from the experience of cities based in the Euro-American world. From the

Chicago School's promulgation of an urban ecological perspective in the first half of the

twentieth century (Low 2014) to Lefebvre's (1991) materialist perspective on the dialectical

relationship between social and material space in capitalism and Harvey's (2001) path breaking

work highlighting the centrality of spatial organization and restructuring to capitalist

accumulation,[7] the locus of research and theorizing has been the cities in advanced capitalist

West European or North American contexts. Notwithstanding the relevance of some of this work

to understand the contemporary transformations in cities of the South, it is important to note that

this literature reflects only minimally the material, political economic and experiential realities of

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[7]This is hardly a representative or a comprehensive list of theorists, whose work is seminal to the discipline of urban sociology/ urban studies. I mention the above in order to highlight the location of theory-making in the realm of the urban. Several other philosophers / scholars, whose work continues to animate questions about the urban form and space spanning disciplinary boundaries, also have theorized from their location in the Euro-American urban world. Some of these include Foucault 1995(relevance of spatial control to modern technologies of power), Wirth 1938 (a sociological definition of urbanism) and Massey 1994 (mutual constitution of space and gender).

lifeworlds in these cities. Similarly, through the last decade urban scholars have challenged an inherent bias in the hitherto conceptualizations of the city, which has relegated cities of the South as aberrations/ incomplete projects in the prescribed trajectory of city-ness and urban modernity as defined by cities of the North (Edensor and Jane 2011; Roy 2009b; Robinson 2002). Roy (2009b) argues that the attempt to redraw the geography of knowledge production on the urban by producing theory rooted in the urban South does not naively assume, "the inapplicability of Euro-American ideas to cities of the Global South" (820), but in fact aims to examine how experiences distinct to cities of the South might provide newer insights about the urban world in general.

Even anthropology, despite (or on account of) its historical inclination towards the "remote" Other, in its specialized realm designated as urban anthropology, has tended to focus more on cities in northern America (Toulson 2015, Low 1996). Low's (1996) critique of anthropology's failure to engage with the city locates it in the discipline's fixation with the exotic Other, located in the "remote" field. Even when the discipline did engage with the realm of the urban, especially in US and British academic traditions, it was guilty of practicing "ethnography in the city:" considering the city (mostly located in North America or UK) merely as the field site, peopled by appropriately "anthropological" subjects like the marginal ghettoes or exotic or kin-based communities (385).

In an illustrating instance, Low proceeds to provide a set of metaphors with which to analyze the complex realities of contemporary cities, which includes categories such as the divided city, the ethnic city, the gendered city, the contested city, the de-industrialized city, the global city, the informational city, the fortress city to name a few, most of which focus on cities in north America. In a move deeply resonant with her own critique of early urban anthropology

however, South Asia figures only under two scantily developed sections on "the sacred city" and "the traditional city" (398-99). In a latest compilation on conceptual essays in urban anthropology, it is again surprising that the "urban" is assumed as a universal category, with no attempts to address the question of difference between the Northern and Southern contexts, in terms of urban experience, urban histories or nature of political struggles that have underpinned these respective urban centers (Nonini 2014) .[8] It is remarkable that this collection does not speak to the recent conversations and critiques emerging out of the global South, largely from urban planners and geographers, about the need to "de-colonize" the universal category of urban, as it has emerged in the Euro-north American context (Edensor and Jayne 2011; Roy 2009). As a discipline whichbases its self-identity on investigating and theorizing difference, I find ironic this invisibility accorded to this difference within urban anthropology in the trajectories of urbanization in advanced capitalist contexts and the context of the global South, with its far divergent political economic careers and colonial and post-colonial influences. My dissertation, in its attempt to illustrate socio-spatial processes which define urbanism in non-metropolitan centers in India then, speaks to these lacunae and debates within the study of the contemporary urban. While not seeking to replace certain dominant typologies with new ones, I hope that my research brings to the fore the distinct nature of social and spatial processes which underlie what is considered as urban in contemporary India and the specific vulnerabilities and possibilities that this urban produces for its marginal denizens.

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[8]This volume has a broad sweep, and to its credit, it does include themes relevant to the urban contexts in the South, such as extra-legality, neoliberal policies, citizenship and social movements. But it is equally confounding that location/ place as an axis of difference does not figure in this volume at all, unlike its other sections on class, gender sexuality or race.

By locating Moti Peth at the intersection of older geographies of exclusion and evolution of new ones in contemporary Pune, I hope to illustrate urban processes peculiar to India/ South Asia which produce specific vulnerabilities as well as possibilities of coping with them for the working class, lower caste men, molding their gendered identities. My research does so by illustrating the mutual imbrications of caste, local politics and cultures of voluntarism with urban space. My work does not only aim to spatialize our understanding of urban gendered identity, but also contributes to the emergent body of work which seeks to produce knowledge on the urban from a more situated perspective.

While the above strands frame my research concerns rather neatly, the location of my own self in the material and epistemic terrain of the "field," on the other hand, is a far messier project. It is however, a necessary project; indeed the validity of the knowledge generated through this research will stand challenged if I fail to excavate the process of production of this knowledge. As the commitment towards self-reflexive knowledge production has grown stronger in anthropology in the last few decades, there has been a critical review of the power-laden processes through which knowledge is generated and represented and an emphasis on laying bare the fault lines and disruptions along which ethnographic encounters and representations proceed (Nelson 1999; Gordon 1997; Gupta and Ferguson 1997a, 1997b; Appadurai 1988a, 1988b; Clifford 1986). Writing one's gendered, caste or class self in the ethnographic account, without this exercise sliding into hand-wringing confessions of privilege and what Bourgois (2003) terms as, "…hermetically sealed academic discourses on the 'poetics' of social interaction," (14) is not only an ethical imperative. It is fundamentally a question of methodology, without which the project of ethnographic knowledge would be reduced to an opaque act of power, of merely the ethnographic production of the Other.

I went into the field as an upper caste, middle class, single woman in my 30s, studying at a North American university, to research the lived spaces of the urban working class in Pune, the city where I had grown up and worked. The question of how urban space archived lived practices and social relationships excited me. I wanted my work to be relevant to the cause of vulnerable sections of the city, who, like in several cities of India, were being evicted from the imagination of (and from the actual spaces of) the city. I was not entirely unaware that my "politics of solidarity"(Nelson 1999: 57) with the marginalizedcame wrapped in a rose-tinted sheath, ensuring me of my innocence and the nobility of my intentions in doing ethnographic research; though it was my eighteen month long research and the act of writing it that brought home with full force this politics, as it turned my assumed solidarities into fraught ones and at times transformed them into *complicities*.

The way in which men and masculinity came to occupy a central place in my research is one such narrative marked by these contradictory impulses. Men as gendered subjects were not the original focus of my research, even though I aimed to study spaces and activities of neighborhood associations in working class areas, which were heavily masculinized. Fieldwork, however, exposed the impossibility of separating men's gendered presence (and mine) from these masculinized spaces. I and the single young men whom I interacted with found ourselves negotiating these spaces constantly, whereby gendered spaceshardly retained the distance of a "research topic." In hindsight, these interactions entailed hard labor on both our parts: to de-sexualize our interactions even as the young men simultaneously attempted to include me in their

hitherto exclusive zones of nearby teashops or afternoon gatherings in the galli spaces,[9] for me to resist our engagement to be framed within a "safe" kin-based relation of a sister or an elder sister-in-law and for them to deal with my gendered presence which often was contrary to their ideas of femininity (my comfort with technology, my single status, my physical mobility, my interest in politics and so on).

The young men's unthinking claim of patriarchal privilege, and the entitlements and discounts they awarded to themselves as opposed to the women in the galli were recognizable to me from my own experience of my family's upper caste patriarchy, albeit masked by labels of "educated" and "cultured." Forging solidarity with the women in the galli in this regard came easily. Field-working with men entailed different kinds of alliances, as the men described to me matters of the "outside" (politics, the city's underbelly, organization of festivals, their efforts to get a job) in tea shops, the galli's gym or at times during bike rides around the city. My ambiguous performance of my own gendered identity meant that I was able to build (in later months) a camaraderie with the young men, reflected in shared humor, shared routines of tea-drinking, and my assumed participation in some of their activities. These moments of access to men's worlds, to some of the pleasures of their mobility and the eager audience that I provided to their narratives made me wonder what feminist solidarity really consisted of, in everyday, real life situations like these.

As the requirements of academic analyses pushed me to interpret the young men's narratives through categories of patriarchal privilege, misogyny or violence confusingly

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[9] Of course, my interaction with older and younger women and girls of the galli was an equal if not more, part of the time I spent in the galli, which hopefully balanced the initial anxieties and discomforts that I am certain were caused by my presence among the young men there.

entangled with vulnerability, fear, pathos and care, it became increasingly difficult for me to hold on to a unidimensional understanding of men as powerful beings largely incapable of emotional response and nuance, an understanding ossified by the complete absence of nurturing and emotional primary relationships with men in my own personal life. Post-fieldwork, the realization that I had actually worked most intensively with men's narratives thus came also as a confirmation of this acutely personal struggle to reclaim a more affirmative ground for engaging with men, to base my understanding of feminist politics within the realm of engagement rather than of disengagement with men.

Given their association with the public sphere in segregated societies, men and masculinities are assumed to be accessible and visible to the anthropological gaze (Chopra 2004: 57). However it is now a well-accepted anthropological axiom that what is "visible" is essentially partial, fragmented and incomplete (Chopra 2004; Nelson 1999; Rose 1997; Clifford 1986). My construction of the masculine identities of young men in Shelar galli makes no claims for a universalized or complete understanding of their experiences as men; in fact what I document and interpret as men's gendered narratives and experiences here have been borne out of our co-production of a distinct gendered field, inhabited by our inequities of power (class, caste and gender based) and our negotiations with and subversions of the normative gender regime of the galli; I speak from and take responsibility for the insights obtained from the vantage point of that gendered field.

Our location at the two extremes of the caste hierarchy telescopes the question of power and epistemic ability into an even more uneasy zone. The last decade has witnessed the emergence of powerful critiques of tenacious caste hierarchies which have ensured a systemic exclusion of Dalits from the project of knowledge-making in India. Referring to eminent Dalit

intellectual Gopal Guru, Sarukkai (2012) claims that if theorizing is an ethical and political activity then it cannot be divorced from lived experience; in other words, non-Dalits have no "moral right" to theorize Dalit experience (33). As a "theoretical outsider" (ibid) to the experience of caste-based indignity and exclusion that Dalits (including the Mang residents of Shelar galli) continue to resist and be subject to, how are we to place my interpretations of the gendered subjectivities of Mang men?

Despite several persuasive arguments against identity-based essentialism[10] and despite the explicit commitment to make our ethnographies "polyvocal" (Abu-Lughod 1991) to reclaim the voice of the Other, the question of who can represent whom cannot be divorced from institutionally entrenched power hierarchies in exercising "knowledge capital" (Sampath 2014), i.e. the ability not just to produce knowledge, but also how potential research spheres seem automatically "available" to privileged researchers to choose from, as well as access to resources to ensure the visibility of this knowledge to a larger audience. Indeed, my research, as much driven by an investment in a critique of elitist politics of space or in a questioning of hegemonic representations of lower class masculinity, is equally implicated in this realm of unequal knowledge capital, which marks how the "choice/ idea" of conducting research in a working class, Dalit neighborhood was available to me or the way in which I gained easy access to Shelar

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[10] Recent engagements with standpoint theories have sought to articulate dilemmas underlying the question of representation. Rege (1998) speaking of the perils of a focus on the category of "difference" contends that a Dalit feminist standpoint, while originating from the struggles of Dalit women, can be "achieved" if non-Dalits, "…educate themselves about the histories, the preferred social relations and utopias and the struggles of the marginalised" (WS-45). Rege is of course, cautious in her claiming of a Dalit feminist standpoint by maintaining that feminist movement in India *cannot* claim unity across castes and has to address the specificities of Dalit women's oppression. In exploring men's role in the production of feminist knowledge, Chowdhury and Al Baset (2015) seek to extricate feminist standpoint from the biological imperative of being a woman and argue that a feminist standpoint, "…is a theoretical location that is contingently achieved as an outcome of struggles against dominant thought" (30), thus arguing for the possibility of "men doing feminism."

galli.[11] Following Abu-Lughod (1991), if I were to trace, "…how people like ourselves [came to be] engaged in anthropological research about people like those…" (148), it would be in the stark historical interplay of caste-based injustice and privilege that "people like those" would be rendered as subjects of scholarly research (and other beneficent interventions) of "people like ourselves."[12] My intended solidarity with Shelar galli through my academic research then, seemed to be predicated on a complicity in the very same exploitative logic of caste hierarchy which disempowered the residents of Shelar galli.

If the above contention brings the act of doing my research uneasily close to an act of appropriation, it is only in the ethical telling of its process that this act can be rendered as *accounted for*. It would entail rejecting the mold of narratives and interpretations in which the unmarked researcher represents the always already caste-marked "Dalits-as-subjects" (Anand 2006) and would entail making my own caste-self visible with its dilemmas, revulsions and its achieved intimacies. Abu-Lughod (1991) contends that a fundamental mode by which anthropology produces the Other through its representations is via its language of theory and generalizations which construct anthropological objects as visible and thus legible/ inferior to the power of the anthropological gaze (149-51). Reversing this mode of producing the Other, she

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[11]I needed to labor hard of course, to build trust and confidence and to negotiate our fields of interaction charged with gendered, class and caste logic. But my initial conversations with the members of the neighborhood association of the galli were met with very little suspicion or skepticism; I was received mostly with enthusiasm, which I attributed to a large extent to my embodied caste and class confidence: my upper caste Marathi, my skin color and a confident (even though respectful) occupation of space in the galli. Through the duration of my fieldwork I realized that I could occupy their spaces in ways they could never occupy mine. It is necessary to note here that three neighborhood associations (located in Muslim and Dalit neighborhoods respectively) that I approached in Moti Peth did not respond to my requests for permission. I was required to make a formal presentation about my research objectives in another Dalit neighborhood, which was attended by neighborhood association members and an eminent woman politician from the neighborhood. While I eventually got permission to conduct my research, I had to drop this idea due to lack of time.

[12] In the next section of this chapter I locate Moti Peth and Shelar galli in the caste-based history which underlies Pune's geography of urban exclusion. Though not explicit, this history clearly points towards the processes of exclusion and injustice which determine who becomes the "researcher" and who, the "researched."

suggests, requires us to, "…bring closer the language of everyday life and the language of the text." (151) Necessarily a process of demystification, the firmer rooting of the written ethnography in the particular spatial and temporal contexts of those being studied would thus serve to reduce the distance between the researched and the researcher. Through the following chapters I attempt to ground theories and concepts I use in the reality and language of the everyday in Shelar galli; the transition from "speaking for" to "speaking from" (Abu-Lughod 1991: 143) can only be achieved in the process of firmly grounding theory and of locating the self in the field.

I did not live in the galli, except for a brief period of three weeks, in a rented room in the neighboring galli, in the fifth month of my fieldwork. My intention to live in the galli for a small duration was anxiety-provoking for me as well as the for the galli residents; for them, on account of feeling vulnerable to my potential upper caste judgments about their lower caste/ class way of life: the language, the food, the public toilets, the filth in the neighboring areas, the daily brawls. For me, on account of my entrenched, embodied notions of "cleanliness" and "hygiene" which might be pushed to their limits, and yet feeling the pressure to pass the ethnographer's "test by fire" by trying to push those limits. The rented room, with an attached toilet, relieved our anxieties considerably! Predictably, my subjection to the gaze of the galli's scrutiny intensified during these three weeks, while simultaneously opening up newer spaces of trust and confidence between me and galli residents, particularly with women in the galli.[13]

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[13] My room with its rudimentary tea-making equipment and an attached toilet was a novelty for several residents of the galli, none of whom had a toilet in their own homes. It soon became a favorite hangout of young girls especially, because of the perceived permissibility that they experienced in this space as compared to their own homes/ galli spaces where they were closely watched. I also got several male visitors, who would drop in for a cup of tea around the evening, careful to sit near the door, with its curtain open. The occasions when they could see me make tea, do the dishes, fill up water or clean the room and the awkward occasions when I could see familiar faces on their way

For the rest of the duration of my fieldwork I stayed with my family in a residential neighborhood, three miles away from the galli. My familiarity with the city, my mobility and my proximity to galli meant that I could spend entire days (and at times nights) in the galli, or visit the galli at odd hours (early morning or late nights) in case of special occasions, which I often did. Indeed, my ethnography afforded me the choice of exit from the field at all points, and this ethnography would have been a different one in the absence of this choice. It is important to acknowledge that the availability of and my exercise of this choice marks the limits of my ethnographic data.

II

Framing Concepts: Urban Space, City and Masculinity

The theoretical framework of my ethnographic analysis combines concepts from anthropology, feminist theory and feminist geography, all of which now boast a rich repository of research and insights in the broader realm of gender and space. In this section I delineate the relevant theoretical constructs which have directed my analysis of young men's lives in Moti Peth. I divide this section into two broad themes of urban space and masculinity/ gendered identity, before elaborating upon the conceptual linkages between these two themes.

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to the public toilets with a mini-bucket in their hands, afforded us short-lasting though peculiar intimacies, very different from the "come and go" pattern in which I spent my time in Shelar galli. Indeed the texture of this ethnography would have been radically different if I had not moved out of the room after barely three weeks, on account of a personal crisis due to which I moved back to my family's apartment.

On space/ place and the urban

Examining the disciplinary trajectory of anthropology itself at the turn of the century is a highly productive exercise in my attempt to link place and identity conceptually. Gupta and Fergusson (1997a, 1997b) and Appadurai (1996; 1988a, 1988b) highlight the historical lack of disciplinary reflexivity vis-à-vis the concept of "the field" and the study of "local" cultures whichhad been primary to the discipline's self-definition. Their critiques foreground how the centrality accorded to the "field" in ethnography and the essential spatial division between "home" and the "field" for the anthropologist hadled to the construction of the "local" through ethnographic research, thus clearly mapping the Other onto "local," "exotic" regions. By conceptualizing and representing spaces as essentially separate and bound entities which contained respective peoples who "naturally" constituted a community and practiced their cultures, anthropology was complicit in consolidating what Gupta and Ferguson (1997b) term as an assumed, "…isomorphism of space, place, and culture" (34).

These critiques brought to the fore a radically different conceptualization of space, place and locality;[14] the authors contended that to imagine, depict and construct cultural difference as mapped on to place uncritically was essentially an act of power. When viewed as being located in discontinuous and disconnected spaces, cultural difference can easily be argued to be a result of inherent hierarchies; however when spaces are conceptualized as necessarily interconnected, cultural difference can no longer be attributed to inbuilt hierarchies, but points towards the workings of power in producing them as such(Gupta and Ferguson 1997b: 35). Similarly the

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[14]In fact, from late 20th century onwards, the question of spatial organization was progressively foregrounded in all social sciences' attempts to understand the radically reconfigured relations between people, places, identity and economic and political activity in an increasingly globalized world, giving rise to the spatial turn in social sciences (Appadurai 1996).

"local" ceased to be a pre-given spatial category which bestowed a common identity on those who inhabited it; it is through elaborate social rituals of inclusion and exclusion and an unmistakable exercise of power that bodies are located in a spatially situated community of social relations, hierarchies and obligations producing a sense of locality (Appadurai 1996: 179-80).[15] This reimagining of place and locality destabilized their hitherto understanding as static containers of a community/ social relations; place in fact now came to be recognized as the very register along which difference was constructed and identities shaped based upon this difference. The anthropological study of place and identity thus transformed from, "…a project of juxtaposing pre-existing differences to one of exploring the construction of differences in historical process" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997b: 46), as one investigating, "…a difference producing set of relations…" (ibid).[16]

My project of studying Shelar galli in terms of the social relations that have constituted it historically and spatially also draws inspiration from geographer Doreen Massey's lucid elaboration upon the idea of place. Challenging the hitherto notion of place as bounded and fixed

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[15] Of course, "spatially situated" should not be misconstrued to conflate a bound place with locality; this would be repetition of the same conceptual error that Appadurai faults anthropology with. In fact Appadurai (1996) and Gupta and Ferguson (1997b) labor to demonstrate that in contemporary era where globalizing processes result in unprecedented movement of peoples across the world place comes unhinged from locality, leading to a redefinition of both, locality and place.

[16] The edited volume by Feld and Basso (1996) which elaborates upon the phenomenological and experiential ways in which communities render places meaningful and develop identities rooted in them is an interesting case of this reformulated anthropological project. The production of locality in the essays in this volume is a consequence of the intersection of memories of ancestral past, kinship networks, and political structures which are mapped onto ecological environments, mediated by ritual, mythology, linguistic representations and sensual activity. The above research however, in its focus on place-making within rural, "remote" settings like Australian aboriginal territories, Navajo reservation or Papua New Guinea continues to perpetuate the anthropological construction of the "local," as if only territorially bound, small-scale communities are wont to construct locality. More recent work, impelled by the de-territorialization engendered by globalization (Escobar 2008; Bestor 2003; Gray 2003; Raffles 1999; Moore 1998) seeks to conceptualize place which is produced not just through the experiential worlds and embodied activity of people in localized settings, but simultaneously through their enmeshment in global networks impelled by colonialism or neoliberal capitalism, in localized knowledges and through political struggles centered on place.

in its identity, Massey (1994) argues that the place is constituted out of the interaction of multiple social relationships which operate across spatial scales ranging from the most immediate (the household, the neighborhood or the workplace) to the more distant (city policies, national political power, global finance), thus imbuing it with an inherent dynamism (4-5). Massey's conceptualization resonates with the interconnectedness of spaces which Gupta and Ferguson (1997b) aim to uncover; for Massey (1994) the identity of a place cannot be comprehended by, "… placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counter-position to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections *to* that 'beyond'" (5).[17] The identity of a place thus is not absolute and static, but as Massey argues, is relational and porous. McDowell (1999) underlines the implication of power in the production of a place,

> "Places are made through power relations which construct the rules which define boundaries. These boundaries are both social and spatial —they define who belongs to a place and who may be excluded, as well as the location or site of the experience" (4).

Place-making then, is a process of boundary-making, essentially mediated by power. The critical perspective on place, as espoused by Massey, Gupta and Fergusson and McDowell seek to lay

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[17] In her later formulations, Massey (2005) qualifies the conceptualization of space as open and porous in more cautionary, more specific terms. Massey critiques geographical imaginations of space as being inherently "open" (corresponding to an imagination of global) or essentially "closed," (corresponding to being local) as rooted in an orthodox absolutism (163-166). She argues for the latter's relational nature. Thus, can a xenophobic argument against immigrants in West European cities be on par with an indigenous community in Amazon closing their territory to preserve their way of life? The question of differential "power-geometries" (166) along which these arguments are negotiated are decisive, according to Massey in deciding the merit of places being open or closed. Her re-formulation of space stems from her feminist discomfort with postmodernist celebratory evocations of unbounded, open places which, she warns, are frequently mere sites of the playing out of Euro-American modernist and imperialist imagination (173). When I use Massey's conceptual frame to underline Moti Peth as a place essentially porous and connected to a beyond and outside, it is not to highlight this uncritical and romanticized "openness" of place, but in fact to allude to the historical relations of domination and discrimination which ply along these lines of connection, which get masked when we consider Moti Peth as a spatially discrete entity.

bare the political process underlying precisely these boundaries which define a place as a fixed, bounded entity.

While the understanding of space as being socially constructed has since long become commonsense in anthropology[18] and other social sciences, this early literature on the politics of locality and identity nevertheless provides a crucial framework to examine the articulations between identity, place and exclusion, which my project aims to do in the context of Moti Peth and its young male residents. In Moti Peth, the residents' internalized imagination of their own neighborhood points to the isomorphism of place and culture which Gupta and Ferguson (1997b) deconstruct in their critique of anthropology. Moti Peth was consistently identified as backward(*magaslela*), "slum-area," filthy (*galiccha/ ghan*), traditional and beyond improvement by residents of Shelar galli throughout the eighteen months that I spent there; this characterization of their area seamlessly merged with their evaluation of their own selves as backward, lazy, illiterate and filthy.

Delinked from Pune's three-century long urban history of caste-based segregation which has produced this *poorva bhaag* (eastern part of the city) as distinctly impoverished as compared to the upper caste dominated western part of the city, from the post-Independence trajectories of distress migration in the region and from the peculiar history of caste relations and labor in the city, these internalized evaluations of Moti Peth and its residents functioned to "…incarcerate the

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[18] The consolidation of the field of anthropology of space and place points to this development. An edited volume by Low and Lawrence-Zuniga (2003) going by the same title tries to demonstrate the inherently power-laden processes through which the body, ideologies of gender/ race or class, the built form and institutions at multiple scales (family, state, global capital) are implicated in the production of meaningful places. However, the categories along which the volume is organized (as embodied, gendered, contested, transnational and inscribed spaces) themselves beg critical theorization, in the absence of which the concept of space and these categories seem arbitrary and mutually exclusive.

natives" (Appadurai 1988b: 37) within Shelar galli, constructing the galli as a timeless container of backwardness, filth and several other moral "lacks," akin to what Massey (1994) describes as the problematic view of "space as stasis" (5).

Taking cue from the above critiques, my work aims to achieve two things: in linking the young men's gendered identities to their experiences of caste, class and place-based marginalization, I attempt to trace precisely those spatial and social (and historical) interconnections of Shelar galli/ Moti Peth to the city and the region which remain concealed in the city's hegemonic discourse and practice, which *produce* the former as "backward." Second, I demonstrate in ethnographic terms the present-day social relations and spatialized processes of inclusion and exclusion through which Shelar galli comes to be implicated in the construction of unequal difference in the city and its implications for the identity of its young male residents.

Conceptualizing Moti Peth and Shelar galli in terms of the intertwined politics of place and identity however, is an inadequate description of the full scope of my research. It is the playing out of this politics within the context of the social and spatial processes *of the city* that I want to elaborate upon in my ethnography. To the extent that the urban is a spatial form (apart from other things) and that city is a place (apart from other things), my view of the city and the urban experience is informed by the critical perspective on place as a product of a political process, as elaborated in the earlier section.

Based upon Lefebvre's (1991) framework, which regards achievement of social hegemony as a *spatial* endeavor,[19] I view the city as a dynamic constellation resulting from an ongoing

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[19] According to Lefebvre (1991), social space is constituted by representations of the relations of reproduction and production, which need to be internalized as "natural," to ensure the continued reproduction of society (32-3). These representations however, are not abstract, but are mapped onto physical space, inscribing the latter with

political struggle to maintain or challenge relations of domination. If the city is to be considered

as, following Roy's (2003) characterization, "hegemony localized" (21), then Moti Peth has to be

located within a geography of unequal spaces (unequal in their material, cultural and symbolic

resources), which make up the city of Pune. Tracing this geography would necessarily entail

following the particular caste-based and pre-colonial historical trajectories of the Pune's

urbanization; though I engage with this aspect briefly through the initial chapters, the bulk of my

ethnographic research illustrates the process distinct to the city through which these relations of

inequality are sustained and reproduced spatially in Moti Peth, via the specific question of young

men's gendered identities.

In highlighting the mutually constitutive nature of masculine identity and urban processes,

I aim to produce ethnography *of* the city,[20] as opposed to ethnography *in* the city (Toulson 2015;

Low 1996), an ethnography which hopes to reveal as much about the nature of urban spatial

processes as much as it will about the construction of young men's gendered identity within it.

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meaning. However, precluding any deterministic relationship between space and capitalist mode of production, Lefebvre demonstrates how social space and material space are engaged in a continual dialectic through the conceptual triad of production of space. Integrating the lived, imagined and conceived aspects of space, the triad shows how the attempts of capitalist relations of production to dominate and represent space in a particular way is in constant negotiation with imagined spaces that are produced through meanings attached to a physical space and people's shared experiences and material acts within it.

[20]This formulation, referring to the early decades of urban anthropology in US and British academic traditions, signals a shift from considering the city merely as the field site (peopled by appropriately 'anthropological' subjects like the marginal ghettoes and the exotic/ kin-based communities) to the city becoming the object of ethnographic analysis itself, elaborating upon its complex social and spatial interconnections constituting the new focus of ethnographic fieldwork.

Locating the "city"

To do ethnography of the city, it is first crucial to set the terms of viewing this entity, especially since my research attempts to contribute to literature which is explicitly rooted in the experience of the global South and which seeks to recover cities of the South as a legitimate site of urban theorization. In doing so, my research builds upon a robust body of theoretical work that reflects the distinctiveness of urban processes and the social relations shaped therein in South Asia; I outline here some of the major conceptual strands which enable me to articulate my ethnographic data in terms relevant to processes of urban place-making and to the nature of urbanism itself. The specific form of the city, as it has evolved in Western Europe in the wake of Industrial Revolution, has been a major site of the shaping of and enactment of the narrative of modernity, as manifested in its built environment, forms of sociality and the affective and embodied practices of its dwellers. A bulk of theoretical work which has emerged on the urban in South Asia responds to the nature of this "Ur-city," as it recovers processes and forms which cannot be subsumed under an overarching, universalized understanding of the modern urban, that literature on Euro-American cities assumed till recently. In doing so, this work has produced valuable new vocabularies which not only help understand and narrate cities in the south without pathologizing them, but also contribute to a more robust understanding of the urban itself.

Literature which traces the influences of colonial urbanism in South Asia is a valuable entry point because it illustrates how the incipient city in colonial India provided an arena *par excellence* for the actualization of principles of colonial modernity including those of hygiene, rationality, and planning (Beverly 2011; Glover 2008; Kidambi 2007). More importantly, a section of this literature gestures towards the emergence of peculiar notions of "public" and "private" in colonial India, located at the intersection of colonial constructs of civic spaces and

indigenous spatial categories (Hosagrahar 2005; Kaviraj 1997; Chakrabarty 1991). Hosagrahar (2005) labels this fractured, contradictory amalgamation as "indigenous modernities" (1-8), which not only influenced the ideas of a "public" sphere but also shaped the use and structure of the built forms which defined emergent spaces in colonial India as urban. This constitutes an important move in conceptual terms because it challenges the universal claims of modernity in the context of shaping of urban life and processes, claiming for South Asia its own processes and its own distinctive modernity.

A similar conceptual move is evident in the work of Hancock and Srinivas (2008) and Srinivas (2001) as they elaborate upon religion as an analytic category in understanding and defining the realm of the urban in Asia and Africa. The authors argue that in the hitherto discourse of the urban as a site of secular modernity, religion could only be studied as incidental to the urban ideal at best or as evidence of failure to modernize, at worst (Hancock and Srinivas 2008: 620). Critiquing the "outworn terminology" (624) that this perspective generates about the role of religion in the city (as anti-modern, as fundamentalist and so on), the authors contend that embodied and spatialized religious practices enabled by circuits of globalization and new media are in fact *constitutive* of modernity and capitalism in contemporary cities of Asia and Africa.

In fact, Srinivas's earlier research (2001) on Karaga Jatre, an annual religious celebration in the city of Bangalore, clearly illustrates the interpenetrations of the civic and the religious in the enactment of a different kind of civic ritual: this ritual does not conform to the 'civic' as is conventionally understood in terms of spatiality: of zones, maps and grids imposed upon the city, but is one which carves out an alternative civic territory of the city, linked by the multiple layers of communal histories and memories, commercial history of the city and embodied occupation of city spaces by its participants. Srinivas (2001) contends that the sacred actually forms the basis

26

of the claims of the participant communities to the city, a central pathway to organizing critical

publics or political communities of the city (245-247).[21] This casting of ideal civic participation

as mediated heavily through participation in religio-cultural activities is a crucial insight to

comprehend associational life in contemporary urban South Asia. As I focus on neighborhood

associations in Moti Peth in Pune as a site for performing and constructing a masculine gendered

identity, understanding these associations as being located on the intersection of the city's civic,

religious, spatial and political axes enables me to incorporate into my analysis the peculiar

formulations of "public," morality and mobility that these associations afford for its male

participants, in making their masculine selves.

Chatterjee's (2001) formulation of "political society" provides another important

conceptual peg, around which to base an exploration of the available modes of mobilizing

political communities for the urban poor in South Asia. In deviating from the classic model of

emergence of a modern public sphere in the context of 18th century Western Europe, Chatterjee

(2001) claims that the post-colonial Indian state could ill-afford to grant the vast majority of

urban poor, who resorted to illegal means to survive in Indian cities, the status of a civil society.

He proposes the category of "political society" to mark the relationship between state and its

urban poor: as a relationship not defined by a framework of rights and duties, but ordered

according to political contingencies and populist considerations. This contention casts the narrow

conception of allegedly "corrupt" democratic practices and electoral populism in a new analytic

light: not as "deviation" from the ideal model, but as everyday practices which sustain the

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[21] Later research has also confirmed the continuation of this mode of social action (See Copeman 2009;Waghorne 2004; Hancock 2002). I elaborate upon this literature in Chapter IV, where I focus upon the career of the neighborhood association in the context of urban Maharashtra.

unwieldy configuration of caste, class, community and locality in the context of survival of the urban poor in the hostile city, and in the process shape the city's ethos and its inner workings.

The analytical move to embrace (not romanticize) what were thought of as anomalies in the journey towards urban modernity, and make these elements themselves into a focus of theorizing has been a hallmark of this work from the South, as seen in Chatterjee (2001) and more recently in the work of Roy (2009) and Simone (2004, 2001). On these lines, modes of informality (in housing, land and in acquiring resources to survive in cities) constitute an extremely fertile area of research to grasp processes and lives in urban South Asia or urban Africa. Roy (2009) argues that informality, far from being a practice marginal/disruptive to the process of urbanization in South Asia, is in fact central to it. She demonstrates how the state itself engages in a conscious act of deregulation and unmapping of urban land, thus producing a permanently unstable regime of land and property in cities in India, with crucial implications for the citizenship claims of the urban poor as it produces an exclusionary and an insurgent city (84-86).

Simone's work on cities in Africa (2004, 2001) branches out and illustrates how informality is a way of life itself in several cities of Africa, as their dwellers continually plug in and out of fragmented, ephemeral, invisible networks of people, resources, objects and connections in order to make do and survive in their hostile and resource-deprived urban contexts. This "promiscuity of participation in city life" (Simone 2004: 215), far exceeds the vocabulary of planning and rational urban governance, yet, Simone suggests, it constitutes a creative circuitry through which opportunities, collaborations and resources are routed and which actually make African cities work, in the face of extreme deprivation. Importantly, Simone's characterization of these dense networks as being "invisible" (63-66), "spectral" (92) or

"haunted" (ibid) provides clues towards understanding the affective tropes through which urban dwellers relate to their spaces and their lives within these spaces.[22]

The recovery of allegedly marginal practices of the city as valuable in making the city itself has entailed what Hancock and Srinivas (2008) term as, "a scalar shift" (622) in the study of cities in the global South. Against the background of urban studies' preoccupation with a few "global cities," this shift requires the analytical lens to be trained on, "links between and within cities and city regions" (622), productively explored in Srivastava's (2014) ethnography of fragments of neoliberal Delhi, Simone's elaborate vignettes of urban life in Africa (2004) or Srinivas's elaboration of how embodied, ritual enactments are enmeshed with social histories of place to produce "landscapes of urban memory" (2001: xxv). Consequently this shifts research on city-making/ place-making into realms which urban studies had hitherto treated with relative indifference: ritual life, transient and fragmented associational cultures, circuits of specialized knowledges of the city, neoliberal spaces of self-making, and memory and embodied practices.

Neoliberal restructuring of urban South Asia since the late 1990s has been a trigger for a considerable amount of work which seeks to map geographies of exclusion and the emergent politics of space in the wake of the massive changes in the discursive and spatial worlds of South Asian cities (Ghertner 2014, 2011; Desai and Sanyal 2013; Kirmani 2012; Anjaria and

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[22] This new knowledge on how informal networks sustain and define city-ness in the global South is manifested interestingly via concepts like "urban infra-power" (Hansen and Verkaaik 2009) and through the figure of the "*tapori*" (Mazumdar 2001). The highly informal and invisible channels through which things "get done" below the surface of the city are encapsulated in Gupte's (2012) elaboration of "*powertoni*" (202) in the underworld of Mumbai or in Simone's (2004) description of the concept of "feyman" (106) as the almost magical appearance of something out of nothing, in Douala, Cameroon. I elaborate upon some of these concepts in the following chapters, as I comprehend the ways in which the young men in Moti Peth participate in the city's life. Cumulatively, these new coinages and concepts points towards modes of operating in the city and making the city which might not be apprehended easily by given theoretical frameworks. These everyday usages in people's lives, now being given a conceptual charge itself is an important move, to recognize and legitimize ways of being urban and making cities.

McFarlane 2011; Phadke et al 2011; Baviskar 2010; De Neve and Donner 2006; Fernandes 2004; Vohra and Palshikar 2003). However, while this research carries relevance to understand the contours of exclusion and neoliberalism in South Asia, relying on fetishized imaginaries of the neoliberal influence on South Asian cities (Anjaria and McFarlane 2011: 5-6), might take the analytical focus away from precisely those realms elaborated in the preceding paragraph: a focus on the "small picture" of (not just metropolitan) cities within India and the dense regional networks of commerce, memory, migration, history and contemporary political equations within which these cities are imbricated might be far more productive and necessary in order to understand the nature of urbanism in South Asia, rather than a uni-dimensional focus on neoliberal restructuring in metropolitan centers.

A cautionary strain that I have found useful while thinking about the question of Mang men's place in the city has been Ananya Roy's (2011) engagement with the term "subaltern urbanism," which refers to a specific set of ideas that characterize the extensive production of recent knowledge on urban centres in the South. In an attempt to bestow agency on the large urban proletariat in these centres, this research highlights the entrepreneurial resourcefulness of the slum and the collective political agency of the urban poor which expertly exploits the porous divisions between the legal and the illegal realms, in a bid to survive in the city. While acknowledging the need for this discourse, Roy questions whether the kind of knowledge that this research consolidates about the "slum" and the "poor" in the cities would eventually lead to a reification of the politics of the poor, ignoring how the latter are also imbricated in conservative and/or capitalist politics of urban life (229-31). This cautionary strand is valuable, since it tempers my researcher's inclination to approach the practices of Dalit, working class

urban dwellers from an uncritical, celebratory vantage point, eager to recover agency or read in narratives of resistance.

Rather than a coherent theory of a pre-given "urban" then, the above work provides us with a framework of alternative conceptual pegs, which redefine the realms of potential research and encourage radical shifts in terms of scale and content in order to comprehend changes in what are deemed as urban areas in the global South. The insistence on shifting the site of theorizing to cities of South is an important political assertion, aimed also at restoring legitimacy and value to the experiences and trajectories of the cities outside of the Euro-American urban world. These frameworks will certainly encourage an understanding of the intersections (of social relations, materialities, institutional practices, historical discourses) and the emergent political struggles which produce the city and urban experience specific (but not limited to) South Asia.

Men and masculinities

The growing body of literature on men as gendered subjects signals a shift from an earlier analytic blind spot that characterized considerable research across social science disciplines, including anthropology where men's gendered identities had been rendered invisible and unmarked (Gutmann 1997; Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994). This shift owes a huge debt to feminist theorizing and gender studies, which since 1970s has challenged the naturalized and institutionalized hierarchical gendered order, by illustrating the constructed nature of categories

of gender and sex.[23] While it is true that earlier feminist work on gender inequality rendered men as a monolithic category implicated within institutionalized patriarchy, later feminist theorizing on gendered identities as fluid, contingent and performative, opened up the space for an interrogation of the processes of construction of masculinities along with femininities (Srivastava 2014; Mac An Ghaill 1996). In fact, a large branch of contemporary research on men, dubbed as "critical studies on men" or "studies of men and masculinities" continues to be inspired by and build upon feminist theory (Connell, Hearn and Kimmel 2005). I base my conceptualization of masculinity jointly within this strand of research on men and within feminist theories of gendered identity.

Early 20th century theories of sex role, as they developed in west European context, conceptualized masculinity as mere elaboration of general set of expectations attached to the male sex, internalized by men as their sex role (Connell, Hearn and Kimmel 2005; Connell 1995). Masculinity in this essentialized, universalist understanding, then, was simply what men do. However the emergence of *gender* as an analytical category in feminist theorizing at the end of the 20th century inaugurated the shift towards critical research on masculinity as socially constructed. This category sought to introduce relationality in the study of unequal difference between men and women; instead of focusing on women's marginalization or male dominance in isolation from each other, "gender" necessitated a focus on the larger system of meanings based upon the perceived differences between the sexes, which was then deployed to signify relationships of power, not just between men and women but also between unequal relationships of class, race or color (Moore 1999; Scott 1986: 1067). The shift from women to gender in

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[23] A considerable research on men has however, been reluctant to acknowledge this debt or to attribute centrality to the issue of power, the central contribution of feminist theorizing, in the study of construction of masculinity (Gutmann 1997).

feminist theorizing thus opened up space to investigate constructions of the masculine, just as it did of the feminine (Srivastava 2014).

Connell's (1995) now oft-cited definition of masculinity is firmly located in this understanding of gender.[24] She defines masculinity as,

> "…simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture" (71).

As I set out to analyze young men's masculine identities in the larger framework of gender relations, my work also hopes to reclaim the relationality implied in this concept, given the fact that "gender" continues to be reduced to "women" in a large chunk of present day research (Srivastava 2014; Ghannam 2013).

Influenced by poststructuralist perspectives, the increasing characterization of gender as performative in feminist theorizing provided crucial imperative for a focus on the ways in which masculinity was performed and an essentially contingent project. Credited in large part to the work of Butler (1990),this perspective turned the hitherto notion of gender as a cultural elaboration of biologically given sex on its head, to argue that the category of "natural sex" itself is a gendered one, produced through repeated performance of embodied acts in accordance with

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[24] Connell (1995) also set the agenda for a critical view of masculinity, arguing for plurality of masculinities and power differentials *within* groups of men, thus taking the field beyond a simplistic, monolithic view of all men as being equally powerful, or as ascribing to a singular model of masculinity. The categories of "hegemonic masculinity," "subordinate masculinity" and "marginalized masculinity" have been helpful in operationalizing these power differentials while analyzing men's interrelationships and bringing in the vectors of race, class or ethnicity in the analysis of masculinity (71-85). Notwithstanding its utility in questioning the monolithic category of "men," this categorization however, is often limiting in understanding what men's affective worlds, anxieties and practices in their everyday settings. I avoid the use of these categories in my own analysis since they place rigid boundaries around these typologies, whereas on the ground, men's performance and enactment of their gendered identities demonstrated a far easier movement between allying with hegemonic masculine ideals and challenging them simultaneously. For a critique of the concept of hegemonic masculinities, see Ghannam (2013); Hopkins and Noble (2009).

cultural norms, which are themselves historical and social constructions (Cameron 1997: 48-49). Arguing that the project of "becoming" male or female is always in process, gender performativity implies that masculinity or femininity has to be constantly *achieved* through performance, thus unsettling the hitherto stable categories of male and female into a terrain of fluid, contingent and shifting gender identities (Menon 2012: 69-71). Gender performativity theory was particularly valuable in laying bare precisely the points of discontinuities between the bounded categories of sex and the ambiguity produced through multiple enactments of gender; however it was also critiqued for eliding issues of power and inequality in its bid to see gendered identities as essentially fluid, where masculinity and femininity could be reduced to a matter of choice (Chopra, Osella and Osella 2004; Moore 1999).

What then, is the relevance of this theory to investigating a context where the male-female dichotomy continues to be one of the central principles of ordering social relations, a steadfastly gender-segregated context such as Moti Peth where "masculine" and "feminine" were starkly differentiated and oppositional categories, rather than located on a continuum?I follow Chopra, Osella and Osella (2004) in their contention that while the sex-binary needs to be challenged by revealing the contested nature of gendered identities, this lens also provides a constructive entry point to explore the processes through which a stark division between the sexes is maintained or challenged through embodied enactments in a variety of sites which bestow masculine or feminine identity on the doer. Indeed, a large part of my ethnography elaborates upon the repertoire of everyday bodily routines of young men in the distinct context of Moti Peth, which renews, "…the link between masculinity, men and power" (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994: 10) and the resultant anxieties and contradictions produced when this link is disrupted for the young men, exposing the constant need to recoup or bolster their fragile sense of masculinity. Focusing

on these processes also demonstrates how "becoming" a man is a collective and relational endeavor, an ongoing process of consolidation of a gendered identity whichplays out not just in relation to women but also to other men.[25]

In their edited volume which aims to trace the contours of South Asian masculinities, Chopra, Osella and Osella (2004) highlight how the articles in their volume speak of, "…masculinities nuanced through other categories" (12) such as those of the Punjabi Jat Sikh, Malayali, subaltern and Vanniyar. Arguing that masculinities are located in peculiar relationships to statuses of caste, class and ethnicity in South Asian context, the authors gesture towards the concept of intersectionality, a major strand of feminist theory which also has come to shape research on men and masculinities in important ways.

Building upon a rich legacy of conceptualizing multiple axes of oppression and a critique of monolithic categories of feminist analysis by feminists of color (Crenshaw 1991), intersectionality has come to be a highly debated, yet useful concept in understanding how the experience of gendered identities are refracted through the latter's simultaneous entanglement in racial, ethnic, caste or class hierarchies. The methodological challenge in studying intersectionality lies in the fact that while these categories are irreducible to the each other (being lower caste is not, for instance, the same as being a woman) (Yuval-Davis 2007), people experience these structures simultaneously, in ways that are inextricably enmeshed with each other (Valentine 2007). Recent research on men has increasingly adopted the lens of

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[25] See Ghannam (2013) and Gutmann (1996) for an ethnographic account of men's gendered self-making in Cairo and Mexico City respectively as being necessarily a collective project, implicated in men's social relations with women, other men and community members.

intersectionality in exploring the multiple axes of along which men are gendered (Hearn and Kimmel 2006; Connell 1995).[26]

Indeed, it would be analytically impossible to investigate the young men's gendered identities in Moti Peth divorced from their status as working class, Mang residents of Moti Peth. My work then, in essence is about how relations of caste and class, shaped and manifested in place come to bear upon young men's experience of themselves as men.

"Placing" masculinity

While community and class (and at times caste) have been the oft-cited vectors along which men's identities have been researched in India, *place* as an axis of difference, figures rarely in these analyses (even though these studies are located in specific places). Hitherto research categorized as "gender and space" (Phadke 2013, 2011; Abraham 2010); has had as its focus the question of women's differential access to spaces and the spatialized production of women's bodies as gendered. In taking an intersectional approachwhile investigating masculinity in Moti Peth, I aim to illustrate how structures of caste and class are experienced as spatialized

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[26]In his ethnography of Puerto Rican crack dealers in Harlem, New York, Bourgois (2003) illustrates how ethnic identity, race and class crosscut to produce a gendered identity for young Puerto Rican men which valorized violence and sexual conquest to reclaim their manliness, which was rendered increasingly vulnerable as the economy shifted to a service base. Morell (1998) in a historical overview of the emergence of South African masculinities highlights the colonial, racialized axis along which hegemonic white masculinities and oppositional African masculinities emerged in the first half of the 20th century, epitomized in the region's discourse of "white men and black boys" (616). Morell also elaborates upon the emergence of a peculiarly violent "black masculinity" in response to the large scale emasculation experienced by working class, black South African men in South Africa's highly segregated and exploitative urban milieux of Durban, Cape Town and Natal in the latter half of the 20th century.

and emplaced; I thus seek to insert place in the interlocking grid of caste and class which in turn are woven into men's gendered identities in Moti Peth.

I base my understanding of masculinity in Moti Peth as place-based upon insights drawn from feminist geography, a sub-discipline of geography best placed to conceptualize the mutually constitutive nature of space and gender, due to its twin allegiances to feminist principles and a geographical perspective. Early feminist geographers highlighted how gender relations are organized and sustained in accordance with fundamentally spatial binaries, of the private and public, or the inside and outside (McDowell 1999; Massey 1994). However it is not simply the spatial metaphors which make geography pertinent to the feminist project. Pratt and Hansen (1994) argue that since social life is materialized in places, places are not merely a reflection of social location, but social location (including a gendered one) is partially constituted by places (6-8). Thus asking the question "where" is central from the perspective of feminist geography, as it allows to incorporate distinct power-laden intersections between social, political and economic processes that constitute a place, into the analysis of multiple oppressions (Nelson and Seager 2005).

In accordance with this central question of "where," Pratt and Hansen (1994) demonstrated how women's access to employment in four neighborhoods in Worcester in North-East US in the 80s, was mediated by class, race and ethnicity; they further showed that the resultant gender relations and notions of femininity were circumscribed by place-specific factors like history of labor organizing, requirements of employers and work schedules, thus implicating geography in the construction of difference in gender relations in the context of Worcester. For feminist urban geographers, "where" led to a focus on the urban as a central spatial scale through which gendered subjectivities are formed and experienced (Bondi and Rose 2003). The focus on the

urban not only showed that urban form and locational differences in the city actively construct gender relations, but it also emphasized that researching the way gendered differences mark city spaces enables a deeper understanding of politics of inclusions and exclusions that characterize the nature of the urban itself (ibid).

The aim of feminist geography then, lies not merely in documenting the differences in the ways men and women experience places; it also aims to, "…show how these differences themselves are part of the social constitution of gender as well as that of place" (McDowell 1999: 12). I focus precisely on these differences in the experiences of men and women in Moti Peth to propose a dialectical linking of gendered identity and place: the spaces and processes of Moti Peth produce men and women as gendered; simultaneously Moti Peth itself is a product of caste and class-based marginalization and of the differences in the way in which its male and female residents experience, perceive and use these spaces. The conceptual move to theorize men's gendered identities as emplaced also leads us to a methodological imperative: narrating men's lives then will necessarily entail narrating the story of Moti Peth and of the city. In fact, the validity of this project will lie in the extent to which this dissertation can/ does become the narrative of the city as much as it becomes the narrative of the lives and struggles of men who inhabit it.

This analytical framework has inspired an investigation of *geographies of masculinities* by a wide constituency of geographers, including feminist and cultural geographers and geographers researching themes covering urban space and economic geography (Hopkins and Noble 2009; Meth 2009; Hoven and Horschelmann 2005; Berg and Longhurst, 2003; McDowell 2003; Longhurst 2000; Jackson 1991). McDowell's (2003) exploration of how changes in labor market in England have structured white working-class boys' gendered identities is an impressive

38

illustration of application of principles of feminist geography to understand the impact of place

on masculinity. Tracing the divergent labor histories and traditions of education in the towns of

Sheffield and Cambridge as representative of the North-South divide in England, McDowell

(2003) demonstrates how these historical factors manifest in young men's imaginations of their

future prospects, the kinds of employment that are available to them and incentive to invest in

higher education (93-120). Relevant to my research is her illustration of the highly "spatially

circumscribed" (221) lives that these young men in both the cities led, their structural

disadvantages tying not just their employment but also their aspirations strongly to their local

neighborhoods, the latter becoming sites of performance of what McDowell (2003) terms as

"…acceptable working class masculinity" (237) negotiating between the demands of a dominant

ideal of rebellious working class masculinity and respectable domesticity.

In her attempt to tie politics of place to marginalized men's emotions, Meth (2009) too

uses a feminist geographical framework; she investigates the lives of poor black men in an

informal settlement in the South African town of Durban. Meth (2009) attempts to go beyond

women as the sole assumed focus of research on "geographies of fear" and in concentrating on

marginalized men's experiences of fear, contends that fear in men's context is not necessarily

linked only to violence, but can also be constituted by fear of social stigmatization and of

humiliation (855). South Africa's harsh policies on eradicating informal settlements and the

state's inability to provide gainful employment to most poor men has had long-standing

consequences for men's "emotional geographies" (ibid), mediated in important ways by their

location in informal settlements in precarious conditions, with little or no infrastructure or

protection from violence; feelings of being abandoned and neglected by the state and feeling

useless vis-à-vis their gendered roles as breadwinners combined to deepen their sense of

marginalization, linked inextricably to place and state policies simultaneously.

Meanings and experience of masculinity in South Asia

In this section I present a brief review sketching the broad themes which characterize

research on masculinity in South Asia, notably India, and locate my research within this terrain.[27]

Historical research on colonial and post-Independence India highlights the discursive

deployment of notions of masculinity (and femininity) which inscribed colonial relations and the

socio-political processes of a newly emergent nation with unmistakably gendered meanings.

Sinha's (1995) landmark study has shown how the figures of the "manly Englishman" and the

"effeminate Bengali *babu*"[28] that emerged in nineteenth century colonial India encoded within

them the constant power dynamics between the colonizers and the colonized, rooted in political,

economic and administrative imperatives of the imperial rule (2-4). In its response to this

Orientalist internalization of themselves as effete, incipient cultural nationalism advocated by

Indian elite in twentieth century sought to wrest back their power by calling for a reinvigoration

of a Hindu masculinity, one which blended qualities like discipline, loyalty, and courage blended

with an emphasis on character-building, education and selfless service to the nation to

[27]In the last two decades, research on masculinity outside the Anglo-American region has covered considerable ground in terms of understanding the meanings and experience of being a man in the distinct colonial, racialized or gendered contexts specific to Latin America (Gutmann1997), Africa (Ouzgane and Morell 2005), Middle East (Ghannam 2013). The research on South Asia is a similar move to address the gap in research on masculinity which derives from the South Asian experiences and its distinct political, economic and social contexts.

[28] Bengali *babu* refers to the middle class, English educated Bengali man, who typically held clerical positions in the imperial administrative system. Sinha (1995) argues that as this category of natives gained political consciousness and began to challenge the colonial rule, the former were attributed, "…an 'unnatural' or 'perverted' form of masculinity [ ] in the colonial ordering of masculinity" (2).

consolidate the masculine ideal of a "real Hindu man" (Banerjee 2003; Hansen 1996).[29]Srivastava (2014) presents a fascinating analysis of the post-Independence project of producing the modern Indian citizen as a gendered project, to be achieved via "Five Year Plan Hero;"[30] this figure was epitomized in Hindi cinema's male protagonists of the 1950s and 1960s as engineers, doctors and scientists, who embodied the rational, scientific masculinity of modern India and mastered its incipiently urban spaces.

This research, while elaborating upon the discursive content of masculinity in modern India, proves to be inadequate to illustrate the everyday experiences and notions of being a man in present day India. The last decade however, has seen a burgeoning of work which investigates a range of sites of production of masculinity including work (Jeffrey 2010; Ramaswami 2006; De Neve 2004; Indukuri 2002; Ray 2000); modernity and consumption (Srivastava 2014, 2004; Osella and Osella 2006; Lukose 2009; Derne 2000); migration (McDuie-Ra 2014), communal violence (Mehta 2006; Verkaaik 2005; Hansen 2001); masculinization of local politics (Jeffery 2010; Lukose 2009; Roy 2008); all-male sites like wrestling (Alter 1992), movie-going (Osella and Osella 2004; Derne 2000) and neighborhood clubs (Dasgupta 2002). This research elaborates upon processes of making and unmaking of masculine identities which are embedded in constellations of gendered, class, caste or ethnic relations. A large section of the above

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[29] It is crucial to note that this was not the only indigenous response to their being cast as effeminate vis-à-vis the hyper-masculine colonizers. Nandy (1983) proposes that colonial binary ordering of gender was preceded by a far more fluid indigenous tradition which valued androgyny and did not subscribe to such a neat binary division of gender attributes. Nandy (1983) argues that Gandhi is unique in that he dipped into these cultural resources in order to present a resolution to the British challenge. He proposed a model which gave precedence to the transcendence of both the male and the female principle, one which embraced androgyny, manifested in several saintly indigenous traditions (52-55). Nandy also claims that Gandhi, in giving precedence to the feminine principle over the masculine, redefined masculinity itself, as one which could embrace its feminine aspect (ibid).

[30]The term "Five Year Plan" refers to India's long-standing legacy of rational planning inherited from Soviet Union in the realm of economic development. India's economic planning has been conducted through Five Year Plans beginning 1947.

research goes beyond simplistic renderings of masculinity in terms of patriarchal dominance or hegemonic masculinity, to underline the vulnerabilities which disrupt the links between maleness and power and the consequent recuperative strategies of the actors. I elaborate upon some of the relevant research from the above body of work in the coming chapters of my dissertation.

III

Mapping the Dissertation

The introductory chapter is followed by Chapter I which elaborates upon contemporary research on "men in the city" in the specific context of India and traces the ways through which urban processes have produced vulnerabilities vis-à-vis the construction and performance of subaltern men's gendered selves. It then locates Shelar galli and Moti Peth within the peculiar trajectory of historical caste and class relations in Pune which has led to their spatial and social marginalization from the cityscape. I also provide a thick description of Shelar galli, by the way of introducing the galli's ethos to the reader.

Chapter II presents a detailed ethnography of the galli as an avenue of self-making for the young men here. I do this by tracing the embodied ways in which men's daily routines masculinize the galli and enable them to perform a class-specific masculine identity. An important focus of this chapter is also men's consumption practices and the fraught ways in which class and caste mediates their construction of themselves as men through consumption. The last section of this chapter is dedicated to the realm of work and employment (or lack of it) and its implications for the young men's self-esteem; running through all these sections are the

distinctly spatialized referents around which the men in Shelar galli negotiate difficult questions around consumption, work and aspirations.

In Chapter III I explicate upon the ways in which young men's masculine identities are a product of their relationship with the women in the galli. By focusing on the myriad textures of relationships between men and women (as mother and son, as lovers, as the researcher and the researched and as patriarchal keepers of women's honor), this chapter illustrates the role that women's evaluations and expectations play in shaping the gendered identities of men in the galli. While the stark contrast in men's and women's ways of inhabiting Shelar galli is a consequence of a complex intertwining of historically entrenched patriarchal and caste ideologies, I suggest that the young men's participation in the regime of surveillance contributes partially in reclaiming a sense of manliness for them in the galli.

Chapters IV and V explore the neighborhood association (*mandal*) as a site for the young men to construct and enact a masculine gendered identity. Chapter IV elaborates upon the trajectory of voluntary associations in post-Independence India and locates the mandal in this terrain of the praxis of "publicness," thus making explicit the modes through which men come to be associated with the realm of the "public" in the highly segregated context of Shelar galli. I demonstrate in this chapter how their access to friendships with and networks of other men via the mandal enables the young men to situate their masculinity in constant reference to the morally ambiguous and spatialized terrains of power in the city (its underworld, politicians, gang wars), thus articulating their gendered identity to urban space.

I continue the thread of neighborhood association in Chapter V; in this chapter I show ethnographically how the discursive practices of the mandal provide an evaluative platform and

allow its exclusively male members to represent a moral, albeit an inherently masculine image and reclaim a sense of self-worth. I demonstrate how a strong sense of locality pervades the discourses of mutual aid which underlie the neighborhood association's activities, enabling the young men to simultaneously construct moral, gendered identities alongside a deep sense of belonging to the galli and its ethos.

The last ethnographic chapter illustrates the "place" of local politics in the lives of the young men, as mediated by the mandal. Demonstrating how the practice of local electoral politics operates through a fundamentally spatialized idiom and grammar, I show how participation in these processes affords a temporary but a valuable sense of power for the young men in the mandal. This chapter elaborates upon local politics as a masculinized spatial practice and its implications for the mandal members' gendered and caste based identity.

Chapter I

Coordinates of Inequality

In her excellent essay on the figure of the *tapori* in Hindi cinema, Ranjani Mazumdar (2001) characterizes the *tapori* as, "…as male persona who was part small time streethood and part the social conscience of the neighbourhood" (4872). Mazumdar proceeds to analyze the tapori as emblematic of the fundamental tensions that contemporary urban Indian experience engenders for the marginalized and the powerless in the city; straddling contradictory realms of the legal and illegal, the moral and the immoral, the tapori constructs a subculture of gestures, language and spatial practices, which according to Mazumdar, represents an agential act of every day resistance, of a claiming of belonging to the city while still being condemned to its margins.

She analyzes the life of the protagonist of the 1995 Hindi film, "Rangeela," a tapori, who sells cinema tickets in the black market, lives on the footpath and falls in love with a girl, who constantly strives to break out of her class and make it big in the Mumbai film industry. The tapori's desires, aspirations and a principled rejection of class power is enacted in and shaped by the spaces of the Mumbai city, its crowded streets, its cinema halls, its footpaths and its five-star hotels. Importantly, Mazumdar (2001) claims that the figure of the tapori in this film represents a challenge to conventional images of heroic masculinity, where the tapori, with his ordinary dreams and vulnerability, copes with anxieties about his class through a defiant performance of "empowered-ness," which in fact, expresses his powerlessness (4879).

Interestingly, though a cinematic invention, the figure of the tapori finds resonances in Bhau Padhye's "Vasunaaka," an explosive collection of short stories in Marathi, revolving around a gang of young men and their lives on the street corner of a working class neighborhood of Mumbai, first published in 1965. Unlike the tapori in Rangeela though, the young men in Walpakhadi, a fictional working class neighborhood in Mumbai, are upfront about their lack of privilege; in the words of Pokya, the chief narrator and a member of the gang,

"Once the sun went down, our 'company' used to don woolen pants and gather at Vasunaaka, to goof around. There was nothing else to do. We did not have the physique for cricket, nor were we Brahmins, to follow marching orders in the RSS[1]. These days a lot of good-looking girls come for SSC coaching classes. We could flirt with them, but then no one except for me, could manage to go up to SSC. Who can manage to stick around in school? What's the point of it anyway? One works in an office and eventually stiches woolen pants. Is it ever possible for us to hook up with a flame like Madhubala? Our lives will have some hope only if we were to rob a fuckin' bank like they do in 'Highway 301'. Anyway, till then one will just have to goof around and seek comfort in baiting one of the ordinary chics from Walpakhadi itself" (2-3).

Pokya's introduction to his gang indexes an acute suggestion of being trapped: in the restricted trajectory of Walpakhadi and its "ordinary chics;" woolen pants and a regular job mark the impenetrable limits of their world of desires. On the other side of this boundary lies the aspirational world of cricket; Pokya's wry admission of their lack of physique establishes their underprivileged class position, their malnourished bodies probably being unable to match up to the challenge of this physically demanding sport. While Pokya also admits to the absence of the cultural capital of upper caste membership, his remark about RSS is laced with an unequivocal sense of contempt for those Brahmins who follow orders in this organization.

Madhubala represents the other constituent of the young men's worlds of desire. Touted to be the most beautiful actress of Hindi cinema in her times, Madhubala is a gendered manifestation of the unattainability of approval and value from the class associated with power, which imperceptibly merges in Pokya's imagination with all things beautiful. Unable to find a

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[1]Rashtriya Swayaksevak Sangh (RSS) is a Hindu right-wing outfit, established in 1925. RSS expounds a heavily masculinized and a distinctly Hindu upper caste version of cultural nationalism, which relies on the muscular, patriotic and celibate Hindu man to protect his motherland from the colonizer and from the Muslim "Other" (Banerjee 2003; Hansen 1996). RSS functions through a network of its *shakha* (branches) across cities and towns; typically a shakha is held on an open ground in a locality, where young boys gather early in the morning and are trained by RSS cadre in physical combat and discipline, and are narrated historical tales of national (Hindu) leaders and martyrs. Marching is a significant aspect of the *shakha* physical discipline; "*dahine rukh, baye rukh*" that Pokya contemptuously mentions, refers to marching orders shouted out in these marches: "to the right, to the left." It possibly indicates Pokya's judgment of his peers in RSS as herd-like, simply following orders.

sense of purpose in school education, but simultaneously hankering for the dazzling world outside Walpakhadi, something as extreme (and probably impossible) as a highway robbery seems to be the only possibility for the young men in pursuit of their fantasies.

The collection of short stories follows the exploits of Pokya and his gang in Walpakhadi, saturated by a shocking level of misogyny, reflected in their language, their forced sexual liaisons and their intensely objectifying gaze towards the women of their neighborhood. "Vasunaaka" is a *tour de force* through the world of subaltern men in the city, as they negotiate their lives on the edge of extreme sexual violence, "immoral" activities (like gambling and buying sex) on the one hand, and small time employment, a moral imperative to protect their neighborhood and a highly localized sense of control materialized in Walpakhadi's tea shops and its iconic street corner, Vasunaaka, on the other.

Both these depictions of marginalized young men in the city of Mumbai, though three decades apart, are crucial,as I attempt to analyze young men's experience of themselves as men and how this experience is mediated (amongst other things) by their location in the city and its spaces. While distinct in time and space, the tapori in Rangeela or Pokya and his gang hanging out at Vasunaaka render themselves visible amongst the young men from Shelar galli in Moti Peth of contemporary Pune; in suggesting this convergence, I do not claim a seamless continuity or a local manifestation of a timeless archetype of masculinity. What makes these instances relevant is their foregrounding of place and its articulation with the gendered subjectivities of men who inhabit this place.

In this chapter I aim to elaborate upon both the aforementioned aspects viz. place and place-based gendered identities of men, zooming in from the larger context of South Asia/ India

to the specificities of Pune as an urban space. In the first section of this chapter I review briefly recent research on subaltern men in urban South Asia/ India to orient us towards specific urban conditions or processes which have shaped gendered vulnerabilities of men on the subcontinent in contemporary times. The urban processes and the vulnerabilities detailed in this section resonate strongly with the lives of young men in Shelar galli, providing a concrete frame within which to understand the implications of trajectories of urbanism unique to Pune. The second section of this chapter provides a detailed account of precisely these historical trajectories of the city, with specific reference to the influence of relations of caste on the urban fabric of Pune.

I

Of Men in the City: A Brief Review

My attempt to frame this discussion within the existent literature on masculinity and its articulations with urban space in the context of South Asia led me to a mix of sources, from ethnographic investigations to literary, filmic and non-fictional representations. While focusing disproportionately on India's metropolitan centers, this scholarly and creative engagement nevertheless provides some crucial signposts while thinking about how marginalized men's gendered self-making is circumscribed by formations of caste and class, which get articulated in a grammar specific to the urban form as it continues to evolve in a rapidly neoliberalizing South Asia.

The working class male figure in the Indian city has been a prominent presence in literary and filmic representations in post-independence India, their struggle to survive in the morally

fraught spaces of the city epitomized by Hindi film classics like *Do Bigha Zameen* (1953) and *Shri 420* (1955).[2]Ira Raja (2014) analyzes three short stories revolving around masculine guilt about eating, set in post-Independence Calcutta spanning the period between 1950s and 1980s; she argues that in all the three cases the male protagonists, with their low paying clerical jobs, anxieties induced by their recent migration from the village to the city and with changing role of women, seek to cope with this crisis of their masculinity by resorting to consumption of food: sweetmeats, chicken fry and milk, which carry multiple valences of class, alternative desires and authority (170-78). For Raja (2014), the stories' similar endings in the ultimate defeat of the protagonists' attempts to recuperate their sense of control are a marked reflection of their disempowerment encoded in their failure to consume, in a newly modernizing nation (177-80).

The city features in far bolder terms in Bhau Padhye's (1965) "Vasunaaka," (included in the introduction of this chapter), in the space that the city of Mumbai offers to the less educated, lower caste young men to seek masculine control in the intense local neighborhood networks and in the city's underbelly constituted by red light areas, local lottery dens and small time criminal rackets. At the same time, however, Vasunaaka itself becomes an articulation of exclusion of the young men from Mumbai's fortunes, a reminder to the men of the firmly fixed boundaries of their sphere of relevance in the city.

A significant section of the radical, politically charged Dalit literature and poetry which burst on to the Marathi literary scene around the 1970s, was in the form of intense engagement of

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[2]*Do Bigha Zameen* (1953) is the gut-wrenching tale of a drought-stricken farmer, who has to travel to Calcutta in order to save his land in the village. The movie chronicles how the city's unscrupulous ethos crushes his spirit, finally ending in his failure to save his land. The male protagonist of *Shri 420* (1955), heavily influenced by Charlie Chaplin's "little tramp," is shown to come to Bombay in search of livelihood, only to be sucked into the city's criminal underbelly. While the protagonist does redeem himself in the end, the film comments on the respectability that the modern city accords to criminals and gamblers.

Dalit (male) youth with the city of Mumbai, a city which denied them humanity and exploited their labor, while also holding tremendous attraction for its liberating potential (Ganguly 2005). Ganguly (2005) analyzes the works of (male) Dalit writers like Narayan Surve, Keshav Meshram, Namdev Dhasal, Daya Pawar and others to excavate the simultaneous fury, sense of destitution, hope and desire that the city, its filthy slums, brothels, streets and the city's rich evoke in the writers, at times leading to their comparison of the city to an unattainable ruby or a temptress (185) or portrayal of the "…intensely erotic yet faithless city" (186), as a "magnificent whore" (ibid).

Mazumdar's (2007) reading of the Bombay cinema as an "archive" of the city in which it was produced, addresses the relationship of marginalized men with the city more directly: she argues that the naked anger of the youth towards social injustice borne out of a fundamental crisis of the modern Indian nation in the 1970s, was telescoped most effectively in the trope of the "angry man" in Hindi cinema through movies like *Deewar* (1975). Mazumdar (2007) however emphasizes that it was primarily the angry man's experience of poverty, deprivation and homelessness in the Indian metropolis that molded his rebellion, thus making narratives of the city central to the making and playing out of the narrative of the "angry man" (5-17). In a fascinating reading of the superstar Amitabh Bachhan, who came to embody the "angry man" in the 1970s Hindi cinema, Srivastava (2014) contends that the star's popularity could also be attributed to the fact that he represented for the first time the presence of "provincial masculinity in metropolitan milieu" negotiating with the demands of cityness including modernity, consumption and commerce.

Emerging in the cinematic representations of 1990s, the tapori, as we saw in the earlier section, represents a radically different masculine response to the unforgiving city. For

Mazumdar (2001), the tapori's masculine performance, built carefully through a playful manipulation of gestures and language drawn from the city's polyglot street culture, was integral to the production of a "…defiant gaze" (63), which provided an effective disguise to conceal his "inferiority complex" (ibid) arising from class and sexuality. These above illustrations demonstrate how the material and discursive spaces of the city, embedded in the fundamental social-political processes of post-Independence India, engendered and deepened caste and class vulnerabilities of, while simultaneously making available recourse to partial agency for (some of) the men who inhabited them. The gendered logic of this process is most visible in its recuperative aspect: reclaiming of a semblance of agency in the city has been enabled via the assertion of men's gendered power whether it was in the misogyny of Vasunaaka boys, in the tapori's defiant masculine gaze or via the distinctly masculinized idiom through which Dhasal and Pawar processed their relationship to the city.

Scholarly focus in the 2000s has sought to theorize construction of masculine identities and account for multiple masculinities through ethnographic documentation of marginalized men's life-worlds, a large section of it focusing on their lives in the city. Locating the city as a space of anxiety and loss (of power or agency) and of attempts to reclaim their masculine self, constitutes the dominant motif of this research. For instance, Srivastava (2004) explores the traditional sex-clinics in Mumbai and Delhi highlighting how the assurance of restoration of sexual prowess of their dis-located, migrant male clients is articulated here through explicit icons of a patriarchal *hakim*[3] and "traditional" Indian medicine (196-8). He also investigates the vast sub-culture of Hindi language "footpath pornography" (187) in Delhi, which is replete with advertisements of

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[3]*Hakim* refers to a practitioner of a wide range of therapeutic practices that come under the broadly defined rubric of traditional medicine. It could include, though is not limited to, Unani practitioners and folk healers.

various kinds of success for its predominantly male readers, ranging from financial success, miraculous rings for power, pacification of one's enemies and learning to speak English within 50 days (195). Srivastava (2004) argues that the realms of male sexual culture (as represented by Hindi pornography and sex clinics) and consumption (in the range of skills and objects advertised in the pornographic books) are contiguous sites of recuperating the migrant male self, embodying the complex intersection of, "…commodity culture, urban anxieties and 'traditional' remedies" (187), characteristic of the contemporary urban milieu in India[4].

Also focusing on migrants to Delhi, McDuie-Ra (2014) explores the ways in which men from the north eastern states of India negotiate a challenge to their "tribal masculinity" (126) in the face of the racist and discriminatory ethos of Delhi and the radically altered gender equations among north eastern migrants in the city's life. McDuie-Ra (2014) describes the dilemmas tribal men face, as their strong impulse to "protect" their women from the dangers of the city are continually foiled by changing gender roles in which women from the north- east, as the desired labor force in the city's malls, spas, call centers and restaurants, have gained financial independence and physical mobility. Men, however, respond to this erosion of their masculinity, by occasional resistance to racist harassment through aggression or humor, and through a display of city skills i.e. the range of street smart skills required to get by in the city, ranging from dealing with landlords, auto-rickshaw drivers to building networks for securing employment (141-3).

Research focus on local politics as a site of performance and recuperation of urban masculinity has been remarkably productive in recent years, illustrating not only how subaltern

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[4] For more on the lives and struggles of migrant men in New Delhi, see Ramaswami (2012; 2006), Sethi (2011).

men "do" politics, but also throwing light on the intricacies of local urban politics itself and its articulations with urban processes and dynamics. In this context, Verkaaik (2005) demonstrates how the Muhajir Quami Movement[5] (MQM) in Pakistan is essentially an urban movement, rooted in what he terms as "nationalism of the neighborhood" (5); the modus operandi of the movement, operating through bazaars, streets, parks and gyms, provided urban men with the opportunities to indulge in transgressive acts which critiqued the dominant Islamic cultural discourses and provided space for them to perform a competitive masculinity, all couched within a complex discourse which frequently blurred the boundaries between the playfulness of "fun" and commitment to extreme violence (111-130). Similarly, Hansen's (2001) now classic work on the chauvinist politics of violence of the Shiv Sena in Mumbai illustrates the closely intertwined character of urban political capital and masculinity for the aspiring underclass men in Mumbai, for whom the hyper-masculine idiom of Shiv Sena's tactics and rhetoric provided a valuable avenue to acquire recognition and respect in their local contexts. Research by Jeffrey (2010), Lukose (2009) and Roy (2003), in the contexts of Meerut, Kerala and Kolkata respectively, highlight the local politics as a site for masculine performance, as a via media for poor or unemployed men who seek to, "…locate themselves in gender and class hierarchies" (Roy 2003; 115). I elaborate upon this literature in detail in the last chapter of my dissertation which also deals with young men's participation in local political brokering.

In a bid to link practices of consumption with caste and gendered dynamics, Rogers (2008) investigates caste-based vulnerabilities and the resultant emasculation that young Dalit boys experienced in an inner-city college in Chennai, which leads to their performance of "hyper-

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[5]Fueled by discontent and discrimination experienced by Muslims who had migrated to Pakistan after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, MQM recruited young men across neighborhoods of Karachi and Hyderabad and was involved in large scale ethnic violence during the 1980s (Verkaaik 2005).

masculinities" as "college rowdies" (80). Against the background of an intensely disparate milieu between the upwardly mobile OBC students and Dalit male students in the college, as regards their use of spaces, modes of consumption and leisure, cultural capital of English and prospects of white collar employment, Rogers (2008) highlights the feelings of anxiety and inadequacy that this lack generates within the Dalit students; against the background of a patriarchal ideology, the recovery of loss of self-worth and value for these students occurs via sexual/ verbal harassment of the OBC female students in their college in a bid to, "…establish male hierarchies by humiliating or devaluing the status of other men" (87).

The aforementioned metropolises, shaped by colonial and post-colonial histories of caste/region/class based migration and/or politics and by contemporary circuits of global and local capital and commodities have thus generated distinct configurations of caste, class and ethnic politics, inscribed in these centers' spatial and social spheres. Men's lived experiences of humiliation, dis-location, inadequacy, aspiration, violence, empowerment, and discrimination in the instances above are fundamentally structured by these place-specific constellations of vulnerabilities and the political possibilities (or the lack thereof) to challenge the former. Similarly, the range of recuperative strategies outlined above, cannot be divorced from the social and spatial peculiarities that specific urban sites embody.

What is missing from this research however, is a deeper illustration of the processes through which certain arenas (like consumption, local politics or mastering the city) *come to be* masculinized and become sites for a recuperative masculine identity; are these arenas considered masculine already because they are associated with and inhabited by men? Similarly, these elaborations upon the gendered experiences of urban subaltern men, while located in cities, do not (except for Srivastava 1994 and Ghannam 2013) pay closer attention to the question of place

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as making possible the emergence of distinct formations of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities within their specific contexts. McDowell (2003) contends that any attempt to investigate the implication of urban space in the construction and experience of masculine gendered identitymust necessarily excavate the set of "…socio-spatial relations that constitute the particular place" (93). A close analysis of the material and discursive practices which gender these arenas and construct and sustain them as masculine, while simultaneously demonstrating how the urban milieu provides structuring conditions for these practices is what I hope to achieve in my focus on similar arenas in the context of Shelar galli and Moti Peth. In the following section of this chapter I elaborate upon the latter part of my objective, via tracing the historical production of Moti Peth as a marginalized space in Pune's geography.

II

Situating Shelar Galli and Moti Peth in Pune

Locating Shelar galli and Moti Peth in Pune's landscape carries within it a geographical and historical imperative of tracing relations of dominance and resistance which underlie this location. In this section, I combine historical literature and anecdotal evidence obtained during fieldwork to sketch the city's history and geography of exclusion and locate the place of Mang (the caste to which most residents of Shelar galli belong) within this terrain. I use this history as an entry point to elaborate upon the production of city-spaces as a manifestation of caste-based exclusion, in a bid to tie place to caste in the context of Moti Peth. To this end, I examine intersecting trajectories of labor regimes, spatial exclusions and inequality of educational and

cultural resources within the city primarily along the axis of caste. Interestingly, Pune's pre-colonial history of urbanization has come to bear far more strongly upon the evolution of its discriminatory spatial regime than its colonial or modern precedents.

Pune, with a population of 3.7 million (Census of India 2011),is located in the state of Maharashtra in western India. The city considers itself to be the educational and cultural center of the state.Moti Peth is located in the central eastern part of the city, which is divided into wards, traditionally called as *peths*. The division of the city into peths can be traced historically to the rule of the Peshwa dynasty between 1720 and 1818, which was primarily responsible for Pune's growth as a flourishing urban center in the eighteenth century (Gokhale 1988; Kosambi 1989). The Peshwas, who were the *de facto*upper caste Brahmin rulers of the vast Maratha ruled territories in eighteenth century India, made Pune their capital city in 1720, and over a period of a century, transformed it into a major bureaucratic-military center, imprinted with a distinct Brahminical cultural and social ethos (Kosambi 1989: 247).
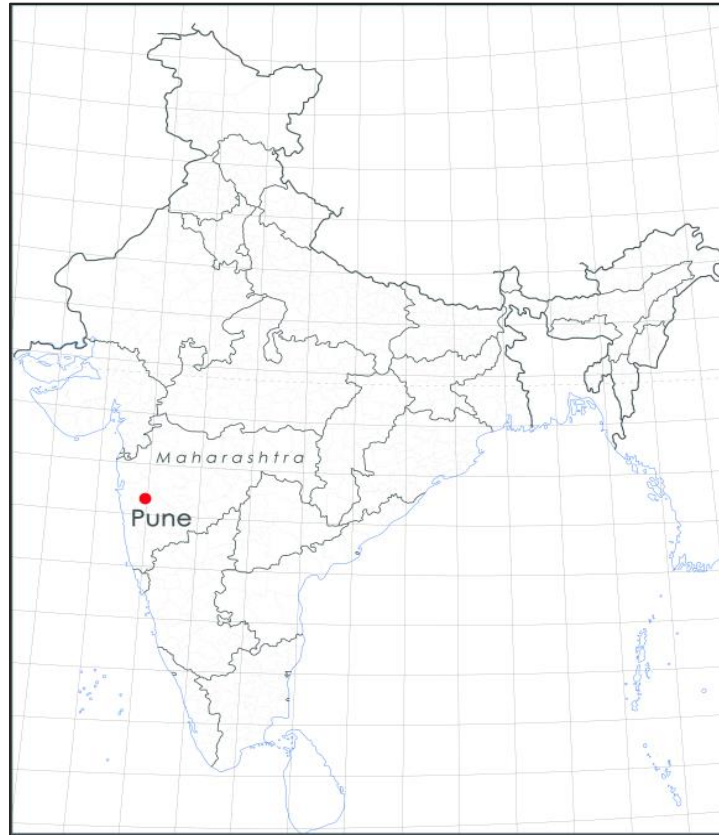
Map 1.1: Locating Pune in the state of Maharashtra

The pethswere clearly demarcated neighborhoods whichconstituted the core of Pune's urban spread in the eighteenth century. Assigned to officials in the form of hereditary land and administrative grants, individual peth area was to be developed by these officials by settling artisan castes in these areas and encouraging economic activities through caste-based production and exchange of commodities (Gokhale 1988: 16-18). The eighteen peths which were developed during this period displayed a distinct castebased division in terms of their spatial location: western peths were mainly residential and Brahmin-dominated, and central and eastern peths were commercial and residential, and had a far higher proportion of merchant castes like Pardeshis, Kachhis and Wani-Gujars, service providing castes like Kumbhar (potters), Teli (oil-

pressers), Mali (gardeners), Shimpi (tailors) and those considered as untouchable castes

including Mang, Mahar, Dhor and Chambhar, engaged in leather curing, tanning and cleaning of

animal carcasses (Gokhale 1988: 26-35).

Peshwa rule represented the near-complete hegemony of Brahmin state authority,

manifested in unconditional privileges and protection granted to the Brahmin community by its

rulers. For instance, throughout the eighteenth century Brahmin men were exempted from land

revenues, house taxes, forced labor, death penalty and enslavement (Chakravarty 1995: 5). The

regime is known for the extravagant lifestyles and excesses of its Brahmin rulers, their

consequent moral decadence contributing to the downfall of the regime in the early nineteenth

century, according to its critiques (Rege 1995: 25).[6]

This prosperity and luxury however, was the product of a violent upper caste, patriarchal

control over women and lower castes, which allowed the Brahminical state to appropriate the

latter's labor in subsidizing its excesses[7]. Historical reports show that the largest proportion of

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[6]In the year 1972, "Ghashiram Kotwal" a Marathi play written by Vijay Tendulkar was first performed in a well-known theater in Sadashiv Peth (original name retained), still considered to be the quintessential space of Pune "Brahminhood." The play depicts the tyranny of the Peshwa regime as it played out in their manipulative, unscrupulous politics in their capital, Pune. Tendulkar's play was a sophisticated political satire, laying bare the hypocrisy, arrogance and a strong sense of entitlement that characterized the actions of Brahmin rulers, aristocrats and priests in 18th century Pune. Not surprisingly, it created a huge controversy in Pune after its release, leading to its temporary banning in the state, on account of the "hurt sentiments" of Puneri Brahmins. The play and the initial response to it, both are suggestive of the hegemonic Brahminical ethos that is a crucial part of Pune's social, cultural and economic fabric.

[7] In her brilliant analysis Rege (1995) demonstrates how the Peshwa state constructed the lower caste women *lavani* (a folk performative dance) performers' bodies as sexualized and consumable entities, facilitating the state's practice of female enslavement, which served as labor in their public works or for purposes of gaining revenue. Rege also alludes to a radical pauperization of peasantry in the Peshwa regime, gleaned from historical sources (25-26). In her critical analysis of the Brahminical patriarchy as the sustaining bulwark of the Peshwa regime, Chakravarty (1995) demonstrates how legal regulations surrounding adultery was used by the state not just to maintain its hegemony over lower castes and women, but also as an important way to extract labor and revenue from the alleged violators of the code. Chakravarty (1995) claims that the Peshwa regime was synonymous with oppression and violence in the collective lower caste memory, a stark marker of the high level of violence which enabled the century long regime (8).

house tax (incidentally the most remunerative tax in the regime) accrued from peths with *non-Brahmin* majority, which in turn funded the famed and expensive public works like water reservoirs, parks, temples and government palaces initiated by the Peshwas in the upper caste-dominated western peths making them into the most prosperous and prestigious peths, stamped with an indelible Brahminical ethos (Paik 2014; Gokhale 1988). The consolidation of what Paik (2014) terms as the, "…social, educational and cultural *polis*" (195) comprising of these Brahminical peths, was premised upon the explicit exploitation of labor of lower caste populations of the emergent city through the eighteenth century.[8] The low caste populace was simultaneously excluded socially and spatially from the *polis* through inhuman rituals of humiliation, their lives contained within the strict limits of eastern peths.[9]

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[8] Deshpande (2007) informs us that Bhangis (a formerly untouchable caste involved in scavenging work) were "imported" by the Peshwa regime to settle in Pune explicitly for menial tasks that no other caste groups were ready to perform. This was also confirmed by Mr. Khandale, a Mang activist encouraging financial entrepreneurship amongst Mang youth in Pune. In a Mang waada located in one of the central peths, he informed me, Mang members from a nearby town, Daund, were specially transported and settled, to perform the polluting task of burying corpses (Interviewed on 19.01.2012).

[9] For instance, Mahars were forbidden from entering the city limits in the afternoon, lest their long shadows defile caste Hindus. They were also required to carry brooms which would sweep their footprints after them, to prevent pollution of caste Hindus in the city and hang earthen pots around their necks so that their "polluting" spittle did not come into contact with caste Hindus (Chakravarty 1995: 6).
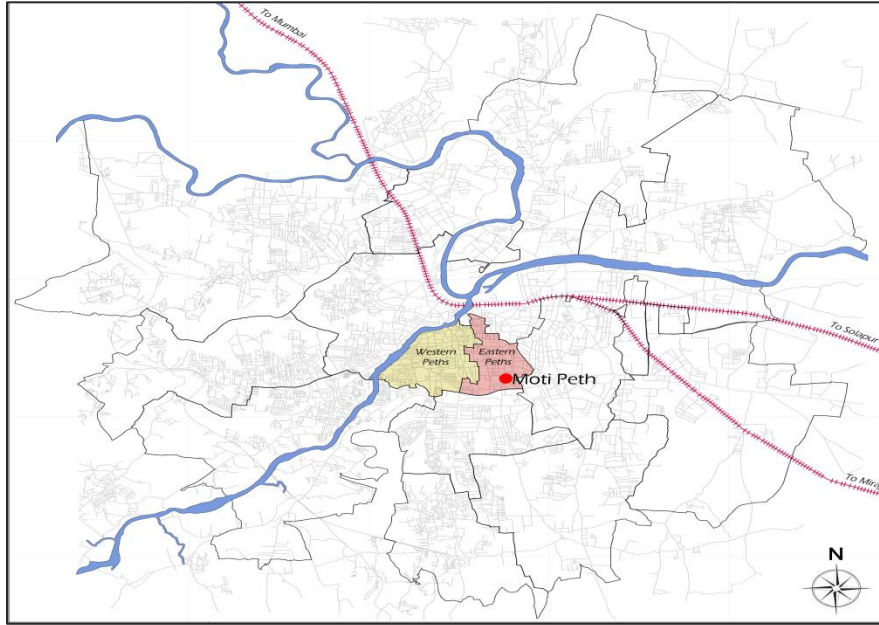
Map 1.2: Moti Peth in the eastern peths of the old city. The western and eastern peths together made up the core of the city of Pune in the 18th century.

Through the nineteenth century, even after the fall of the Peshwa regime and the British take-over of the city, the peth structure largely retained its distinctly caste based division; all the eighteen peths settled by the Peshwas had its own Mang waada,[10] (Mang settlement), thus producing a distinct geography of Mang settlements in the incipient city.[11] Several ghettoes of

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[10]*Waada* is an architectural form specific to Maharashtra, also referring to a settlement. Traditionally, waadas were built around a courtyard, with wide corridors. The older parts of Pune still have several crumbling waadas, constructed in early 19th century. The historic Shaniwar Waada in the city, the official residence of the Peshwas, represented the epitome of Peshwa glory and still is an important tourist attraction.

[11] Colonial and post-Independence history of the city demonstrates a continuous displacement of these settlements to fringes of the city, justified by developmental imperatives. While not chronologically accurate, Mr. Khandale narrated the history of displacement of five Mang waadas in Pune from various locations in the central part of the city through twentieth century, in order to make way for elite Marathi schools like Dyana Prabodhini, Hujurpaaga, an auditorium and a hospital. Inhabitants of these waadas were settled in far-flung areas of Hadapsar, Wadarwadi and Rajewadi (original names retained).

Mahar[12] and Mang caste populations came up on the fringes of the now growing city, providing labor to the newly set up military cantonment zone, ammunitions factory, and a mental asylum, encircling the outer edge of the city along its eastern border (Paik 2014: 197-8). Crucially, the latter half of the nineteenth century also saw the earliest radical critiques of caste inequality, emerging out of the very eastern peths which were a product of this discriminatory geography. Jyotirao Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule[13] launched a scathing critique of caste privilege in mid-nineteenth century Pune and in what is still considered a revolutionary act, started the region's first school for Mahar and Mang girls in 1848, located in one of the eastern peths. In 1868 Jyotirao and Savitribai Phule, themselves living in the vicinity of Moti Peth, also threw open their water tank for the untouchable castes to draw water from, a radical act of defiance against the reigning caste hierarchy. Lahuji Vastad Salwe, a Mang, ran his *talim* (gymnasium) in the same area, training young men in wrestling and other martial arts. Salwe, fast growing now in his popularity as a Mang icon, mentored Vasudev Balwant Phadke, a revolutionary in pre-Independence Maharashtra. Phule's erstwhile waada, the site of Savitri bai's school and Lahuji Salwe's *talim* continue to be landmarks in the city's history of radical caste politics.

Besides being the military headquarters for Bombay Province during the colonial period, late nineteenth and early twentieth century Pune witnessed the founding of several centers of higher education like the Deccan Education Society; New English School; Poona Engineering College; Byramjee Jeebhoy Medical School; Nutan Marathi Vidyalaya; Fergusson College; Sir

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[12] This is also another formerly untouchable caste. Mahars were numerically the largest untouchable caste group in Maharashtra, followed by Mangs and Chambhars.

[13] Jyotirao Phule and Savitribai Phule belonged to the Mali caste (traditionally gardeners or dealing with garland-making). His writings including "Shetkaryacha Aasud" and "Tritiya Ratna" are considered as one among the earlier systematic critique of the caste ideology. Savitribai Phule, who started the first school for girls from Mahar and Mang caste, is considered to be the pioneer of women's education in modern Maharashtra.

Parshurambhau College; at the behest of leading Brahmin social reformers like Tilak, Agarkar and Chiplunkar (Paik 2014; Benninger 1998). The establishment of these centers around Sadashiv Peth and its surrounding areas strengthened the nexus between upper caste privilege and knowledge production in modern Pune; the city's identity in colonial and post-colonial India as "Oxford of the East" masked within itself a long legacy of Brahmin monopoly of educational resources of the emergent city.

Notwithstanding the early politics of resistance and developments in the city, a survey conducted on the housing conditions of depressed castes in 1937 revealed their high concentration in the eastern parts of the city; this survey also revealed that the Mang caste remained the most poverty-stricken of all the erstwhile untouchable castes which included Mahars, Charmakars and Bhangis. It is instructive that this survey recorded that the untouchable castes were practically absent from the newly established colleges in the city, their major benefits accruing to upper caste and intermediate caste Hindu and Parsi students (Deshpande 2007: 135-9).[14]

It was in the post-Independence period that Pune began to emerge as a center of heavy industry and technology. The city experienced rapid economic growth after 1960s facilitated by the industrial corridor set up between Pune and Mumbai, housing automobile industries, auto-components, plastic, glass and machine tools (Khairkar 2008). Similarly, during this period the city got premier professional and technical educational institutions like National Defense Academy; Armed Forces Medical College; National Chemical Laboratory;Film and Television

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[14] Paik (2014) reports that in the late 1930s the total number of boys from untouchable castes in premier educational institutions like Fergusson College, S.P.College, Wadia College, Poona Engineering College and B.J. Medical School amounted to a mere 32 out of a total enrollment of 3176, while the number of girls was zero (204).

Institute of India; Central Power and Water Research Station and Military Engineering College, thus providing a specialized labor pool for the production related industries emerging in the region. By the 1980s, occupations also spread into areas like electronics, software design and engineering and consultancy, making the city attractively poised for setting up of multinational firms when India liberalized its economy in 1991 (Benninger 1998).

Referring to occupational surveys conducted in 1911, 1937 and then in 1988, Deshpande (2007) points out the unsettling pattern of employment of the erstwhile untouchable castes in Pune: most of these castes were concentrated in lowest rung of occupations through the twentieth century. While their share of employment in the manufacturing sector went up marginally in the post-Independence era, a mere three percent of total backward caste earners were employed in skilled factory jobs in the mid-1950s (142-3).

Importantly, there has been a considerable association between caste and occupation in case of castes like Bhangis, Charmakars, Mahars and Mangs, which has shaped the labor regime of the city until present day in complex ways (Deshpande 2007, 2004; Chikarmane and Narayan 2000). A considerable percentage of Bhangis (who traditionally engaged in tasks considered most filthy, such as sweeping, cleaning the sewage, collecting night soil) and Charmakars (traditionally practicing as cobblers and leather tanners) retained their caste-specific occupations in colonial Pune, though show some dissociation from caste-based occupations in the decades following independence (Deshpande 2004: 206-7). A large percentage of erstwhile Mahar and Mang caste members (engaged in sweeping and rope-making respectively) did shift out of their traditional occupations from early to mid-twentieth century onwards.[15] It is instructive however,

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[15] I elaborate upon the social and political implications of this aspect in detail in the following chapter.

that despite marginal upward movement and notwithstanding internal differences between the trajectories of individual caste groups, a large chunk of Dalit groups continue to remain clustered in the lowest rungs of occupational hierarchy in the city, like scavenging, sweeping, waste-picking (ibid; Chikarmane and Narayan 2000).

The population of Dalits in the city saw a sharp surge between the 1960s and 80s decades, a consequence of increased migration on account of rapid industrialization of the city and due to acute famines which struck eastern Maharashtra during the early 1970s, driving rural landless Dalit communities to the city in search of survival (Paik 2014; Deshpande 2007). In 1998 they represented seventeen percent of the city's population. Deshpande's (2007) survey conducted in 1998 showed that,

> "Among Brahmin earners the percentage of persons engaged in upper occupations is 19 whereas among Dalits it comes down to below 2 percentage points. On the other extreme of the occupational ladder, just about one percent of Brahmins work in poor occupational grades as compared to 23 percent of the Dalit earners" (145).

This survey reports that the incidence of unemployment amongst Dalits was much higher than average for the city and that they were concentrated in Class IV government jobs (mostly as sweepers, garbage collectors, sewage cleaners), as casual laborers, domestic workers, hawker and coolies (ibid).[16]

The last two decades have seen a tremendous change in the economic landscape of the city as it has shifted to post-industrial, knowledge and service-oriented activities like multinational-

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[16]This survey also notes that the dissociation between caste and occupation is marginally higher in case of middle level castes (called Other Backward Castes, abbreviated as OBCs) like tailors, carpenters, gardeners, washer men and oil pressers. While these caste members can be found in skilled work force in the city in a higher percentage than the SCs, the former are still concentrated more in low paying or temporary employment in comparison with Brahmin or Maratha caste (Deshpande 2004: 204-208).

owned information technology hubs, pharmaceutical companies, business process outsourcing

companies (BPOs) and bio-technology firms, facilitated by its strongly entrenched research and

educational institutions and the skilled labor pool that they supply (Basant and Chandra 2007).

While there is no specific data on the proportion of Dalits employed in private sector/ service

oriented industries in Pune, research conducted in the last decade clearly demonstrates that the

deepening neoliberal ethos of urban India is exclusionary and hostile to Dalits in the realms of

education and employment (Still 2014). The shift to service-oriented professions in Pune (as in

the rest of urban India) necessitate newer forms of distinction and embodied cultural capital,

labeled in alleged caste-neutral, (yet heavily caste-driven) idioms of "merit" and "family

background" (Deshpande and Newman 2014; Jodhka and Newman 2014). The relevant

requirements of fluency in English, clothes, and demeanor act as "caste-blind" factors which

keep out Dalits from certain kinds of employment opportunities, even as the clamor of aspiration

and hard work in a brave new India becomes shriller and louder in contemporary public

discourse.[17]

Akin to the transformations in several metropolitan and smaller cities in India, Pune has

acquired a new aspirational landscape consisting of high-end places of leisure and consumption

and an increasingly class-segregated spatial regime (via gated communities), mapped onto its

earlier geography of exclusion. A quick look at the history of housing in Pune shows that high

proportion of SCs remains concentrated in the city's slums (Deshpande 2007). A majority of the

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[17]See Thorat and Attewell 2014; Jodhka and Newman 2014 and Deshpande and Newman 2014 for quantitative and qualitative research surveys concentrated in New Delhi and other north Indian cities, which show the ways in which Dalit applicants to private sector jobs are at a distinct disadvantage than their upper caste counterparts, in all stages of the job-search, application or interviews, not just on account of the former's lack of confidence or fluency in English, but due to clear casteist biases in interviewing processes and the employers' imaginations of merit.

43% of Pune's population which resides in slums belongs to Dalits and Scheduled Tribes groups (Census of India 2011).[18]

Photo 1.1: Advertisement for an upmarket housing scheme, by Rohan builders in Pune. The tag line reads, "Surprisingly private property." (http://adsoftheworld.com/media/print/rohan_avriti_staircase)
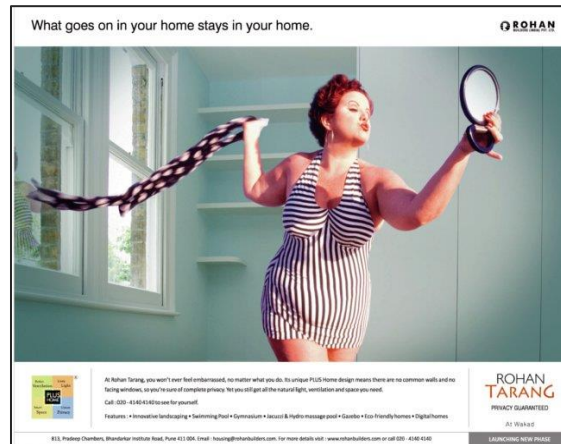
Photo 1.2: Another proposed scheme by Rohan builders. The advertisement promises apartments with no common walls, a no-neighbor apartment, with "privacy guaranteed." (https://www.flickr.com/photos/ravikaran/6375996327/sizes/l/in/photostream/)

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[18] The latest census conducted in India in 2011also revealed that Dalit and Scheduled Tribe populations in the ten most populated cities of the country lived in highly segregated areas, with minimal access to urban infrastructure like in-house water supply and in-house toilets (Sidhwani 2015).

Photos 1.3 and 1.4: Represent some of the iconic landmarks that are flaunted as the face of the changing city, as the face of the emergent exclusive, corporate friendly spaces in the city. 1.3 captures a five star hotel shaped as a cruise liner, in the upmarket area of Koregaon Park. The newly constructed International Convention Center in the north eastern part of the city can be seen in 1.4.
(http://www.thing2gether.com/tag/westin-pune/ [Photo 1.3] andhttp://www.panchshil.com/properties-pune/commercial/icc-trade-tower/ [Photo 1.4])

Moti Peth's location among the eastern peths, as a peth associated with low castes and Muslims, with a high concentration of sweepers and garbage collectors amongst its population and inadequate urban infrastructure (narrow, traffic-clogged lanes, erratic electricity supplyand garbage clearance, lack of open spaces and public parks, densely packed slums), is hardly merely a geographical fact. The congested spaces of Moti Peth are distant from the charming leafy avenues and quaint stone bungalows that make up the city's upper caste, prosperous residential colonies[19] (much like the quiet Kothrud, in Shailu's Facebook tribute described in the Preface); neither do they possess the markers of the new aspirational city, like its trendy cafes, multiplexes and eateries. Moti Peth and Shelar galli remain tied to the city primarily in terms of the labor that the sweepers, garbage collectors, domestic help, and wage laborers herein provide to service

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[19] Significantly, the western Brahmin dominated peths in contemporary Pune also share some of the characteristics with other peths, especially in terms of their narrow lanes, congested markets and crumbling waadas. However, as Paik (2014) points out, these areas carry an unmistakable cultural capital on account of the location of several prestigious Marathi high schools, theatre halls, book stores, auditoria for classical music concerts and public lectures, iconic eateries and increasingly a wide network of ATMs, banks and large stores, all of which are rarely found in the eastern peths.

other parts of the city, including the prosperous western peths, or upper middle class localities like Prabhat Road, Apte Road and Sahakarnagar.[20] Between the historical coordinates of unequal resources, spatial exclusionand a broadly caste-based labor regime of the city, lies Moti Peth's present, marked by a constant aspiration to "improve" and critical towards it's "backwardness." The history of place then, is also the history of inequality.

Photo 1.5: The "unruly" spaces of eastern peths in Pune. Most of the lanes are narrow and choked with traffic. The houses, as can be seen in the image on the right, are old and crumbling.

[20] Original place names retained.

Photo 1.6: Sheep being herded back to their pens in a Peth adjacent to Moti Peth. This is a Muslimdominated Peth, with several families in the business of providing horses and chariots and brass band troupes for weddings.

Photo 1.7: A galli in Moti Peth, flanked by shacks on both sides.

Photo 1.8: A video parlor which screens movies in a dinghy room, located at a stone's throw away from Shelar galli. The parlor screens action movies/ thrillers from the 80s. I was told that it caters largely to male clientele of migrant workers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

III

Cast(e)ing Shelar Galli: Dilemmas of Naming

Naming and representing the caste status of residents of Shelar galli has been a constant dilemma for me as I began to write this dissertation. Are the young men here, whose lives and identities I analyze, to be represented as "Dalit," as "Scheduled Castes," as "Matang" or simply as "Mang"? This is not merely a question of semantics; embedded within each of these categories is a specific history which implicates the residents of Shelar galli in a peculiar relationship to other caste groups in the city designated within academic and political realms as "Dalit." In this section I trace some of the aforementioned histories to highlight not just the sticky terrain of caste identity and naming but also the ways in which these histories have molded the world of political possibilities and aspirations of the residents of Shelar galli.

The Dalit population of contemporary Maharashtra is comprised largely of Mahar, Mang and Chambhar caste groups, in that order of their respective strength of population; castes like Bhangi, Dhor and Khatik form a marginal percentage of Dalits in Maharashtra (Paik 2014; Wankhede 2001). The majority of Mang caste groups are to be found in the western Maharashtra districts of Pune, Satara, Sangli and in Marathwada districts of Beed, Latur, Jalna, Osmanabad and Solapur.[21] The politics of naming these groups has had a complex trajectory in colonial and post-colonial Maharashtra. The terms "untouchable castes" and "Scheduled Castes" have their origin in nineteenth and twentieth century colonial administrative and classificatory systems respectively, to refer to those at the bottom rung of the caste hierarchy on the sub-continent (Paik 2011). However, the term "Scheduled Castes" (or SC) also became the basis for the post-colonial state to compile lists of castes disadvantaged due to their position in the hierarchical system, resulting in its consolidation in contemporary use in official and policy documents. Residents of Shelar galli used "SC" frequently to refer to their caste status throughout my fieldwork. [22]

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the revolutionary Dalit leader, intellectual and the author of India's Constitution, first used the term "Dalit" ("broken" or "crushed" in Marathi) in his writing in early twentieth century, in his attempt to theorize and unite under a common identity those groups who were subjected to brutal domination under the Brahminical caste ideology (Paik 2011: 228). It was however the militant anti-caste Dalit Panther movement coupled with

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[21]Informal conversation with Shaileshkumar Darokar, Associate Professor, Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai (Interviewed on 02/18/12). The Marathwada districts, incidentally are also some of the most arid and drought prone areas of the state.

[22] Guru (2001a) critiques this category as constructing members of these castes as passive subjects to state-sponsored charity, rather than treating them on an egalitarian basis (104).

powerful Dalit autobiographical literature that emerged in Maharashtra in the 1970s which can be credited with the assertive claiming of identity that "Dalit" connotes across India today. Guru (2001a) argues that Dalit as a category, "derives its epistemological and political strength from the material social experience of its subjects" (102); this category is constructed out of the historical struggles of the Dalit and references practices of untouchability and extraction of lower caste labor, and has a truly inclusive potential to forge solidarity between lower castes, women, Adivasis and working class populations (102-105). More crucially, claiming a Dalit identity refers to the claiming of a specific kind of a political subjectivity, wherein the denial of dignity and humiliation attached to being untouchable is secularized and re-signified into a positive political value and a politicized demand for justice and inclusion (Rao 2009: 1-3).

"Dalit" however, was *entirely* absent from the vocabulary of self-identification in Shelar galli. In the context of pre-colonial Maharashtra, Mahar and Mang castes groups had been traditionally locked in a relationship of hostility and rivalry in the context of rural local economies which privileged Mahar over Mangs (Waghmore 2013). This relationship of animosity was further deepened in the colonial period with the arrival of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar (himself a Mahar) who, with his radical critiques of caste ideology and a manifesto for Dalit liberation, emerged as the unprecedented leader of the untouchable castes. It was largely the Mahars who followed Dr. Ambedkar's clarion call to abandon traditional caste occupations and move to the cities of Bombay and Pune, in colonial Maharashtra as well as who took to schooling and organized political action, inspired by Ambedkar's motto, "Educate, agitate and organize" (Paik 2007).

The history of Dalit movement in Maharashtra through the colonial and the post-colonial period has increasingly become synonymous with predominance of Mahars and witnessed a

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rising chasm between Mahars and Mang/ Chambhar castes over issues of leadership of the movement and the allegedly disproportionate benefits that Mahar community has derived in state affirmative action in education and employment (Waghmore 2013).[23] Mobilizing under the name of their *own* icon, Anna bhau Sathe,[24] Mangs have maintained distance from political mobilizations of various factions of the Dalit movement in post-Independence Maharashtra as well as displayed far less enthusiasm in renouncing traditional occupations or seeking educational mobility. When Dr. Ambedkar led mass Dalit conversion to Buddhism in 1956 as an act of revolt against Hindu caste ideology, it was primarily Mahars who converted en masse; Mangs and Chambhars steadfastly refused to leave the Hindu fold (Paik 2007: 173-183).

In his work with a Dalit organization in the eastern Maharashtra district of Beed, Waghmore (2013) discovered that Mangs were perceived to be "docile" (*gulam*) (150) within several activist factions subscribing to the ideology of Phule and Ambedkar. He elaborates,

> "Mangs are [ ] considered docile for not radically revolting against traditional inequalities of caste, not converting to Buddhism, not following Ambedkar's call for education and not giving up traditional polluting occupations of caste" (150).

Shelar galli's relationship to Dalit Swayamsevak Sangh (DSS henceforth) illustrates this lack of a significant history of resistance. DSS was formed in November 1977 in front of Shaniwar

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[23] Mangs did not extend their support to several of Babasaheb's initiatives, including his campaigns to force entry into temples during the 1920s in Mahad, Pune and Amravati (Paik 2007; Arjune 2006). Sakate (2010) gives a detailed account of the fraught decades before and after independence in which Mangs grappled with the implications of Babasaheb's leadership of the anti-caste movement for their caste and Babasaheb's explicit overtures to the Mang leaders in his efforts to forge a unified caste front.

[24] Born in 1920, Anna bhau Sathe is now considered as the foremost Mang icon. A prolific writer and an impressive balladeer, Sathe has more than thirty novels to his credit and several ballads and songs. Influenced by communist ideology and later Ambedkar's teachings, his writings strongly reflect his political commitment to fashion a joint resistance front including working classes and lower castes (interview with Nitin Pawar. Mr. Pawar is the general secretary of an umbrella body of associations of informal workers in the city, called Mahatma Phule Samata Pratishthan. This body includes unions formed by rag-pickers, sweepers, auto rickshaw drivers, domestic workers, hawkers and headload workers in the city. Interviewed on 05/12/2012).

waada in Pune.[25] Formed as a response to the Dalit Panther movement, which they perceived to be Mahar dominated and as narrowly focused on caste atrocities, the founding members of DSS aimed to reach out to the Mang youth with a more "constructive" (*rachanatmak*) and reformist agenda. This included creating awareness (*prabodhan*) amongst Mang caste groups about Ambedkar's revolutionary philosophy and working towards eradicating religious orthodoxy and superstitions among these communities. It was notable that DSS tried to make its agenda inclusive by using the term "Dalit," rather than Mang; though as Mr. Sonawane informed me, the agenda was directed largely towards the Mang community, who they believed lagged behind their Mahar counterparts on several counts.

The eastern peths in Pune was the epicenter of this reformist movement. In fact, Sonawane pointed out to me that some of their most zealous activists hailed from Moti Peth. Eastern peths, along with several slum pockets on the outskirts of the city, were also the sites of their major activities, which included conducting workshops on teachings of Ambedkar, Phule and Anna bhau Sathe, attempts to eradicate certain traditional ritual practices which denied Mangs basic human dignity (like begging for alms on eclipse days, dedicating their sons to a deity) and formation of forums through which educated, professional Mang caste members could share their experiences with the larger community. According to Sonawane, DSS has played a major role in consolidating Anna bhau Sathe's stature as a Mang icon in Maharashtra in the last three decades.

Notably, Sonawane's characterization of the degrading conditions in which Mangs lived three decades ago was couched in a self-deprecatory rhetoric, aimed at young Mang men, termed

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[25]The historical account of DSS and its activities comes largely from my interview with DadasahebSonawane, a founding member of the organization and now a senior activist in the city(Interviewed on 01/23/12)

as "our boys" (*aamchi mula*). He lamented that the guarantee of a sweeping job with the Pune

Municipal Corporation had spawned complacency (*alshi pana*) amongst the Mang youth, whom

he described would stand idly for hours on street corners and outside public toilets, with towels

wrapped around their waists, brushing their teeth with unprocessed tobacco (*mishri*). In outlining

the reasons for the decline of DSS in recent times, he again alluded to the declining social

commitment of Mang youth in today's consumerist and globalizing context and their attraction

for fast money, a "vice" nurtured by the culture of electoral politics in the city. At the same time,

he also agreed that Mang youth today were gradually becoming more engaged with the question

of improvement of their *samaj* (caste/ community), inspired by icons like Lahuji Salve.

Photo 1.9: The image declares, "*Hoy mi Mang*" (Yes, I am Mang!), flanked by the presence of Mang icon, Annabhau Sathe on the right and Lahuji Salwe on the left.

These images are downloaded from Facebook, which has seen a proliferation of groups/ pages dedicated to Matang caste. Formed usually by young men in the age group of 20-35, these groups have membership ranging from a few hundred to one thousand (usually male) members. Remarkably, some of the pages are also personal Facebook profile pages, with names like "Mang Sena" (Mang Army), "Kattar Mang" (Fanatic Mang), "Mang Aarakshan Sangharsha Samiti" (Committee for Mang Reservation) and "Matang Kranti Sena" (Matang Revolutionary Army). The groups/ founders of the groups are based across Maharashtra, including Pune, Jalna and Mumbai. These images are representative of an increasing caste-based assertion of the Mangs, especially amongst the male youth.
(https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1630292433856600&set=pb.100006275764333.-2207520000.1440757076.&type=3&theater)

Photo 1.10: The poster asserts in the first person, "Even if I might be poor in monetary terms, I am wealthy in terms of caste, because I am Matang."
(https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1549406315286753&set=pb.100006521986430.-07520000.1440756767.&type=3&theater)

Photo 1.11: This image, downloaded from Lahuji Raje Pratishthan's Facebook profile page, appeals to Matang caste members to come together and not be ashamed (*laaju naka*) of their caste. It exhorts Matangs to be proud of their caste (*abhiman balgaa*). The plea in this message explicitly suggests the sense of shame and reluctance to assert one's caste identity with pride that is associated with Mang caste groups. I did not find any of these images on Facebook pages of the men in Shelar galli who eventually became my Facebook friends. (https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1637285433157300&set=pb.100006275764333.-2207520000.1440757072.&type=3&theater)

Photo 1.12: Anna Bhau Sathe holding his most famous novel, "Fakira" and Lahuji Salve with his sword (in his right hand) combine their prowess to give rise to a militant Mang identity, likened to that of a ferocious tiger. The unmistakable masculine idiom through which Mang identity is expressed and asserted through this imagery begs closer examination.
(https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1551823618378356&set=pb.100006521986430.207520000.144075676 7.&type=3&theater)

Photo 1.13: The assertion of caste identity is articulated in an overwhelmingly gendered register as seen in this poster. It reads, "*Swagger of a lion, gait of a leopard, agility of a tiger, caste, that of a Man***g." The words describe the Mang man in the image, a raggedy, muscular figure, standing atop a pile of human skulls. The long hair, bare chest, his bent head which hides his face from the viewer serves to heighten the comparison of the fearful, threatening presence of the Mang male figure with the ferocity of a wild, untamed beast.**
(https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1633609750191535&set=pb.100006275764333.- 2207520000.1447605712.&type=3&theater (accessed on 06/17/15)

Photo 1.14: This image shows a popular Bollywood actor with the caption, "*Only Jay Lahuji*." The seemingly unwavering glance of the actor, his finger pointing with a deliberate authority, seems to warn the viewer to not dare claim allegiance to or pay obeisance to anyone else but Lahuji. The (re)claiming of pride in Mang identity is clearly a masculinized endeavor, articulated in terms of aggression, strength, courage and an overt threat of violence.
(https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=361853677329765&set=a.302669413248192.1073741827.10000515540
76306&type=3&theater)

Almost a year into my fieldwork then, the history of DSS as emerging from the heart of Moti Peth came as a revelation to me.[26] Shelar galli's coordinates were as much mapped on to a landscape of anti-caste politics as they were pegged around a history of unequal caste relations, the former constituted cumulatively by the history of DSS' activism and the proximity of Lahuji Salwe's talim and Phule's historic waada. The theme of our caste differences was omnipresent in my informal conversations with galli residents, yet, it was remarkable that Shelar galli's collective narratives about the neighborhood were spatially and temporally located at a far remove from Moti Peth's longstanding legacy of anti-caste activism. Constant allusions in the galli to my assumed "superior" caste capital (my Marathi dialect, my education), the complete absence of reference to Dalit in conversations around caste and identity, the disparaging tone in

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[26]I "discovered" DSS only when I started speaking to city-level organizations in my bid to get a broader picture of the Mang community in the city, in the latter half of my fieldwork.

which Mahar-Dalits were referred to, and a relative indifference to Moti Peth's anti-caste legacy, together indexed Shelar galli and Moti Peth as a social space where caste was a constant social and moral referent, but *not* an axis of an emancipatory political agenda (akin to the Dalit movement in Maharashtra).[27]

These constitute uneven histories. The Dalit movement in Maharashtra, associated largely with erstwhile Mahars /Buddhists, thus rests upon a historical legacy of Ambedkar's revolutionary teachings, militant anti-caste struggles through the 70s and 80s, and vibrant cultural and literary movements in urban and rural areas (Guru 2001b), all of which have also inspired critical movements around dignity and recovering Dalit subjectivity across the country. Dalit activism, in comparison to Mang/ Chambhar political activism, displays a markedly heightened political consciousness and claiming of Dalit identity.[28]

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[27] Young men in the galli had a distinct tone of condescension while referring to "*Jay Bhim wale loka*" (those who say "Jay Bhim"). "Jay Bhim" (victory to Bhim or Babasaheb Ambedkar) is a ubiquitous Dalit usage, used in speeches, as terms of greetings and as an identity marker. Some of the young men informed me that Mangs have now started using "Jay Lahuji" as their greeting, referring to *their* own icon Lahuji Salve. Notably though, most of the young men could not hide their contempt at this usage as well, striving to distance themselves from this claiming of Mang identity. In the following days, they would cry out "Jay Lahuji" and sneer when they saw me, as if to include me in their collective mocking of those from their own caste group who used the term.

[28] This is manifest in the hard-hitting content of Dalit writers like Namdev Dhasal and Baburao Bagul and through instances like the assertive occupation by Dalits of city spaces every year on the occasion of Dr. Ambedkar's birth and death anniversaries in Mumbai and Pune. It is imperative here to remember that, akin to the complex internal dynamics between Mang, Mahars and Chambhars, Dalit movement itself is not monolithic and singular. This broad-brush account of the different political trajectories of Mahars and Mangs/ Chambhars does not do justice to the internal debates and issues relevant to those identifying as Dalits/ Buddhists and their implications for Dalit emancipatory project. See Paik (2011) for illustrations of some of these dilemmas.

Photo 1.15: This image shows the entrance to a Dalit vasti in an eastern peth. The entrance is, clearly marked by the presence of blue flag on top of the blue arch, which declares the name of the neighborhood association of the vasti "Jay Bhim Mitra Mandal".

Photo 1.16: A noticeboard in a Dalit vasti on which notices about happenings in the vasti are posted. The wall also has famous quotes by Babasaheb Ambedkar and Jyotirao Phule painted on them. The shorter one, at the bottom, reads, "It is better to die in the mother's womb than to live an exploited life!"

Photo 1.17: A poster put up before Babasaheb Ambedkar's birth anniversary, in one of the bigger squares of the city. Sponsored by a Dalit neighborhood association, it also carries photographs of its members. Such life-size posters are a common presence in the city's landscape, and are a common mode of gaining visibility in local political circuits.

A large part of the Mang political mobilization in the 1970s and 1980s period on the other

hand, has been concerned with making a niche for Mangs outside the Mahar domination in the

larger Dalit movement, via reformist movements and lobbying for a separate development

corporation or for separate quota within reservations (Waghmore 2013: 33-35). The recovery of

pride and dignity in Mang caste identity has made its presence felt only recently, as evident from

the Facebook pages of various Mang/ Matang groups exhorting their followers to assert their

"Mang" ness fearlessly and to not be ashamed of it. These discrete historical trajectories of

politicization have had material consequences for the Mangs; in the last two decades Mangs in

Maharashtra have demonstrated consistently poorer figures (in relation to Mahars and

Chambhars) on all indices including level of impoverishment, literacy, prevalence in traditional

caste-based occupations, level of urbanization and housing conditions (Waghmore 2013; Deshpande 2007; Arjune 2006; Wankhede 2001).[29]

This complex and uneven historical terrain of the politics of identity amongst the ex-untouchable caste groups warrants careful attention to nomenclature in Shelar galli. I use the term "Dalit" while referring to general issues in the context of the ex-untouchable castes, across colonial and post-colonial contexts, in recognition of "…. Dalits' claims to a history of suffering and resistance against caste inequality" (Rao 2009: xxi) that this term condenses within itself. In the context of Shelar galli however, I use the specific name "Mang" to represent the caste identities of its residents. The decision to use this name is partially derived from the fact that the residents of the galli steadfastly refuse to identify themselves as "Dalit;" residents of Shelar galli and several Mang communities in Moti Peth are staunchly rooted in a Hindu ethos (as opposed to several Dalit communities who have embraced Buddhism, in a bid to reject the religion that has condemned them to an irredeemable inferior status), enthusiastically celebrating the Hindu calendar of festivals and religious rituals through the year. Also, several Mang caste members in contemporary Maharashtra identify their caste as "Matang," a Sanskritized version of "Mang," suggesting (far from resistance to), a desire for mobility in the Hindu caste hierarchy (Paik 2011: 235). Most residents in the galli, however, used Mang and Matang interchangeably.

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[29] It is important to stress again that this is a macro level portrayal and should not be mistaken as a depiction of Mang political mobilization in its entirety. Waghmore (2013) himself warns against a monolithic view of Mang politics and elaborates the activism of a local human rights organization, Manavi Hakka Abhiyaan (MHA) in Beed district in which a large percentage of followers of Phule and Ambedkar's ideology are in fact Mangs. He depicts how the MHA constructs Mangs as *swabhimani* (self-respecting) to counter the prevalent image of the Mangs as *gulam* (145-158). As we have seen, Moti Peth itself was the site of a dynamic Mang organization, Dalit Swayamsevak Sangh (DSS), which claimed Ambedkar's teachings as its guiding philosophy.

More relevant is the fact that this refusal to claim a Dalit identity bears the weight of the continuing fraught relationship between Mahars and Mangs in Maharashtra and of the radically different political subjectivities of those on either sides of the label. This refusal, as I show in the coming chapters, has come to shape decisively the ways in which young men in the vasti attribute (or not) self-worth and value to where they belong, in caste and place terms. Use of the term "Mang" instead of "Dalit" marks precisely this troubled axis along which young men in the galli negotiate their lives as well as their gendered identities.

IV

Introducing Shelar Galli

Tightly sandwiched between two parallel wider streets of Moti Peth, Shelar galli is surrounded by clusters of slums and shacks on all four sides which screen it from the constant grind of noise and traffic that Moti Peth is; in fact the lane hardly sees any traffic, except for the passage of vehicles owned by the residents here and an occasional scooter or an auto-rickshaw that might pass through. The inhabitants of this vasti are clustered around what is known as Shelar waada, a brick structure allegedly owned by the extended Shelar family. The fifty odd households which make up Shelar galli are tightly packed around Shelar waada, the plot crisscrossed by alleyways barely wide enough to let one person pass through. Most of the shacks in the galli, a mixture of brick /asbestos walls and tin roofs, huddle precariously in the square-shaped plot.

The majority of families in the galli are constituted by extended Shelar family. Contesting narratives of how the waada came to be built index a deep-running conflict over ownership of this plot, which continues to govern the moral economy of association and assistance in the galli. According to elder members of Shelar family, the plot was leased by their ancestors from the British as early as 1930s, though it came to be populated only by late 1950s. The Shelars claim that they portioned out sections of this plot to be rented to other Mang families, who had newly arrived in Pune from the south-eastern district of Solapur, in search of employment. The alleged tenants (consisting of around twenty households) contest Shelars' ownership of the plot and claim that the Shelars simply encroached on it and have been falsely charging rent from the former for all these years.

Shelar galli is surrounded by concentrations of several other lower caste groups: Padmashalis (from Andhra Pradesh), Bairagis (a Scheduled Tribe from Rajasthan), Khatiks (butcher caste), Joshis (traditionally involved in stitching of clothes) and a sizeable Muslim population located in the neighboring peths. Moti Peth, like other peths, is a haphazard mix of residential areas with its crumbling waadas, slum clusters and ill-ventilated buildings. These are peppered with small commercial establishments: kiosks selling minor grocery, tailoring shops running out of dinghy rooms, workshops for book-binding, making trunks out of tin, fabricating metal grills, bakeries, fish markets, home-based *beedi*-rolling (*beedi* is a handmade cigarette made from Tendu leaves) ventures and countless tea stalls.

The spacetime of Shelar galli

Describing the galli and its life for the very first time in this narrative, as expected of introductions, feels like a contrived and an undoable task, the task's impossibility and artificiality brought on by the sheer volume and weight of events, relationships and emotions that constitute my experience of this material space in the eighteen months of my fieldwork. It is probably best to begin by acknowledging with due credit the place of "place" in this research, while at the same time admitting the acutely "stage-like" quality that the galli held for me in the beginning weeks of my research, where, assisted by a staggering array of props, the vasti seemed to perform its everyday life, captured in my ethnographic documentation. The metaphor of stage however, was rendered obsolete rather quickly, as I discovered my own subjection to the intense collective gaze of the vasti. This very first ethnographic section of my dissertation which elaborates upon men's lives in the galli, is also in part a tribute, a figurative *salaam* so to say, to the spacetime of the galli itself that I temporarily inhabited and co-produced with women, men and children of the vasti and to our mutual negotiations, frustrations and translations which were decisively shaped by this space, framed simultaneously by our power-laden encounters.

It is imperative to recognize however, that notwithstanding the purported mutuality of our negotiations or translations or of the processes of place-making in the galli, the privilege of representing these processes (and of claiming a degree of mutuality in the first place) to an audience wider than the galli, in a language incomprehensible to the galli, continues to rest with me. Or that claiming mutuality in certain interactional aspects does not obfuscate the question of power which boldly underlines any venture of ethnographic representation, including mine. In this figurative *salaam* towards the galli and the social worlds that it encompasses then, I hope in earnest that this representation makes visible this politics and contradictions.

87

Velgode
Waada

Towards Tirangaa Mandal

Ganesh
Temple

Entrance to
Shelar Waada

GALLI

Tree & community
ledge

Public
Toilet

Anganwadi &
Gymnasium

New Temple

Towards
Mahatma
Phule Waada

Towards
Masoli
Aali

The first two weeks of my field note entries contain several descriptions which I had unthinkingly labeled by that quintessentially North American usage, "hanging out." Picture this: two young men wash up wordlessly in front of the public toilets in the galli, around 6 in the evening. With a thin towel wrapped around their waist and their wet hair ruffled, they head to the entrance of Shelar waada, on the opposite side of the 12 feet wide lane. On their way out one of them casually pushes the little boy squatting carefully over his marbles, causing him to tumble on one side and upsetting his neatly laid out marble equation. The two young girls stringing flowers in front of a cushy heap of marigolds sitting in the entrance of their house located right opposite the public toilets burst out in laughter watching this. A little away from them, the elderly woman combing her hair, whose grandson has just been knocked down, puts down her comb and hurls two quick expletives in a belligerent voice at the young men, now headed towards her. In the middle of the lane the other young man stamps his foot irately and raises his hand at the team of anxious goats making their way through the galli, causing them to scatter in panic and break into a run, leaving a trail of semi-hard olive colored pellets in their wake. The young man approaches the grandmother and apologizes good humoredly to her, who launches again into a string of expletives, even as the towel-clad young men continue to apologize casually and partially enjoying the spectacle of the old woman's rant.

By this time other young men talking amongst themselves in front of the gym have stopped their conversation, distracted by the expletives. The young girls stringing their flowers are exhorting the old woman to take it easy, from a distance, while giggling simultaneously. This infuriates the old woman even further, as she begins to rant more fervently, this time looking at no one in particular. Two young men from the gym huddle now walk over to where the old woman is sitting and slap the towel-clad men on their bare backs and tell them to not push it with

her. They goad the young men into the narrow entrance towards the waada, and then try to calm down the old woman. An elderly man feeding his goats opposite the temple now joins in placating the old woman. The young boy leaning against the bike parked in front of the public toilets is now interested enough to pull out his ear plugs and to tune in to the raving, while still holding his mobile phone in the same position. The bunch of middle-aged men playing cards in the temple, stall their game temporarily, as they all turn to look in the woman's direction, a few of them looking like they are poised to intervene. By this time, the grandmother's son comes out of the narrow entrance to the waada and tells his mother to come home and make tea for him. He holds her by her arm and practically leads her in, insisting that he wants his tea right now. As the old woman disappears, there is more laughter and snide remarks. The little boy has wrapped up his marble game and is now busy chasing a stray dog with a bunch of elder boys towards Jay Mata mandir. The galli resumes its evening.

It was always hard to describe whether men's and women's activities in the galli were performed in private or in others' company, given that everyone's acts were utterly visible and at times audible to the rest. In hindsight it was evident to me (and which I hope to demonstrate in the coming chapters), that "hanging out" was severely limited in its utility in capturing the essence of the spatio-temporal cycles of men's and women's modes of being in the galli. The spatial and social structures which underpinned the content and form of inhabiting the galli,implied a radically different orientation to space, time and social relationships than the volition, a slowing down and temporary exemption from life's demands implicit in the definition of hanging out. I term these modes and orientation collectively as the "spacetime" of the galli; spacetime serves as an analytical category in my attempts to demonstrate the articulations

between urban social and spatial processes and the gendered subjectivities of young men of Shelar galli.

The analytical category of spacetime is based upon Nancy Munn's (1986, 2003) work on the island society of Gawa in Papua New Guinea. Munn (1986) challenges the assumption of a universalized and abstract "space" and "time" in which people act and exist and contends that time and space are localized in embodied actions and relationships of people going about their everyday lives (3-18). She illustrates how space and time (which are central to the sense of being) are actively constructed through people's bodily movements, perception of duration, succession, directionality and continuity, through their material practices, subjective feelings attached to them and through interactions with each other and with objects, all of which are culturally defined. Spacetime thus represents the being-in-the-moment orientation that is produced by embodied, intersubjective acts, which is already meaningful and relational and symbolizes (and is in turn produced by) certain values, memories or practices for those who produce and experience them. The conceptualization of spacetime is not limited merely to spatial/ temporal orientation of autonomous individual subjects, but also applies to collectivities' "in-the-moment" sense of being and how they experience themselves as well as their external world.

The category of spacetime, however, runs the risk of presenting a fetishized view of time and space, if it is conceptualized as being constituted merely of subjective feelings and embodied acts of autonomous individuals or collectivities. In this context, Harvey's elaboration on relational space might provide useful clues for a more robust conceptualization. Harvey's (2009) view also resonates with Munn's conceptualization of spacetime, "In the relational view, matter and processes do not exist in spacetime or even affect it. Space and time are internalized within

matter and process" (137). However for Harvey (2009) a spatio-temporality of a site and an event incorporates the intangible historical and affective processes that have gone into its construction. He illustrates this effectively through the instance of "Ground Zero" in New York city, where the site was not just the absolute space occupied by the twin towers of World Trade Center till 2001, but now has become a relative space, as developers speculate about its high real-estate rates as compared to other sites in the city and its possibilities for profits. For Harvey however, the relational spatio-temporality of Ground Zero will necessarily encompass the memories of those who lost their loved ones in the September 11 attacks and the entire weight of the historical and political processes which underpin the exercise of US hegemonic power in several parts of the world and its resultant resentment which led to the attacks (146-7). Thus it is only in a dialectical interaction with social structures and relationships, material practices and ideology that embodied acts and subjective feelings cumulatively produce a relational spacetime (133-42).

Similarly, it will be a folly to consider spacetime as a singular spatio-temporal regime defining a site or an event, given the very relational nature of the processes which underpins them.[30] Thus a regime of gendered social relations in the galli in conjunction with its specific working class context will engender a spacetime which might overlap or diverge in several ways with a spacetime produced as a consequence of the informal regime of property ownership in this area of the city and its interaction with the caste composition of Moti Peth.

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[30] For instance in his earlier work, Harvey (1985) has demonstrated how the existence of money as a mediator of commodity exchange in capitalism produces its own spacetime and shapes our consciousness, as we learn to abstract space and time in monetary terms. However, he also points out that capitalism's spacetime, though dominant in the contemporary context, is not fixed and is in constant dialectical tension with activities, spaces and social relationships that *cannot* be incorporated into the spatio-temporal logic of capitalist accumulation (ibid; Harvey 2009: 157-9).

Spacetime here serves not just as a conceptual tool to analyze men's lives in Moti Peth, but importantly it also provides a crucial methodological imperative to this ethnography, which weaves in the embodied, discursive and spatial elements in the making of the men in the galli. Somatic practices constitute the entry point into the study of the relationship between men and their city, though not necessarily as "beginning points" of this relationship. In this context, Srinivas' (2001) work represents a similar attempt in incorporating the multiple levels of embodied, historical, cultural and mnemonic aspects in the constitution of the urban. In her ethnography of an annual religious celebration, the Karaga Jatre in Bangalore, Srinivas (2001) proposes an alternative civic model of the city charted by the participants in this celebration, one which involves transformations in the body, memory and the city itself. Here, embodied ritual practices by participants of the Jatre, drawing upon mythological and localized urban myths, construct an alternative map of remembered places in the city, through mnemonic, kinetic and oral modes, at the same time re-making the city itself through these practices (246-250). The insight from Srinivas' (2001) complex model is that embodied acts and memories are not merely ways of remembering the city, but are dynamic repositories of the relationships which make up the city, between its various caste groups and the state, between social histories of communities, and between the citizens and the city's ecological and material terrain. In the context of my study, the focus on the body then, is crucial not just from the point of view of understanding masculine self-making and gendered practices, but constitutes a productive methodology to delve into larger questions of the "caste-body" in the city, as mediated by labor and consumption.

The nexttwo chapters attempt to make explicit the gendered spacetime of the galli, and articulate the embodied ways of being of the young men in this galli to structures of caste and class and their marginalized location in the city.

Chapter II

Making the Masculine Self in the Galli

This chapter elaborates upon the myriad avenues of young men's gendered self-making in the galli, tracing the influence of class and caste-specific discourses of consumption, work and masculinity on these avenues. I approach the question of space time by staying close to the ground: a thick description of the young men's temporal and spatial routines in the galli, which eventually led me to their articulations with the body, city space and the arenas of work and consumption. In elaborating upon these ways of making the gendered self, this chapter simultaneously locates them in place and in relations of space, to reveal the contradictory ways in which "place" provides possibilities as well as constricts them for the young men, reflected in their deep ambivalence towards the galli, and ultimately towards their own evaluations of themselves.

I

Avenues of Masculine Self-Making in Shelar Galli

Following the spatio-temporal rhythm of men in the vasti

Notwithstanding the limits of the notion of "hanging out" in understanding men's and women's modes of being in the galli that I have outlined in the earlier section, I begin this section with an ethnographic focus on those men's practices which come closest to hanging out, precisely to explicate the complex matrix of meanings that these practices embody. Early on in my fieldwork I was introduced to the concept of *fresh hone* i.e. to freshen up, a practice diligently followed especially by the young men in the vasti. Fresh hone occupied a distinct temporal place in their daily routines, a practice which marked the beginning of their evenings in

the galli. I often arrived in the evening to see three or four young men washing their faces

vigorously with soap, their heads lowered below the couple of taps located right in front of the

public toilets. My proposals to go for tea were met several times with a quick nod towards their

houses inside Shelar waada and a request, "*fresh houn yeto jara*" (I'll just freshen up and come).

While I associated fresh hone with a general understanding of a neat appearance,

changing into fresh clothes or washing up,[1] I soon learnt that fresh hone in the lexicon of the

galli's young men was synonymous with a strong sense of style expressed primarily through

their clothes and accompanying accessories. Their appearance post-fresh hone was radically

different from the casual T-shirt-and- track-pants garb that most of them wore in the galli during

the day. Slim fit jeans, fitting shirts in solid bold colors, tees with catchy messages on them,

broad leather belts, sneakers, jackets with hoods proclaiming brands like Puma, Adidas or

Reebok and an occasional pair of cargo pants marked the continuum of young men's fashion

quotient in the galli during the time of my fieldwork.

For the young men, the evening post-fresh hone held several possibilities, engaging in

one or some of the following trajectories: they could sit by themselves on one of the motorbikes

parked next to Mhasoba temple and watch the galli while simultaneously listening to music on

their mobile phones. Or they could stand with few of their friends next to the mandir or the *paar*[2]

and goof around, occasionally breaking into exaggerated guffaws and high-pitched laughter. Or

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[1] Fresh hone is an oft used term in my own middle class, Marathi background, primarily referring to straightening up of one's appearance usually in early evenings, when one might possibly step out for a quick errand or a chore in the vicinity of one's residence.

[2] A *paar* refers to a ledge, generally built around massive trees like peepal or banyan. Paars dot urban and rural spaces in Maharashtra and are important nodes of public interaction. People sit or gather around a paar or hold village meetings in the shade of the tree. The paar was a crucial space in the galli as well, as people sat on it or around it, and stored odds and ends on it due to lack of storage space in their own homes.

they could head together to Sadanand tea stall in the adjoining Masoli aali, for a quick cup of tea, before heading back to the galli to continue their discussion. Or they could stand casually in front of the tiny kiosk that was located in the galli, owned by one of the Shelar brothers, engaging in small talk with those who came to buy milk or poking fun at children who wanted candy. Or they could hop on to their bikes and head out of the galli, generally to a tea shop in the neighboring peths or occasionally to eat in one of the small eateries nearby. Or, they could do all of the above in varying sequence.

Mapping the time and space of these activities soon became complicated, as I discovered that several of the activities listed above could easily flow from late mornings or afternoons into the evening and seamlessly flow into late nights in the galli. I would arrive at noon in the galli to find Satya or Chotu parked on the bikes in front of the public toilets, or to see Kartik, Naresh and Rama sitting in a relaxed manner on the ledge outside the gym, willing to go to Sadanand tea stall for a shared cup of tea. Most of the residents in the vasti heated water for bathing early in the morning on open fires set up along the paar; by afternoon these simmering fires would look like blackened scars lining the paar, with an occasional aluminum vessel resting atop one of them. Stamping out the simmering fires with their feet or using the soot to doodle on the dusty ground was a favorite past time for the young boys who sat on the bench next to the paar in late mornings.

My favorite times were the afternoons, when the entire galli seemed to slow down, a languorous and at times listless energy pervading the galli. The women would step out after having completed their morning chores, sitting mostly on the bench next to the paar or next to the entrance of the galli. Older men and women who had returned from their sweeping duty

99

around 1 p.m. would be relaxing or repairing their *jhaadu* (broom) along the street. A group of 8-10 men would have by now assembled in the mandir, beginning their game of cards. A couple of other young boys might simultaneously watch TV standing in one corner of the mandir. Vendors selling everything from children's readymade clothes and cheap carpets to savory snacks and greasy *samosas* would pass through the galli, inviting varying degrees of attention from those sitting outside.

Cricket afternoons however, rattled up the easy, almost intimate ambience of the galli into raucous cacophony, as the young men in the vasti took over for their regular sessions of what they termed as MPL: Moti Peth Premier League matches. Three or four teams of five players each would play round robin matches of twenty overs each; all the participants would contribute a nominal amount ranging from INR 50 to INR 100 and the winners of the final match would pocket the entire amount of the kitty. The narrow patch of the galli served as a perfect cricket pitch for MPL, younger school children settling on the sides as onlookers, and the motorbikes all parked neatly on one side. The women in the galli hardly shared the playful enthusiasm that the boys displayed when talking about MPL sessions, given the former's forced retreat into their shacks, which during the afternoons would heat up incredibly transforming the shacks into mini ovens. MPL matches lasted for three to four hours, punctuated by the players' cheering each other, their fights, scuffles, fist pumping, high fives, and the teenaged boys' rather pompous mimicry of their cricket heroes' gestures as seen on television, sometimes waving to an imaginary stadium audience or going into a huddle.

Between September and January, when the weather was particularly pleasant, in the afternoons the roof of the public toilets in the vasti served as another site of the card club, apart

from the mandir. It was generally the men in their early and late twenties who were the regulars of this rooftop card club, occasionally peeping down on the galli below to scream out their order for tea or to ask one of their friends to pass some *pan masala* upstairs. These were pre-fresh hone times, undeserving of the glamor that was reserved for the evenings; in the afternoons, most of the men and boys were dressed in T-shirts and acrylic tracks, some sitting in their vests and a towel wrapped around their waists. The young men's conversations with each other and with other residents of the vasti were often peppered with verbal or physical humor, chuckling, guffawing, teasing and witty remarks, their high pitched laughter drawing attention to the small islands that their huddles generally were.

My introduction to the immediate surroundings of the vasti had been effected on a delightful evening when the younger teenaged boys in the vasti, Satya, Shailu, Chotu and Mohit helped me make a map of the vasti. Our mapmaking exercise was replete with sneers about the crabby old man in the next lane "who refused to die," or the glee over the adjacent neighborhood association's (mandal) whose pompous speakers failed to play during a festival or the panic-stricken scrambling of some men from the vasti when their gambling den in the galli was busted some years ago. Vinit and Kartik, a bit older than the teenaged boys, once regaled me with tales of their practical jokes in the galli, when they tricked a man sleeping in the mandir or locked in someone else in the gymnasium room, much to everyone's entertainment.

The diffident bicycle repair man, who frequently visited the galli was the target of the jokes of group of teenaged boys; the former mostly played into the boys' ploys, never sure whether he was being questioned in earnest or in jest. The teenaged boys would surround him, ask him improbable questions, laugh amongst themselves, watched by those sitting in the galli.

The older man's transformation into a spectacle for the younger boys for a quick laugh was cruel; even more disturbing was the way in which the vasti watched this routine, with evident indulgence for the boys, their fun ways and their admiration ability to make everyone laugh.

Galli as a site of embodied masculinity

I argue that for the young men in the galli, masculine self-making was located at the intersection of their occupation of the galli spaces and their practices of consumption, both fundamentally embodied practices, performed most evidently in their time spent in the galli. The body is recognized to be fundamentally implicated in the process of the construction of gendered identities, as also being dialectically involved in the production of space (Ghannam 2013; Ranade 2007; McDowell 2005; Low 2003; Connell 1995; Munn 1986). McDowell (2005) articulates the former aspect lucidly,

> "Men's and women's bodies are surfaces that are inscribed with, defined by and disciplined through social norms and conventions about gendered appearances, in size, weight, and deportment as well as through decoration and clothing…thus, through bodily performances, as well as in all social interactions, masculinities (and femininities) are constantly being actively constructed, maintained or challenged in the different spaces of daily life" (20-21).

A vast body of research investigates practices and places of sports, work and leisure as sites of construction and embodied expression of masculine gendered identity (McDowell 2005; Chopra 2004; De Neve 2004; Whannel 2002; Connell 1995; Alter 1992). Whitehead (2002) in a bid to materialize male bodies contends that dominant notions of embodied masculinity emphasize "occupation of space" and "the ability to exercise control over space" (189). "The male/boy/man is expected to transcend space, or to place his body in aggressive motion within it, in so doing

102

posturing to self and others the assuredness of his masculinity" (ibid). On the same lines, Ghannam (2013), in her work in a working class neighborhood in Cairo examines the production of male bodies by analyzing, "daily presentations of the body" (6) in the varied contexts of the neighborhood's everyday life. For instance, she demonstrates how young boys are socialized into a manly habitus via errands which enable them to master the neighborhood spaces and negotiate social interactions through visits to mosques, local stores, guided and goaded by other men and women including family members, neighbors, uncles and vendors (36-41).

Following from this, I argue that their bodily ways of being in the galli and the embodied registers of their humor, constructed in fundamental ways for the young men and boys here a gendered experience of their own selves and of the galli space. Their easy stance as they leaned and stood against a motorbike, sat on the bench in the mandir with an arm resting along the length of the backrest and followed outsider women (or men) with their eyes along the galli or stood alone in front of the gym with their legs planted wide apart, without feeling the need to do anything in particular, presented a mixture of a confidence and an unthinking claiming of the galli space as something that was accessible to them in a way that it was not to the young girls or the older women of the galli.

The comportment of the bodies of the young men was not merely a key aspect in the construction and performance of their masculinity, but was also inextricably linked to producing the galli itself as a gendered space. In this context, it is helpful to refer to the basic tenets of "spacetime" which emphasize the embodied ways in which space and time are actualized

(Cresswell 2003; Low 2003; Munn 1986).[3] Ranade (2007) narrows down this link further, as she articulates gendered bodies to gendered spaces: according to her, "tenuous structures of power are reinscribed through space by everyday practices of moving through and occupying space… Gendered bodies produce and are produced by particular spatio-temporal configurations" (1524). The construction of a space as masculine will thus entail an inscription of the existent gendered power relations upon the way the space is used, inhabited, experienced and will shape the interactions between and within genders that unfold in this space. I suggest that the bodily comportment of the young men in the vasti contributed towards establishing their unequal access to the spaces of the galli as well to modes of interacting with the people in it as normative and legitimate, thus molding it as a distinctly masculinized spacetime.

A photograph I had taken on a crowded February evening in 2012 in the galli exemplifies for me the deeply masculinized nature of the galli. I stood in the middle of the galli, facing the Jay Mata Mandir end, and stared at two life-size hoardings (billboards) staring down at me. On the left stood a horizontal hoarding, or "flex" as it was popularly known, with Siddhartha Mandal printed in bold yellow on top. "Bye Bye 2011" and "Hello 2012" flanked the name of the mandal. Nineteen young men's faces stared down from the hoarding, most of them wearing dark glasses, some facing the camera, while others looking away from it, posing stylishly. The flex was installed to convey New Year's wishes to the general public on behalf of Siddhartha mandal, on the New Year's Eve.

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[3] Embodiment and space enjoys a long history in the discipline of anthropology, drawing upon a variety of traditions ranging from philosophy and phenomenology (Low 2003). Historically, anthropology has referred to several conceptual frameworks to understand how the body is generative of space and how this process is mediated by culture: some of these include *proxemics* (Hall 1968), *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977), *spatial tactics* (de Certeau 1984), and *intersubjectivespace-time* (Munn 1986).

Adjacent to it loomed a much taller, vertical flex board, almost thirty feet high. The image of Mohanlal Shitole, dressed in a bright red turban and a starched white shirt, and a thick gold bracelet resting on his wrist, stood along the entire length of the flex making it seem like Mohanlal was towering above the narrow galli itself. The rest of the space was dotted with faces of a host of local politicians (all men, barring one woman councilor) and some senior mandal members in the galli, on whose behalf collective birthday greetings were printed on top of the flex. Having been witness to Mohanlal's strong ambitions in local politics by this time, I was hardly surprised by the fact that this flex was sponsored by and erected by Mohanlal himself, on the eve of a grand celebration of his birthday in the vasti.

Photo 2.1: Mohanlal's towers above the galli from a life size "flex" on the occasion of his birthday. Mohanlal had organized for children's "fun fair" on this evening; seen in the picture is the crowd of children waiting for their free ride on a manual merry-go-round. On the left is an older flex on behalf of Siddharth Mandal installed on the New Year's Eve.

Through the duration of my fieldwork I witnessed several such flex boards, showcasing

the dark glassesclad young men (and at times even little boys) of the galli who posed rather

enthusiastically for these posters. To me these flex boards represented the unquestioned sense of

entitlement to the galli that the young men here experienced, suffusing the material and social

space of the galli with their narcissist posturing and a naturalized assumption that they had a

right to gaze out from and be seen on the flex boards, as representatives of the galli/ mandal.

Masculinization of the galli's visual regime reflected a larger trend in the cityscape itself; the

possibility of printing flex boards at cheap rates in recent decades has changed the nature of local

political practice in important ways. Printing flexes congratulating a senior political party

member fulfilled the dual role of declaring one's political allegiance as well as making oneself

visible (literally and figuratively) on the horizons of local politics. These flexes are a rich

repository of the popular motifs of masculinity as they circulate in and dominate public spaces in

contemporary urban Maharashtra.

Photo 2.2: A flex posted on a street wall in one of the eastern peths, as tribute to the person in the photograph, pehelwan (wrestler) Rajesh Barguje. The tag line, in Hindi, says, "Your work should earn you fame… and you should earn such fame that just your name ensures success of any venture." Notice the juxtaposition of masculine figure of Maratha icon Shivaji, a roaring lion and the image of the smiling wrestler, affectionately referred to as "Master," meaning "Guru."

Photo 2.3: Flex atop a bus stop claiming the glorious history of Shivaji, on the occasion of Shivaji's birth anniversary. The message reads, "You will take time to understand our history, but when you will, it will drive you crazy."

Photo 2.4: Flex boards dominate the city's public spaces. The flexes are a crucial site for young men to fashion a manly self, not just in terms of bodily presentation, but also as benevolent, powerful, figures, as loyalists of a firebrand leader or as proud aspirants in local politics. The flex board in this image wishes public on the occasion of Dr. Ambedkar's birth anniversary and on the occasion of a local deity's annual fair.

Photo 2.5: Notice the flamboyant style of clothing of the young man who features boldly than the rest in the above poster. His nick name "Yoyo" printed across his image signals his resemblance to the popular Punjabi singer Yoyo Honey Singh. A thick gold chain is displayed prominently around his neck.

Photo 2.6: This is a public birthday greeting for the man dressed in white, holding a cell phone. The wishes are conveyed by the young man at the bottom, wearing goggles, followed by several other men, whose names are listed in the flex. The message addresses the older man as "Dada," which in Marathi is used to refer to elder brother.

The male body was imbricated in the construction of a masculine identity not just through its occupation of the galli via a markedly gendered idiom, but also through the practices of consumption for the young men in the galli. The past two decades have seen a prolific rise in the literature on the multiple sites of consumption in South Asia and the complex ways in which they mediate social identities based on class, gender and caste, and imaginaries of citizenship and modernity for their practitioners (Athique and Hill 2010; Srivastava 2010; Lukose 2009; Fernandes 2004; Van Wessel 2004; Saldhana 2002; Breckenridge 1995; Derne 2000). Using insights from this literature, I examine briefly the role that practices of consumption played in consolidating a gendered self for the young men in the galli.

The post-fresh hone imperative of style was not just limited to clothing for most of the young men in the vasti: most of them complimented their clothes with accessories like studs in their ears, gold chains, bracelets, zero power spectacles or aviator sunglasses. The teenaged boys were particularly enthusiastic about changing their hair styles regularly, at times coloring their hair, highlighting them or getting them straightened. Satya, one of the younger boys, who was particularly good at sketching, would often use a black pen to sketch tattoos on his forearm, expert imitations of a faintly gothic aesthetic.

Lukose's (2009) research on the engagement of Malayali youth with consumption in a neoliberal Kerala also resonates with this emphasis on "being fashionable," an imperative which she argues is a deeply gendered one. Elaborating upon the slang word, "*chethu*" she demonstrates how this term condensed a distinct practice of commodified masculinity among lower caste, working class Malayali young men. *Chethu*, which referred figuratively to "hip," "sharp" or "cool" was used by young men to refer to a certain style quotient manifested in

wearing jeans, cotton shirts and sneakers or in a fancy bike or a flashy car. Chethu, however, also encompassed considerations of status evidenced in easy cash, an anglicized comportment, and *flaneur*-esque consumption of public spaces like the beach or the beer parlor and an aspirational orientation towards life marked by youthfulness, enjoyment, and a staunch rootedness in the present moment (66-70). However, girls wearing westernized clothes would never qualify as chethu; they would be referred to as having "*gema,*" as being arrogant or a show-off (66), a clear indication of the starkly masculine contours of chethu.

Lukose traces the material and ideological components of chethu to the moment of liberalization of Indian economy, beginning 1991, by referring to an insightful analysis of a Tamil hit film released in 1996, Kaadalan (Lover boy). In their analysis of Kaadalan, Dareshwar and Niranjana (1996) point out that the film produced a fashion-conscious, MTV sensibility for lower caste men, marked by a combination of baggy pants, blue jeans, rap music and Michael Jackson moves, portraying a distinct youthful energy through its use of colors and fashion (12-14). While until now, it was the upper caste, middle class men's and women's bodies that constituted the space for the production of the consumerist aesthetic and ethos of globalizing India, this film signaled in important ways a shift, "…where globalization and its signifiers attach themselves to the body of the male lower caste "youth"" (Lukose 2005: 925). I suggest that these reconfigured contours of a masculine identity were expressed explicitly in the aspirations and in the value attached to practices of consumption of the young men, as represented by the notion of "enjoy" prevalent in the galli.[4]

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[4] Consumption (of clothes, styles of dressing, bikes, accessories, social media) as a site of fashioning masculine identity has been the theme of a sizeable chunk of research in recent times. Osella and Osella (2006) and De Neve (2004) highlight practices of consumption, through which men construct themselves in the image of masculine

Curiously, "enjoy" was mostly used as a noun in the vasti and not as a verb, as it usually is used in the English language. On my question of what enjoy entailed for him, Arun, a 25 year old police aspirant in the galli mentioned the following qualifying conditions:

> "*Mhanje sagle mitra ekatra aale pahije, aapan hasun khelun rahila pahije. Majha haach enjoy aahe. Sagle jan khush rahila pahije*" (It means all [male] friends should come together, we should laugh and have fun. This is my enjoy. Everyone should be happy).

Giving myself the liberty after having almost a year-long worth ethnographic experience of the vasti behind me, I went ahead and asked Arun a leading question: "Do you think bikes are an important part of enjoy?" Arun's face broke into a smile, almost as if to give me a minor prize for having identified the answer accurately.

> "*Ho mahatvacha aahe, barobar aahe, tyashivay enjoy houch shakat nahi!*" (Yes that is important, you are right, there just cannot be 'enjoy' without it [bikes]!) He then went on to add, "*Bikes ani kapde…hairstyle. Aapan swtaha changla disla pahije, samorchyavar impression changla padla pahije. Navin navinprayog karayla aavdel nahi ka…enjoy sathi*" (Bikes and clothes…hairstyle. One should look good, make a good impression on others. I would like to try out new things for the sake of enjoy…).

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ideals of "householder"/ "patron" etc.in Kerala and Tamil Nadu respectively. Rogers (2008) and Anandhi (2002) explore consumption as an axis along which caste hierarchies are challenged or reinforced in Tamil Nadu. In rural Uttar Pradesh, educated Jat men seek to establish distance from rural agricultural labor, by riding motor cycles, wearing designer watches or chino styled trousers (Jeffrey, Jeffery and Jeffery 2008). In several of the above instances, the imaginary of modernity is an important constituent of the masculine identity being sought to be constructed through practices of consumption.

Photo 2.6: Young men often posed on their bikes in dramatic poses, for the benefit of their friends' mobile cameras (and mine).

The presence of motorbikes and geared scooters was hard to miss in the galli, not just because of their material presence in front of the public toilets, but also because of their repeated appearance in conversations which centered on evaluating young men in the galli, either by their own selves or by others. In his scathing criticism of the younger generation of boys and their utter lack of interest in doing "social service," Khandale kaka, an elderly resident of the vasti and once an active member of the galli's neighborhood association, enlisted the precise markers of this commodified masculinity, given to the wanton ways of "enjoy:"

> "*Tyanna kamachi aavad nahi, ekmekachya madatila janyachi aavad nahi, ani jean pyant ghalna, mobile khishat, gadi kadhli re, chal re bas maga*" (These boys do not like to work, they do not want to come to each other's help. They just show off their jeans, stick their mobiles into their pockets, and call their friends to hop on to their bikes to zoom off).

112

Instances of young men and boys insisting on their parents buying them a motorbike invariably cropped up whenever I brought up the question of the nature of expectations that young men here had from their parents. As I set out one evening to have tea with some of the mandal members, Naresh, the mandal president, rolled out a gleaming new bike painted in electric blue, different from the regular yellowcolored bike which he and his two younger brothers, Arun and Chotu took turns to use. As I rode behind him on the new bike, Naresh informed me that it had cost a whopping INR 120,000.

> "*Chotu rusun basla mag ghetli hi bike. Mummy mhatli tyala kahich ghetla naahi atta paryant*" (Chotu sulked so much, so the bike was bought. Mummy said that we haven't bought anything for him till now).

Mala bai, who stayed with her 18 year old son, Gotya, told me that she had succumbed to her son's insistence and bought him a scooter worth INR 27000. Gotya, who had dropped out of school after Class 7, had insisted that he had to own a bike in order to look for work. Mala bai, who earned her livelihood by rolling beedis and supplying them to a contractor on a daily basis, had to use part of her pension money in order to afford the bike for her son.

In February of 2011, as the galli was swept away in the excitement of the local municipal elections, I was witness to a furious rant by Kiran Shelar against his cousins for their alleged betrayal during the election: the Shelars had traditionally voted for the Congress party, but by voting for the right wing Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Kiran's cousins had betrayed the family because of the allure of easy cash.

> "*Sagala aai-baapachya joravar aahe, pora pan aai-baapachya jivavar kadhli*" (They are basically living off their parents. They even had children, while living off their parents!)

Kiran's remark spewed contempt and spite as he said this. He went on to describe how his cousins, in their late twenties and early thirties, always depended upon him for any official document that they needed to obtain or to get admitted in the hospital. Kiran insisted that in contrast, he had never asked his parents for any help, he was always self-sufficient, that he had come up the hard way.

> "*Vayachya teravya varshi gaandi khali gaadi hoti majhya, ajun kuthlyach porakade nastana*" (At the age of thirteen my backside was already atop a bike, when no other boy had a bike!)

Kiran's crude, arrogant description took me by surprise; I had hardly ever heard any of the young men/ boys in the vasti swear explicitly, no doubt on account of their careful use of language in my presence. *Gaand*, a commonly used term in the world of masculine abusive language in Hindi and Marathi, literally translates as asshole. *Gaand* and related abuses carry distinct connotations of sexual abuse and sodomy. Kiran's assertion of having a bike under his gaand at the age of thirteen thus neatly telescoped his claims of self-sufficiency and independence from his parents into an unmistakable expression of a sexualized masculine prowess and simultaneously served to highlight his cousins' impotence expressed in their dependence upon their parents. Kiran's outburst was perhaps the most illuminating instance of the way in which a bike was indexical of achievement and aspiration in the galli, manifested in heavily masculinized idioms.

Photo 2.7: A young man from the galli worships his decorated bike on the occasion of Diwali, by applying vermillion and turmeric to the bike.

Ironically, the richest referents of "enjoy" were made explicit to me not through the young men's descriptions as much as through the narratives of girls and young women in the vasti about the pleasures *denied* to them, in sharp contrast with their male counterparts. On a pleasantly warm December afternoon, I sat with a motley group of three to four young girls between the ages 11 and 18, with their respective mothers, in front of Nadepalli waada; we were sitting amidst small mounds of yellow aster flowers, which the women and young girls continued to string expertly into *venis*.[5] The girls had agreed to be formally interviewed by me, although, in their mothers' presence, it seemed like a considerably sticky proposition.

> "*Aaplya ikde vatavaran asa freely aahe asa vatata ka?*" (Do you think the atmosphere in the galli is 'freely'?)

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[5] A *veni* refers to braided hair. But in this context it refers to an intricately strung, an inverted U-shaped flower adornment, which women wear in their hair on festive occasions. A flower *veni* is an important item in the offerings made to a Goddess during festivals, thus increasing their demand in the wholesale flower market by three fold than on regular days. Most women from families who were into flower business were expert *veni* makers, a task far more arduous and back-breaking than stringing regular flower garlands.

Emboldened by my preceding ten months in the galli and my familiarity with the term, "freely" I had decided to risk it, never mind the mothers. The girls tittered nervously.

> "*Vatavaran freely nahiye.Maine saadi pehni, toh bodyguard do rehte. Ek peeche rehta, ek aage rehta.*"(The atmosphere is not 'freely'. If I wear a sari, I am accompanied by two bodyguards. One following me, the other ahead of me).

Sonali, 20, spoke up, in Hindi and in an exaggeratingly filmy way, as if to deliberately sound frivolous and non-serious about what she was saying.

> "*Mulanna kashi aazadi aahe, kase KFC la jatat, kuta jaatat, tasa aamhala nahiye. Camp tar mahitach nahi.*" (We don't have the freedom that the boys have, to go to KFC and other places. We don't even know camp [cantonment area]).

11 year old Rashmi had jumped in, happy to make use of the space that Sonali had opened up.

> "*Ani haa, ashi gaani vagare lavli na, mhanje ashi romance chi, te bhavanna avdat nahi. Bahininni fakta nataka baghaychi. Ani mulikada mobile asna pan gunha aahe!*" (And of course, if we play songs, especially romantic songs, our brothers don't like it. The sisters should only watch television soaps. Same old stuff. For girls, it is a crime to even have a mobile phone!).

Rani also spoke up now, enlisting some more "enjoy" elements, available unfairly only to the young men. The acute lack of "freely" and "enjoy" were the twin notions through which the young girls here seemed to process the profoundly patriarchal ideology that dictated their everyday lives in the galli. The young girls' descriptions put in sharp relief the privileged ease with which their male counterparts indulged in the fresh hone version of dressing up, accessed spaces of pleasure in the city (KFC and cantonment) and possessed the much sought-after commodity of the mobile phone. Indeed, the image of a young girl standing alone and listening to music on her mobile phone or playing a video game absent-mindedly is unthinkable in my repertoire of imagery of the social life of the galli.

116

The ten months that I had hitherto spent in the galli testified however, to the immense possibilities of self-fashioning available on the intersecting sites of consumption and pleasure that the mobile phone represented for the young men in the galli. Younger boys between 18 and 23 had made it a point to inform me about their dynamic collection which included Jennifer Lopez, Shakira and Beyoncé and a smattering of latest Bollywood hits. The older men preferred old and new Hindi or Marathi music. Lakhan, 27, and recently a father of a baby girl, was once surprised when he discovered that I was also a fan of old Marathi songs. He immediately pulled out his mobile phone in order to show me his playlist.

> "*Bankechya manager ni majhakadun gani gheyliyet! Pan hyanchya barobar astana mi hi gaani lavat nahi*" (Even a bank manager had borrowed songs from me! But I don't play these songs when I am with these boys).

He glanced towards the rest of his gang, who mostly did not identify with the older Marathi music. While consumption of popular English/ North American music had clear allegiances with a westernized comportment that the younger boys aspired to, it was suggestive to me that for Lakhan, the bank manager's appreciation of his music served to establish for him his own aspirational class/ caste orientation, as he pointed out his friends' lack of understanding of this music.[6]

Besides music however, the mobile phone was a container for a vast array of images, continually circulated amongst the young male members of the vasti by posting on each other's

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[6] Old Marathi music, largely in the genre of *Bhavgeete* is one of the strongest markers of an upper caste/ middle class Marathi constituency in the specific context of Pune. The voluminous archive of music included under this genre is mostly classified as light romantic and devotional, including songs written and sung by Brahmin/ upper caste artistes. Produced during the three decades during the 60s and 90s, the lyrics and the music of this genre express a distinctly upper caste ethos and sensibility, through its alleged genteel language and use of supposedly sophisticated metaphors.

Facebook walls. The opening up of our virtual self-making to each other on account of being Facebook friends revealed to me their urgent landscapes of desire and aspiration; their Facebook walls were a pastiche of a lower middle class aesthetic, seeking to replicate images of fun and friendship (with other male friends) so starkly present in contemporary advertising in India. The young men's spacetime in the galli acquired finer and more intricate layers here, as they continued to stand in front of the public toilets in the vasti, their mobile phones in their hands, and visited each other's Facebook walls and embellished them with imagery from breathtakingly disparate worlds: glamorous photographs of Telugu or Tamil superstars or north American boy bands; digitally enhanced pictures of various deities and icons including Ganesh, Saraswati, Durga or Shivaji, Anna bhau Sathe, Mother India; "likes" ranging from Chicago Bulls, hip-hop bands called "Veins" and "Flo Rida;" to television programs like MTV Splitsvilla; images of local politicians, cricket icons or body builders; kitschy posters with moralistic or humorous messages in flowery English or Marathi; pictorial messages for various festivals and national holidays; and an assortment of pictures taken by the owner of the mobile phone, including cute poses of children and toddlers in the vasti and pictures of themselves and their friends taken in stylish poses, with catchy taglines.
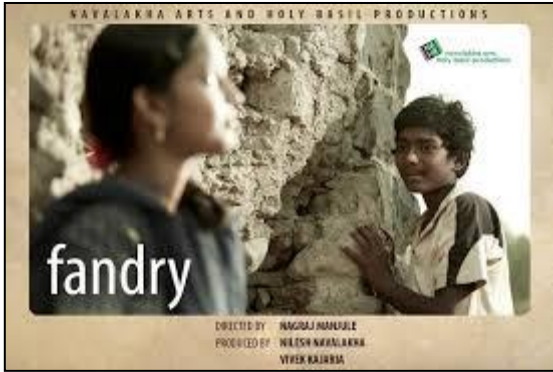
Photos 2.8 and 2.9: These are some of the young men's favorite movies during the time when I conducted my fieldwork. The movies "Fandry" and "Timepass," (on the right) both were a huge hit especially with younger teenaged boys. Both these movies revolve around low caste protagonists who are in love with upper caste girls. The male protagonist in "Fandry" himself belongs to a Dalit caste in real life. The question of caste itself featured in explicit ways in both these movies, albeit with very different political messages.
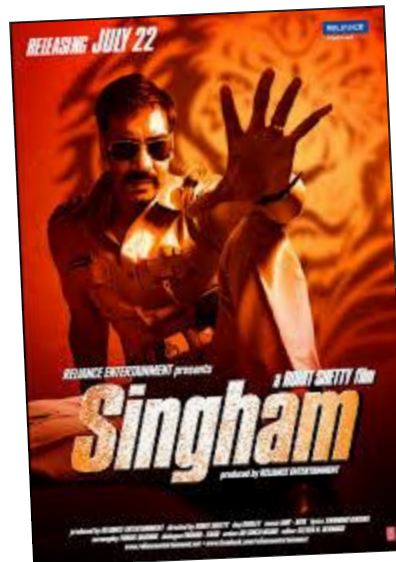
Photo 2.10: "Singham" (2.10) was an action thriller which had a Marathi firebrand police inspector as its protagonist, played by a top Bollywood action star. I watched this movie with the teenaged boys in the galli. The best moments of the movie were when the protagonist delivers a few dialogues in Marathi, his dialogues drowning in the whistles and screams of the mostly male fans in the cinema hall.

In a broad sense, motorbikes and mobile phones, as vehicles enabling consumption of different kinds of spaces, represented the intertwining of a fashionable youthfulness with the expectations of manliness in the vasti, often expressed through the idiom of "enjoy." It was my

introduction to "Jonas Brothers" in the galli, however, that directed me to explore the complex modes through which the alignment between consumption and masculine identity was fundamentally inflected by class and caste-driven anxieties for the young men in the galli. I present below a brief sketch of Jonas Brothers to illustrate this interplay.

Jonas Brothers: carrying the cross

After having traveled to a nearby town called Shingnapur for a friend's wedding in January 2012, Satya, Shailu, Chotu, Sunil and Mohit, aged between 16 and 23, had eagerly shown me the photographs they had taken of themselves *en route*. When I had first met them ten months ago at the beginning of my fieldwork, the five had been sorely disappointed at my ignorance about "Jonas Brothers," despite my having lived in the US for three years. After having seen the group on television a couple of years ago, they had chosen to call themselves after this famous North American boy band. In their avatar of "Jonas Brothers" (hence forth JB) the five occasionally introduced themselves as Paddy, Rick, Bunny, Andy and Justin respectively.

Their Facebook accounts suggested that all of them were in a complicated relationship and that a couple of them studied at Symbiosis College, associated mostly with trendy, upper class, convent-educated college goers. Having dropped out of school around class 8 or 9, (Chotu/Bunny informed me that none of them were keen on going to a new school after having gone to the same school till class XII. Besides, the college where they would get admission was corrupt and nor were the girls there good looking, he had added nonchalantly), the five friends' lives revolved mostly around the galli and its happenings; their witty one-liners, occasional

120

breaking into a jig, boyish enthusiasm for cricket and other celebrations in the galli, all infused an unmistakable sense of a trendy youthful energy around their little group.

I noticed that the digital folder containing their photographs in Shingnapur was titled, "Singapoor." Each had posed, against the background of a barren, rocky plot of land; their arms spread wide open, or fingers hooked into their jeans' pockets, their arms around their friends, giving a hand horn salute, shirt unbuttoned, leaning against a tall rock. Unsmiling faces, eyes hidden behind sunglasses, stared unfazed into the camera, or sometimes looked away, as if gazing into the faraway horizon.

Rick, the technologically savviest of the group, had added colored captions for some of the photographs. An electric blue hued "About my life" accompanied his own photograph in which he was standing atop a rock and staring ahead of him. In another photograph, he was standing with one arm extending towards the sky and the other pointing at the ground. He looked up towards his outstretched hand, at the word "Friend" inserted in capital case and a bold font. Red, bold "Love" rested at the base of his hand pointing towards the ground. For Rick, the choice between love and friendship was crystal clear. Paddy/ Satya had also posed with his arms outstretched and the caption declared his unequivocal stand, "I Hate Love." Andy/ Sunil seemed to have a more accommodating view: wearing a bandana and a pair of sunglasses, he leaned against a tall rock, his head slightly bent. "Only Love" the photograph asserted, in electric blue. Chotu's elder brother Arun was the rare case who had made it into JB's exclusive photo-shoot on the highway that day. Arun also stood atop a rock with his shirt completely unbuttoned, exposing a fairly muscular chest. "Coming Soon" was the ominous caption, in bold red.

The slim fit jeans, sneakers, hoodies, sun glasses, bandanas, vests, all were carefully assembled, I noted.

> "*Amhi standar rahaycha prayatna karto. Magchi mula aamchi copy karaycha prayatna kartaat, tyanna kay vatatay ki aamhi modeling cha course kelay*" (We try to be "standar." The boys who live in the neighborhood behind us try to copy us, they think we have learnt modeling…).

Rick ended his statement with a half-hearted laugh, as if marveling at his group's ingenuity for others to think that they had actually learnt modeling. "*Standar*," the galli's version of the term "standard," was, as I had earlier discovered, a crucial milestone in its collective journey aspiring towards class mobility. "Does standar refer to wealthy?" I inquired. Chotu and Satya explained to me patiently,

> "*Nahi, standar mhanje hi-fi. Mhanje disayla changla, paishe kamavnara, kapde vyavasthit, Changla rahnaara…*" (No, standar refers to "hi-fi," it refers to a man who looks good, earns money, and dresses neatly, lives properly…).

As if to illustrate this, Chotu suddenly turned to me and asked me defiantly, don't you think there is a difference between us and the boys who live behind us? The neighborhood behind Shelar galli was a considerably large Matang slum, named after its designated block number, 755. By now the position of 755 as the ultimate Other in opposition to whom the residents of Shelar galli, including JB, constructed their self-image, had manifested in myriad situations and conversations in the vasti. Satya, without waiting for my reply, elaborated upon the boys from 755,

> "*…mhanje distaat, tonda kharkati. Tabyetine ase akaand-phakaand, lukde ekdam, butke, dhepale…taslya sharirala suit honare ka?*" (I mean, their faces look like dirty dishes! Their built is awkward, scrawny, short, slouching…would it [smart clothes] suit a body like that?"

Satya's description invited knowing snickers from the rest of the brothers. "So why such a big difference between the two groups of boys," I wondered aloud, "when you all stay in such close proximity to each other?" According to the boys it was the cumulative effect of their moral upbringing in their families (*sanskar*) which had made all the difference.

> "*Titha haye na, 755 madhi, pandhra pan vay nasel, misha pan phutlya nasel vhatavar tari…pyayla shiktaat. Daaru, tambaaku, gutkha, tasla bharpur pramanaat aahe…*" (In 755, a boy might not even be 15, he might not even have a mustache yet, but he would have learnt to drink. Alcohol, tobacco and gutkha is rabidly prevalent there).

As the JB sought to distance themselves from the unquestionably inferior ethos of 755, lacking equally in morality and style quotient, Chotu closed off the topic with a decisive contention,

> "*Ani amhi baher kuthe gelo ki aamhala samjat nahit ki he hya samajache aahet. Pan aamchya samajatle aamhi lagech olakhto! Bolnyavarun…jhanki astyat. Mhanje over karnaare…mhanje Khadki Dapodi! Tyanna avadtyaat kapde ghalayla, pan tyanna jamat naahi!*" (Nobody can identify us by our caste when we go outside. But we are able to spot those from our caste immediately! From the way they talk…they are pretty jhanki... you know, those who live in Khadki-Dapodi! Those who overdo it, who like to wear good clothes, but just don't manage to carry them off!)

Clearly, *jhanki* here did not refer simply to a lack of awareness of style or fashion; *jhanki* as the failure of a style of dressing to efface an embodied lower caste identity also pointed towards JB's own successful distancing from this identity: where clothes, consumption, standar, and enjoy intermingled to erase completely the traces of Mang-ness from their bodily selves, making them eligible for entry into the imaginary of trendy youth, as projected on television and digital media. The inability to erase one's caste from one's body was localized in Khadki-Dapodi, twin northern suburbs of Pune, home to some of the biggest clusters of slums in the city. Conversely, for JB their own skillful erasure of their caste identity was also expressed in a material space: according to Satya, there was only one way to breach the exclusive membership of their group:

"*Amhi limited aahe. Aamhi konachya maaga palnaar naahi ani konala mage annar nahi. Dusre yeu shaktat amchyat pan amchi condition aahe, KFC madhe party dyaychi tyanni…*" (We are "limited." We will never run behind anyone, nor will we beg anyone to join us. Others can join us, but on one condition: they have to treat us in KFC…).

Satya (Paddy) said it in one breath. If eating in a Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) restaurant was a metaphor for exclusiveness and privilege of access, then in demanding a treat in KFC as essential membership criterion, the Jonas Brothers not just linked their own "limited" stature with KFC, but also seamlessly tied the ability to consume with exclusiveness. For JB, there was a clear hierarchy between McDonald's and KFC. McDonald's had fallen out of their favor not just because the place was crowded and cramped, but also because "those with faces like dirty dishes" could be found there. The latter would not dare to go to KFC, they know it is way beyond their level (*haisiyat*), Chotu sneered.

"*Pan amhi kasa, tyanchya madhi shaamil jhalo na amhi disto tasa. Kahi kahi lok kasa, ase vegle loka aale na ki haad hud kartat. Baghtaat sarkha. Pan tasa kahi nahi hot amchya barobar. Tithle kase aata aaplyala rispek detat*" (But in our case, if we go there [to KFC], we will blend in with the crowd there. If "different" people go to KFC, everyone there treats them with contempt; they keep on looking at them in a certain way. But this doesn't happen with us. We are treated with "rispek" there).

Rick jumped in, elaborating upon their feeling at home at KFC. That they knew what to order at KFC was not as relevant as the fact that they were given respect (*rispek*) there, according to Rick. "*Mhanje aamhala tar vatata ki aamhi tyanchat…basu shakto*" (In fact, we feel now like we can sit with *them*). Satya added vociferously. If JB had successfully erased the signifiers of their lower caste status from their bodily appearance, then their anonymity in KFC represented to them the complete suppression of the implicating evidence of their working class status which

made JB undistinguishable now from the unmarked "them" in those distinctly middle class and upper middle class spaces of consumption.[7]

JB exuded a lively, confident, and at times an arrogant air, their pompous claims encouraged no doubt, by the eager audience that I provided for their narratives. At the end of his boastful description of an impossible cricket match that JB had won, Satya lamented the loss of a video clip of the match, on account of losing his phone. He leaned back and said it deliberately and slowly,

> "*Jonas Brother chya jivanat asha cross goshti hotat. Mhanje je kay pahije asta te bhetat nahi!*" (Things get "crossed out" in Jonas Brothers' lives like this. It means that we do not get whatever we want!)

The rest of the gang members scrambled to give me examples of "*cross jhala*;" their favorite thing in the store being sold off before they could go and pay for it, losing their mobile phones before a girl could call them as planned, their elders giving them a dressing down for something that they actually had not indulged in: checking out pretty girls who walked past the galli.

For JB, this paradigm did not cast a dampener merely on the everyday and mundane pleasures in the galli; cross jhala seemed to define the inevitable trajectory that all their future ventures were destined to take. Even in their fantasy. I proposed that they make a list of things they would like to do if each of them miraculously stumbled upon INR 100,000. Their replies

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[7] Following Srinivas (2001), if embodied practices condense a set of social relationships with the city, nowhere is it more obvious than in the case of Jonas Brothers, who strive hard to obliterate their caste from their bodies. In talking about the ways in which embodied ritual practices incorporate social history and constitute memory, Srinivas (2001) contends that, "Cultural resources are sedimented on and stored in the bodies of citizens through particular gestures and practices" (30). While the case of JB is not identical to the ritual context Srinivas has worked in, her argument enables us to view JB's endeavors not merely as an effort to erase caste, but also to produce a new regime of the Dalit body in the city space, shorn of the markers of labor and stigma which qualified their bodies in the past, one which now staked a claim in the aspirational narrative of the city.

were instantaneous: they would buy fancy clothes, mobile phones, and fulfil their hearts' desires; they would invest in a small business, or buy a kiosk or an auto-rickshaw. Rick intervened at this point as if to remind JB of the ever-present limits to their aspiration:

> "*Pan amhi kahi business chalu kela tar lai ghatyat jaanar. Dhanda honarach nahi!*"
> (But if we were to start a business, it will run into huge losses. The business just won't take off!)

To my questioning glance, they all cried out in a tone which chastised me for not getting the self-evident answer, "*Aho Madam,cross!!*" "But this is fantasy!" I protested, "you have to *assume* that there will be no cross".

> "*Nahi honar! Apan jari dharla, tari te honar, cross goshti…*" (That won't happen! Even if we assume, even then things will get crossed…), Chotu said in a raised voice. Rick cut him short, "*Ek lakh bhetle tech cross bhetla…tyachyaivaji ek karod bhetle pahijet!*" (The fact that we got INR 100,000 and not 10,000,000 is in itself a cross!).

Mildly frustrated, I gave up the fantasy track of inquiry. JB members continued with their cross thread though, in a bid to ensure that I understood exactly the nature of its power over them. To explain it further, Chotu recounted the allegedly unfair disqualification of the dance troupe that he was a part of, from a popular talent show, aired on a satellite television channel. "But aren't there several other dance troupes that you can try your luck with?" I inquired.

> "*Aho, haye na, pan mala cross hoto tyacha kay?!*" (Of course there are, but what about the fact that I am jinxed [crossed]?!), Chotu's impatience at my refusal to get it clearly showed through his irate reply. "*Ata majhya mule tyancha nuksan hota na, mag mi kay mhanto, majhya mule tyancha kashala…*" (Now if other groups are suffering because of my jinx, I think to myself, why should I let that happen to them…), he justified his refusal to explore possibilities with other groups.

The inevitability of "cross" seemed to arrest the boundaries of Jonas Brothers' imaginations effortlessly, colonizing every possibility or even the fantasy of a possibility through its

paralyzing logic. It imprisoned a small gain within the reading of a larger failure and discouraged struggle to break out on account of the inevitability of failure which loomed above their life chances. Notwithstanding their bravado and a youthful energy around them, the paradigm of cross jhala alerted me to the young men's deep-seated conviction of their destined failure. Their desperate attempts at disavowal of the markers of their scheduled caste and working class identity through practices of consumption met the stonewall of cross, trapping them into a perpetual no-man's land where aspiration and desire were urgently felt and expressed but hardly ever consummated.

Practices of embodied occupation of the galli and of consumption were vital elements of the young men's gendered spacetime; this spacetime was articulated in complex ways to discourses of caste and class based identity, expressed in a fundamentally *emplaced* matrix through which it became legible for the young men. Khadki-Dapodi, ward no. 755, KFC, "Singapoor," Sadanand tea stall and the galli itself were some of the nodes around which young men's material, embodied and discursive practices consolidated to give shape to a gender, caste, class and place specific spacetime.

In hindsight, I realize that in my portrayal of the galli's gendered spacetime as heavily masculinized and saturated with men's narcissistic practices of consumption, the paradigm of cross raised a crucial signpost of a distinct vulnerability that underpinned these practices. JB's perceived entry into the bracket of young, middle class consumer India on account of their bravado-laced claims of the successful erasure of their caste and class markers seemed to neatly fold back onto itself through their articulation of cross. Obviously unrelated to their caste and class backgrounds, the specters of which they were convinced they had decisively vanquished,

127

cross for JB, presented a frustrating conundrum. It was only my deeper exploration of the themes of education and employment that first foregrounded the stark contours of cross for me: cast in unmistakable molds of class and caste vulnerability itself.

II

On Education, Work and Masculinity

Flagging off masculinity and work

A radically different aspect of these modes of being in the galli came to the fore as I trained the ethnographic focus on the temporality of these acts: the practice of fresh hone, for me, through its connotations of washing up, changing into different (and better) looking clothes, seemed to demarcate this time from an earlier time in the day when the men were possibly engaged in activities distinct from what they did in the evenings. However, this assumed division was rendered irrelevant as I tracked the young men in the galli to realize that the only difference in pre and post-fresh hone, was often, simply the change of clothes: as mentioned in the preceding section, young men's activities (sitting, chatting, playing cards, listening to music on their phones) could easily flow from morning to afternoon to late night, making these temporal divisions redundant. It was only after getting a firmer grip on the temporal rhythm of the galli, a few months into my research, that the mildly shocking blind spot in my ethnographic investigation revealed itself to me: *did/ where did the young men in the vasti go to work?*

Feminist geography has made crucial contributions to theorizing the links between work and gendered identities, particularly in advanced capitalist contexts. Tracing the emergence of the distinct realms of "home" and "workplace" with the consolidation of industrial capitalism in the West, this literature contends that the social and spatial organization of wage work under industrial capitalism became a vital peg around which to construct attributes of ideal femininity and masculinity (McDowell 1999; Massey 1994). As men's productive labor, performed in the workplace/ factory which was cast in terms distinct from home, the site of women's reproductive labor, masculinity itself came to be, "…deeply embedded in the social meaning of work" (McDowell 2003: 58). With a stronger focus of feminist analyses on case studies of women's work, the assumption that individuals entered labor market with already fixed gendered identities came under question; these case studies demonstrated that waged work/ jobs were sets of social practices that embodied and reproduced socially accepted versions of masculinity and femininity, thus imbuing the performers of these practices with these gendered attributes (McDowell 1999: 134-6). While this work largely derives from advanced capitalist contexts, it nevertheless provides a rudimentary framework which can help us locate masculinity vis-à-vis the realm of employment, where the latter becomes generative of masculinities (and femininities).

In the voluminous literature on the centrality of employment (or its absence) to the construction of masculinities in Britain, the transition to masculine adulthood was inevitably linked to the movement from school to a manufacturing job for white working class men in Britain (Willis 1977); however the large-scale loss of manufacturing jobs and increasing casualization and feminization of labor in post-Industrial Britain has rendered this route to masculinity extremely precarious for this class of men, sparking off debates of an alleged "crisis of masculinity" (McDowell 2003: 58; Nayak 2006). Responses of young white men to their

growing irrelevance in the new regime of labor has varied from a recuperation of working-class masculinity through reworking of earlier hyper-masculine traditions of drinking and socializing via the arena of consumption (Nayak 2006), or by adopting explicit markers of "street style" to project a criminalized, hard masculinity (ibid: 820-24) or through young white men's dogged pursuit of a "domestic masculinity," in which they try to achieve the ideal of hard-working and respectable working class masculinity through their increasingly precarious low-skill waged work (McDowell 2003).

McDowell's later research (2005) explores how changing regimes of labor and capital engender vastly disparate masculinities in Britain, breaking the older dichotomy between working class, embodied masculinity and the cerebral, middle-class one. Comparing men's employment in two ends of the service sector employment: fast food outlets and merchant banks, McDowell (2005) argues that both the realms demand a masculine bodily performance which emphasizes clothes, deference, humility, oriented towards the care of the customer (23-28), the fast food jobs simultaneously erasing the earlier moral worth attributed to manual labor, coming to represent the most stigmatized of all service sector work (27). This shift is also reflected in Bourgois' (2003) ethnography of young Puerto Rican men in the neighborhood of Harlem in New York City; Bourgois contends that the race and classspecific machismo encoded in young men's street style of speech, gesture and dressing proved to be counter-productive in the feminized realm of service sector jobs, which demanded subservience, thus continually frustrating their attempts to "go legit," sending them back into the spiral of unemployment or of crack dealing and crime in El Barrio (115-146). The unmaking and remaking of working class masculine identity in the above illustrations are structured to a large extent not just by the

capitalist regimes of labor; masculinities also interact with the feminization of certain kinds of work, molding themselves in opposition to/ resisting the feminized attributes in certain work.

Jackson (1999) points out important lacunae in literature on gender and work in the context of South Asia, by referring to the gender-blind nature of hitherto research towards paid or unpaid labor, a disservice to both, women's domestic labor and to the ways in which men's labor/ work is connected to their gendered social roles. In a crucial insight, Jackson (1999) argues that the compromised position of poor and marginalized men implies a high possibility of their failure to conform to the demands of masculine social roles of being the sole breadwinner of the family, given the nature of work available to these men, its bodily demands and the low wages that are associated with it. This insight signals the highly precarious relationship between masculinity and employment for marginalized men in the context of South Asia, an insight which finds strong resonances in the lives of the young men in the galli.

More recent research however, has begun to train a gendered analytical lens on the realms of men's work: Indukuri (2002) and Ray (2000) explore how men employed in the distinctly "feminized" realm of paid domestic work, navigate the complex landscape of expectations that their contradictory roles of breadwinners and of subservient domestic help engenders for them, in the cities of Delhi and Kolkata respectively.   In both the cases, the male domestic workers evoked their masculinized roles of taking responsibility for their families, making sacrifices and prioritizing their families over their employers' families, in a bid to construct a counter-narrative to the dominant notion of masculine failure and lack of independence encoded in doing domestic work. De Neve (2004) elaborates upon spaces of work not just as a site of production, but also as a site of consumption and aesthetics (67); she shows how low caste Tamil men construct

themselves in alignment with various components of masculinity viz. "the householder," "the patron" or the "cosmopolitan" man, through the relational setting of work space and via a distinct aesthetics of consumption (clothes, money). Shop floor humor is another site which is explored by Ramaswami (2006) through which migrant laborers in a polishing factory in New Delhi are shown to construct their gendered identities, suspended precariously between masculine notions of hard work and their simultaneous failure to live up to the expectations of being the sole breadwinners of their families.

The complex trajectories of employment in Shelar galli

The question of employment (or the lack of it) amongst the young men in Shelar galli was a realm around which we tiptoed gingerly for the following duration of my fieldwork. Out of the fifty odd households in the vasti, members from at least 80% households held permanent jobs as sweepers in the health and sanitation department of Pune Municipal Corporation (hence forth PMC). A few others held jobs in other branches of the health department (fire brigade, malaria control, garbage collection). At the time of my fieldwork however, most of the young men (between the ages 17-35) did not hold a PMC job; it was mostly either or both their parents who worked as sweepers with the PMC. A permanent job with PMC did not just come with the benefits of employment in the public sector (pension, health and tenure security), but also carried with it the established tradition of being inherited by the employee's immediate family members.

It is extremely difficult to obtain accurate information about the historical process through which Mang families came to be aligned with sweepers' jobs in PMC. However, Mang caste

members continue to hold majority of the 6500 odd sweepers' and other jobs in the health and sanitation department of PMC in contemporary Pune.[8] It is imperative to locate this alignment within the specific historical trajectory of development of urban infrastructure of Pune, given the fact that the certainty of inheriting one's parent's government job framed in crucial ways the intensely fraught landscape of work, education and self-worth in the social worlds of the galli's young men.

Narratives of the elder generation in the galli suggested that the PMC conducted an aggressive recruitment drive in its health and sanitation departments in the period between mid-70s and early 80s, when most of the families in the vasti acquired this job. It was however, not a coincidence that it was Mang caste members who filled up the vacancies more than any other caste. The 70s and early 80s decades were marked by a militant assertion of Dalit identity in Maharashtra, reflected in the rise of the militant Dalit Panther movement and the emergence of Dalit autobiographical literature, which sought to give voice to the anger of exploited castes. A broad upshot of these developments was the defiant refusal of Dalits to take up employment

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[8]This number however is only an estimate. See http://punecorporation.org/informpdf/rti/jmc_8.pdf for the PMC data, though there is little clarity as to when this data has been collected or updated. However, this number was confirmed in my interview with Nitin Pawar, a prominent social activist in Pune. Mr. Pawar is the general secretary of an umbrella body of associations of informal workers in the city, called Mahatma Phule Samata Pratishthan. This body includes unions formed by rag-pickers, sweepers, auto rickshaw drivers, domestic workers, hawkers and headload workers in the city. On account of his close association with the mostly scheduled caste population which makes up this informal sector labor constituency, Mr. Pawar's insights were invaluable for me to locate the galli in the larger context of the city's labor force and its connections with formations of caste. Crucially, Mahatma Phule Samata Pratishthan has been operating from Nana Peth for several years now, their office located within walking distance of the galli, due to which Mr. Pawar was astutely aware of the ground realities in Moti Peth and its Mang neighborhoods.

which tied them to menial/ polluting labor that their caste status traditionally was associated

with, which were then promptly taken up by members of the Mang caste.[9]

As mentioned in Chapter I, this is also a continuing trend from 1920s onwards, when

following Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's clarion call to abandon their traditional caste occupations

and to move to cities, members of the erstwhile untouchable Mahar caste migrated to Mumbai en

masse, to be absorbed in the labor force of newly established textile industry, dock yard, colonial

army and sanitation (Paik 2007). Mangs in rural Maharashtra, with their reservations about Dr.

Ambedkar's leadership, were much slower to respond to this slogan, and as a result replaced the

positions vacated by Mahars in the village *balutedari*[10]system, and continued to practice

traditional caste-based occupations in a much larger percentage than the Mahars, both in rural

and urban Maharashtra (Patil 2013; Paik 2007; Jogdand 1991).

An interview with Suresh Shelar, a senior resident of the galli, revealed further the crucial

internal caste hierarchies which have molded the presence of the Mangs in the galli as sweepers

in PMC today. Suresh *nana* pointed out that as the PMC began its recruitment drive, it was not

just the erstwhile Mahars (Dalits), but *also* Mangs who hailed from Pune, who refused to take up

this work which was perceived to be polluting. It was instead the Mangs who had recently

migrated from Solapur, who accepted these positions, as they negotiated their intense struggles

for survival in the city as outsiders and as those who were considered to be lower than Pune-

[9]Interview with Nitin Pawar.

[10]*Balutedari* system refers to a tightly organized system of reciprocal relationships within the caste-based hierarchy of the social and economic life of rural Maharashtra since the medieval period. The system involved twelve caste groups (including artisanal castes) which provided various services to the other caste groups in the village and were in turn paid in kind for their services. Mahars, Mangs and Chambhars were at the bottom of the *balutedari* hierarchy in this system.

134

origin Mangs. Remarkably, the Mang caste has never been traditionally associated with sweeping or cleaning occupations in the context of Maharashtra; the strong presence of this caste in the labor force in present day PMC as sweepers is a telling comment on the movement of Mangs towards an occupation which would place them lower in the hierarchy of menial labor. This is an ironic byproduct of a combination of factors including the historical trajectory of Dalit politics, migration and its enmeshed relationship with the strongly entrenched Mahar-Mang caste dynamics in Maharashtra.

Spatial and social registers of education as a lost opportunity

For most young men in the galli then, the certainty of inheriting this job was the most prominent rationale (in combination with their families' abject poverty and their own lack of interest) for dropping out of school before class X.

> "*Hithlya mansacha kasa e, kashta kelet, shikshanacha vichaar karayla vel milalela naahi. Fakta struggle karat rahaycha. Aai vadilanni pakadla hota dokyamadhe, jau de, nahi shikla tar majhi nokri tar haye…Pan aata tasa nahiye, ek divas shalet nahi gela tar bandhun martyat*" (The lives of people here have been spent in the sheer struggle to survive, there was no time to think about schooling. Earlier, it hardly mattered to parents if their son dropped out of school, he would anyways inherit their job. But things are no longer like that, parents hit their children if they miss even one day of school).

Anya, twenty four, lanky and taller than most of his peers in the galli, had a cheerful countenance and a distinctly self-deprecatory sense of humor and spoke to me with far more ease than several of his other friends in the galli. Anya's statement condensed the radical changes in the discourse surrounding education in the galli in the past three decades. During my fieldwork, there were repeated alarms raised by the vasti residents about the security of their jobs; not just on account

135

of the increasing drive of privatization and sub-contracting that PMC had increasingly adopted in the last decade, but primarily due to regular hearsay reports of the discontinuation of the clause which allowed immediate family members of PMC sweepers to inherit their jobs. In the possible absence of this guarantee of a government job, Anya's comment reflected this sense of urgency which colored the vasti's imagination about education now, reflected in several conversations I had with men and women of all ages here. The centrality of education was also driven home with the increasing realization that certain educational qualifications might enable sweepers to seek jobs in supervisory or clerical positions.

Anya himself had dropped out of school after class VIII, a year after his father's death. By age nineteen he started accompanying his mother, who had inherited her husband's sweeping job, to her work. Besides helping his mother in the sweeping, he also engaged sporadically in small-scale money-lending in the galli or liaised between wholesale flower merchants and women who made venis/garlands in the galli, earning minor profits from the both the ventures. Though he had dropped out of school out of sheer lack of interest, it hurt now, Anya admitted.

> "*Shiklo asto tar ek sangay purta tari jhala asta, aamhi dhavi shikloy, baravi shikloy. Aata aatvi sangtana laaj vatati*" (If I had continued with school, I would have at least been able to say that I have completed Class X or XII. Now I feel ashamed to say that I have completed class VIII).

Vinit, 26, also echoed Anya's regret; he insisted however, that it was his parents' inability to afford even his subsidized fees that forced him to give up school.

> "*Ani jara manala laglya sarkha hota baher gelyavar kuthe…hota mala bharpur vela…ashikshit pana bharpur, mhanje ithe nahi vatat, baher vatata mala*"(I do feel a pang when I go outside. Often…this lack of education, I don't feel it here so much, but I feel it outside).

Vinit, a self-taught sculptor, made Ganesh and Durga idols during the festive season, when he earned most of his income for the year. Both Vinit and his younger brother were slated to inherit their parents' sweepers' jobs in a few years' time. For Vinit and Anya their lack of schooling pinched, not because it impacted their chances of employment as much as the shame that it generated in the world outside the galli. Kiran Shelar, Suresh nana's elder son, 34 and father of three little daughters traced the bold contours of this lack clearly for me. Himself schooled till Class X, Kiran now brokered sale of plots of land within Pune and its suburbs. Kiran spoke passionately about 'our local boys' who do not go to school beyond class X.

> "*Kasa vagaycha, kasa bolaycha, standard level kuthla aahe…tumhi jar college and shikshanach ghetla nahi tar tumhala jag duniyachya kay goshti kalnaar aahet?*" (How to behave, how to talk, what is a standar level…if you do not attend college and get an education, how will you learn about the outside world?).

He then went on to narrate a comparative scenario, where a young man educated till class X can easily order a *vada-pav*[11] from a street vendor; but the same boy will be stumped if he goes to KFC or Pizza Hut. Unable to order anything because he cannot read in English, he will have to face the ignominy of having to ask someone else to help him place the order. For Kiran, even a little bit of English (obtained from a college education) was adequate to offset the disadvantages of poverty, imbuing one's person with the sheen of good character (*changlya gharatla*).

The ability to consume, related intimately to the ability to speak or understand English, was an oft highlighted casualty of having given up schooling. Arun also underlined the inability to place an order in a mall and the resultant shame that his uneducated peers felt on account of

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[11] Vada pav ranks high in the street food repertoire of urban, working class Maharashtra. Mashed boiled potatoes seasoned with green chilies and ginger are deep fried in gram flour batter, following which the bright yellow dumpling is doused with sour and spicy chutneys, placed in a bun slit into half, before serving it with fried green chilies on the side.

their little or no English skills. Arun was one of the few young men in the galli to have obtained a Bachelor's degree. Currently unemployed, he was preparing for a qualifying examination for service in the local police force. He admitted that his relatively poor English skill also was a source of worry for him.

The celebration of education as a ticket to modernity, upward social and economic mobility, and development has enjoyed a long history in the imagination of post-colonial India, entrenched through state rhetoric and schemes, development organizations and the media (Jeffrey et al.2008). In their research on the dilemmas of educated under/unemployed youth in rural western Uttar Pradesh, Jeffrey et al. (2008) argue that the idea of education as a harbinger of progress is internalized by people, manifested in their everyday practices, lived experiences and indeed their habitus, as they construct themselves as "educated" and "modern" or conversely experience the serious inadequacies generated by the label "*unparh*" (ill-literate) (156). The symbolic and material hegemony associated with proficiency in English in post-Independence India (Faust and Nagar 2001) adds another layer to this complex, producing profound feelings of marginalization and humiliation for those excluded from the benefits of an English medium education, deepening further the wedge between benefactors of and those excluded from the benefits of the magic pill of education and/ or of English medium education.

The plethora of disabilities that the young men in the galli listed on account of their disrupted education, were grim reminders of the level of disenfranchisement expressed in the unmistakable sense of inferiority that exclusion from education and English generated for them. Not surprisingly, barring the few examples of Vinit or Anya who candidly admitted to their feelings of inadequacy, these were articulated primarily by the relatively better educated men in

138

the galli in their scathing critique of those who were not.[12] Thus the school drop-outs of the galli were painted in unflattering hues to me by their peers, the formers' utter lack of exposure to the world outside the galli as a result of their minimal schooling featuring in their narratives as a punishing refrain.

For Abhijit himself a graduate, and a small time theater actor, graduation was a ticket to a job, which enabled one to see the outside world. But in the absence of both, graduation and a jobamong the men in the galli, their awareness about how the world worked was dismal: Abhijit recounted how the young men wanted bikes once they come of age, but had no idea that one required requisite documents (like a driver's license, no-pollution certificate) to be able to drive outside the galli. Sunny sneered at the galli men's inability to even deposit a check in a bank, due to their ignorance. Sunny had dropped out of school in class VII, however he proudly told me about his regular trips to SP College with this friends, which enabled him to see the world outside the galli. He derived confidence from his current job as a salesman in a watch store, located in the prestigious Cantonment area of the city, a site where he interacted with decidedly upper middle class and cosmopolitan customers.[13]

For Sunny's elder brother, also a salesman in a toy store in the same area, the young men's confinement to the galli was not a consequence of their lack of confidence, but rather reflected the latter's complacency.

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[12] Jeffrey et. al. (2008) elaborate upon detailed narratives of educated young men in which they set up comparative capabilities between the educated and the uneducated in binary terms, vis-à-vis refinement, manners, consumption, comportment, speech, moral strength, confidence and wisdom (64-72). All these narratives in the ethnography are unmistakably marked by the narrators' ill-concealed contempt and derision towards the "uneducated person," as they imagined or mimicked the latter's graceless social acts.

[13] Original place names have been retained in this paragraph.

> "*Amhi baher bharpur phirlo na, aapli mula gallitna baherach nighat nahit…tyanna pahilya paasun gharchyankadun miltay, aamhala nahi na tasa milala...*" (We always roamed a lot outside, but our boys never step out of the galli. They have always gotten it readymade from their families, we never got anything like that…).

Sunny and Rama did not have a PMC job to inherit. Having lost their father at a young age, both the brothers had to start earning during their teenage years in order to sustain themselves. Rama could barely conceal his derogatory tone while talking about the "readymade jobs" that awaited a lot of young men in the galli, which afforded them the luxury of not having to step out. For Rama the lack of exposure to the city, which flowed from lack of schooling and the complacency generated by readymade jobs, culminated into a harsh judgment of the men in the galli as representing, "*gavthi vichaar*" (attitude of country bumpkins). Remarkably, Rama's evidence for this contention was the fact that his friends in the galli hardly ever took their wives out for a movie or a trip out of the city. Asserting that his peers never dared to take their wives on a holiday out of Pune because they did not even know how to speak Hindi, Rama ended with an emphatic statement about traveling with his future wife and bragging to his peers in the galli about their conjugal travels.

These narratives indexed a profound social disability, which the young men in the galli experienced due to their lack of education. Crucially, the link between a masculine identity and its gendered performance of consumption (of bikes/ KFC) and of occupying the public domain (of rules and regulations, of banks, of travel) was rendered acutely vulnerable for the galli's young men, by this lack. These inadequacies destabilized my hitherto construction of the material spaces of the galli as explicitly masculinized, which had yielded unquestioningly to the young men's embodied and consumptive practices in my initial months of fieldwork. That the young men could not/ would never be able step out of the galli was a conclusion that Abhijit,

140

Kiran, Sonu, Rama and Arun articulated repeatedly, underlining not just the spatial limits of the galli, but also the symbolic stonewall of *gavthi vichaar*, ignorance and complacency that the galli's milieu was riddled with. While elaborating upon his uneducated peers' lack of confidence to cross the boundary of the galli, Arun once offered a striking insight:

> "*Galli chya baher padle ki tyanna freedom nahi asa vatata*" (They think that their freedom ends once they step outside the galli).

The galli thus became a place of "freedom," from the lack of control and confidence experienced in spaces outside of it (banks, roads, Hindi-speaking towns, English-speaking standar world of KFC and the mall), a simultaneous *container* of this lack of the young men. The overarching narrative of men's inability to transcend the galli precluded viewing the galli now as merely a materialized terrain of masculine control; tied to all the above spaces in an unlikely landscape, the galli was transformed into a central node of a damning, spatialized rendering of the young men's disability.

Of "smart work" and "slow life:" employment, self-worth and masculinity

The lost opportunity of gaining social capital and the attendant confidence attached to education was just one aspect of this uneasy terrain of school drop-out status for the young men. The lack of schooling qualification of most of the young men in the vasti complicated their chances of employment, since several of them were well into their mid-30s by the time their parents retired and passed on the *sarkari nokri* to them. Obtaining a job in this intermediate period as they waited for their PMC position was a difficult proposition, as testified by Kartik. Kartik, 25, ruefully told me of the several job interviews in which he was rejected once his class

VIII pass status was revealed. Notwithstanding their assured jobs, young men were still faced

with the prospect of un/ under-employment, a constant nagging presence as they negotiated the

demands of a work status. For Satish, lack of education produced a peculiar vulnerability for the

men in the vasti:

> "*Ata don type aahe, smart work kiva hard work. Mulanna hard work madhe java lagtay sadhya…*" (There are two types of work, smart work or hard work. The boys have to go into hard work currently…).

Defined by the demands (or not) of an education-based skill, "smart work" and "hard work"

(Satish used these English phrases), were understood as mutually exclusive categories,

precluding the possibility of any work that they did as falling in the category of "smart." It was

highly instructive that these two types of work, while roughly corresponding to white collar and

blue collar employment respectively, were articulated in terms far more charged with judgment

surrounding worth and value of work. "Hard work" included brokering land deals in the city,

working as delivery boys or as salesmen in small stores, or accompanying parents in their

sweeping duties.

Photo 2.11: Advertisements for English coaching dot all parts of the city. In the flier stuck on an electricity pole in this image, the advertisement promises that learning English and speaking English fluently in Western Academy will lead to "easy success" in life.

Photos 2.12 and 2.13: Peth areas abound with advertisements like these. In 2.13, a Caucasian man points at the reader asking them, "Is English speaking your weakness?" The advertisement exhorts the reader to join this particular coaching center immediately, because "this one decision can change your life."

For the galli's young men, the last category, their destined sweeping jobs were located on

the wrong end of the "smart work-hard work" continuum, *farthest* away from any connotation of

"smart," as if to drive an unbridgeable wedge between the two realms. A strong sense of shame was associated with the act of sweeping the streets for the young men in the galli, articulated poignantly by Anya,

> "*Mi jitha jhaadu marto na Krishna Society chya baher, titha call center chya gadya yeun thambtyat…high class pori Jevha tithe yeun thambtat na asa khishatla rumal mi tondala lavto lagech* (laughs). *Mag nantar mala ashi savay padun geli, mhatla kay karaycha aapan kay kuta big boss aahet ka, apla kay shikshan jhalay, qualification aahe ka aapla…aapan kay koni karodpati aahe ka, tyanna lajayla, aaj he kela nahi, tar aapan khanar kay?*" (A lot of call center pick-up cabs halt at the place where I go to sweep outside Krishna Society. When high class girls stopped there I automatically used to cover my face with a kerchief (laughs). But then I got used to it, I said to myself am I a big boss, or am I qualified and educated or a millionaire to be embarrassed in front of them? If I don't do this work today, what will we eat?)

I struggled to find redemption in Anya's eventual removal of the kerchief from his face, while he swept the streets. The removal of kerchief was prompted not by a claiming of his hard work also as work of dignity, which deserved respect; clearly the removal of the kerchief signaled a strategy in which Anya extricated himself from *even* the expectation of respect, on account of the absence of markers in himself which demand it: money, education, qualification, status.

Nowhere was the gap between aspiration and reality more visible than in the case of Chotu a.k.a. Bunny, of JB. By family consensus, Chotu, youngest of three brothers, was to be the recipient of his mother's sweeping job; his elder two brothers would get monetary help from their parents instead, obtained from their post-retirement gratuity fund. Arun, the middle brother, however agreed that this did cause friction within families at times; a one-time monetary bequeathal was hardly comparable to the permanency of a government job. Notwithstanding the advantages of the job, Chotu was struggling to accept this new job, Arun mentioned. He had already started accompanying his mother in the mornings when she went to sweep, but he felt

ashamed mentioning it in front of his Englishspeaking, wealthy friends from the dance troupe, Arun clarified, not without empathy for his younger brother.

The impossibility of recovering a sense of respect and value for their work was writ large in several of these testimonies of embarrassment, on behalf of the sweeper or those surrounding him. Prasad, twentyseven, had quit his temporary sweeper's job, which he had undertaken with a contractor, a few months before I interviewed him. Prasad was keen in building a career in local politics and had been active in the radical Dalit political outfit, Dalit Panthers of India for the last ten years. He insisted that while he did not feel any shame in doing his sweeping work, it was on account of the embarrassment of people who looked up to him as a possible local leader that he decided to quit his job. If he approached someone for a favor, he would not be taken seriously, if his job was revealed, Prasad explained to me. Prasad, younger of two brothers, was initially to inherit his father's job. But now being engaged to a girl who possibly was going to secure employment in the police force, Prasad's elder brother demanded to his father that he get the *sarkari nokri*, since his younger brother would anyways have one permanent government job on account of the latter's wife.

For the Mang men in the galli, the place of work in their sense of themselves as masculine is inflected by an ideology and a history of caste injustice which has denied them personhood and manhood precisely on the basis of the work that their caste was associated with (Gupta 2010; Upadhayay 2010; Anandhi 2002). The caste-based division of labor, which has historically sustained (and continues to sustain) caste hierarchy in India, rested on the axis of the hegemony of non-manual work vis-à-vis the moral values of pollution and degradation ascribed to manual work. Gupta (2010) in her review of upper caste narratives of Dalit masculinity in colonial India,

145

describes in detail the centrality of manual labor which led to the casting of the Dalit male body as, "…the abject body of labour" (315), fit only for servitude and passivity. Representations of their bodies as, "…resilient but dim-witted" (ibid), led to a disturbingly infantilized view of the Dalit male workers, who were regarded only as a valuable source for agricultural labor, fit to be, "…tamed and trained for practical use" (ibid). According to Gupta (2010), the exploitation of Dalit masculine labor by upper caste men and by the colonial authorities was predicated on the construction of, "…the emasculated, feeble Dalit man, who, at the same time, was capable of hard physical labour" (316). While these constructions were contested by Dalit men who asserted their masculinity via resorting to working in the colonial army and acquiring "military modernity" (Gupta 2010: 322-30), the case of men in the vasti testifies to the enduring association between manual labor and its ritual meaning, devoid entirely of dignity, in the context of caste and how it continues to mediate the lived realities and aspirations of lower caste men in the contemporary India.[14]

Jeffreyet. al. (2008) record the overwhelming preference and struggle of young men in western rural UP, across caste divisions, to transition from *haath ka kaam* (manual labor) to *pen chalane ka kaam* ("pen" work/ white collar employment) (90), amongst the educated unemployed men in rural Uttar Pradesh, testifying to the aspiration for, "…new forms of youth masculinity in which they would be removed from manual labour" (174). Yet, these aspirations

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[14] This theme finds resonance in the brilliant Marathi film "Fandry" (2013), which revolves around the emotional world of the protagonist, Jabya, a Dalit adolescent boy from rural Maharashtra. Jabya struggles with his infatuation with an upper caste girl in his school, while trying hard to distance himself from his family's traditional work of catching and butchering stray pigs, an occupation for which highest stigma is reserved in the caste-bound morality of the village. The movie is a poignant, but powerful portrayal of the shame, anger and humiliation that caste-based work engenders for lower caste performers of that work, impinging on their very construction of self-worth, in being denied dignity and personhood.

were continually frustrated, as Jeffrey (2010) shows; young middle-caste men from Meerut narrated their inability to secure jobs with multinational firms, on account of their English accents their demeanor (84-85). Anandhi (2002) too reports that refusal of Dalit youth to perform agricultural labor constituted the most naked challenge to upper caste dominance in rural Tamil Nadu; the Dalit youth, in fact, claimed with pride that they did not know how to till the land (4400). In their reworking of the polluting, lower caste connotation associated with the work of cutting hair and nails, several men who worked in saloons and beauty parlors in Delhi (Ahmad 2000) insisted on distancing themselves from the term *nai* which refers to the caste occupation of barbers, in Hindi (94). In a bid to locate their work as carrying respect and dignity, most of the men preferred calling themselves as "beautician," "hairdresser," or a "stylist," which alluded more to a professional skill than an occupation determined by caste status (ibid).

Work, in all the above illustrations, appears to be a crucial site, on which men construct and negotiate their gendered selves, contesting, challenging or conforming to the values attributed to specific acts of work; in their shame and embarrassment then, the men in Shelar galli were responding to the historical burden of entrenched cultural meanings of sweeping as well as the contemporary social milieu that further weighed down this burden, through its aspirational category of "smart work" which alone was rewarded with status and dignity. The transient nature of their work and the lack of dignity accorded to it transformed work for the young men in Shelar galli into an unsettling terrain, preventing them from constructing themselves either as breadwinners or as "smart workers."

In a conversation once with Satish, Anya and Naresh, the rhetoric of a highly constricted world of possibilities came to the fore painfully clearly, as the young men tried to list their

147

options of work, only to come up against an imagined failure in all the cases. The chances of doing "smart work" already dimmed, Satish had earlier pointed out towards the frequency of hard work to which the men had to resort. Naresh then brought up the possibility of going into a small business, and the three of them listed out the necessary requisites for starting one's own business: contacts, networks, capital investment and an ability to absorb losses.

> "*Majhya kada kuthla evdha paisa nahi kuthla business takayla…ektyane asa karnyachi, mhanje daring pan naahi, karan aapan te kadhi kela nahi and aaplya gharchyanni te kadhi kela nahi, mag aaplyala tyacha experience nahi*" (I don't have the money to start a business…I don't dare start a business on my own, because I have never done it before and neither has my family…that's why one doesn't have any experience in this).

Naresh' candid admission pointed towards not just a class-based disadvantage of lack of capital, but importantly a fundamental caste-based disadvantage as well: of a lack of confidence arising from no prior exposure to the world of networks and contacts which are necessary for business.[15] Anya then brought up the possibility of going into "*don numbercha dhanda*" (illegitimate businesses) and himself crossed out this option, "*Pora karu shaktyat…pan pora ghabartyat*" (The "boys" will be able to do it…but they are scared). In his efforts to maintain a sense of dignity in the face of reality, Anya missed out on the inherently contradictory message that his statement conveyed: if the boys were scared, how could they still be *able* to do it?? Naresh stepped in to reassure us that even if the "boys" got caught while indulging in illegitimate activities, they could still get out on the basis of their contacts, but then it would put a blot on their reputation and respect. The possibility of acquiring employment which would fulfill the

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[15] Deshpande and Newman (2010) argue that there is a marked difference between college level students who qualify for affirmative action (and thus are low caste) and those who don't, in terms of harnessing their respective family sources for searching for employment: this includes the possibility of tapping into family networks or possession of cultural capital which might expose the student to possibilities of employment (97-99).

requirements of respect, dignity and smartness, narrowed down progressively in our conversation, laying bare not just the recurrent anxieties of the young men, but also a painfully limited field of expectations and hopes on which to map their imaginations of a future.

> "*Asa perfect saangu shakat nahi, kuthlya goshti chya maga palun te nahi jhala tar…*" (I cannot say accurately…what if I run behind something and it doesn't work out).

Responding to my question about their future dreams, Naresh' non-committal reply signaled an approach which eschewed any risk. Even of dreaming. Anya followed up closely on this,

> "*Aho, attacha yug tasa fast challay, tashi paristhiti aapli tar nay…lifach slow aahe aapli!*" (The world today is so fast, but our circumstances are not like that…our life itself is slow!).

These responses exposed to me without warning the privilege that the ability to envision a future assumed; indeed the notion of a future itself, predicated on a certain momentum at which life proceeds, seemed to be elusive for the men as they comprehended their lives as stagnant, a temporality vastly disparate from the fast-paced world outside. The theme of time occupies a pivotal place in recent discussions on youth and unemployment across varying contexts: in their ethnographic work on unemployed young men in urban Senegal and Ethiopia respectively, Ralph (2008) and Mains (2007) both highlight the temporal registers through which the experience of unemployment is processed by the unemployed men as lack of progress. The overabundance of unstructured time, which stretched out in an endless wait for a better future, constituted a burden for the unemployed men; time had to be "killed" (Mains 2007: 666) leading them to devise elaborate rituals of tea-drinking (Ralph 2008) or chewing a local stimulant, watching film videos and chatting (Mains 2007), activities which not only were coping mechanisms in the face of hopelessness, but were simultaneously punishing reminders to the men of their own failures.

149

Craig Jeffrey (2010) describes this troubled relationship of unemployed youth with time through the idiom of "timepass," in his rich ethnography of educated, unemployed lower middle class men in north India. As he documents young unemployed men's performances of time pass across the tea shops of Meerut, Jeffrey (2010) contends that these gendered acts of horseplay, humor and exchange of specialized knowledge about the city not only helped the men fashion their masculine selves, at another level it also enabled them to highlight their own social suffering, which Jeffrey terms as, "…a type of a defiant public admission of failure" (93).

Circumscribed starkly by their families' status as migrant Mangs in post-Independence Pune, the realm of education and employment presented a curious case for the young men in the galli aged between eighteen and thirty. Within the vasti and its families, the realm of inherited jobs was its own universe, the coveted *sarkari nokri* governing the disbursal of its benefits through an indigenous internal logic, often determining young men's life choices and internal family dynamics. Thus with their chances of employment being completely independent of their education in their growing up years, most of them had dropped out of school without acquiring any substantive qualifications. However, the aggressive demands of a neoliberal ethos that pervades urban and rural Indian context today combined with an increasing jeopardizing of their employment chances has suddenly left this group of young men in the lurch: with neither qualifications, nor reassurance, even as the world of aspirations continue to tighten its hold in their social and gendered lives. This stark paradox and its attendant anxieties marked profoundly the production of masculine identities in the galli, their relationship with employment and education being irrelevant at best and emasculating at worst.

III

Men in the Galli: Uncertain Masculinities

By illustrating the ways in which the social and material space of the galli was woven into the discourse and everyday practices of men's gendered identities in its earlier sections, this chapter has developed an argument about masculine selves which are not just located at the intersection of caste, class and gender formations, but that this intersection itself is embedded firmly within a spatio-temporal matrix of the galli, Moti Peth and their place in the city of Pune. In the last section of this chapter I attempt to make explicit the spatialized register of masculine identities in the galli, by investigating the young men's deep ambivalence towards the galli itself. While the space of the galli was definitely a place of control and "freedom" for the young men, they also articulated the intensely felt need to break out of the ethos embodied by the galli; I argue that masculine selves shaped in the simultaneously restrictive and enabling galli milieu reflected this frustrating admixture for the young men of Shelar galli.

Their preference to continue to stay in the galli in the future on account of the social network of support that it afforded them was the leitmotif of my initial interviews with young men in the galli; however, this thread soon branched out and wound itself into a tangled confusion of contradictory assumptions and aspirations, which brought home ever more forcefully the dilemmas of being in the vasti.

> "*Baher property asleli chalel, pan he sodun nako…karan hya gallit je karta yeta te baher nahi karta yet.*"(It will be good to own property outside, but I don't want to leave here. Because outside we cannot do the things we can do in the galli).

151

Clearly establishing the galli as a place of freedom, Anya's contention was supported by Kartik and Prakash, who both stressed on the impossibility of forging mutual relationships of support akin to those in the vasti, outside of it. In fact, the assurance of help in difficult times was the sacrosanct quality that most residents of the galli underlined continually, imbuing the vasti with a moral high ground that was not merited by middle class "housing societies."

> "*Society madhe lok busy astaat…kahi problem aale na ekatrit pane kahi face karu shakat nahit, dara banda, door banda asta tyancha. Manya aahe tithe paisa aahe, pan tyanna pudhchya darjachi vyasana lagleli aahet. Mi tar mhanto aaplya areat changla aahet.*"(The residents of 'housing societies' are busy. They cannot face a problem in unison. Their doors are closed. Agreed, they have money, but their addictions are also of a different level. In fact I say that our area is then much better…)

In Naresh' narrative, what the vasti lacked in monetary terms, was recovered in moral terms vis-à-vis the housing societies, with their busy residents, closed doors and expensive addictions. Support however, was not just constituted by possibility of help, but importantly was underlined with the possibility of obtaining respect and dignity as well, as highlighted by Vinit,

> "*Aaplya lokanmadhe rahava. Baghitlele aahet udaharna…Dhondiba Shelke…Nehru nagarla rahayla gele…ithe evdha tyancha vajan hota, mhanje tyanna maan sanman hota ikda, jevha gele na, tevha tyanchya mayatila fakta 20-25 loka hote…*"(One should live amongst one's own people. We have seen instances…Dhondiba Shelke…he moved to Nehru nagar. He was so respected here…but when he died there, barely twenty five people come to his funeral).

In the same breath though, Vinit was quick to point out the example of a family whose move from the galli into a "flat" culminated in a marked difference in the way their children talked and behaved. A little later in the same conversation Vinit articulated in clearest of terms the process of exclusion that was at work in the city-space notwithstanding the attempts of lower caste groups to break out of areas labelled as "lower caste:"

"*Jyaveli aamcha samaaj Matang samajatun sidela kuthetari changlya area madhe rahayla gela, tar tithe changlya jati che lok je astaat, tonda var tar bolat nahit tyanna ki he mangache aahet mhanun, pan thodi kujbuj hote…mangache ase astaat, he boltaat, he ase torture kartaat*" (Every time someone from our caste has moved to a better area, their upper caste neighbors whisper behind their backs, about them being Mang…it's torture!)

In his interview, Santosh, twenty three, goaded by his insistent mother, had shyly admitted that he dreamed of living in a flat outside Moti Peth, the location of a toilet and bath *inside* one's own house being one of the most important determinants for his preference for a flat. For Santosh, the impossibility of an everyday life independent of the perpetual conflict ridden dynamics between the galli residents was another strong incentive to move into a flat. The image of the vasti as a network of unprecedented mutual support floundered in these narratives, as the tightly-knit weave of social relationships in the vasti also entailed an unwanted embroilment in the vasti's affairs, for many. In the wake of a particularly bitter feud with another mandal outside Moti Peth, which sucked in most of the mandal members in the galli in its spiral of tense conflict, Anya burst out saying that he did not want to raise his one-year old son in this galli, but in a flat farthest from Moti Peth:

"*Majhya gharamadhe bhandana jhali tar shejarcha yenaar naahi sodvayla. Tumcha tumhi.Kahi kunachi sambandha nastoy. Dar banda karaycha aapla, sansar aapla aapla, ghar, TV, jevan vagare…*"(If there is a conflict in my house, the neighbor will not come to intervene. To each on his own. No connection with anyone. Just shut your door, live your life, watch television, eat your dinner!)

My son can go to school and meet his friends during the day; during the night we will come back to the galli to sleep though, Anya speculated, betraying his hard labor to arrive at a solution which enabled him the simultaneous distance from and proximity to the galli. The characterization of the galli as restrictive culminated in the dramatic equation outlined by Sunil's mother, as she elaborated upon why her son wanted to move out of the galli:

"*Apan galiccha vasti madhe rahilo, tar aapla bolna gachal vatata. Kiti jari aapan prayatna kela sudhraycha tari aapan sudhru shakat nahi…an baher gelyachya nantar aapli bhasha badalli jati ani aapan swachha rahayla lagto ani paishe kamvayla lagto*"(If we live in a filthy slum then our language also reflects that ethos. No matter how much we try to improve, we cannot do it. But once we step outside, our language changes, we start staying clean and start earning money).

The complex of galli-squalor-filthy language-lack of money was remedied neatly by the counter-space of "outside of galli" which enabled the galli dwellers to achieve the highly sought after state of "improvement," constituted by its morally laden ingredients: hygiene, respectable language and productivity. The drastic difference in the "inside the galli" and "outside the galli" portrayals of opportunities for cultural capital, mobility and "improvement" was a startling indictment: so overpowering was the ethos that inhabited the galli, that just the sheer act of transcending galli's limits seemed to hold out a redemptive promise of a respectable life for its residents. The internalization of the galli and indeed of their own selves as irredeemable was lodged firmly in these denouncements: JB described to me in detail the case of some of their caste members who were rehabilitated under a state scheme in a multistoried apartment building constructed in Moti Peth itself. The unfortunate result of this move: goats were tied in the elevators, groceries sold in the corridors of the building, squalor reigned everywhere. After their derisive guffaws had receded, Chotu said decisively,

"*Asa dakhavla tyanni ki aamhi kadhich sudharnaar nahi.Aakhya samajala mahiti aahe ki aamcha samaaj kiti ghan aahe.Aamhi tyala ghanach manto, pan aamhala garva pan aahe.*" (They proved how our caste will never improve. The whole society knows how dirty our caste is. We also regard our caste to be dirty, but we are also proud of it).

Abhijit's unforgiving indictment of the vasti and its residents was much more unequivocal than JB,

154

> "*Aaplya saglya vastitlya lokanni vatata ki vasti mhanjech sagala jag aahe. Evdhach aahe ki corporation chi nokri aahe, mahinyala 10-15 hazaar gharat yetat, baki sagli zopadpatti chich level aahe… ithe kadhi thambavasa vatat nahi.*" (People in our vasti think their vasti itself is the world. People here have a government job, they get 10-15 thousand a month, but their level is that of a slum. I never feel like hanging around here).

For Abhijit, a stable job and income were hardly adequate to push the vasti out of the loaded category of *zopadpatti* (slum), having listed a detailed inventory of the depraved qualities which made the vasti eligible to be termed as zopadpatti: lack of education, early marriages of girls and boys and lack of exposure to the world outside the galli. Similarly, Kiran could not hide his extreme condescension while describing the atmosphere of the galli, which he claimed was like that of a *kheda* (village):

> "*Ithli loka kashi rahtaat...roj sakali aaplya tya paara bhovati chuli petlelya, sagle loka uthun aahet tithe…*" (Do you see how people live here? Every morning the fires are burning for heating water, people are hanging lackadaisically around the fires…)

The contempt in his tone and on his face as he mock acted a person just out of bed, rubbing their eyes with an exaggerated expression of laziness and a sleepy countenance was undisguised and sharp. "*Arre, thoda tari standard raha na tumhi!*" (Arre, live at least a little bit in a standard way!!), he ended his tirade in a mixture of what seemed like an already defeated appeal to and righteous anger towards "them" who refused to live like standard people do.

As the above narratives unfolded, they lay bare a severe sense of internalized caste and class-based inferiority that was realized on the sites of the galli/ vasti and zopadpatti, sought to be recuperated in a flat in a standard area or in a housing society for the young men in Shelar galli. This was not surprising considering the rather long history of naturalized association of the space of zopadpatti/ vasti/ slum with a dehumanized moral and material ethos, consolidated through popular and scholarly discourse on the "slum problem" in India. Well-intentioned but

patronizing scholarly accounts of slums in post-Independence India produced them as "dirty,"

and "polluting" spaces infested with "criminal activities" in need of "improvement," reproducing

a distinctly Oscar Lewis-like logic which made fuzzy the boundaries between the poverty-ridden

material conditions of a slum and the moral disposition of those who inhabited this space (Jaoul

2012; Roy 1993; Bapat 1981, Lewis 1966).[16] After 1991, as a new brand of middle class civic

activism proposes to cleanse public spaces through "city beautification" drives and to rid Indian

cities of encroachers, squatters and polluters (Chatterjee 2004; Fernandes 2004), the space of the

slum has become a renewed focal point of this reformist vision: Ghertner (2008) and

Ramanathan (2006) demonstrate how these spaces are increasingly portrayed as a "nuisance" and

as "illegal" in the legal discourses, thus consolidating further incriminating layers of

(im)morality that these spaces purportedly embody.

Even though the residents never described their vasti as a zopadpatti (slum), there were

continuous emphasis on Moti Peth and its surrounding peths as constituting a "slum area" (*sic*) in

the cityscape, freely referencing its attendant discourses of slums as "backward," in need of

"improvement" and "awareness".[17] In this context, the young men's heavily loaded vocabulary

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[16] Gilbert (2007) contends that the term "slum" is not simply a technical tool to describe a particular kind of shelter, but has been heavily ideological in its use, across time and space. Conjuring up images of moral depravity and wretchedness, this term, Gilbert argues, is a hegemonic middle class construct, as it operates in contexts as disparate as contemporary *favelas* in Brazil, shanty towns in India or in the classic Dickensian imagery of slums in Victorian England. Gilbert warns that the return of the term in UN documents in recent times will only further strengthen the ideological underpinnings of this word, shaping policies which attempt to get rid of these "undesirable" spaces.

[17] During the duration of my fieldwork I was also involved with a loose coalition of slum dwellers across Pune city as they attempted to respond to state sponsored rehabilitation schemes in the state executed by Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA). Notwithstanding their strong opposition to these schemes as a strategy of land developers and state agencies to transform city spaces into profitable real estate and to marginalize the slum dwellers, a sizeable number of representatives from this group also articulated clearly the aspiration to transcend the label of a zopadpatti dweller and "learn" to live like the middle classes and gain respectability, if given a chance to break out of the class-based spatial divisions of the city. Several of them even differentiated themselves from "illegal" slum residents, who they claimed were filthy and of suspect moral character. These characterizations were laced with caste biases, subtly

156

of "improvement" was cast in terms of an aspirational journey from one end of the spatialized

spectrum (galli) towards the other (a flat in a standard area), though both, the galli and the flat

were hardly uncomplicated points of origin and destination respectively. The promise of

respectability and material and cultural capital that life in a flat indexed was continually reined in

with their implicit recognition that this move would cost them the loss of the well-entrenched

caste and class based networks of familiarity, mutual assistance and dignity now available in the

galli. Moreover, this move was hardly just a matter of desire for the galli residents; Vinit's

statement about the Mangs being kept out of standard areas was a telling comment on the

exclusionary regime of city spaces that operated along the axes of caste and class, which implied

an indefinite suspension of these desires for most of the aspirants.

To me both, the imperative of being in the galli and/ or the desire to cross its boundaries

seemed to culminate in a consistent impasse for the young men, reminiscent of what McDowell

(2003) terms as "spatial entrapment" (202) in the specific context of white working class men in

UK, whose lives and aspirations were highly localized, on account of their low wages and

dwindling opportunities against the background of declining manufacturing jobs in UK. Arguing

that for these young men, the popular ideas of living an increasingly mobile life in a fast

globalizing world rang completely false, McDowell (2003) contends that,

> "…unlike affluent workers or better educated and more fortunate young people, free to
> explore an ever-increasing set of educational and leisure opportunities, these young men
> are trapped in 'place'" (202).

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equating Dalit/ recent migrant populations in the city with illegality. The internalization of these biases by the
residents of Shelar galli then, was hardly surprising.

The sense of being "trapped" in case of the young men in Shelar galli came to the fore in their experiences and imaginations of life in the galli or outside it, where promises were almost invariably undergirded by the certainty of losses. The comfort and freedom of the galli was constantly undermined by the deep sense of lack and loss of self-worth that it engendered in them; on the other hand, the geography of caste/ class exclusion in the city and the fear of losing their social networks of mutual aid threatened to keep their desires to attain social and material mobility by transcending the galli just that: wishful aspirations.

I contend that in most of these narratives, the young men's denouncements of the galli in fact represented their critiques which were directed towards the inhabitants of the galli; and towards *themselves*. A thin line divided the young men's simultaneous attachment to and revulsion towards the galli from their ambivalence towards their samaaj (caste) which inhabited the galli. The social and historical meanings of "slum" and Mang samaaj affixed to the galli in combination with the vulnerabilities produced by caste and class status engendered a crisis of self-worth for the young men, projected onto the galli, in their feelings of contempt, frustration, reassurance and lack of confidence in terms of engaging with the city located outside the purview of "slum area." This attribution of characteristics of the self to space and vice versa finds resonances in the work of Meth (2009), who focuses on the mediation of poor black men's emotional worlds by their location in informal settlements in Durban, South Africa. Meth (2009) shows effectively how place and state policies intersect to construct men's "emotional geographies" (857) through registers of feeling dispossessed, useless, inferior, and full of despair, all of which were expressed through the dire situation of their informal settlement, with no infrastructure, no state action against alarming rates of violence there and no provision of medical services, reminiscent of rural (and hence inferior) areas (859-60).

In their research on the spatial politics of Dalit settlements in North and South India respectively, Jaoul (2012) and Gorringe (2006) illustrate how radical politicization of caste consciousness is articulated to the practices of place-making of Dalit settlements. The authors describe ethnographically the micro-political strategies of the radical Dalit political outfit, Dalit Panthers of India (DPI), which operated in both the Dalit settlements in Kanpur and in Madurai, which resisted and challenged the dominant caste hegemony, via spatial symbols of assertion of their identity as inherently political. While this politics of space enabled the above settlements to construct a counter-narrative to the stigma that hegemonic discourses had imbued them with and to recuperate their self-esteem (Gorringe 2006: 60-64), the absence of this political consciousness in Shelar galli further narrowed down possibilities of a similar reclamation of pride and self-worth for its residents, as they grappled with an omnipresent self-deprecatory discourse surrounding the galli, their caste, and indeed themselves.

In Conclusion: Gendered Spacetime of the Galli

The above sections have demonstrated how the galli as a gendered spatial and temporal regime is constructed, sustained or challenged by social relations and everyday material practices which are structured by historical discourses of class, gender, caste, consumption and work in complex intersection with each other in the context of contemporary Pune. Men's everyday practices in the galli, thus indexed processes and structures far deeper and overarching than that assumed in merely descriptive terms like "hanging out."

159

At the same time we see that the galli itself shaped the construction and enactment of masculine identity of its young male inhabitants, a process which was necessarily relational: the material and social space of the galli, seen in a specific relation with *other* spaces of the city (ward 755, KFC, malls, Khadki Dapodi, flats in standard areas, "slum area," city streets which they swept, "Singapoor") provided spatialized referents for the young men's exercise of gendered self-making, the galli being a simultaneous expression of their unquestioned gendered power and a container of their acute feelings of inadequacy vis-à-vis the world outside its boundaries. These places collectively made up the spatialized register in which the young men's affective landscape was mapped: their feelings of humiliation, aspiration, inferiority, frustration or loss of dignity were distinctly emplaced, pegged on to the myriad sites of the city, including the galli.

This characterization of the gendered spacetime of the galli however will be rendered utterly flat and partial till we also focus attention on the social relations between men *and women* in the vasti and its implications for gendered identities produced in this site. In the following chapter I focus on women's everyday lives and experiences vis-à-vis the men in the galli, in an attempt to demonstrate the role played by women in the construction of masculine identities in the galli and the implication of space in this process.

Chapter III

Gendered Fields of the Galli

Notes from a Post-Mortem

In September I took my friend Chris (who was to later become my partner), to the vasti to introduce her to my field. Chris' obviously Christian name elicited particular enthusiasm from Sona bai, a staunch believer in the ways of Yeshu (Jesus) and who promptly sought to monopolize Chris' attention by recounting the unfortunate incident of her eldest son's recent death.[1] Midway through her narrative she rushed inside her house and hurried out clutching a dusty plastic bag. "*Majha Anil lai sundar vhata*!" (My Anil was very handsome!), she exclaimed authoritatively, as if almost challenging Chris lest she think otherwise. As evidence, she fished out a bunch of photographs from the bag and held them out for Chris to see, even as several others, including me, now gathered around more closely around her to see the pictures.

The pictures were an unmistakably 90s artefact: 4X6 inches wide printed photographs, with rounded edges, some sticking to each other, having lost their gloss a while ago. Adorning the photos was a much thinner, younger Anil, in a variety of filmy poses, against a studio backdrop, in baggy pleated trousers, loose shirts, sporting a mullet. He sprawled on the stark white floor, looking longingly at the camera, the red rose in one of his hands standing out against the white background. Or then he gazed defiantly into the camera, holding a cigarette lighter topped with a bluish-orange flame close to his face. He leaned against a wall, his arms folded determinedly across his chest, looking away from the camera. His right leg bent, the right heel rested against the wall. The aviator sunglasses hid his eyes, but his face wore a pained

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[1] Sona bai had not converted to Christianity. However she went to church religiously every Sunday, accompanied by her middle son. At times she also held prayer meetings in her shack, wherein she invited other vasti residents to participate, with little success. Sona bai's affinity to Christianity was looked down upon by most vasti residents, but mostly it did not come in the way of their everyday relations with her.

expression. There were several more, heroic Anil, an outraged Anil, sentimental Anil, romantic Anil, all reminiscent of the posters of Bollywood heroes sold cheaply on footpaths of the city.

"*To chaar hazaracha ghadyal ghalaycha, paach hazarache boot asayche majhya Anil che*!" (He wore watches worth four thousand [rupees]; my Anil's shoes alone cost five thousand!) By this time, Lakshmi bai, Anil's adoptive mother, had also joined in, as eager as Sona bai to describe Anil in superlative terms. Anil was Sona bai's eldest son, who was later adopted by his father's childless sister, Lakshmi bai. The latter stayed in the neighboring Matang vasti, thus allowing Anil to shuttle between his two mothers' homes regularly. As we passed around the photographs and discussed Anil's aspirations to become a model, it struck me to be ironic that Anil's death had opened up his life to me far more than it ever had been when he was alive.

Thirtyfour year-old Anil had passed away on a rainy July evening earlier in the year, sending ripples of shock in the galli. He had slept after watching television and had never woken up. The tautly managed performance of everydayness in the rectangular patch of paved street that made up the galli had crumbled the next morning as it gave way to the heart-wrenching staging of Anil's premature departure. Wrapped in a blanket and covered with marigold garlands, Anil was laid out in front of the narrow entrance to the houses in Shelar waada. Sona bai, Lakshmi bai, his wife Naina and sister Preeti were wailing loudly, having entire conversations with Anil, in voices that had by now become hoarse from crying and wailing the whole night. The rest of the vasti had stood watching unapologetically in the light drizzle, near the gym, in the mandir, around Anil, a motionless audience for the grieving women's outpourings.

Over the following week, the process of the galli's coming to terms with Anil's death unfolded in myriad ways: in Sona bai and Lakshmi bai's continued public grieving and in the eager and repeated recounting of the actual event of his death. Hushed conversations combined memories, gossip and subjective judgments in curious ways to produce personal theories explaining Anil's untimely death. When I met him two days after his brother's death, Kartik, his head tonsured, was headed to Sadanand tea house in the adjoining Masoli aali with Suresh. We had not even settled into our wooden seats in Sadanand, when Suresh starting speaking indulgently about his sense of connection with Anil, owing to their shared interests in acting and *natak* (theater).

"Anil used to work in a natak company earlier, but all that stopped once he got married" Suresh said ruefully. "It killed his creativity and probably distressed him terribly. That is why he took to drinking" he added, underlining his connection with Anil as a fellow creative traveler. "Anil was strutting about in a pair of jeans already, when no one in the waada even knew what jeans were!" his face was flushed with unabashed admiration.

Anil's style quotient was outstanding. My first meeting with him in February had been unforgettable for the very same reason. He was dressed in a flamboyant red shirt, which exposed his smooth bare chest, boot-cut jeans with heavily embroidered back pockets, a denim jacket and pointy leather shoes, an unlikely Elvis Presley in the alleyways of Moti Peth. His premature death had sealed his place in the galli's annals of fashion greats; tales of his penchant for expensive watches and shoes did frenetic rounds in the two weeks following Anil's death and continued to resurface even later, as Chris had witnessed.

165

"It is his wife who stifled his unique ways. She actually hid away all his stylish clothes and forced him to wander in the galli in an unwashed vest and a pair of shorts!" Kartik did not beat around the bush while naming the villain, in the same breath validating energetically his deceased brother's *shauq* (pursuits of pleasure). In death, Anil had most certainly redeemed his allegedly wayward behavior. Until now, Kartik had always maintained a resentful distance from his brother, disapproving of the latter's alcoholism and wasteful ways.

For the women in Anil's life, blame became a shuttlecock, furiously directed towards each other, each decrying the others' contribution in hastening Anil's demise. "My blood pressure has shot up since he has gone. There is a burning sensation in my stomach all the time. These pills just make it worse!" Lakshmi bai was leaning against the asbestos wall of Sona bai's one room house. Her sari was disheveled and her voice mournful; I feared she was going to break into a wail. Sona bai sat across her, watching the tea come to a boil on the kerosene stove. Having recently seen Anil's modelling pictures I had come to Sona bai to request permission to photograph them for my research. Ever since Anil had died, Lakshmi bai mostly spent her days in Sona bai's house.

As I looked at Anil's pictures again, Lakshmi bai reiterated Anil's extravagant watch and shoes fetish. "But his wife destroyed him. She suspected him all the time (*shaq*), never let him live in peace." Naina, everybody's favorite punching bag, I thought. Sona bai and Lakshmi bai recounted that Anil had been engaged to a much more beautiful girl for a year and a half, when Naina had caught his fancy. Adamant that he now wanted to marry Naina, he had broken his engagement with his fiancée, infuriating the latter's family due to this betrayal. At this point, Sona bai and Lakshmi bai got into an argument as to which one of them protected Anil more

effectively from his fiancée's family's wrath. Things soon spiraled and I suddenly found myself amidst a full-blown showdown between the two elderly women, locked in competition over their protection of their now dead son.

Sona bai's middle son's wife intervened and calmed the frayed nerves, and for a couple of minutes we all sipped our tea in tense silence. My wishful innocence of a researcher's intent fell woefully short to justify this unfolding of distress and opening up of old wounds. I *had* come hoping that I would be able to dig for more on Anil's life in the presence of his photographs, had I not? Sona bai and Lakshmi bai's distress *did* make its way to this account after all, to bolster my ethnographic narrative and analysis, did it not? But it would be a mistake to merely mouth maudlin tributes to ethnographic dilemmas of power differentials in the field, lest I consolidate the latter even more through this representation, of the omnipotent anthropologist mining relevant data from unknowing informants, the latter completely blind to this politics.

There was nothing innocent about my engagement with Anil's photographs which had most certainly actively steered the conversation towards his life. However, the contest between Sona bai and Lakshmi bai was not entirely devoid of a performative element either, as each sought to gain my validation for her maternal strivings. It seemed to be a competition for motherhood "Brownie points" in an eternally patriarchal ideology which continually evaluated wives and mothers on account of their sacrificial and nurturing contributions towards men's lives, but which seldom made explicit the demands of responsibility and adulthood for men.

My mind went back to the day of Anil's funeral, to an impromptu condolence meet held outside the crematorium after Anil's body was consigned to flames. One of his friends from Lakshmi bai's neighborhood spoke about his jovial nature, his knack for making friends and his

167

sense of humor. He mentioned both Sona bai and Lakshmi bai, but reserved the highest praise for the latter, "It is possible that Sona bai goes off to sleep, but Lakshmi bai, she will stay up even till three in the morning for Anil to return home." The explicit comparison, tactless and probably unintended, set the scoreboard ticking, as the two mothers continued to compete in distress, grief and display of concern and love for their son for months after he was gone.

Clearly, Naina's perspective on her husband's two mothers was different. On the day of the funeral, we rode on the state-run hearse bus, Anil still surrounded by his mothers, his wife and his sister. His five year old son sat in Mona mami's lap, still bewildered by all the crying and mourning around him. Harsh, his elder son sat in the front seat, staring out at the traffic. Anil's wife Naina continued her conversation with him, this time for all of us to hear her clearly. "Look what your mothers did to you, my Anil!" she wailed. "They fostered your addictions and ruined your life with all their indulgences!" She remembered their time together and continued talking to him even as the bus pulled into the crematorium.

Mona mami and her younger sister-in-law, Chaya, reminisced tearfully all the way back from the cremation, as we crammed together in an auto-rickshaw. Mona mami, Anil's distant aunt, indicted Sona bai in no uncertain terms. "Poor Anil used to cry, feeling rejected by his own mother. He would always come to me and borrow five-ten rupees from me," she said, not without emphasis on the latter part.

To me, narratives about Anil seemed to gloss over his drinking habit, his fetish for expensive accessories, his reluctance to work and take responsibility for his family, in turn choosing to look at some of these very things in an indulgent light (like his expensive and fashionable clothes), possibly owing to the shock of his untimely death. Theories of his death

continued to indict the women in his life. The last in the series was one which Preeti, Anil's sister, proposed, after having consulted an astrologer: Naina, by subjecting her husband to her daily curses, had finally brought on his premature death.

Eight months after Anil's death I was greeted one evening by a huge flex, installed in the same spot that Mohanlal had earlier installed his life-size birthday poster. This time it was Harsh, Anil's elder eleven year old son, who loomed above the galli, striking a stylish dance pose. As I stood gazing at the flex, someone quipped that Lakshmi bai had sponsored this flex specially for her adoptive grandson's birthday which was celebrated in the vasti on a grand scale a couple of days ago.

My own piecing together of Anil's narrative post his departure, alerted me to fact that the production of men as men is a venture which plays out as much in the gendered field of their relationships with women, as much as it does in their relations with other men. This chapter aims to illustrate this process by focusing on the modes of gendered relationships in the galli; by locating the varying textures of these relationships ranging from patriarchal dominance, to subversion and negotiation in the social space of the galli, I hope to present a more robust picture of the gendered spacetime of the galli and how it molds men's view of themselves vis-à-vis their gendered identity. I also excavate my own gendered performance in the galli as a crucial site to understand the contingent and relational nature of gendered identities.

The active role of women in producing and sustaining masculinities has not received adequate scholarly attention until now (Ghannam 2013; Gutmann 1997). Gutmann (1997) in his broad review of anthropology of masculinity points out that women's influence on men and masculinity has been documented largely by psychology-oriented research, exploring themes of

Oedipal conflict and mother-son bonding or estrangement; critiquing this research, Gutmann argues for a more politicized perspective on the interrelationship between women and masculinity (401). Referring to the continuing and non-linear processes of becoming a man as "masculine trajectories" (6) (as opposed to a life-cycle approach), Ghannam (2013) emphasizes that masculine trajectories are essentially collective projects, achieved through the joint acts and performance of men and women. Ghannam also asserts that women are not a monolithic section, but "are diversified agents who can relate to the making of men in multiple ways" (90). Via five ethnographic narratives, I focus on myriad kinds of relationships that men and women shared in the galli, including conjugal, mother-son, as neighbors and extended family, as lovers and as researcher and researched, to highlight the modes through which masculinity was constituted in the enactment of these relationships. The last chapter has already highlighted the masculinization of the galli through certain bodily modes of occupying the galli by the young men; the stark difference in the embodied ways in which women inhabited the galli is my beginning point to sketch the other half of the gendered spacetime here. By illustrating young men's investment in maintaining a strict regime of surveillance for the women and girls of the galli, I suggest that for the former, this is as crucial a site of developing a sense of masculine self.

II

Surveillance, Masculinity and the Production of a Gendered Body: "*Saatchya Aat Gharat!*" (Home before Seven)

This was the unanimous title suggested by all the young girls for a map of Shelar galli and its vicinity that they had planned to make at my behest. The title originally belonged to a Marathi film centered on the rape of a young college student in Pune University in 2002, dealing with societal views on the question of modern women's freedom. For most of the young female mapmakers in the galli, this title aptly represented their lives which they considered to be tightly bound spatially and temporally within the confines of the galli and its strict curfews. A title which came close second was "*Hitha kay kaam*?" (What business do you have here?); according to the girls and young women, this was the question they had to encounter most frequently, from men and elderly women in the galli, when they crossed the invisible boundaries of permissible mobility set by the gendered norms of the galli. It is instructive that the "*Saatchya aat gharat/ Hitha kay kaam?*" map was eventually never made, because it was next to impossible for all the girls and young women to spare a few hours simultaneously, to take a break from their daily chores which included doing the dishes, cooking, washing clothes, stringing garlands and taking care of infants and children. As I discovered in the coming months, these titles did not simply refer to the young women's severely restricted physical mobility in the galli, they also referred to the entire regime of restrictions on clothes, accessories, entertainment and indeed all the ways of constructing the self that were available to the young men including use of cell phones, music, social media and films, bringing forth the radically gendered nature of "enjoy" in the galli. Below, I refer to three narratives from the galli, which reflected the material and discursive ways

in which the discourse of "Saatchya aat gharat" reproduced galli's masculinization via creating for its women a profoundly constricted habitus.

"Freely" unavailable

On a hot April afternoon in 2012, I climbed up the steep, narrow staircase which led to Satish bhau's small room, explicitly wanting to meet his wife, Chaya vahini, after a futile morning of fieldwork. Vahini was out, but her two daughters, Soniya and Priya were at home, with their friend Rashmi. Soniya had recently finished final exams for Class X and would probably not be allowed to go to college, as she had mentioned to me earlier. Priya and Rashmi both were best friends and went to the same school, both in class VII. Rashmi stood next to the stove roasting rotis, as Soniya rolled them out with a seasoned rapidity. Priya and I sat on the floor, lined with a pink coloured linoleum carpet, the edges of which had worn out, exposing the floor below.

It was almost the end of my fieldwork days and my days were hectic and agenda-driven; however the hot, quiet afternoon coupled with the absence of the girls' parents in the house brought back a cozy intimacy, reminiscent of my deep hanging out days in the vasti, in the initial months of my fieldwork. I felt that the girls also sensed that intimacy, and the conversation veered immediately towards the realm of the "prohibited" in their lives. We moved from the topic of jeans to swear words. I gave my now mandatory performance of recently learned Marathi swear words, the girls giggled and tittered, before teaching me some more. As our laughing subsided, Rashmi announced,

"*Tumhi kase mulanbarobar chaha pyayla jaata, asa sagala pahije.Asa freely rahayla pahije!*" (The way you go with ease to drink tea with the boys, this is how it should be! This is how one should be able to live, freely!).

By now Rashmi had joined us on the floor and she leaned back and spread her arms on her sides when she said "freely." Sheadded,

"*Mi pudhchya janmi mulgach vhayla pahije, mag asa masta rahnaar freely, headphone lavun gaana aiknaar, mulinvar line maarnar*" (I should surely be born as a boy in my next life. Then I will live freely, wear headphones and listen to songs, flirt with girls…).

This sent the other two girls into further peals of laughter. I realized that the realm of music seemed to be an equally fraught one, similar to the realm of jeans. Soniya confirmed this,

"*Tumcha life great aahe, tumhala asa kahi nasta na, gani aiku nako, gani mhanu nako...*" (Life's great for you, you don't have all these [restrictions], don't listen to songs, don't sing songs…).

The girls clamored to tell me how the elder boys would scold them if they sang a song; they were most scared of their eldest cousin, Naresh, the mandal president. Rashmi chirpily continued the thread,

"*Madam, tumchya barobar itke haslo na ki atta nakki nantar radnaar*" (Madam, now that we have laughed so much with you here, we will surely cry after this).

The three of them again patiently explained to me that every time they have laughed a lot, by some strange twist of circumstance, it was always followed by traumatic events leading to their crying later. The girls carried on rather cheerily, recounting a few days ago they all sat late chatting in Rama's house and later received a thrashing in their respective homes, on account of staying back so late out of the house. The linking up of pleasure with punishment in her understanding was seamless and thoroughly normalized. I thought that the possibility of a

173

"freely" life seemed to lie in the impossibly unreachable realm of next life for Rashmi, not unlike Puja, for whom that possibility had to be realized in the short time before she grew up.

When I first noticed Puja, her deceptively slight frame seemed unable to hold even her distinctly booming voice, leave alone the considerable vigour with which she was punching a boy, who looked only slightly older than her. The seven year old always brought to my mind the image of *lavangi*, the small red colored fire-crackers, which were hugely popular in my childhood, for lavangi created a bang which was disproportionately loud to their miniscule size. She had inherited her mother's fair complexion and had a smile that extended from ear to ear. She retorted to friendly provocations from the young boys with ease and punch, uncharacteristic of most girls of her age and those older to her. I often imagined how she would be as a grown up girl, unable to see her as diffident, like most teenaged girls in the galli.

Puja had taken her time to warm up to me, so I was glad when she agreed to walk with me to the stationery store in Masoli Aali to buy a notebook one evening. As the topic of jeans came up en route to the store, Puja mentioned how her father's teenaged cousin sisters, who also lived in the galli, could not wear jeans once they grew up. Everyone in the house, especially the young men scolded them and did not allow them to wear jeans, she added. "Do you think you will also stop wearing jeans once you grow up?" I asked Puja. She looked unsure. As if explaining to her own self more than to me, she said tentatively, "*Mag sadha dress ghalava lagto, ani odhni*" (Then one has to wear a simple dress, along with a scarf). However, in her mind, the resolution to the problematic possibility of wearing a "simple dress" was quick, "*Mag attatch sagala karun ghyaycha, sagala ghalun ghyaycha*" (Then one should make sure that one does and wears everything [that one wants] right now itself). I heard her disciplined strategy

174

with a sinking heart. Puja's once articulated dream of becoming a police inspector were not adequate to push her real imaginations of pleasure beyond the limits of what she thought was permissible for girls in the vasti. The pleasure of wearing jeans came with a limited warrantee, to be availed of only before one grew up.

Jeans were something that was far beyond the limits of permissibility, as I had already heard from Puja's eighteen-year old cousin, Swati. "*Jeans madhe kasa shape chaan disto…*" (The shape [of the body] is nicely outlined in jeans, isn't it?) Swati had said ruefully, but it was because of "this area," that the elder men in her family did not allow her to wear jeans, she added.

Jeans however, remained firmly entrenched in the realm of young girls' guilty pleasures in the galli. I was startled one afternoon when Mona approached me with two urgent requests: she wanted me to lend her a pair of my jeans for an evening and she wanted me to write a love letter in English on behalf of her sixteen year old cousin, addressed to her cousin's "lover." Mona, herself sixteen, was going to appear for Class X exam in 2011. I agreed to both, clarifying that I could only translate what the cousin wanted to say, if she did not mind telling me. I also hoped in my mind that this did not land Mona in any trouble with her family. However, as I continued to wait for her "secret signal" to pass on the prohibited goods to her, the plan seemed to have petered out. The love letter and the pair of jeans were never mentioned after that urgently whispered request made to me just outside her house.

Mona's house was the first house that I encountered as I rode on my scooter from the Masoli aali end towards the galli. As I would drive past her house in the evenings, I would usually encounter Mona squatting outside her house, working her way through a huge pile of

175

dirty dishes, before the fresh water supply ran out for the day. She would look up and smile at me, the corners of her mouth blackened with the *mishri* that she would chew on twice a day.[2]

A few days after the request, I accompanied Mona on an errand to a store just beyond Masoli aali. On my enquiry about her coaching classes, she replied that she now went in the afternoon instead of in the morning. The change in the timings was a result of the intervention by Ketan, one of the mandal members, she went on to add. He had seen her walking down the road early in the morning a few days ago, and incensed at the fact that she was walking on a deserted road all by herself, had dropped her to her class on his motorbike. He had then proceeded to request the teacher to enroll her for the late afternoon session, when the roads would not be so deserted. Readily endorsed by her mother, Mona now had started going in the afternoons. "Even my younger brother keeps a watch on where I go," Mona added complainingly. If she spent a little time with her friends after school, he would immediately question her as to who she was with and what she was doing. On our way back to the galli, I proposed we take a shorter route. But Mona shot it down saying that she felt scared taking that route, because it was dark and deserted.

For most young women and girls of the vasti, the spatial limits of "Saatchya aat gharat" materialized in the boundaries marked by Masoli aali, the nearby public toilet and their respective schools. Their lack of confidence in traversing spaces of the city outside the galli was not surprising in the light of their severely restricted physical mobility: the anecdote of how Sunita, a young married woman in the galli, could not direct the auto-rickshaw driver to the galli

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[2]*Mishri* or *masheri*, is unprocessed tobacco, roasted on high flame till it turns black. A lot of women in the galli chewed on mishri or brushed it on their teeth, though it was generally looked down upon as an addiction.

once on her way back from a rare excursion to the central market, was repeated to me countless times amidst giggles and laughter. Sunita was not sure what her neighborhood was referred to as in the larger city, once she stepped outside it.

The workings of surveillance

The prevalence of severe restriction on women was not at once obvious in the galli's everyday rhythm, where the galli spaces were populated by women throughout the day and even late nights during summers. The sight of women doing the dishes in the galli in the afternoons; rolling beedis or stringing garlands during summer nights; young girls sitting together near the mandir in the galli; mothers playing with their babies; or older women making brooms or roasting tobacco hardly raised eyebrows in the galli. The spatial production of a disciplined, gendered body however, operates precisely through what Ranade (2007) terms as everyday "ritualised performance of domesticity" (1522) in tune with the hegemonic frames of gendered division of labor and boundaries, earning for the women a legitimate claim to be in the galli.[3] Their transgression out of either of the boundaries (spatial or normative) invited instant retribution in the form of verbal (and at times physical, in case of younger girls) abuse, of which "Hitha kay kaam" was but one aspect.

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[3] It is important to point out that the subjection to surveillance and the onus of respectability was highly unevenly distributed amongst the women in the galli. As mentioned earlier, several older women (above forty) in the galli, who held sweeping jobs with the PMC regularly traveled out of the galli boundaries to their respective sweeping beats in the city between early mornings and afternoons. Rarely did they travel alone, or take public transport though. They were generally dropped to their area of work by their sons on motorbikes, or sometimes they took an auto-rickshaw. Their physical presence in the galli was markedly different from the younger girls, who were far more self-conscious in the way they walked, sat or talked. For instance, I witnessed several brawls in the galli, in which the older women participated with gusto, exhibiting physical and verbal aggression, unthinkable for the younger girls here.

Phadke et. al. (2011) provide valuable insights into how codes of respectability align with space and body in the production of a disciplined gendered body for women in the context of South Asia. The authors draw our attention to the spatial axes of public and private along which women's respectability is produced or challenged, the former emerging in the context of capitalist development in Western Europe in late nineteenth century. The anxieties generated by women's presence in public could be allayed by their bodily enactment of their fundamental connection to the private, domestic sphere (24), the failure of which could then lead to women being labelled as non-respectable and hence non-deserving of claims to safety in public space (24-25). While this "conditional access to public space" (33) very much applies to the young girls and women in the vasti, the production of respectability for women became an even more arduous task, given the fact that most of the galli spaces were in fact extension of their homes, thus obliterating the clear division between private and public. Phadke et. al. (2011) point out insightfully the bodily burden of production of respectability for women in slums,

> "Given that a woman in public is often perceived as a 'public woman', in the absence of any privacy, slum women have to viscerally underline their respectability. Where there is no clear boundary between public and private space to speak of, the burden of marking the private body falls on the habitus of the woman – how she walks, what she wears, whom she talks to or even looks at." (131)

Indeed, the minute details of their lowered gaze as they crossed the mandir when men were sitting there, their hurrying across the lane, making sure their dupatta was covering their torso, walking to the public toilet in pairs (*never* alone) with lowered heads, who could wear a "nightie" and step out in the galli,[4] the darting eyes scanning Masoli aali to check if any of their

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[4] The daughters-in-law could not dream of stepping out in the galli wearing a nightie, but there was relative permissibility for the daughters or visiting married daughters to wear it occasionally, *only* if they wore a dupatta around their shoulders. Similarly the daughters-in-law could access even lesser degree of physical mobility in the

male cousins were watching them, testified to these very strategies of embodying the hegemonic

gendered norms of the galli, on the basis of which the young women and girls could then stake

claim to respectability and legitimacy to be outside.

Photo 3.1 and 3.2: The everyday modes of women's occupation of the galli spaces were largely in terms of doing dishes outside the house (3.1), and sitting and chatting on the ledge near the mandal mandir in early evenings (3.2).

early days of their marriage. It was only in the second year of their marriage that daughters-in-law seemed at ease to step out into the galli during celebrations like Ganesh festival or late night dance held in the honor of Goddess Durga during the Navratri festival.

Photo 3.3: Vendors selling cheap household items, clothes, snacks, fruit, would pass through the galli during afternoons, when women would sit out and relax after lunch.

Photo 3.4: Women's presence in the galli was legitimate and encouraged during special celebrations like the one here held in the honor of Goddess Durga.

Photo 3.5: Stringing flowers in the mandir in the festive season.

Most of the young girls expressed much more fear and trepidation of being at the receiving end of their cousin brothers' anger and abuse, than of being scolded by their fathers, uncles or aunts. According to many young girls in the vasti, the former's control involved a range of intimidating tactics, ranging from threats of physical violence (I'll break your leg if I see you here again), questioning the intent to step out (why do you need to go to the temple outside the galli, isn't there one right here? What took you so long to get back from school, who were you talking to?), to instilling fear through their sharp, hawk-like glances (*nazar*) and intervening directly (like Ketan did, to enroll Mona in a class which was held at a "safer" time). The omnipresent anxiety of being watched and being followed by their brothers' eyes was perhaps best expressed in Swati's metaphoric comparison, "*Aamhigharachya baaher padlo ki CCTV camerech astat saglikade*" (There are CCTV cameras everywhere the moment we step out of the house).

If ethnographic knowledge is essentially co-produced within the intersubjective field of interaction between the ethnographer and the interlocutors, my questions to the young men about women's surveillance and their responses to these represented this mutuality in its most explicit, acute form. After having shared intimate times and spaces with young girls in the vasti and having identified with their sense of frustration and anger against their highly circumscribed lives, the act of framing and posing these questions to the young men generated an acute dilemma for me: should I pose the questions in a way that only alluded to the general control of women's lives in the galli to "understand" what the discourse and practice of control meant to the young men? Or should I let my anger at what I interpreted as the naked use of patriarchal power predominantly shape my questions such that they would lock my young male interviewees in a corner, with no choice but to reflect on their own roles in perpetuating this order in the galli? What did it really mean to ally with the women in an allegedly feminist spirit if my conversations with the men sidestepped a straightforward discussion of patriarchal control? But then again, would the interview be an ethical site for the upper caste, foreign educated Madam to force the young men in a confessional box aimed at eliciting an admission of patriarchy, when I neither fully comprehended the experience of their caste-based discrimination nor the nature of their class-based exclusion?   I continued to navigate this dilemma even as I was interviewing the young men, not quite sure what the "right" questions should be.

"*Aaplya ithe mulinvar jasta daab ka aahe?Mulinna swatantrya kami aahe ka?*" (Why are girls here under so much control? Do girls have significantly less freedom than boys?). These were the questions which I posed to young men during their interviews. However, it was clear that my questions suggested (as was rightly interpreted by most male interviewees) the young men's implication in the controlling and curbing of women's freedom. My questions, framed in

an already loaded vocabulary of control and freedom, elicited responses which were at times defensive, at times unreflexive, but which, I thought, also staunchly refused to acknowledge the operation of their gendered privilege in this realm.

While discussing the extent of control over young women's lives, the notion of "free" came up frequently in my conversation with young men (and with older men and women). I was soon to realize that for the young men "free" was shorthand for sexual freedom or lack of control over sexuality of young girls, and thus generative of a considerable amount of anxiety in the vasti vis-à-vis the question of respectability. Being "free" however, was also an unmistakably classed and placed mode of existence. Kiran, for instance, unapologetic about his views on women's strict surveillance, actually lamented the fact that control over women was quite lax in the vasti.

> "*Aaplya vastit mulinvar control nahiye…jasta tumhi tyanla free mind thevtay. Free mind kuthe astay? Te hi fi area madhe free mind thevtat. Hitha hi-fi area aahe ka aapla?Aaplya mulinaa buddhi aahe ka tevdhi?*" (There is no control over the women in our vasti. You are letting them (have a) "free" mind. Where can one afford a "free mind?" A "free mind" is possible in a hi-fi area. Is ours a hi-fi area? Do our girls have that wisdom?)

The girls in the vasti had no intelligence according to Kiran, to be able to discern the motivations of men in interacting with them. The question of a free ethos rested heavily on the nature of the area, according to Naresh, Anya and Anand as well. Stressing the distinction between my upper-middle class residential area and the vasti, Naresh explained,

> "*Tumchya tithe free aahe sagala vatavaran. Te nava vagare thevat nahit. Pan aaplya ithe charityralamahatva detat. Hya area madhe tasa nahiye. Tevdhi suit nahi deta yet ithe*" (The atmosphere where you live is "free." They don't call you names there. But over here they really place value on your moral character. It is not the same in this area. One just cannot give freedom here).

In the above quotes, the anxiety underlying "free" indexed two things: that "free" could potentially jeopardize women's moral character and that where one lived, shaped this process in a fundamental way. In fact, the ethos (*vatavaran*) of the galli and Moti Peth itself was repeatedly presented as the reason justifying and necessitating this nature of control over young women, as against "hi-fi" areas where women's presence in public spaces and/ or expressions of sexuality would not necessarily imply a blemish on their moral character. Anya volunteered to demonstrate how name-calling worked in the galli,

> "*Lai lambchi goshta nahi. Ami suddha ase baslo na, ki ha mhanto, kunachi re bayko hi? Kiti vajlet tari phirti!*"(I won't even have to go far to show you. Even when we are sitting here, one of us will say, hey whose wife is she? Look how late it is and she's still loitering around!)

It was ironic that after this enthusiastic illustration of their own participation in perpetuating this discourse of women's respectability, which was predicated so heavily on a disciplining of women's bodies and desires, the young men neatly divorced themselves from the question of the "area," which was the alleged root cause of all the restrictions. Vinit insisted that while young girls' attraction towards boys was natural, these secret liaisons happen far more in *daat vasti* (densely packed settlements) or in "slum area," creating an atmosphere of perpetual moral panic (*bhiti, ghabrun*) amongst families here and necessitating control. He conceded the inevitability of this control in the face of this insurmountable danger,

> "*Kahi goshti malahi khataktyat pan kahi goshti aapan baghun pan aaplya manalahi bhiti vatate. To control kadhana mala avghad vatata, ithe tar hona avghad aahe*"(I also feel troubled by these strict ways, but one feels scared after having seen a few instances. Obliterating the control seems hard, it is really hard for it to happen here).

There was an unmistakable tone of defensiveness as the young men painstakingly explained to me how control over women was *only* limited to when they came of age, that this would not

184

come in the way of their education.[5] But when it came to young women staying out late, going far from the galli or not seeking permission without going out, it was non-negotiable, Naresh claimed with conviction.

> "*Hitha sagala badlel. Pan he kadhich badalnaar nahi!*" (Everything here can change, but this one thing will never change!).

To me, the "area" and the portrayal of its unforgiving vatavaran (ethos) served as a convenient foil which allowed the young men to refuse to acknowledge their active participation in the regime of patriarchal control in the galli. There was a readiness to admit to even fear (*bhiti*) of the dangerous consequences of "free" atmosphere for girls, or fear of the pressures of the community (*samajala ghabrun dadpan yeta*) in the galli or Moti Peth, which served to overshadow their own implication in the galli's order of surveillance and to portray control as inevitable.

In hindsight, I realize that my imagination of these conversations in essentially oppositional terms (as either my condoning patriarchy or "forcing" its admission) itself was a flawed one. Could there have been an alternative language which could have framed our interaction not as an accusation by a powerful Madam, coming from a location seemingly devoid of any patriarchal control? What if I could have communicated over a period of time my own vulnerability and subjection to upper caste patriarchy, which had its own grammar of violence

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[5] At the time of my fieldwork, most of the young girls in the galli between the ages fourteen and twenty five had dropped out of school after VIII or IX grade, citing lack of interest. Two girls had completed their graduation (one of whom was already married). Most of the daughters-in-law in the galli also had not completed their graduation, but had been educated till high school. As mentioned in the narratives, Soniya was explicitly prohibited by her elder aunt (who also lived in the galli) from going to college. In a couple of years' time she would be married, Soniya had told me. At the time of writing this chapter however, two eighteen year old girls were enrolled in college (though they could not go to college very regularly).

and exploitation, before broaching their exercise of this power? I am left speculating whether this could have marginally addressed the yawning power gap between us which resulted in the young men responding defensively to what they perceived as accusations or using this very large distance between our locations as a justification for their acts (it is very different in your/ our area).

Notwithstanding these lost opportunities and moments of ethnographic failure, I argue that the galli as a site for the production of respectability for women (by showing their connections to the private sphere, by not transgressing the material space of the galli) simultaneously contributed to the further masculinization of the galli by engendering for its young men and women radically unequal embodied ways of occupying and accessing the galli's spaces. By linking moral character to area, the discourse of respectability enabled the young men to enforce a strict code of permissible and non-permissible behavior for women, which not only included their clothes or their mobility but also took in its sweep all dimensions of pleasure and leisure. Importantly, this linkage rendered invisible their own complicity in perpetuating a deeply patriarchal and disciplinary system in the name of preserving the gendered moral norms dictated by their area and vatavaran.[6]

I have demonstrated in the last chapter how the galli was a crucial avenue of gendered self-making for the young men via developing a gendered habitus and via practices of consumption. In this light, I argue that the discourse and practice of controlling women's physical mobility and

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[6] This is not to imply simplistically that the young men produce the regime of surveillance of women in the galli. Women's modesty and respectability as constituting the honor of the community/ caste group at large is a firmly entrenched notion across South Asian contexts thus binding ideologies of caste and patriarchy in a complex alignment, which continues to affect the intimate, political and social realms of women's lives across caste, class and regional contexts (Menon 2012; Phadke et. al.2011; Abraham 2010; Khan 2007; Chakravarty 1995).

enforcing unequal access to galli's spaces while simultaneously enjoying an unquestioned, privileged right to be in the galli also constituted an *equally* vital aspect of developing this gendered habitus for the young men. Control of women as a constitutive element of a masculine identity or as recuperative for those men whose expectations of masculinity have failed them in other realms (employment, providing for family) has been discussed in depth in research in India as well as in other contexts.[7] This interpretation holds true to an extent in Shelar galli: it is undeniable that the gendered privileges that the young men enjoyed in regulating the galli spaces vis-à-vis women and young girls afforded them a far greater sense of power and control than what the city outside the galli did.

However, this control and power was not absolute; marked by countless ways in which the young girls subverted this control, the gendered spacetime of the galli was transformed into a dynamic, ever shifting equation of patriarchal dominance, assertions of masculinity and visible or tacit subversions which continually challenged this assertion and dominance. I narrate a remarkable love story in the galli in the following section, which exposed to me the frantic transgressions that busily chipped away at the seemingly impregnable foundation of surveillance on which rested the young men's sense of masculine control. More importantly, it alerted me to the intricate channels through which masculine identity was negotiated in the context of

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[7] See Nanda et. al. (2014) and International Center for Research on Women (2002) for important field research on domestic violence and notions of masculinity across four states in India. Both these studies indicate that for men (across class and regional contexts, although in varying degrees) controlling their wives/ partners was a crucial yardstick to evaluate their masculine attributes. In her ethnography of masculinity in a working class neighborhood in Cairo, Ghannam (2013) demonstrates how the use of violence and control by men against women was legitimized if it was viewed as preserving the gendered norms and ideals of "proper" men and women. At the same time, it could also cast a blot on the masculine attribute of one who deployed it indiscriminately (113-117). Bourgois (2003) illustrates sensitively how the Nuyorican men in a Harlem neighborhood in New York City cope with the erosion of their traditional masculine authority as breadwinners by celebrating a street culture which glorified misogyny and violence against women (213-216).

heterosexual relationships in the galli, a process marked as much by feminine assertion as it was by masculine lack of agency.

III

Betwixt and Between

Madhu and Sunny had been involved in a relationship for two years already, at the time of my fieldwork. He was twentyfour, she thirty six. Married, with children aged sixteen and twelve respectively, Madhu's marriage was a kind of a conjugal no-man's-land. Estranged emotionally from her husband for more than a decade now, she along with her children continued to live with her parents in the galli, even as her husband continued to visit them daily during the day from the neighboring slum where his house was located. He contributed minimally to the children's education and Madhu's expenses. But on account of lack of space in her parents' two room house, Madhu, along with her twelve year old daughter Aarti, walked to her husband's house every night to spend the night there and returned back to the galli in the morning.

Growing up in the vasti in the shared context of immense poverty and a much stronger sense of a unified community, Madhu reminisced about dropping Sunny to school every day on her way to hers. Two years ago, while traveling on a vasti-sponsored pilgrimage with several other families from the galli, Sunny confessed to Madhu that he had been in love with her ever since he came of age, fantasizing about marrying her and making her happy. Stumbling unexpectedly upon the possibility of a real intimate relationship, after she had long stopped hoping for one, it did not take Madhu long to begin to reciprocate his feelings.

Amongst all the young daughters and daughters-in-law in the galli, Madhu stood out instantly. Dressed in bold saris and deep cut blouses, never failing to wear lipstick as she stepped out, she carried herself with a confidence and a sense of control that was rare in the other women of her age in the galli. She smeared her teeth with mishri twice a day unapologetically, reclined on the bench next to the mandir in ease as she solved the Marathi crossword, engaged in easy, unselfconscious banter with most young men of the galli and was one of the handful people in the vasti who addressed me by my first name, refusing to call me "Madam." It is true that it was the fact that she was an insider, a "daughter" of the galli, now in her mid-30s, still technically married and a mother, which allowed her to push boundaries that neither daughters nor daughters-in-law here could even approach. But it was her feisty personality, her sharp tongue and the palpable element of the risqué which she embodied rather nonchalantly which earned her a reluctant respect from the men and women in the galli and which attracted me to her as well. She was the only person who seemed least deterred by our power differentials in terms of class and caste, and easily allowed her curiosity about me to dictate her interaction with me. Sensing a non-judgmental space in our conversations, Madhu soon began to confide in me the details of her abusive marriage and her relationship with Sunny, while demanding a reciprocal sharing of my personal life with her. Strangely enough, I could not put a face to Sunny's name when she first revealed her secret to me, six months into my fieldwork. Madhu assured me that it was not surprising, given the fact that Sunny was gainfully employed and avoided spending time in the galli with other boys. He worked as a salesman in a store selling watches in the upmarket, cosmopolitan Cantonment part of the city, coming home briefly for lunch in the afternoon and then late in the night.

I was a bit stunned at the enormity of this transgression which seemed to be playing out every day despite the hawk-eyes, the "CCTV cameras," and the self-appointed sentries of the galli's moral fabric. Even as I wondered how exactly did the two of them manage to meet or talk, I found myself drawn precisely into the management of this relationship, via my cellphone and my mobility which allowed Madhu to step out of the galli with me sometime and meet Sunny. Their meetings were carefully orchestrated during lunch time at Madhu's daughter's school where she would go on the pretext of delivering her lunchbox. Sometimes Madhu would spend afternoons in Sunny's house, chatting with his mother, even as Sunny ate lunch silently, casting sideways glances towards her and stealing conversation when his mother briefly went behind the curtain which partitioned their tiny shack into kitchen and living area. Madhu would call Sunny from my phone when we were together, before Sunny bought her a cheap phone of her own. She would go to the toilet at the designated time of his calling and speak to him behind the closed toilet door.

I first realized how differently Sunny imagined their relationship when I became privy to their conversations, lovers' spats and anxieties, via Madhu's regular updates on her love life. For Madhu, Sunny's repeated promises of ensuring a future of freedom from fear and surveillance for her and her daughter by far justified the enormous risks she ran by choosing to have a relationship with him. His imagination of their future together was indeed light years away from the galli's stifling grip and her joyless marriage: a future where she would wear jeans and salwar-kameez, ride a scooter, open her own little beauty parlour, send her daughter to college and have a caring partner who would ensure that all this did not still alienate her from her family.

Incidentally, my first conversation with Sunny occurred right after one of my futile attempts to make a map of the galli with the young girls and women; sipping tea with his mother I was telling her about the peculiar titles that the girls had suggested for their maps. Sunny, also home for a late lunch, spoke up without warning, looking at me directly for the first time. "*Ithle loka kadhich hya baaher jaanar nahi*!" (The people here will never get out of this!). He hurled the sentence at me. Spitefully, as if suddenly shaken out of his usually reticent and unfazed comportment. He went on to enumerate with equal anger what he considered the utterly limited lives of his peers in the galli: they did not know how to talk to anyone from outside the galli, did not even know how to deposit a check in a bank, he would never want to hang out with them. When all the girls even in the neighboring "755" slum went to college on bikes, these men continued to control their women and keep them under a close watch. He knew and I knew that I now understood his stakes in denouncing this oppressive ethos: a system which not only made his relationship with Madhu beyond the realm of possible, but which also had led to her being trapped in an abusive marriage, with no way out.

Behind this angry outburst I saw an attempt on Sunny's part to construct himself as a man different from (and superior to) the rest of the men in the galli. In aligning his peers' lack of exposure, confidence and their harsh control of women into a scathing indictment of their lasting conservatism ("they will never get out of this"), Sunny established himself as having transcended this conservatism; this was manifested in his ability to maneuver the world outside the galli and negotiate daily interactions with upper middle class, cosmopolitan customers in the Cantonment

area;[8] and as he knew that I knew by now, in his ability to reimagine his role as a romantic partner or a future husband who did not control but in fact, actively encouraged a liberal attitude towards women.

Sunny's endeavor to be a different kind of a man was not simply an exceptional case, as I was to discover over the course of two most unusual meetings. Unusual because I made a rare exception and met him outside the galli in a restaurant, once for coffee and once over a drink. Both our meetings happened at the behest of Madhu, who thought that just like for her, it would be a relief for Sunny to talk to someone who did not have moral judgments about their relationship. As we entered an iconic coffee shop in the Cantonment area on the designated evening, I knew that this was different from my frequent chai trips with the young men of the galli to Sadanand tea house. Our conversation, dominated by Sunny's urgent narration of his distress, had at least temporarily been wrenched out of its "researcher-researched" dynamic, a mix of complicity and tentative trust replacing it. Sunny spoke to me without any hesitation about his anguish at having to see Madhu being abused and harassed by her husband every night and yet to not be able to do anything about it. There seemed no resolution in sight.

By the time we met the second time, I was even more entangled in their relationship, getting almost daily updates from Madhu about what had happened in the day. It also created a curious sense of secret solidarity and a confidence that we understood our mutual transgressions; which is what made it possible for me to go out for a drink with Sunny, an otherwise unthinkable proposition in the gendered morality of the galli. While our conversation still lingered around

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[8] Refer to Chapter II in which I quote Sunny's contempt for his peers in the galli and his claims of his social life which far exceeded the galli's narrow boundaries.

their relationship, I could see Sunny's attempts at establishing a certain amount of class mobility, casually, yet explicit enough for me not to miss. *He never drank beer, only vodka, he never came to a place like this, but only Turf club. He had attended many parties thrown by his boss, the watch store owner. The boss trusted him completely with all the standard customers that came to his store, customers who bought watches worth thousands of rupees.*

Sunny's projection of himself as a liberal man was not divorced from his aspiration to distance himself as further as he could from the normative social order of the galli, be it in terms of his exposure, ambition, consumption or relationships.[9] It seemed to me that his willingness to push those normative boundaries and attain class mobility had also led him to imagine as possible and enter into a "blasphemous" relationship with Madhu. Perhaps, the very fact that I had shared a part of me which I had actively concealed from the rest of the galli, exclusively with him, was a minor triumph for this aspiration, the success of being able to be a man akin to the ones Madam can be herself with.

Yet, my (often more than required) involvement in their everyday romance also confounded me. I gradually saw how Madhu continuously had to reiterate to herself the promised future of a freer intimate relationship with Sunny in order to cope with the reality of their furtive relationship, marked by a level of surveillance barely different from what she experienced in her conjugal and familial context. Sunny would get upset if she talked to the young men in the galli, because he did not want them gossiping behind her back. He would get

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[9] Refer back to Chapter II, in which both Sunny and his elder brother Rama, talked about their skills of navigating the world outside the galli, which were far more superior to the other boys here. They attributed their confidence and independence to the non-availability of a "readymade job" and the premature death of their father, implying that it was their subjection to these harsh conditions that made them "tougher" or superior.

193

upset if she could not visit his house during lunch time and would leave wordlessly, without eating. He would get upset if she did not manage to appear in the galli so that he could steal a glance at her when he came back for dinner, and regularly threatened to go to bed hungry if he did not see her. Our painfully planned all girls' biryani outing was almost cancelled because of Madhu's hesitation in missing her afternoon rendezvous with Sunny. Madhu's enthusiastic participation in the traditional dance during the nine-day festivities dedicated to Goddess Durga caused Sunny to sulk, owing to her openly mixing and laughing with several younger men in the galli. Beyond doubt, Madhu was accountable for every absence from the afternoon rendezvous and every failure to appear in the galli before dinner, to be "punished" by Sunny's starvation and suffering. Sunny's aspirations towards a liberal manhood and his contempt for the conservative controlling men in the galli were as yet unable to reconcile with the prospect of relinquishing entirely the claims to the gendered privileges and power that the galli's ethos made available for its men.

Evidently, the contradiction was not lost on someone with such a sharp understanding of power as did Madhu. Madhu had never shied away from expressing her unflattering evaluations of the controlling ways of the men in the galli, at least amongst other women. "*Gharat nahi daana, an baaher hawaldar bana*!" (There is not a grain of food in the house, yet the swagger is that of a cop!) she had sneered once, with undisguised contempt, implying that the masculine posturing entailed in control and surveillance was merely that: posturing. As Sunny swung between his liberal aspirations and a normalized exercise of patriarchal power in their relationship, Madhu was continually torn. She took a lot of pride in narrating his able fulfilment of his manly responsibility: unlike his elder brother, he regularly gave money to his mother to run the household, he worked hard, he funded his elder brother's wedding expenses, despite the

fact that his efforts went unappreciated in his family. Yet, her pride about what set her lover

apart from the other men in the galli was regularly offset by having to contend with his displays

of precisely that very control over her movements. Strangely, though countless afternoons were

spent in the gym room under the pretext of interviewing, when Madhu defended her absences to

Sunny, an equal amount of time was devoted to Madhu's counter questions: who has he

befriended on Facebook, why did he not call her at the designated time, why was he late in

coming back yesterday, if he could drink, then so could she go out and enjoy herself and so on.

On many of these occasions, I waited impatiently for their quibbles to end, not wanting to

eavesdrop on their conversations, but also unable to step out of the gym room since I was

supposed to be interviewing. "Don't you two ever have romantic conversations, aside of these

interrogations? Are there not happier things to do than starving yourselves?" I had asked her

once with slight irritation after I was forced to sit in the gym room, my phone deployed in a

seemingly unending session of questions and counter-questions. Madhu did not bother to reply

to my question, too preoccupied with their latest point of contention. But as I got more and more

privileged access to several young girls' secret liaisons here, I realized that the centrality of this

mutual bickering and displays of suffering to indicate displeasure, in these liaisons could not be

boxed in the simplistic straitjacket of patriarchal surveillance (only). In what I thought was my

liberal, feminist imagination of romance and love, this pitting of "romance" against

"interrogation" was unable to initially grasp how for the young women and men these

interrogations could be the site of staking a certain intimate claim over their respective lovers,

not necessarily in a patriarchal sense, but one which was intricately mixed with emotions of care

and concern. Of course, "learning" to experience surveillance as love and care is undoubtedly

acutely gendered, where men and women are socialized into the roles of the protector and

protected respectively, justifying patriarchal control (Ghannam 2013). However, Madhu and Sunny's case (and the countless other secret love stories I was privy to) alerted me to ways in which notions of romance were negotiated along modes of surveillance, which at times exceeded the conventional interpretations of surveillance in terms of patriarchal power.

Often I wondered what the way out was for the two, except for carrying on this relationship furtively. According to Madhu, Sunny was determined to marry her and no one else.

> "*Bula houn, sadi nesun gharat basun hijada hoin, pan ajun konashi lagna karnaar nahi!*"
> (I am willing to wear a sari and sit in the house, to be considered as an eunuch and impotent, but I will not marry anyone else!), he had claimed to her once.

He was not averse to dangerous tricks even. Madhu reported to me that he had once proposed that he muster his underworld contacts in order to "fix" her husband. If something happened to her or her daughter he would not hesitate in even confronting and harming her brothers, he had said. The only thing that stopped him from taking such a radical step was the possibility of getting convicted; who would then take care of Madhu and her daughter? He had prayed for his wish to get together with Madhu to be fulfilled (*mannat*) at a durgah thirty kilometers out of Pune, swearing that he would walk bare feet to pray there once a month, for six months (which he also did, as Madhu proudly reported to me). Claims, heroic, laced heavily with martyrdom and valor. Willing to renounce physical comfort, safety and even his masculinity. What can be more masculine than this ability to renounce fearlessly, almost nonchalantly, the very essence which defines you as masculine, I thought.

While Madhu supplied me regular instances of Sunny's claims of courting risk, I realized that it was Madhu whose acts represented a far higher degree of *actual* risk-taking. What did it take to walk to Sunny's house every afternoon, knowing fully well that tongues were already

wagging in the galli about their relationship? Or to risk being seen with him near her daughter's school in the afternoons? On an evening during the ten day Ganesh festival, we decided to go out to see the various decorative tableaux dedicated to Lord Ganesh in the city. The city's nights were charged with an electric energy during this festival, as almost half a million people from the city and from rural areas around Pune flocked to see the tableaux, traditionally famous for their mythological themes and snazzy decoration. Madhu, Aarti and I set out by eight thirty and were joined later by Sunny once we had reached at a safe distance from Moti Peth. We ambled through the city's lanes, stopping to admire tableaux which caught our fancy, eating ice cream, a rare spacetime of an inclusive flânerie, as it were. As all four of us stood watching a particularly spectacular tableau, Aarti suddenly whispered to her mother that the Jonas Brothers were standing behind us at some distance, though close enough to recognize all of us from behind. Seeing no point in a hasty exit, Madhu took a deep breath and turned back and waved at them furiously, gesturing them to join us. Sunny, in the meanwhile, turned in the opposite direction and broke into a run, disappearing into the crowd even as JB reached where we were standing. We discussed the various tableaux and Madhu let it drop casually how we had bumped into Sunny just minutes ago inviting him to join us for a bit. It was only after JB left us that Sunny returned in a few minutes, only to duck and disappear into the crowd again, thinking that he had just espied another face from the galli behind us. The rest of our evening was spent in Aarti and me watching the tableaus distractedly, while Madhu tried to allay a panic-stricken Sunny on the phone. "*Evdhabhyato tar mag kashala yeto*!" (Why does he come if he is so scared!). She blurted out in frustration after she had hung up. "Shouldn't *you* be scared though, since someone might tell on you?" I asked her, more concerned about JB snitching on her to the elders in the vasti. "*Mag mi pan tyanchya aayabahinincha baher kadhin! Mi nai ghabrat!*" (Then I will let the cat

197

out about *their* sisters and mothers! I am not afraid!), she snapped at me without a moment's hesitation.

I found it tragic and admirable at the same time. Madhu's confidence and panache in handling the difficult situation made Sunny's anxiety to escape it stand out starkly. His "masculine" claims of risk-taking somehow rang hollow and puerile in the light of his instinctive flight when faced with a situation which demanded risk. Yet, Madhu herself wielded the profoundly patriarchal notion of women's respectability in ensuring her safety: if her transgressions lay exposed, so would other young girls', in her attempt to shame the young men who told on her. An inevitable patriarchal Rubik's cube, I thought, where no matter which way you turned and twisted it, it was possible to align the "♀"s but never the "♂"s.

Madhu and Sunny's relationship revealed to me the possibilities and the impossibilities of desires, aspirations and subversions in a space I had prematurely and rather naively decided was unidimensional in producing its gendered subjects. Their relationship was the site of and molded Sunny's fraught struggle to fashion a masculine sense of self from irreconcilable imperatives of surveillance on the one hand and his aspiration to transcend what he considered to be galli's brand of conservative manhood on the other. However, I often wondered if Sunny recognized that the conventional gendered roles of the protector and the protected were routinely reversed in their relationship: where Madhu actively protected his masculine posturing and claims, by mostly refusing to point out the evident discrepancies between his claims and his acts in their relationship, even as she took several greater risks than he did in the everyday playing out of their affair. The complicated business of the making of men, then, is hardly only men's matter, as articulated by Ghannam (2013),

198

"…women keenly work to protect the economic and social vulnerabilities of their male relatives, in the process profoundly contributing to their standing as men. Alternatively, a woman who chooses to expose these vulnerabilities could undermine the view of others of the masculine identification of her husband or brother" (88-89).

The power implied in "hiding" men's vulnerabilities can also be materialized in the power to expose them. Nothing could have shown this to me more clearly than the instance when I *allowed* my interview with twenty three year old Santosh to be taken over by his mother. Between my semi-conscious decision to not intervene in the hijacking of my own interview, the eager and indiscriminate outpourings of his mother about her son, and Santosh' tacit relief at being excused from bearing the burden of his inarticulate self, we became collective agents in the construction of his manly self radically different from that articulated by other young men in the galli. This interview represents to me a singular lesson in the co-production of ethnographic knowledge, as our peculiar dispositions and motives guided our conversation, out of which emerged the contours of Santosh' masculinity.

IV

All about His Mother?

The image of Santosh that I had in my mind was not so much a result of my interactions with him, as much a consequence of his parents' indulgent talk about their only son, which I was privy to the few times that I had visited their home for tea. Both Suvarna *kaku* and Vijay *nana* fretted regularly over Santosh, recounting their anxieties over his latest job or his desired future

sarkari nokri (government job). Santosh had dropped out of school right at the end of Class IV, in fact, during the final exam.

> "Being the tallest boy in class, he used to be terribly embarrassed about wearing *half-chaddi* (shorts) to school. How much we requested them! But the school just would not allow him to wear full-pant (trousers)!"

Suvarna kaku had revealed a crucial factor contributing to Santosh's truncated school career. Suvarna kaku spoke in a slightly high pitched tone, rapidly, like she was reading out a well-rehearsed, written out inventory. She never seemed to fumble for words, pause to draw her breath or have tentative thoughts. Growing up a reticent and a shy child, to me, her style of talking was intimidating. On witnessing her pick up a fight in the galli with a younger woman on one summer night, the cumulative effect of the quality of her aggression and the choice of her expletives elevated her to a status of a formidable woman for me, to be approached with caution.

I remember shifting uncomfortably on the bed in their single room, as Suvarna kaku narrated the "*half-chaddi/ full-pant*" tussle with the school authorities, in her characteristic inventory style. I was thankful for the small mercy of Santosh' absence as his parents rambled on about his childhood and his school anxieties with a strange, temporary lack of awareness that their son was now a twenty three year old, lanky young man. Santosh's school drop-out status generated considerable anxiety for his parents: he was slated to inherit Vijay nana's prized *sarkari nokri* (job with the city's municipal corporation, in the fire brigade department) till the municipal corporation recently introduced a new rule making completion of Class X a compulsory criterion of eligibility for this job. A visibly charged Vijay nana had then declared rather dramatically on that evening,

"*Majhya gratuity cha paisa gela tari chalel pan hyala sarkari nokri laavnaar!*" (I will make sure he gets a sarkari nokri, even if I have to lose all my gratuity money!).

Both of them then clarified for me that for getting him a government job for which he was not qualified they might have to pay huge bribes, in the bargain losing all the gratuity money Vijay nana would earn after he retired.

Till recently, Santosh had been working as a delivery boy for a wholesaler who supplied diapers to stores across the city. Currently he was working as a daily wage worker with a subcontractor hired by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), watering plants and trees on the city's arterial streets. Santosh spent a lot of time with the Jonas Brothers, but he clearly was not one of them. His diffidence was striking when held against the crackerjack humor and smart one-liners which JB flaunted with natural flair in their evening galli huddles. I was glad when he suggested his house for the interview. Suvarna kaku, who mostly was at home, stringing garlands and venis, would be an interesting presence during the interview, I had anticipated, though not quite sure why.

Santosh and I settled onto the high iron bed, facing each other, as Suvarna kaku sat with her back towards us, on the floor, amidst tuberoses and rose petals strewn around her, one leg extended in front of her, rapidly stringing venis. In the following section, I revisit specific moments from the interview when our alternating articulations and silences and our acts of drawing boundaries (or not) produced the narrative that I represent here about Santosh's masculine self.

(1.54)

M:[10] What is your plan for your future, or do you hope to get your father's job…

S: Yeah, my father said that before I could get his job, we will have to pay (a bribe) and then we can get a transfer

M: Transfer as in?

S: To a different department

M: Which department?

S: Let's see, maybe sweeping or something else

M: Why don't you prefer to work in this department?

S: No…well…

M: Why?

S: I cannot do it there. My father works on the hearse car…

M: Oh okay, so your father feels like you should not be doing work like this…

S: He feels that my son cannot do it the way I can

M: Cannot do it as in? You do not like to do it?

S: No…I mean…

SK: Does not like it as in he is basically scared (laughs)

S: It is a daring job (smiling)

M: Oh…that is the case, right…

Santosh's answers to my questions in the first minutes of the interview were monosyllabic or brief. My earlier interviews had alerted me to the lack of confidence that many young men felt in the realm of work (or lack of it); hence I persisted with the track of Santosh's reluctance to work in his father's department. Did I know about his fear before this meeting, I try to remember as I write this narrative, given the overall portrait of Santosh that I had constructed in my mind, based upon his parents' conversations? To me, my persistence in demanding that Santosh clarify his

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[10] M (Madhura), S (Santosh), SK (Suvarna kaku)

reluctance now seems deliberate, almost as if seeking an admission of fear, in my project of unearthing men's vulnerabilities. Santosh tried to deflect the admission, by referring indirectly to his inability (*my father said…*). Would I have pressed on the way I did, if it had been a young man with a less diffident body language, articulating his responses in a less tentative manner?

Santosh's attempt to protect himself came to a naught, as his mother articulated with almost cruel ease (turning her head sideways, without looking at us, her back to us still, with a laugh) precisely what he struggled to avoid saying. Yet it was suggestive that Santosh followed his mother's reply not with an attempt to contradict her, protect himself or set boundaries about her speaking up for him; he confirmed what his mother said, admitting his inability to do a "daring" job, with a smile. This was the first instance in the interview that his mother had interjected and answered for him, without being asked to. As the interviewer, by refusing to comment on her encroachment on my interaction with her son I signaled this as a space with permissible boundaries; a space which, I was certain at a subconscious level, would yield not just what Santosh's mother thought about her son, but which would be a telling comment on Santosh's gendered self as well.

(9.08)

M: What kind of a house would you like to live in? We all have dreams about our future no…what do you plan for?

S: (laughs) Plan as in…

SK: (looking back at Santosh, as if to explain the question to him) What about the future? Repeat to Madam, whatever you keep on telling me! That I want a house like this, I want the toilet to be inside the house, only then will I be ready to get married…

S: I will be ready for marriage after I get a job and then will buy a good flat. Here….all this quarreling and all…I don't feel like being here. Will buy a flat somewhere outside, live there, no tension! No worries about conflicts, go to work, that is it.

M: Oh, so you do not insist on staying back in Moti Peth?

S: Well, I do, but then there are so many quarrels here, someone glares at you angrily and things flare up. I like it with the other boys around, but then again, these conflicts all the time…

M: You mean conflicts between the young men in the galli?

S: Yeah…no I mean with those coming from outside. This one glares at you, then that one glares at you…

SK: (dismissively) He does not like friends and all that much…

S: (in a tone as if to complete her sentence) I don't have many of them…

M: Hmm…so you would like to buy a flat…

S: Yeah, a flat somewhere far, in a quiet place!

M: But then would you not get bored there?

S: Hmm… (laughs)

M: Yeah, and the main thing is that the toilet and bathroom will be inside the house…that is important.

S: Yeah, that is the main thing.

M: Why so? Why does the toilet have to be inside?

S: (almost inaudibly) How to go to the public toilets… (voice trails off followed by nervous laughter)

SK: One's own is one's own finally! How can one stand all the time in a queue! (mid-way in his mother's sentence, S repeats almost inaudibly, "one's own")

M: So if you have a choice, which area will you like to live in?

S: Choice…choice as in, I have not really seen the city much. They never sent me anywhere (gives a shortlaugh), my mother didn't send me…

SK: Maybe near Kesari Peth…

S: (repeats) Kesari Peth…

SK: or maybe Nehrunagar

S: Haa… (in a tone as if she has said exactly what he wanted to say), Sitala wadi…that is also a good area.

By the tenth minute of the interview, Suvarna kaku's interventions were already more directive and elaborate; if Santosh hesitated for even a few seconds more over a question, she took over with a flourish, which neither I nor Santosh made an attempt to stop. Santosh's aspirations and ambivalences (to live in a flat, in a different area, to avoid conflict) in this sequence were not

radically different from his peers, as we have already seen in the last chapter. However, the mode of expression of these aspirations were clearly outside the terrain of the masculine: while some of the young men in the galli might have shared his weariness with the regular brawls in the galli (like Anya, in last chapter), no one had articulated it as distaste or dislike, which implied seeking a possible escape from the manly world of inter-neighborhood brawls, loyalty to one's own friends, standing up to "outside" boys and living dangerously close to the world of fights and crime.[11]

The places where his mother spoke for him were doubly damning for Santosh's masculine self: not just was he spoken for by his mother, with or without his volition, she had lain bare a side of him which displayed unmanly, unmistakably feminized traits. Calling out his non-negotiable requirement of having a toilet inside the house was the first instance. In the public discourse in India, especially in recent times, the lack of dignity and shame associated with using public toilets has overwhelmingly been associated with girls and women.[12] Referring back to Phadke et al's (2011) contention of women having to bodily prove their connection to the private sphere, to gain legitimacy, this association is also not misplaced. If Santosh's desire to have a toilet inside his house was a source of a sense of shame, something which women in the vasti were expected to feel to be womanly, but which was hardly ever allowed to the men to feel and express, his mother's casual calling out of it in front of me seemed tactless at best and

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[11] This aspect comes through more clearly in the narratives included in Chapters IV and V. In fact, a lot of young boys and men expressed their participation in these brawls in celebratory and glorifying terms.

[12] See https://sanitationupdates.wordpress.com/2012/03/20/india-bride-awarded-us-10000-for-demanding-toilet-after-marriage/ for increasing instances of young brides refusing to marry grooms if the latter's house lacked a toilet.

infantilizing of her son at worst.[13] However, I cannot neglect my own contribution in this framing, by bringing the conversation back to the issue of private toilets and why it was important for Santosh.

Suvarna kaku's righteous certification that he did not care much for friends (also reiterated by Santosh) struck hard at the centrality of ideals of friendship and peer group loyalty for developing a masculine self in the galli. The sequence ended with Santosh's sheepish admission that he was not familiar with the spaces of city, due to his mother's diktats (see Chapters IV and V for an elaboration of the place of friends and friendship in the performance of what I term as "moral masculinity" for the young men in the vasti and the importance of mastering the spaces of the city in articulating a masculine identity).

(17.44)

M: According to you, what should sons do for their parents?
S: For parents? (pauses for a while)
M: (to SK, in a mocking tone) Please don't listen in on this one, he will feel pressured! (laughs)
S: A lot… (unclear)
M: What do you feel like doing for them?
S: (in a casual tone) nothing…doing a job, then buy a flat, buy a good vehicle…
M: What vehicle will you buy?
S: There is a lot of variety, but probably a simple one, which gives good mileage.
M: You mean a two wheeler or a four wheeler?

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[13] During fieldwork, there were several times when I would see young men go to or come back from public toilets nearby, a towel wrapped around their waists and a plastic bucket swinging in their hands. Most of the young men were unselfconscious even as they greeted me and asked me to join them for tea. As I averted my gaze in the initial months, I realized that the burden of self-consciousness lay mostly with the women. Santosh's explicit articulation of this shame was remarkable for me in this light.

S: Two wheeler. I cannot drive a four wheeler. For that I will need coaching. And besides, one needs to have passed class VIII to get a license.

M: Oh, is it? Hmm…So what expectations do the young men here have from their parents?

S: The boys here?

M: Yes, your friends…

S: (smiles a bit apologetically) I can't really say what they think…

M: What are your expectations? What do you think then? (short laugh)

S: (mumbles something inaudible)

SK: His wish is that my parents should buy for me a three- room flat, they should get me a job and find a good, domestic wife for me, so that I can take care of her. And then I will work hard and take care of you both (his parents) (at this point, S says, "haaa," in a tone which sounded like he belatedly remembered what the point was, or that this is exactly what he wanted to say) He says that I am not going to distance myself from you, I will tell my wife, my parents are my first priority and you come after them, that is what he wishes. He tells all this to me, but he won't be able to tell all this to you…I told him, *bala*,[14] once you are married, no matter what, you will distance yourself from your sister, and he said to me, you just wait and see what happens…(implying that it would not happen).

M: So the parents rank first, then the sister and then the wife…wife comes last? (laughs)

In asking Santosh what he wanted to do for his parents, I attempted to (with success) prevent his mother from intervening, eliciting the brief list of duties that Santosh enumerated. The tone of his reply (beginning with "nothing") suggested a certain ordinariness to his acts, a modest claim of doing a regular job and buying a motorbike. Interestingly, as we proceeded to the question about what he expected his parents to do for him, Suvarna kaku jumped in with gusto, though her reply confounded me. Santosh's desires to fulfill his filial duties and his expectations from his parents were constituted more or less by the same set of actions, including getting a job and buying a house. Though it seemed more likely that the procurement of a job and a house were considered to be the parents' responsibility by both, Santosh and his parents, notwithstanding Santosh's tentative reply. Their constant worry about getting him his father's job, Vijay nana's

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[14]*Bal*, in Marathi, refers to an infant. *Bala* is a term used often as a term of endearment, for both girls and boys.

dramatic declaration earlier and Suvarna kaku's worry that their son should not harbor a feeling of resentment against his parents for leaving him with nothing (*kay thevla majhya sathi*) testified to these expectations which Santosh felt entitled to have.

Interestingly, Suvarna kaku's reply shifted almost unnoticeably from what her son expected from his parents to what *she* expected from her son. I do not want to suggest that her expectation of her son's devotion to his parents and sister over his wife might not be shared by Santosh. But in representing her son as making these noble commitments to his mother in confidence, Suvarna kaku aligned Santosh's image with a patriarchal ideal in unequivocal terms, as one who would not jettison his loyalty towards his parents and sister in favor of the "outsider" wife.

Since my research did not begin with an explicit focus on masculinity, the marital status of the young men constituted the other blind spot in my ethnographic lens. For me, young men in the galli seemed to get married at a much earlier age than I had thought the norm would be; most of the currently married young men (aged between twenty five and forty) had gotten married between the ages twenty three and twenty six, with a few exceptions who had gotten married as early as at twenty one. Many of those who were married did not yet have a fixed source of income or were only intermittently employed, while waiting for their inheritance of a sweeping job and so were entirely dependent (along with their wives and children) on their parents for all their expenditures. My middle class imagination of conjugality[15] found no referent in the

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[15] My middle class imagination of heterosexual conjugality derives from my own middle class, urban, Brahmin upbringing, wherein newly married couples, while respectful of their familial duties, are expected, even encouraged to spend time alone (like going for a movie, going out for dinner), in a bid to get to know each other. More importantly, in my conventional imagination a married man was distinct from the "boys," in the terms of decreased time that the former would spend with his male friends and a marked change in the former's demeanor as he

gendered spacetime of the galli where there were little or no clues to suggest that the "boys" who spent long periods of time in playing cards and cricket, chatting or gambling in the mandir, were in fact married or that some had recently even become fathers. The restricted mobility of young daughters-in-law in the early days of their marriage combined with the rigorously regulated expression of conjugal relationships in the galli's spaces added to my inability to read the marital status of several young men; it is suggestive most of my field notes for the first four months referred to most young men here as "boys."

Santosh's interview alerted me belatedly to the peculiar bind that young men in the galli found themselves in, vis-à-vis marriage and their gendered roles. Their simultaneously married and financially dependent statuses placed contradictory sets of expectations on their gendered selves, as I demonstrate below. To my question of why the men here got married at an early age, Suvarna kaku replied,

> "*Aai-vadil mhantat, mulga ha sarkha bhaer jato, mulanmadhe phirto, sarkha bhandana vagare karto, mag tyachya galyat samja tyachya jodila ek bayko dili, tar ha gharat basal, ticha aikal. Aamcha aiknya peksha ticha aikal. Nokrichi garaj aso nahitar naso, amhi haye na tovar tula sambhalu*" (The parents think, our son always roams outside with other boys, gets into brawls, if we were to riddle him with a wife, then he will sit at home. He might not listen to us, but at least he will listen to her. Never mind if he has a job or not, as long as we are alive we will take care of him)

This was also echoed by Karan, who blamed the current atmosphere of unbridled "enjoy" which was liable to corrupt young boys easily. The instrumental place of marriage became clearer when Anya clarified how he himself was forced to get married at the age of twenty one,

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transitioned from being a "carefree, boisterous boy" to a "responsible, married" adult man, gainfully employed, working towards his career.

> "*Aai vadil pressure taktaat. Aai vadil vichaar kay kartaat, kuthli porgi palvun netoy ka kay, kuthe penyachya naadi lagtoy ka kay, kutha bhaltach kahitari kartoy ka kay…ekda lagna laun dila ki bayko hyachi barobar hyala bandhun thevti*" (The parents pressurize. They think what if our son elopes with a girl, or becomes an alcoholic or goes astray…once we get him married, his wife will keep him tied down)

Marriage was a preventive measure, a medium for the young man to be *riddled with* and *tied down* by his wife's presence, an antidote for his parents' overwhelming anxiety of their son going astray. Clearly, the anxiety far outweighed questions of his maturity, financial capability or willingness to get married. Yet, both Anya and Suvarna kaku admitted that the young men themselves secretly looked forward (*hous asti*) to marriage, excited that their marital status will grant adulthood to them (*mi aata mothyanmadhe modnaar e!*); according to Anya, the young men, excited at the prospect of becoming an adult, exempted themselves from the burden of responsibilities that marriage entailed; if their parents got them married, they assumed with a sense of entitlement that the former would also take care of the conjugal couple.

So who was to blame, I wondered aloud, to Suvarna kaku, when young men, pressurized to marry, refused to take responsibility for their wife and children and insisted that their parents look after them? The contradictory expectations around young men's marriage seemed to coil into a circular blame game, as Suvarna kaku clarified,

> "*Aai vadilanchi chuki nai, aai kay karti, ki hyacha lagna jhalyanantar hyala savay lagal, naika ekda ka bayko tyachya galyat tangli tar to kashta karayla lagal, pan to jasta karto, mool jhalyanantar mhanto ki tu karun dila*"(It is not the parents' fault. The mother thinks, once he has the burden of a wife around his neck he will start working hard, but his indifference increases. Once a child is born he accuses the mother that she is the one who got him married).

The singular concern of parents about their son's possible descent into a dreaded spiral of alcoholism, brawls, addictions and affairs, was indicative of a trajectory feared to be inevitable

for the young men; a fear structured by intersecting class and caste vulnerabilities that their uneducated and unemployed Mang status and the essentialized gendered expectations of lower class masculinity subjected them to. For the parents, the conjugal relationship then, was an instrument expected to detract their sons from irresponsible behavior, which took easy precedence over the achievement of other markers of normative manhood (like becoming financially independent).[16] The young men, whose masculine selves relied heavily on their ability to master precisely the realm of neighborhood brawls, conflicts and male friendships (see Chapter IV and V), seemed to consider marriage equally instrumentally, as a ticket to the world of adulthood, without a serious engagement with its attendant pressures. Even though parents grudgingly continued to support their son and his family, I wondered if it was the newly wed wife who bore the heaviest burden of these contradictions: of a husband who depended largely upon his parents for all his expenses and whose world of sociality mostly still revolved around the world of other "boys," even as she probably remained unbeknownst to some kind of restraining influence that her presence was intended to bring in her husband's life.

(1.16.10)

M: What worries you? What makes you feel tensed? (*tension ghene*)
SK: He worries that he will never get the job (with the municipal corporation)

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[16] In their ethnographies on masculinity in a working class neighborhood in Cairo and south Indian state of Kerala respectively, Ghannam (2013) and Osella and Osella (2006) underline financial independence as an essential requisite in order for the young men to qualify for marriage. Osella and Osella (2006) elaborate upon the trajectory of young migrants to the Gulf, a journey from *payyan*-hood (immature young male) (78) to a mature man, which includes financial independence, marriage and an astute balancing of expenditure of cash on social obligations, in that order. For the lower caste males, even though marriage occurs in early 20s, the young boy has to earn his eligibility by proving his ability to labor in the fields and to provide (39-41). Similarly, Ghannam (2013) contends that the ability of young man to provide for a fully furnished house for his new bride serves as a crucial yardstick to measure his masculinity; she points to the fact that a lot of single men in the Cairo neighborhood where she worked were single out of economic compulsion, their inability to find a bride tied to their inability to earn (71-73).

M: Hmm…that is the main worry, that you will never get that job

S: Haa…the rest here (other young men) do not think like that

M: How come they do not worry about a job? I also worry so much as to what kind of employment I will get (laughs nervously)

S: They don't worry at all… (they think) my parents are there to give me money, I will enjoy and chill

SK: He looks how other boys behave. (They say) Ma, give me five rupees, my daughter is crying. Ma, give me money to buy a sari (for my wife), Ma, I need money to eat out somewhere. That is not how he wants it to be. And I agree; he should be on his own.

S: Right through my childhood I have never asked anyone from my extended family for even a single rupee!

SK: He wishes that he should not be like other boys here. (He wishes) I will make it by the dint of my own hard work and look after you on its basis. Some boys might work hard, but they will do it for their own "enjoy," while going to work they will again shamelessly ask their parents for money.

S: If they see their mothers sitting outside while they (the young men) are going to work, they will sharply criticize their own mothers for loitering around…

SK: He will not do that. If he sees me sitting helplessly, he will instantly ask me what the matter is. If it is about money, he will offer some money to me. In fact he hands over his entire month's salary to me.

More than an hour into his interview, Santosh redeemed his masculine self, by positing himself against the failed filial performances of his peers. Not without considerable help from his mother. It was remarkable that Santosh's gendered self that materialized via our conversation was diametrically opposite from his peers' ideas of what constituted a manly self: he did not have volition in his mother's presence (and made no attempt to conceal the fact); his mother shared without discretion his feelings of fear, shame, worry, a caring demeanor, lack of confidence and a lack of desire to regulate; all highly feminized traits, to which Santosh mostly murmured in agreement. The tentative, self-deprecatory way in which he characterized his inabilities (*I don't know the city that much, I will not be able to get a driver's license, I don't have many friends*) was a far cry from the masculine posturing that his peers engaged in;

notwithstanding their own vulnerabilities, Jonas Brothers, for instance, clamored to prove their intimate knowledge and mastering of the city's spaces outside the galli, allied themselves with the galli's past violent reputation in terms of male courage and loyalty (see Chapter IV and V), and their cool quotient hinged in a big way on their enactment of a certain vision of urban, hip, playful male friendship. Yet, prompted by his mother, in articulating his alternatively gendered male self, Santosh also presented a critique of the dominant modes of being a man in the galli, in his explicit distaste for gang brawls, public toilets, his disapproval for his peers' carefree attitude vis-à-vis getting a job and for their utter failure to be responsible sons to their parents. But then again, I wondered, would Jonas Brothers have been different as men, if I had interviewed them in the presence of their mothers or fathers, or elder brothers or senior mandal members? What kind of a man would Santosh have been and what kind of a man would I have made him out to be, had I interviewed him alone? In the un-answerability of these questions, were lodged the lessons of my own ethnography: of our always incomplete yet collective implication in the production of masculinity in the galli (as well as in the production of the knowledge about it).

V

Madamly Musings

It is probably stretching it too far to designate "Madam" as a category of identity and experience, whilst in the field, but I find it rife with possibilities. To anyone who is familiar with post-colonial India, the word "Madam" has been appropriated in the regional languages for too long now, to strike as originally English in its origin. I attempt here (rather crudely) to do an

ethnography of the term "Madam," in order to see how the category of Madam encodes within itself an entire web of structural, historical and embodied relations of power, around which the young men in the galli and I proceeded to construct an acutely gendered field. My interpretation of the young men's masculine identity is essentially a product of this gendered field.

In the fifth month of my research, as Naresh enthusiastically braced to hand me his wedding invite, he paused with the pen poised over the flap of the invite and smiled at me sheepishly. He had not actually known my name till then, since I had been just "Madam" for as long as we had talked to each other. I was never called anything but Madam (by older and younger men and women and children) during the course of my eighteen long research in Shelar galli (barring three women who called me by my first name). Clearly, Madam was the code for our caste, class, gender and education-based power relation, internalized and used easily by everyone, including me.

There is exhaustive literature on how colonial processes (in South Asia and elsewhere) and post-colonial developments have served to produce and perpetuate the binaries of modernity and tradition, science and non-science, rational and irrational, which were mapped seamlessly on to hierarchies of upper caste versus lower caste, upper class versus poor or urban versus rural.[17] These binaries have aligned modernity, English and caste and gender hierarchies into a potent configuration which has historically enjoyed a privileged place in the project of knowledge-production in post-colonial India. The naturalized way in which we all settled into "Madam" as a

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[17] For some representative illustrations see Nandy (2007); Dirks (2001);Gordon (1997); Chatterjee (1993);Minh-ha (1987).

way of addressing me was indeed a continuation of the historical processes which led to "people like me" studying "people like them." (Abu Lughod 1991: 148).

So what, despite this acute awareness of the power dynamics between us, prevented me from objecting to "Madam," (in which case I would have been addressed in a more vernacular idiom as "*tai*"), or better still, proposing that I be called by my first name? Tai, meaning "older sister" in Marathi, is another such term, which is constituted by distinct, yet similar configurations of power that underlies Madam. Used in everyday interactions between street vendors, auto-rickshaw drivers and (especially middle class or upper caste, young and old) women customers, or while referring to a host of women representatives of state apparatus (like the Aanganwadi tai, social worker tai, bachat gat tai) or to women political leaders and women members of non-governmental organizations, tai serves a crucial end in a heteronormative, patriarchal context: by casting the women as older sisters, mostly in a reformist or care-giving role (especially as social workers, aanganwadi workers), tai lends legitimacy to and produces respectability for the presence of women in public sphere in everyday urban India. In the context of the galli, tai would have framed the terms of my relationship with the young men in unambiguous kinship terms, shaping our interactions in conventionally gendered idioms and expectations, automatically desexualizing the terrain. As someone who had always struggled deeply to reconcile her gendered identity with the conventional expectations that the latter generates, I chose to be the figure of "Madam" and not tai, allowing the power configurations of Madam, rather than those of tai to shape my engagement with men.

This is not to say that I was always successful in framing our interactions by my choice of persona. Throughout my research, men and women in the vasti continued to refer to me in

215

kinship terms (as daughter or as paternal aunt of their grandchildren) irrespective of how I tried to frame our relationship. At the same time, my own stance resisted this filial association in tacit and explicit ways. The festival of Raksha Bandhan was one such instance. Meaning the "knot of protection," this festival epitomizes the role of "brother as protector" and "sister as protection- seeker," wherein the sister ties a decorative piece of thread (Rakhi) on her brother's wrist, eliciting the dutiful promise of life-long protection from her brother. In India, traditionally, several men and women, not biologically related to each other, but who might be neighbors or friends consolidate their relationship into a filial one by tying a rakhi. I hoped to be present in the galli for the celebration of this festival, like I was for all Hindu festivals through the year. However, there was a tacit expectation that I would tie Rakhis on the young men's wrists, "making" them into my brothers. Missing the festival altogether or being there without any allusion to the festival would have been rude at best and callous at worst.

Eventually I did go to the galli that evening clutching a bunch of colorful Rakhis. As soon as I reached, I announced that I wanted to tie Rakhis not on the young men's wrists, but on the wrists of my women and girl-friends; I wanted all my women friends to support and protect each other, I declared, in order to strengthen the supportive bond between women. I proceeded to tie Rakhis on the wrists of several young women and excited little girls, not quite sure what everyone in the galli made out of it. Irrespective of how they perceived it, the fact that I did not tie Rakhis on the men's wrists thus refusing to acknowledge them as my brothers, was a message hard to miss in the galli so fully saturated with conventions of gendered and Hindu ritual practices, in a way which I hoped was not disrespectful towards their beliefs. Thus it would be naïve to expect that our interactions were tightly bound within fixed set of expectations; they were a product of a degree of instability that my stance brought to the gendered norms of the

galli on the one hand, and the ways in which men, women and children continued to respond to me as Madam/ a single woman in the galli/ upper caste, on the other.[18]

The other (and more democratic) alternative to Madam would have been the practice of calling me by my first name. Considering the fact that I was at least 5-6 (and in some cases more than a decade) older than the young men I interacted with, I could have also technically called them by their first names. First-name address though presented with its own anxieties for me (and I anticipate for the young men as well). Even after a deeper acquaintance, it would have been an impossible proposition for the single (or married) young men to enact a first-name basis intimacy with another single, relatively unfamiliar (and allegedly heterosexual) woman like me and vice versa, for the enormous anxieties that it would generate in terms of sexuality and sexual boundaries. For all my resistance towards the conventional gendered and filial norms, the unmistakable intimacy and complete erasure of formal distance that the casual form of address "tu" (as opposed to the formal, honorific form "tumhi") in Marathi represented was not something that I had the confidence to play with. Thus though our struggle to desexualize our interactions became more demanding due to my rejection of known sisterly- appropriate repertoire of behaviors, I sought to balance it with being "Madam," which offered a semblance of formality; the overwhelming history of politics of power which accompanied Madam however, continued to sit uneasily beside my justifications of anxiety.

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[18] These moments also demonstrated to me the obsolescence of the discussion of my position as a "native anthropologist" (Narayan 1993: 671). The contradictory ways in which my world encountered the worlds in the galli and the continually shifting focus of my identity in our interactions (at times as an upper caste woman, at times as a single woman) made irrelevant the discussions around whether I was a more "authentic" insider or not, as is attributed to the notion of a native anthropologist. Narayan (1993) critiques this category as having lost its purchase in conversations on positionality of an anthropologist, as notions of "insider" and "outsider" themselves are rendered suspect vis-à-vis the project of ethnographic knowledge production. Also, preoccupations with whether the researcher is a more or less of a "native" reduce the ethnographic encounter from a complex landscape of asymmetrical power and shifting identities to a rather flat, unidimensional concern with "authenticity."

My essentially partial access to the young men's worlds had to be explicitly achieved, through our collective construction of a gendered zone which was formal and "safe," yet informal enough for me to join them in their evening huddles in the galli, in their trips to the tea shop near and outside Moti Peth, in the all-male carom club situated in the galli, in their late night rendezvous with politicians, or in their movie outings. I attempt to articulate my role in this endeavour, via a thick description of my own gendered performance vis-à-vis the young men. Always attired in salwar kameez, wearing my long hair in a tight braid, my outward appearance whilst in the galli was unambiguously feminine. My ease with wielding the camera, laptop and my scooter however, was not. Despite the fact that Pune has a considerable population of women scooter riders, in the galli, it was clearly a first for all its residents, to see a woman performing competently anything remotely related to technology, strictly a men's realm for the galli dwellers.

Even though I interacted in equal measure with men and women right through the eighteen months of my fieldwork, I was instinctively comfortable with a lot of "men's talk," and unequivocally indifferent to womanly interests; for instance, I could not connect with women instantly over matters like beauty tips or cooking recipes. I did not try hard to seem to be taken in by infants and babies (like young women are instantly expected to be, in the larger context of India), because I was not. On the other hand, though our initial interactions were exceedingly awkward and formal, I did not have to think hard to engage the young men in a conversation. I found myself to be genuinely drawn towards small details of their allegedly manly realms; *did this motorbike give a better mileage than that one? Had they tried the tea from the stall located near Pune railway station? How much did the man who cooked for the galli's celebration of Ganesh Janma festival charge from them? Who exactly came to watch movies shown in the seedy*

little video parlor in the adjoining galli? Of course, I could easily ride their motor-bike through the narrow lanes of Moti Peth, did they want to see?! The new underpass connecting Shivaji nagar with Deccan is so convenient, no?

It was not just my interest in the world that they inhabited, but also my own (even if limited) familiarity with a slice of that world that rewarded me with an engagement on their part which was not limited to a conventional man-woman interaction that they were used to. Seeing me ride a motor bike in my salwar kameez (I did it once when they asked me if I could ride a bike) or responding to my gentle teasing "*Kay rao! Chaha chi party dya aata*!" (Come now bro, you have to treat me to a cup of tea now!), constituted small but significant cues in our interactions which marked my feminine presence with a definite gendered ambivalence not just for the young men, but probably for everyone watching our interactions in the galli. I was careful to ensure that these interactions, especially in the initial months, were enacted in open view in the galli, and never with an individual man, but generally in a group. These interactions were not without their reservations: several elderly women asked me casually in the initial weeks of my fieldwork, whether I did not own any dupatta, with which I can cover the upper half of my body; the boys tend to "look," they whispered conspiratorially to me. I always went dupatta-less to do fieldwork, an unthinkable proposition for the young girls and women in the vasti, justifying it on the basis of my lack of habit of wearing it or its inconvenience while riding a scooter.

That I started getting invited to their tea sessions in Sadanand tea shop, or that they started sharing with me their specialized knowledge of Moti Peth's political gossip were some of the few indicators for me that they were responding to the cues which my behavior communicated. Our conversations gradually became much more relaxed, marked with humor

219

and bantering and a mutual trust which enabled them to allow me access to some of their conversations/ trips and which ensured me that I was not crossing a boundary in doing so.[19]

Notwithstanding the seemingly coherent narrative that I have built about the gendered terrain which we produced, a celebration in the galli following Naresh's wedding brought to the fore the essentially uncertain nature of this process. Women folk dancers were invited to this celebration, which involved an invocation to the various deities to bless the newly- weds, lasting the whole night. A lot of young men told me that they looked forward to these performances especially because of the young women dancers; once the initial invocation was done, the women dancers responded to popular demands of songs and each of the young men were invited in the front to do a jig with them. Most of the young men resisted and had to be brought in the front with their heels dragging and cut a comic figure, dancing shyly next to the women, who were evidently seasoned in these flirtatious encounters. Women from the galli, while a part of the cheering audience, were clearly not a part of this drill. I was thus surprised when my name was announced by Prasad, a young man in his twenties, requesting me to come ahead and dance. Not sure if a refusal would mean offense, yet apprehensive about dancing alone in front of an audience, I gingerly made my way to the front; the sense of anticipation to see "Madam dance" was so palpable, one could have sliced it with a knife. I began, to the great delight of everyone in the audience, including older men and women. Some young men joined me almost immediately, forming a circle around me as I danced inside it. I was disturbingly aware of being watched by some middle-aged men who were sitting in chairs at the back. I smiled at the women, looking for some comfort, and they smiled back indulgently and clapped. The young men's

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[19] My equally intense interaction with the rest of the vasti residents helped to allay any anxieties that could have resulted due to an exclusionary kind of interaction with Madam.

dance reached a frenzied pitch around me. Relieved that I had participated for long enough to respect the request, I exited the group to much cheering and applause from the entire audience.

It was only the next day that I began to be really troubled by the idea that Madam had been made an object for the young men's consumption in the galli last night, akin to the traditional women dancers, who were looked upon as the tantalizing elements of the all night performance. I remembered how the middleaged men at the back had leaned back in their chairs and watched me dance and smiled. In a hetero-patriarchal context, divided by caste and class, the young men interpreting my "freely" behavior with them as a permissive space for objectification and sexual overtures, was the easiest interpretation that I could arrive at, simultaneously feeling intense anger and resentment at what had happened.[20] It was only in a heated discussion a day later with a close friend that a different interpretation came to the fore, one which I had not anticipated at all. [21] If I had worked explicitly towards being treated less like a woman and more like a peer with the young men, in the context of their tea shop trips, humor and banter and political gossip, was it not possible that they chose to treat me like one of them in their "manly" fun? My anger at being objectified could be justified and valid; however equally valid was the possibility that the young men were responding to my ambivalent performance of my gender,

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[20] This understanding and experience is shared and experienced collectively by middle class/ upper caste women in urban India, with ever more intensity in contemporary times. Middle class women's everyday interactions with working class or lower caste men (vendors, hawkers, delivery boys or security guards etc.), when not framed strictly by a class-based code of behavior (adopting a neutral or "talking down" tone of voice, avoiding eye contact, casual talk or daily greetings), can be interpreted as a permissible space by men to take liberties or push boundaries of propriety with these women. At the same time, in the light of the unfair indictment of working class/ lower caste men as those solely responsible for gendered violence in urban India today, several young women, with an explicit feminist conviction, try explicitly to minimize the class or caste based power equation with the men they encounter in their everyday lives, by smiling or greeting them or asking them for a glass of water. These interactions always tend to be delicate, marked by constant uncertainty of how women and men both interpret each other's behavior and verbal and embodied cues.

[21] I am thankful to Deepra Dandekar for these sharp insights.

and expected me to participate in their fun, as a logical extension of my eager participation in several of their other activities like tea-drinking, gossiping or playing carom. I could not attempt to construct a gender-fluid terrain and then apply a narrow lens of patriarchal objectification selectively to the consequent interactions. I will never know what the young men felt while watching me dance. However, what this instance illustrated for me was the omnipresent indeterminacy of these gendered interactions; could I view the young men's behavior that night as entirely divorced from precedents which I had actively initiated and set in our interactions?[22]

This elaboration does not seek to be an explanation of sorts for my fieldwork choices; instead I aim to demonstrate how my embodied and affective engagement with the men and women over the eighteen months in the galli unfolded along the uneven contours of Madam, breached continually by that which I sought to evade: power, indeterminacy and porosity of boundaries. In Avery Gordon's (1997) words, Madam was a haunted category. In her brilliant work on the nature of systemic power and its lurking presence, Gordon proposes haunting as,

> "...one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impact felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with (slavery, for instance), or when their oppressive nature is denied (as in free labor or national security)." (xvi)

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[22] In admitting this mutuality which drove our behavior, by no means do I want to advocate the dangerous narrative of "if women were violated, it must have been something that *they* did," especially in the context of gendered violence. If indeed I was objectified by some men during the performance, it would be still unacceptable and my anger would be entirely justified, because only I could specify the motives behind my behavior and no one else could assume them on my behalf. Instances of working class men indulging in violence against women in contemporary India cities very clearly display a tense class dynamic; but acknowledging this does not imply justifying this violence in any way. The mutuality I speak here however specifically refers to the peculiar gendered terrain that we collectively inhabited in the galli, where boundaries between femininity, masculinity and power were constantly being redefined or negotiated in ways obvious to all the residents of the galli. An older woman in the galli once pointed to me at the end of my fieldwork, "*Tumhi tyanchya barobar mulga hounach abhyaas kela!*" (You became a boy like them to research them!).

"Madam" then, was haunted by the long history of colonialism and power that produced it and troubled by my immediate anxieties and resistances and conveniences. Madam precluded an entire set of alternative possible itineraries that my relationship with the galli might have taken, the possibilities of tai or first-name address that it suppressed in order to materialize in our everyday interactions. Though my insistence on pushing the boundaries of gendered performance, yet keeping intact boundaries of sexual attraction did not quite work. A young man's passionate declaration of love for me at the end of my fieldwork and my short-lived, undeclared attraction towards a new bride in the galli seeped in startlingly. Madam continues to be an uneasy container of all these specters, as I write manhood into the galli's men. Young men in the galli, who strove to achieve manhood via their embodied practices, their consumption, their relationships with women and their participation in the neighborhood association, are as much a product of the ghosts which Madam lives with.

Chapter IV

Tale of the Mandal (I)

"*Casino Royale kasa challay aaj?*" (How is Casino Royale doing today?). Naresh's cheery, casual question puzzled me, even as the other mandal members standing around me broke into knowing chuckles and laughter on hearing this. We were standing a little away from the *mandir* (temple) in Shelar galli on a February afternoon, when Naresh approached us. As the laughter subsided, Naresh glanced over his shoulder towards the mandir and then looked at me. "Casino Royale" he smiled. It was early days for me in my fieldwork and I had still not mustered up enough confidence to ask anyone about the group of men who played cards all day long in the open mandir located in the galli. Flanked by idols of Lord Ganesh and Durga on each side, a group of 8-9 men sat in a circle on the floor, with an untidy pile of colorful playing cards lying in the center. Occasionally, some of them would get up and bend over to spit out expertly aimed reddish black streams of betel-nut juice outside the mandir, while still holding their cards like a Japanese fan in one hand. Twice a day, the chai-boy from the neighboring Sadanand tea stall would walk towards the mandir, armed with flimsy plastic cups and an aluminum kettle, as the men briefly broke for tea.

As I discovered that afternoon, the mandir doubled up as "Casino Royale," since the mandal had rented out the mandir space to a local gambling club. It fetched an assured income of INR. 3000 every month for the mandal, thus helping fund most of the latter's cultural and religious activities. During the year of my research following that early February evening, I saw the different worlds that occupied the mandir: as a place where men gambled and played *pachees;*[1] where *aarti*[2]was held every fortnight; where vasti residents sat and made flower

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[1]*Pachees* was a favorite pastime for the mandal members, especially during the summer months. It is a traditional board game, akin to Ludo, albeit in this case, the players betted money on the game.

garlands since many of them were in the flower business; where elderly men slept in the night owing to lack of space in their houses; where men watched TV during the day and where occasionally children and women hung out; where the young men in the vasti deliriously celebrated India's cricket World Cup victory in April 2011.

Throughout my research, the mandal's "mandir-cum-Casino Royale" continued to intrigue me as a space which occupied center stage in the social life of the galli and which seemed to effortlessly straddle the contradictions between the "moral" and "immoral" worlds contained within it. As I struggled to comprehend the contours of the mandal in the vasti, I realized that the mandir provided a useful analogy; the mandal was not entirely unlike the mandir in its essence. Both provided a fertile ground on which the social relationships of the galli were nurtured and a site where multiple (and contradictory) realms of morality, politics, locality and identity were negotiated by its male members.

In the two following chapters I focus on how the mandal in Shelar galli comes to occupy a crucial presence in the social and affective lives of the young men in the vasti. Elaborating upon the discursive and spatialized practices of the mandal, I attempt to demonstrate how these practices mediate the formation of and performance of a class, place and caste specific masculine identity for its members, while simultaneously consolidating a strong sense of belonging to the locality for them.In light of their acute marginalization from public life outside the vasti, I contend that belonging to a mandal provides space for the young men here to project a collective

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[2]*Aarti* refers to the worship of a Hindu deity (in this case Lord Ganesh), generally accompanied with singing of ritual hymns/ songs and greeting the deity with a lamp.

and individual self-image which is geared towards upholding a class-based moral code prescribed by the mandal and towards preserving self-respect.

Chopra, Osella and Osella (2004) argue for "localizing" the process of construction of a masculine identity, contending that it is crucial to locate masculinities in the particular socio-spatial contexts in which they are enacted, to avoid the pitfalls of talking in terms of a "…frozen (masculine) identity acquired and achieved once and for all" (30). Central to this contention is the understanding that masculine identities are not monolithic but are being continually made, re-made and negotiated in the socio-cultural and spatial field of gendered interactions and mediated by structures of power. Following this, I attempt to uncover the aspects of material and social space of the mandal, in order to understand the enactment of and reproduction of male gendered roles that unfold here. This chapter demonstrates how the mandal is not merely an urban, public backdrop where an already-consolidated masculinity is enacted, but itself is a fundamentally gendered and spatialized terrain, molding the identity of those associated with it.

In specific terms, this chapter uncovers the historical and discursive elements of the mandal and focuses on the embodied and material ways in which mandal mediates the relationship between masculine identity and urban spaces in Pune. The first section of this chapter locates the mandal at the intersection of spatial, religious and civic/ political axes of the city's life, in order to situate our examination of the peculiar masculinity that is shaped in mandal spaces.[3] I then elaborate upon mandal's activities as the site of embodied ways in which mandal

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[3] For this section of the chapter, I also use data obtained as part of my preliminary research conducted for this dissertation. I conducted twomonths of research on the culture of mandals in eastern part of the city of Pune in the summer of 2009. I interviewed members of fifteen mandals (Hindu, Muslim and Dalit) in order to understand how mandals channelized their members' participation in the domain of the "public," in ways specific to South Asia.

members not only enact their gendered identities, but also engender the vasti spaces themselves as masculine. Last, I focus on practices of doing friendship through the mandal, which enable mandal members to extend this masculinized control over vasti space, temporarily to the space of the city itself.

I

Mitra Mandal: Locations and Intersections

Tracing the historical evolution of mandals

Mitra mandal (or simply mandal), which translated from Marathi means a collective of *male* friends, is a highly localized entity, which represents a spatially bounded community, such as a residential cluster or a lane; each neighborhood, slum or alley in cities across western Maharashtra generally has one or more mitra mandal, run exclusively by male members. In Pune, mandals are almost synonymous with Ganesh Mandals, i.e. collectives whose explicit objective revolves around the ten-day annual celebration of the Ganesh festival; however, Ganesh mandals are but a part of a strongly entrenched public culture of mandals organized by religion or community-specific groups in the city. Stories of little boys wanting to form a small mandal of their own to celebrate the Ganesh festival and going door to door in their locality to collect contributions for the same are narrated and remembered with indulgence, viewed as a natural process of socializing for boys.

Muslimmandals, typically referred to as "Young Circle" or "Friend Circle" are a prominent presence in certain older parts of the city, while Dalit localities almost always have their own mandals.[4] In terms of their class profile, mandals are not amenable to easy categories; but it would be safe to say that the network of mandals is far denser in the poorer parts of the city, as compared to their numbers in middle class residential neighborhoods.

The popular narrative about the historical origins of Ganesh mandals in Pune is associated with the prominent nationalist leader Lokmanya Tilak's initiative in transforming the Ganesh festival into a publicly celebrated event, beginning in 1890. This public celebration of the Ganesh festival is referred to as "*sarvajanikganeshotsav*" in Marathi. The word *sarvajanik* is translated as "universal;" in fact, most Ganesh mandals add the suffix "sarvajanik" to their names (e.g. Siddhartha sarvajanik ganesh mandal). These details of nomenclature are significant, as they index the location of mandals in the realm of the "public" in India, and as I shall show later, one which is distinct from a Euro-centric conception of a public sphere.

It is not without a sense of pride that mandal members allude to Tilak's infusion of the public festival with a distinctly political agenda, making the festival (and by extension the mandals that organized it) the site of anti-colonial and nationalist activity.[5]The history of mandals is thus closely intertwined with the incipient nationalism in the first decade of twentieth century in India.[6]By 1900 there were approximately 100 mandals in Pune, which had increased

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[4] Interestingly, most Muslim mandals use the English terms referred to above in their nomenclature.

[5]For a more nuanced history of the Ganesh festival in Pune, see Kaur (2003). Kaur questions the dominant narrative, suggesting that Tilak, along with contemporary social reformers, only provided momentum to the process of politicization of the festival, which had already begun a few years earlier (33-41).

[6] A few old Ganesh mandals which I encountered during my preliminary research ran their own gymnasiums (*taalims*), which were considered to be fertile grounds for nurturing revolutionaries in the colonial period.

to 350 by 1950s (Kaur 2003:60). By mid-1990s there were close to 3,000 registered mandals in Pune, showing a phenomenal increase (ibid).

The historical origin of mandals and their location within a peculiar praxis of "public-ness" can be traced to the culture of voluntary associations that emerged in colonial India. Watt (2005) traces the rise of voluntary associations like Arya Samaj, Theosophical Society of India, Servants of India Society and Swami Vivekananda Seva Ashram, which institutionalized modes of social service and philanthropic practice in early 20th century northern India. While voluntary organizations were shaping an incipient public sphere in colonial India, they simultaneously constituted a field of action in which Indian subjects were asserting control in several areas of Indian public life, including education, charity and health (170-77). By its virtue then, the notions of disinterested, selfless social service whichunderlay the functioning of these associations in colonial India were linked to duty and loyalty to one's homeland on the one hand and to notions of active citizenship and civic engagement on the other.

Underlining the leadership of the voluntary associations which was constituted largely by Hindu upper caste men, hailing from educated elite families in 19th century India, Watt (2005) argues that this associational culture embodied caste, gender and classspecific definitions of citizenship, characterized by virtues of celibacy (*brahmacharya*), hygiene, and Brahminical values of morality and civility (15-19). Kidambi (2007) in his analysis of social service associations in colonial Bombay,contends that the rise of these associations represented a new mode of "social improvement," in which the urban educated indigenous elite undertook social service in order to "civilize" the urban poor by inculcating in them values of hygiene, sanitation and morality and working towards their uplift (204-220). Both Kidambi (2007) and Watt

232

(2005)suggest that this mode of civic activism generated moral capital for the emergent Indian bourgeoisie on the basis of which they were able to claim political leadership of the "masses."[7]

While the discourse of social service that defined the voluntary associations was closely linked to claiming of citizenship and civic rights, it was fundamentally molded by Hindu religious concepts of *dana* (giving) and *seva* (service). According to Watt (2005), voluntary associations reconfigured the notion of dana into institutionalized philanthropy and channeled dana into their pedagogic mission, making educational activities akin to giving away of knowledge (69-71). Similarly, the idea of seva (service) which was hitherto associated with ascetics serving people in Indian religious traditions was now transmuted into that of social service, uplift of the downtrodden and service to the nation (98-105).

Locating the history of voluntary associations within the genealogy of the public sphere in colonial and post-colonial India will reveal the connotations of *sarvajanik* (universal) or *samaaj* (society/ public) that heavily characterizes the rhetoric of mandals in contemporary Pune. Chatterjee (1993) has traced how the emergence of Indian "culture" as the site for nationalist resistance in early twentieth century enabled nationalist politics in colonial India to overcome the limits set by bourgeois public sphere; by evoking an inner spiritual or cultural core and linking it to a national identity, the strategy of cultural nationalism by-passed the process of participating in a public sphere, whichwas amenable to colonial control. The strategy of cultural nationalism instituted a new conception and practice of the "public" in colonial India whichcollapsed the

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[7]Bornstein (2012) traces the history of philanthropy in India and points out the role that Mahatma Gandhi played in transforming the concepts of daan and seva into "social obligations and obligations to society" (35) as the anti-national movement gathered momentum from 1920s onward. He also was instrumental in persuading industrialists like the Birlas in initiating charity projects including building temples, schools and hospitals.

divide between political and cultural spheres which had characterized the classic notion of public sphere as it evolved in the context of Western Europe in the 18th century.[8] This strategy, on the one hand, politicized culture by making the latter itself the site of political resistance; on the other hand, this politicization was heavily masked by the rhetoric of moral purity and superiority claimed as the feature of this cultural core(35-75). Voluntary associations in colonial India thus are a part of a larger configuration in which Hindu reformist and the incipient nationalist activism fused political rhetoric with community, religious and local referents in inseparable ways, thus giving rise to an indigenous discourse of "public" (Freitag 1991: 83-84), in contrast to the classic Habermasian (1989) conception of a public sphere elaborated above.

Recent research byCopeman (2009), Waghorne (2004), Kaur (2003), Hancock (2002) and Srinivas (2001) illustrate how participation in the public sphere and the exercise of citizenship continues to share shifting, blurred boundaries with the religio-cultural domain in post-independence India.[9]Hansen (1999) labels this mode of public engagement with the term,

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[8] Habermas (1989) traces the emergence of the private-public dichotomy to the rise of capitalist mode of production in 18th century Western Europe. While the private sphere was constituted by *particular* kin or family related interests, the realm of public was constructed as one whence property-owning individuals engage in a rational discussion based upon the *general* interests relevant to the larger society, regulation of and protection of the 'publicly relevant private activity' (27) i.e. private economic activity and social reproduction of labor. The emergent public sphere was thus contingent upon a dichotomous conceptualization of general and particular interests, translated into the essential separation of politics (representing activities informed by rational, general interests) from particular concerns of private individuals, represented by the realms of culture / religion/ kinship or ethnic identities.

[9] For instance, Hancock (2002) demonstrates how temples have always been imbricated with the state project of nation building in post-colonial India. For visitors, temples are not merely sites of devotion but on account of being public trusts, a site where they encounter state bureaucracy and regulations and learn rituals of citizenship. For Hancock (2002), temple spaces represent an alignment of the community's embodied historical memory with the practices of the state; this alignment allows for the emergence of what she terms as 'somatic citizenship' (26), a model of citizenship and political participation in which religiosity is an active presence in public life and governance.In his recent work on blood donation activities carried out by a variety of religious sects in contemporary north India, Jacob Copeman (2009) argues that the activity of blood donation bears a distinct religious connotation associated with dana, (the term in Hindi and Marathi for blood donation is *raktadan, rakta*signifying blood) and an expression of seva, service to the religious *guru* of the sect (279). He also contends that this activity is

"cultural anti-politics:" he contends that in the post-Independence period, cultural anti-politics

has consolidated into the image of the "ideal" national citizen of modern India, who works

selflessly for the downtrodden, has high moral and ethical standards, and whose apolitical

activism ennobles and purifies his self continually.

Mandals in the *poorva bhaag* (central-eastern) part of the city, including Siddhartha

mandal, are located precisely within this intersection of the discourse of "public" andserving the

samaaj and notions of citizenship and civic duties which underpin ideas of urban modernity in

post-colonial India. Mandals in Pune lay a heavy emphasis on apolitical selfless service to the

community; the range of religio-cultural activities which constitute this service and the moral

capital credited to it continue to shape the identity and animate their activities in contemporary

Pune.All mandals proudly underlined the selfless nature of their services, which included

celebrating Ganesh festival and other religious and national holidays; feeding pilgrims;

organizing blood donation camps; running a gymnasium/ library; writing civic messages on

notice boards; and organizing minor financial help for neighborhood members.

Mandal as an urban associational form

The mandal in its contemporary avatar in urban Maharashtra, also embeds within itself a

complex amalgamation of specifically urban influences extending from colonial to post-colonial

period. While little or no research exists on the social history of mandals in Pune, I rely upon a

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a powerful idiom to articulate patriotic citizenship and commitment to the nation, with its underlying assumptions of
donating blood in the service of the Indian armed forces (ibid).

considerable amount of historical research on the public culture of the city of Bombay to speculate about the nature of mandal culture as it exists in Pune today.[10]

The culture of voluntary associations in colonial and post-colonial India was not just a manifestation of an indigenized public sphere; voluntary associations were also crucial sites of imparting to their participants values of urban modernity, facilitating the transformation of the native into a modern citizen-subject (Kidambi 2007). The space of the city enjoys a powerful hold on the imaginary of modernity in post-colonial India. In fact, the metropolis becomes (and continues to be) a crucial trope through which to express the fraught desires and aspirations to modernity of newly Independent India, be it through avenues like cinema (Srivastava 2014; Mazumdar 2007), urban planning (Hull 2011) or consumption (Srivastava 2015; Lukose 2009). Kidambi (2007) emphasizes that the rise of voluntary associations in colonial Bombay with their varied interests and ascriptive caste or religious alliances (from cow-protection societies, to cricket clubs to Parsi charity organizations) was fundamental to the making of Bombay as a metropolis, with a vibrant public culture of associational activity (158-201). He details how this realm was shaped decisively by the ways in which the city provided a site for, "…new possibilities for imagining and fashioning collective selves defined by the competing identities of caste, class, religion and nation." (158).

Kidambi also shows how the contours of the culture of voluntarism in colonial Bombay were plotted very closely on to the caste and religious lines in the emerging metropolis. He describes the emergence of caste-based associational activity in colonial Bombay, in the form of

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[10]Although there is a dearth of in-depth research in this area, *para clubs* in Kolkata (Dasgupta 2002) or fan clubs of movie stars in Tamil Nadu and urban Kerala (Osella and Osella 2006) offer instances of the ways in which associational culture manifests in localized socio-political and cultural contexts across urban India.

self-help societies and educational trusts and a proliferation of Christian, Parsi and Hindu religious societies over this period in the city(167). For several castes placed lower in the caste hierarchy, engaging in "modernizing associational activities" (168) was one of the routes towards upward mobility.

The history of working class political mobilization in Bombay during the early twentieth century provides us with valuable clues to understand the place of associational activity amongst the working class and lower caste populations in the urban milieu. Chandavarkar (1994) in his brilliant study of the emergence of the working class culture in colonial Bombay, highlights the place of the neighborhood as an equally significant site of political mobilization of workers in the textile mill district of Bombay in the early decades of the twentieth century. He details the emergence of a variety of associational formations in the bustling, densely packed working class neighborhoods of Girangaon, as a consequence of economic, social and political factors underlying the consolidation Bombay as a center of industrial capitalist development. Thus the flourishing of neighborhood based gymnasiums, *melas, tolis, mandalis, chawl* committees and caste associations[11] represented an intricate web of informal social support networks through which jobs, credit, housing, leisure and political brokering was routed for the surge of migrant labor pouring in from all parts of Maharashtra. Several of these associational forms performed functions like arbitrating marriages; organizing financial help for its members; organizing cultural and religious celebrations; providing shelter for newly arrived migrants and presented a

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[11]*Melas* constituted dance companies which organized religious celebrations around Janmashtami (Lord Krishna's birthday). Chandavarkar (1994) informs us that each mela had a membership fee and was led by a prominent male leader in the neighborhood. *Melas* were based upon the ideal of group loyalty. *Tolis* were similar groups of Muslim youth who organized Muharram celebrations, also led by leaders of a Muslim mohalla (lane). Chawl committees were neighborhood based associations, revolving around chawls, a distinct residential form of housing built for the working class in Bombay (212-235).

complex intersection of caste, regional or village based allegiances. Importantly, the cultivation of this vibrant geography of neighborhood-centric political and cultural activity was largely credited to the active mobilization of the communist party until the 1950s, where these spaces were also the nodes through which textile workers' strikes were sustained and communist ideology was propagated (Chandavarkar 2009b: 134-150).

Chroniclers of the rise of the extreme right-wing chauvinist party Shiv Sena in Bombay in the 1960s refer to the process through which the party violently crushed working class resistance in the city through this decade and simultaneously tightened their grip on the city by capitalizing on this very neighborhood-based culture of associations (Chandavarkar 2009b; Hansen 2001; Heuzé 1995). This began a new era of transformation of mandals and *shakhas* (branches) into local hubs of aggressive, masculine assertion and organization of cultural and religious festivals with explicit communal hues (Heuzé 1995: 216-228). Ironically Shiv Sena articulated the rhetoric of "social service" as the driving factor behind the mandals and shakhas, wherein the local mandal leaders (dada) sought to get jobs for young men, organize medical help, rescue friends from police custody, and raised funds through forcibly collecting subscription money from businessmen, liquor and gambling operators for organizing their religious celebrations (Chandavarkar 2009b: 175-178).

The condensed history outlined above by no means can be simplistically extended to analyze the mandal culture in contemporary Pune. This historical genealogy however, deepens our understanding of the complex influences that underlie this associational form. Mandals seem to occupy a crucial place in the colonial and post-colonial public culture of urban Maharashtra embodying simultaneously gendered discourses of citizenship, religion, locality and politics. At

238

the same time, their location at the axis of the civic and claims to a universality (sarvajanik) do not preclude their organization along caste/ community or religious lines. Kidambi (2007) terms them as "hybrid" societies (14), "…which were as much a product of colonial modernity as the purely voluntary associations that are the *sine qua non* of liberal models of civil society" (ibid). It does not come as a surprise that mandals in Pune (as mentioned at the beginning of this section) are organized around locality and caste or religion based affiliation including Dalit mandals, Muslim Young Circles or a mandal like Siddhartha mandal, which was mostly identified by its Mang membership. The caste-based spatial organization of cities in post-colonial India also transforms mandals into local constellations of caste or religious groups. In Moti Peth, where several lower caste groups were densely packed in its cramped alleyways, mandals thus often were mapped on to the area's distinct geography of caste or regional community. In light of scanty research whichexplores the contemporary articulations between associational cultures and urban processes, my research hopes to illustrate how mandals are products of intersecting processes shaped by and in turn defining the nature of "cityness" in the case of Pune.

Specifically in the case of Siddhartha mandal, its annual calendar comprised of three major events: Ganesh Janma, a day-long event and a communal meal celebrating Lord Ganesh's birth, held generally in the winter months of January or February, the ten-day Ganesh festival which occurred during August or September, followed soon by Navratri, the nine-day celebration dedicated to Goddess Durga. The rest of the year was scattered with other minor religious/ civic celebrations: Independence day, Republic day, Anna bhauSathe's birth anniversary, New Year's eve and a fortnightly worship of Lord Ganesh, held in the mandal's mandir.

239

Spatializing the mandal

Notwithstanding their discursive precursors which are related to the history of voluntarism and an incipient public sphere in India, it is crucial to realize that mandals are highly localized entities;[12] hitherto research has paid scant attention to the spatialized dimension of the mandal and its activities. In Pune's landscape, a mandal's presence in a particular neighborhood is typically marked through notice boards announcing its name, sitting spaces like benches, newspaper racks constructed by the mandal on the street, aroom or other physical structure adjacent to the board which might house the mandal's gymnasium or a temple/ a *durgah* (a shrine dedicated to a Muslim saint), and/or earthen pots which are used to store water, provided to passers-by on the streets during summers. Often, this entire space is marked by religious or nationalist iconography, such as photographs of national or community leaders, the Indian flag or images of Hindu deities or of prominent durgahs in South Asia.

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[12] Mandals are unique to the urban culture of western Maharashtra, to the extent that they are voluntary associations concerned with the organization and celebration of Ganesh festival. Even here, we see a strong presence of Muslim voluntary associations and Dalit mandals, challenging a monolithic view of the mandal culture in Maharashtra. Mandals however, are clearly a part of the broader terrain of associational culture and voluntarism that characterizes urban India, which includes, as mentioned earlier, *para* clubs and movie fan clubs.

Photo 4.1: Hazrat Tipu Sultan Friends' Circle, located in one of the eastern peths. Behind the board announcing the name of the association, one can see a newspaper rack (on left hand corner at the back) and a blackboard for announcements (in the center at the back).

Photo 4.2: A Dalit mandal located in the eastern peths. One can see a newspaper rack on the right hand corner. The mandal space also has photographs of well-known Dalit icons including Dr. Ambedkar, Mahatma Phule, Savitri Phule, Anna bhau Sathe and Shahu Maharaj.

Photo 4.3: Chand Taara chowk Young Circle, named after the square in an eastern peth. The black board generally has a "Thought for the day" written on it. Note the images of nationalist leaders Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Azad against the Indian tricolor on both sides of the board. In the middle is a photograph of a mosque in Mecca, I was told.

Photo 4.4: Jawan Mitra Mandal in an eastern peth. "Jawan" here refers to soldiers in the Indian army. On the right is the Ganesh temple and on the left of the seating area is a blackboard for notices. The message in the center in the seating area reads, "Laborers, rest here."

Not unlike the above profile of mandals, the physical presence of Siddhartha mandal is hard to miss. Tucked away in Shelar galli, in the recesses of the congested labyrinth that Moti Peth is, the mandal was housed in a small two-storeyed structure, with a tin roof, located right at the beginning of the galli, from the Masoli Ali end. An old rusty notice-board hung on the

242

second floor of the structure announcing the name of the mandal, in a bright red Marathi font. The image of a *dhamma-chakra*[13]was painted in brown right below the name of the mandal. At the time of my research, the small room located on the second floor of the mandal structure was the site of a carom club, run by Kartik, one of the mandal members; the rusty notice board was partly covered by a smaller, brighter yellow colored board which announced the presence of "Siddhartha carom house."[14] The room on the second floor had a tiny balcony, where carom club customers emerged briefly to spit out their tobacco, before disappearing inside hurriedly. A narrow, scraggly ladder was propped up against the wall of the mandal structure, to enable customers to ascend to the carom club on the second floor.

The room on the first floor of the mandal structure represented the mandal perhaps in the most direct manner. This room, like the mandir, enfolded within its walls several worlds, central to the social life of the vasti here. All the mandal meetings were held in this room, also the site of an ill-equipped gymnasium for the mandal members and of a steel cupboard which contained mandal's documents. If one were to construct geography of men and boys' spaces in the galli, the small cement ledge located outside the room, adjacent to its door, would constitute a major hot-spot for mandal members, along with a bright orange colored metal bench which was often placed towards one side of the ledge. A much bigger and slicker board hung above the door of this room, which also announced the name of the mandal. On two ends of this board were two

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[13]The *dhamma-chakra* or the Wheel of *dharma*/ Law is a significant presence in Buddhist iconography, representing Buddha's teachings. With the en masse conversion of several Dalit communities to Buddhism since 1956, the dhamma-chakra has also come to symbolize Dalit struggles/ collectives in contemporary India. Even though Siddhartha mandal did not identify as a Dalit mandal, the association with Buddhism (via its name, Siddhartha) was probably the reason why the dhamma-chakra was painted on the board.

[14] Carom is a popular table top game in India, which can include two or four players. Carom clubs are a dominant presence in the map of leisure sites of working class neighborhoods in urban Maharashtra.

images: Hanuman Shelar on one end, in his signature scarf wrapped around his head and a bare-chested, muscular body-builder, flexing his arms, on the other. A chalkboard was affixed on to the wall, next to the door. The chalkboard was used rarely, to announce mandal meetings or timings of a funeral after a death in the vasti or a greeting to the vasti on Independence Day or Republic day.

On the right side of this two-storied structure, was another ramshackled room, with an iron grill affixed along the entire length of its windows. The length of the wall above the iron grill was painted in the colors of the Indian flag. This room, I was told, was also mandal's property; it housed a small mandir dedicated to Lord Hanuman and was rented out by the mandal to the local *aanganwadi*,[15]operated by Pune Municipal Corporation.[16] Mornings were busy in this little room, as infants and children from the neighborhood spent a few hours in the aanganwadi, playing and getting their mid-day meal. Occasionally the aanganwadi was also the site for holding state-sponsored health camps or vaccination drives.

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[15]Aanganwadi is an important presence in the landscape of public health services provided by the Indian state to the rural and urban poor. Started in 1975 as part of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), aanganwadis were set up for every 1000 populace, and are staffed by trained aanganwadi women workers. Aanganwadis provide outreach services to the poor in the areas of nutrition, immunization, including pre-natal and post-natal care to women, organizing crèche or pre-school for infants and toddlers, ensuring immunization of children in their jurisdiction and providing nutrition and child-care for them..

[16]The mandal's spaces (i.e. the gym, the mandir, the carom club) were difficult to place within neat categories of property ownership in the already complex property regime that characterized this part of Moti Peth. For instance, the plot where Ganesh mandir was located was not owned by the mandal, they had simply built a structure on the existent street, which technically was state owned. However, this space functioned as a privately-owned property, since the mandal rented it out and gained an income from this rent. The gym room and the adjoining mandir were allegedly owned by a man belonging to the Bairagi caste, who had now transferred the ownership of these small plots to the mandal, I was told.

Carom house

Anganwadi and Hanuman mandir

Notice board announcing the mandal's name and gym

Entrance to the mandal gym

Ledge outside the gym

Photo 4.5

Aanganwadi run by the municipal corporation

Notice about dengue epidemic posted by the health department of the municipal corporation
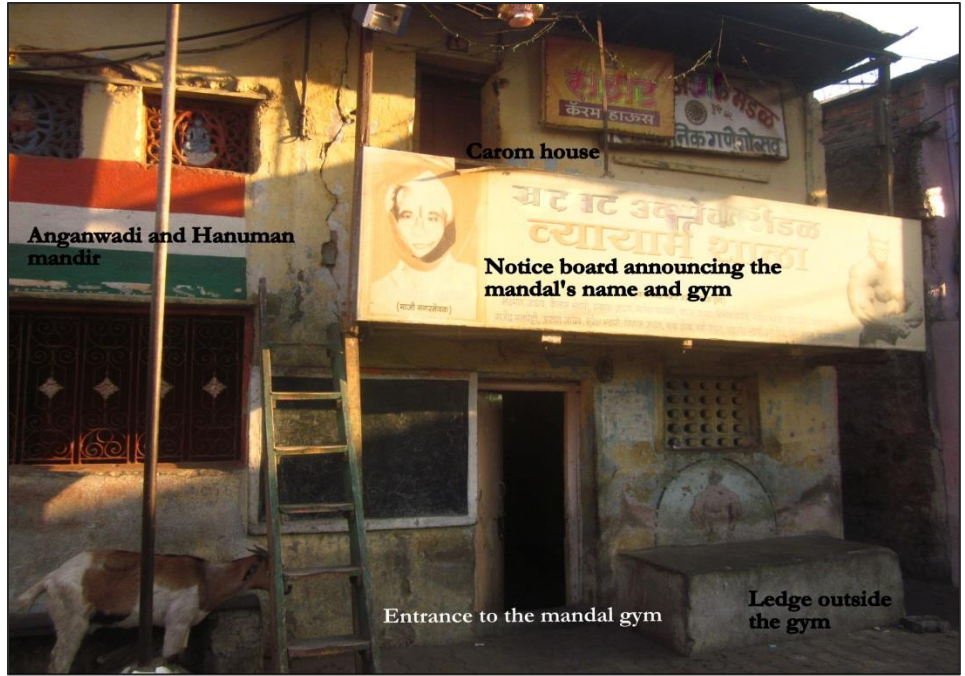
Photo 4.6

The last instance where Siddhartha mandal materialized in the galli was the "mandir-cum-Casino Royale." As described earlier, the mandir was home to the mandal's deities, to its television set and to Casino Royale. The narrow bench on the edge of the mandir was always occupied by young or older men (and very rarely by women), as they sat watching the happenings in the galli or watched television.

Photo 4.7: "Casino Royale" / mandal mandir in the galli.

Photo 4.8: A pachees game in progress in Casino Royale. The idols of Lord Ganesh and Durga can be seen behind. The mandal television is in the right hand corner of the mandir.

In the everyday life of the galli however, the mandal's spaces were hardly understood to be exclusively "owned" by the mandal: the tacit rules governing the use of these spaces at times allowed an arbitrariness to take over and at other times were unequivocally regulatory. For instance, when the mandir was not doubling up as Casino Royale, young girls from the galli would sit and chat on the bench outside the mandir in the afternoons, an unthinkable proposition when the Casino was in session. Every fortnight, when a special worship ritual for Lord Ganesh was conducted in the mandir, its access would be at its "public" best, with children and the elderly, and women and men in the vasti, all gathering for the aarti in late evenings. The mandir was relatively more accessible to women and young girls of the galli than the mandal gym room, or the carom club above, which were distinctly male, though not exclusively mandal domains.

The women in the vasti, however, conducted their *bachat-gat* (self-help group) meetings in the gym room, every week in the afternoons.[17]

The cement ledge near the mandal gym, while mostly seen as a hangout of the young boys or men in the galli, could easily be populated by elderly couples or women (but rarely by young girls) in the vasti, if they occupied the place first, during evenings. Late nights, however, would be largely the domain of elderly men and young boys: hanging out on the bench/ ledge, playing carom until the last session which ended at 11 p.m. or heading with their bedding to the mandir or the gym room, if they slept there.

The social life of the vasti was cumulatively constituted by its spaces of work, leisure, religiosity and sociality, which in turn were regulated by the vasti's gendered and caste based norms. In this terrain of sociality, the mandal gym, carom club, the ledge/ bench and the mandir all represented vital milestones in the temporal and spatial rhythms of the residents of this galli. These everyday uses of mandal spaces ended up obliterating the physical distinction between the mandal and the galli completely as also between conventional notions of public and private spaces.[18] Also, a few months into my fieldwork, it was evident that the axis of difference in the galli was not pegged significantly on to mandal and non-mandal spaces (and consequently,

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[17]Bachat gat or women's self-help groups have mushroomed in Pune (as across urban and rural India) in the last two decades, initiated by NGOs as well as local governing bodies. Designed to foster financial empowerment and independence amongst women from marginalized and poor communities, these groups typically consist of a maximum of twenty women members who contribute a fixed amount of money every month and can avail of loans at a nominal rate of interest. Pune Municipal runs around 200 bachat gat in various slums of the city, as part of its Urban Community Scheme

[18]The qualification of these places in the galli as "mandal spaces" is essentially my imposition, in my bid to locate the mandal in material terms. See Abraham (2010) for an elaboration of similar neighborhood spaces in the Rajasthani town of Bikaner. Abraham demonstrates how these spaces, functioning more as a continuation between the street and the home challenge their assumed division into the categories of "public" and "private" spaces respectively (198-200).

mandal and non-mandal members, who were all men). Gender, on the other hand, was clearly a more explicit axis along which the physical space of the galli was organized.

The porosity of the boundary between the mandal and the galli/ vasti was however, not merely in physical or spatial terms. My struggle in the initial months of fieldwork to understand who constituted the mandal testifies to this porosity. It gradually dawned upon me that even though the mandal functionaries and active members might be fewer (around fifteen), the actual membership of the mandal was much wider: all the young boys and men who were residents of this galli were considered to be mandal members by default. In my initial conversations with vasti residents (across gender and age), I noticed that most people used mandal and vasti interchangeably, especially while highlighting the work done by the mandal, seamlessly transitioning between the mandal which does "good work" and its members and the vasti residents who are "good people" (*changle loka*).The upshot of this fluidity of boundaries between the mandal and the neighborhood was a scenario in which the mandal membership and its functioning were acutely enmeshed with the social relationships contained within the neighborhood, the galli dynamics and the caste/ community alliances therein.[19]

The last link in the series of articulations that the mandal condenses within its location is in terms of local electoral politics. Mandals as highly localized and integrated socio-spatial entities are crucial actors in local electoral politics in contemporary Pune, providing political parties with access to local caste or religion based constituencies, opportunities for networking

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[19]In cases of bigger and richer mandals, the links between spatiality, local neighborhood dynamics and mandal activities are considerably weakened. However, for a majority of the smaller mandals that dot the older part of the city, like Siddhartha mandal, these aspects are tightly interwoven, fundamentally structuring the mandals' membership, profile of activities and often their image as well.

and an ideal platform for launching populist schemes and mobilizing youth in the city.[20] Not

surprisingly then, most members agreed that the mandal was the first step for inaugurating an

individual political career, on account of the visibility that the mandal afforded to those

participating in it. This aspect of the mandal is the focus of my last chapter, where I illustrate

local electoral politics as a spatialized and a masculinized practice, mediated primarily by the

mandal.

Mandals and a masculine idiom

I argue in this chapter that the masculine identity that is fashioned and performed on the

site of mandals in Pune cannot be understood independently of the multiple and articulated

realms of religion, politics, civic duty and locality that the mandal straddles.The idealized

archetype of a young male member of a mandal isthus someone who is involved in activities of

local religious, political, civic, and moral nature via the mandal, albeit inflected fundamentally

by his specific class, caste and spatial location in the city. Mandal then, is not merely a site of an

exclusively male space in the city's landscape; rather I suggest that the mandal is a socio-spatial

entity representing a specific mode of engagement with and an imagination of a "public," which

in its historical, performative and spatial context itself has been cast in masculine terms, in case

of modern India (Das 2007; Watt 2005; Chatterjee 1993). By implication then, the fact of

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[20] Hansen's (2001) analysis of the rise of Hindu right wing party Shiv Sena in Mumbai illustrates the party's effective harnessing of neighborhood mandals to establish a strong grassroots base in the city. It is these neighborhood based networks that helped sustain Shiv Sena regime in Mumbai for a long time.

belonging to a mandal itself bestows a masculine identity on its members, idealized in the image of the mandal and the nature of its work.

> "*Mandal mhanje amhi.Mandal mhanje area.Mandalache naav kharab hota mhanje ithlya mulanche naav kharab hota, mhanun mandalacha naav changla rahila paahije.*"(Mandal is us. Mandal is our area. If the mandal's name gets tainted, by implication the reputation of boys here gets tainted. Hence the mandal's reputation must stay unblemished).

This statement by the mandal's president Naresh, revealed in most unequivocal terms how mandal members' identity was tightly enmeshed with the vasti space and the mandal as a masculine entity. It is this relationship whichframes my analysis of the masculine identity that is sought to be reproduced and consolidated in mandal spaces.

However, as this chapter indicates, mere membership of the mandal was hardly an adequate condition for acquiring of a masculine identity. This gendered identity had to be constantly reiterated and enacted through the mandal's spatial and discursive practices in order to construct and strengthen the articulations between mandal and masculinity for its members.

II

Mastering the Galli or,Embodied Masculinity

This section illustrates how members of the mandal enacted and reproduced an embodied masculinity through the acts of organizing various celebrations in the vasti; I demonstrate how the bodily sense of a masculine identity, in this case, was deeply tied to mastering the vasti spaces and possession of an easy sense of entitlement to the vasti, its streets and its places. While the preceding chapter has already set out the theoretical framework for examining embodied

251

ways in which gendered identities are reproduced and detailed the young men's bodily occupation of the galli spaces, this section describes the distinct ways in which the galli spaces are masculinized via mandal activities.

The mandal members' trips around the neighborhood to collect *vargani* (donations) for various religious celebrations were some of the most illuminating instances when I witnessed this process being played out in the narrow lanes of the vasti. Armed with their printed receipts in plastic bags young men and boys would set out every evening to cover the alleyways in Moti Peth including houses as well as shops in the adjoining bustling market. I accompanied them on some of these trips, as we walked through narrow alleyways, snaking our way through a labyrinth of densely packed shanties and rooms in a purposeful manner. They used a variety of tactics to elicit vargani from reluctant givers: invoking an everyday familiarity with the women or pleading sheepishly while asking for more money, a hearty, back-slapping style with the shop owners, at times bullying them good-humoredly, goofing with and teasing the younger boys they met.

The most productive vargani "beat" was in Masoli aali, a hotbed of potential donors, given the large number of small shops and vendors in this market packed in this narrow lane. A late Sunday morning was reserved for Masoli aali, ensuring maximum mandal members' presence, in order to increase the mandal's visibility in this vargani-fertile area. The drill was now familiar to me: senior mandal members entered the shop and asked for vargani, since the shop owners would generally be acquainted with them. Younger mandal members would hang around outside the shop, or at times would be enlisted to do small jobs as writing the varganireceipt.

252

Things went smoothly until the group encountered resistance from an irate Muslim owner

of a chicken shop who said that he had already paid a hefty amount to a mandal from the

neighboring Jawaharnagar. Naresh, the president of the mandal retorted half accusingly, half-

jokingly,

> "*Jawaharnagarchyamandalaladeta ani aaplya areatlyamandalala nahi, asa kasa!*" (You
> give money to a mandal in Jawaharnagar and not a mandal in our area, how does that
> work?!)

He explicitly invoked rhetoric of belonging to a common area, "our area" which formed the basis

for the faintly moral claim with which he demanded that the store owner give more. In the

adjoining Jannat bakery, all the mandal members aggressively crowded the owner in, grabbing

freshly baked *khari*[21] and biscuits stacked in aluminum trays by the side and demanded that he

give more than what he gave last year. While some of the senior members were busy negotiating

the vargani rates, a man pushed his way through the small group and asked the owner if he could

get change for INR 500. Naresh took the bill from the man's hand and exchanged it for five bills

worth INR 100 from the owner. But instead of handing the money back to the man, he smiled

broadly, and handed only four bills back to the man, asking him, "*Jhala*?!" (Done?). It took a

few seconds before the man realized that he had been "made" to donate INR 100 in the service of

a mandal, and he protested vehemently, though not with anger. Naresh, along with all the boys,

now surrounded him and took his hands into his, and expressed gratitude for the vargani, in an

exaggerated fashion. The other boys also joined in thanking him profusely, until the man realized

that there was no point in resisting and left taking the remainder of the money. It was clear that

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[21]*Khari*, a puffed flaky, salted pastry, is a hugely popular bakery item across India. In the vasti households, khari was mostly consumed by dunking it in sugared tea, both as breakfast and as an evening snack. There were at least three bakeries, selling various baked goods and a variety of khari, in the market very close to the galli in Masoli aali.

the boys were completely confident that the owner of Jannat bakery would not react to this treatment of his customers.

The slightly increased level of aggression was hard to miss in the mandal members' demeanor. Shailu, a younger mandal member picked up the phone kept on the owner's table and dialed his own number from the phone: saving the bakery's number on his cell phone, he said in a mock threatening tone, "*Ata kava pan phone kartayeil tula!*" (Now we can call you anytime we please!). Dhawan told me that this bakery had been burnt in the riots following the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1991 and ever since then the bakery owner was quite scared. "*Vattel te deto to*!" (He gives in to any demand you make), Dhawan said, when he stopped laughing with the other mandal members as we stepped out of Jannat Bakery.

On another of the vargani trips, the younger boys were extremely animated as we climbed up the stairs of the dilapidated Velgode waada next to the vasti: they told me excitedly that here was the rooftop from where they would check out *samaan.*[22]As we climbed up to the first floor of the building, Dhawan mentioned that they used to stand on the roof of a hut next to the waadaunder the pretext to get a kite and then steal glances at the girls. By now in full flow, he leant on the railing of the balcony of the first floor of the waada in a very affected manner, in a bid to imitate the girls who stood there, looking back at them, generating loud guffaws from others. Mohit, the youngest of the Jonas Brothers, teased the elder boys saying that even though they liked to check out the girls, they never dared to talk to them directly, instead sending messages through him. Sunil protested vehemently to this, saying others might be sending

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[22]*Samaan* literally means "goods" in Marathi. However, in masculine spheres this word is used to describe good-looking girls. This was not just a common usage in the vasti, but a usage found commonly in popular Marathi films.

messages indirectly, but not he!

Ingold and Vergunst (2008) in their edited volume on ethnographic explorations of walking, focus on the phenomenological element of the act of walking and claim that walking constitutes a way of knowing; personal experiences and memories are embedded within places, which become accessible in the act of walking thus making the latter constantly generative of a strong sense of location in time and space (5-7). I argue that for the young men, these trips represented acts of place-making, which enabled them to plot the implicit boundaries of their mandal and neighborhood, in turn allowing them to reinforce an affective connection with the material spaces of the neighborhood. The relationship between the act of walking and place-making has been central to productive research on how embodied acts constitute places and produce identity and sense of belonging. Referring to the "constitutive co-ingredience of place and human identity," Anderson (2004: 254) elaborates upon walking as a methodological tool in geographical research, which can generate knowledge about how people locate themselves in place via memory and practice. This is also illustrated by Mehta and Chatterjee (2001)who describe a walking narrative of Dharavi, a large slum in Mumbai, in the horrific aftermath of communal riots in 1992. The authors show how an interviewee described the violence during the riots by walking through and thus re-inhabiting the spaces where violence occurred; but this time his bodily movement marked clearly the boundaries between "us" and "them" thus drawing an invisible line through his movement (208-210). In her work on the annual Karaga Jatre, a religious celebration in Bangalore, Srinivas (2001) illustrates how memory of a place and affective belonging to it is constructed through oral, kinetic and aesthetic means; participants in the Jatre procession remember and claim a place in an embodied fashion by inhabiting city spaces as the procession moves along an axis of local deities, shrines and temples. Srinivas

(2001) contends that for its participants, the Jatre procession links them to a narrative of social history of place and community in an embodied fashion, as they walk through the city spaces.

For the young mandal members, the act of walking the gallis of Moti Peth together, joking and chatting, enabled the construction of a common narrative of place and locate their lives within its coordinates of familiarity. The vargani trips were not the only instances when they walked these lanes; almost every day small groups of mandal members made their way through narrow lanes, between crumbling shacks, jumping over puddles of stagnant water, to reach Sadanand tea stall in Masoli aali for their daily cup of tea and discuss vargani collection, local politics, galli gossip or girls.

At the same time, the bodily acts of walking through the *galli-bol* (alleyways) unhindered, unthinkingly in a large group together indexed control of space: an easy and nonchalant sense of ownership and knowledge of the narrow paths, signaling towards a masculine way of inhabiting the galli space.[23] In his discussion of the male members of the right wing outfit "Bajrang Dal" in Delhi, Srivastava (2010) refers to former's similar acts of occupying, riding through the spaces of the city at various times, which represented for the male members of this organization an, "…act of consuming – controlling and mastering – space" (839). Srivastava (2010) demonstrates how the ability to roam the streets of Delhi at all hours and their knowledge of the smaller, unknown routes in labyrinthine neighborhoods of Delhi

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[23]This is in sharp contrast to how the young girls and women in the vasti could or could not use thesegalli-bol. The young girls would always take the wider alleyways, diligently avoiding narrower/ darker alleyways, or a lane which passed along a tea shop. Also, their use of these routes was heavily contingent upon the time of the day; it would be rare for any young girl/ woman to use these routes after eight in the night.

enabled these men to plot an alternative map of the city, one, which they proudly claimed, left their "imprints" (ibid) on the city's spaces.

The tenor of mandal members' interactions with people in the galli and store-owners in Masoli aali was suggestive of an easy confidence which was a combination of the sheer familiarity with the place, its people and a largely unquestioned legitimacy accorded to the mandal's work within this demarcated territory. This enabled the mandal members to project a self-image as men who are well-networked, who know most people as they stride down the road casually, who tease and horse around as they please and who check out young girls at will. On the one hand this display of control was acutely sensitive to and fed into any indication of vulnerability (for instance, of the Muslim bakery owner or of the girls in the waada), but on the other hand, effaced any signs of vulnerability of the mandal members themselves (it took the youngest member of Jonas Brothers to reveal that while everyone checked out the girls, no one actually dared to talk to them).

In terms of an embodied masculinity, the vargani trips were but one instance of the mandal providing this opportunity for its male members. The actual celebrations whichthe mandal conducted on religious or civic occasions lent themselves as fertile sites for the realization of this embodied sense of being a man in the vasti and simultaneously masculinizing the galli space. In the following part of this section, I recall two specific moments during these celebrations which, for me, afforded a glimpse into varying hues of masculine identity that these episodes condensed.

One such moment which remains etched on my memory occurred just before the annual Ganesh Janma festival in the January of 2012, when everyone in the narrow galli focused their

attention on the mandir for a few minutes in the afternoon: about 10-12 young mandal members bent around the idol of Lord Ganesh in the mandir, taking position, getting a grip on the bottom of the platform on which the idol rested. There were tense moments, with the boys screaming instructions at each other, planting their feet a little more firmly in anticipation of lifting the idol. One could hear a few of them counting up to three together and then with a collective heave and loud grunts the five foot tall idol of Lord Ganesh rose up gently, while slightly tilting behind simultaneously. As the idol floated in air slowly, still tilted backwards, its carriers cried out in unison, "*Ganpati bappa, morya!*" (Praise Lord Ganesh!). We all watched silently, as group of young men took ginger, rapid steps, making sure that everyone was moving at the same pace, their backs bent slightly, their hands gripping the platform tightly. They placed the idol on the *pandal* (platform) constructed for the celebration, a few feet away from the mandir and let out another unified cry praising the deity; this time we all joined in. The young boys and young men stood up and relaxed; straightening their shirts, wiping the sweat off their brow on the sleeves of their T-shirts, dusting their hands on the backs of their trousers, rearranging their hair, while at the same time debriefing excitedly about the short journey from the mandir to the pandal.

I watched the exercise of transporting Lord Ganesh along with the rest of the vasti, with a mild sense of envy. The physical challenge of transporting the heavy idol, combined with the sense of reverence attached to this particular deity in all our minds, somehow seemed to bestow a special status on those who seemed to have the privilege of carrying out this special duty: of carrying the Lord, praising Him, placing Him protectively on the other platform. Almost as if they all shared an invisible intimate bond that the rest of us in the vasti could not breach in those arduous moments.

The mandal members had engaged in a performance of strength and physical prowess most typically associated with masculinity (Chopra 2004; Connell 1995), but for me, what had served to sharpen the masculine contours of the act was the ritually exclusive status of the task (so overwhelmingly *male* in the Hindu context), which implied a temporary heightening of a privileged status to the performers of that task.[24] It was palpable in the respectful and revered silence that took over the galli for the few moments that it took the men to carry the idol from the mandir to the pandal. Also, given the fact that this was one of the most significant events in the mandal's annual calendar, the successful public performance of this task (as of other tasks entailed in this event) carried all the weight accorded to the mandal's ideals of engaging in virtuous, religious programs geared towards the welfare of the galli.

I recall the second moment from a delightful day in January of 2011, when I had just begun my fieldwork. To celebrate India's Republic Day, the mandal had organized a "fun and games" event for the children in the vasti. The atmosphere in the galli on the resplendent afternoon was abuzz with a light-hearted energy, as everyone in the vasti crowded around the rectangular patch on the street, where the games were being conducted. The current mandal organizing committee along with the Jonas Brothers were in the thick of things, lining up the participants for a race, shooing away spectators from the tracks, cheering the little children as

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[24]This is not to suggest that men enjoy an exclusively intimate relationship with the deity, one which is not available to women in other contexts. In her description of a powerful woman storyteller in Rajasthan, Gold (1996) demonstrates how the woman cultivates an intimate relationship with a powerful deity, at the risk of antagonizing her family and community members (171-177). Similarly, Gold (1994) also includes the story of a Brahmin girl, who, with her cleverness, manages to please Lord Ganesh, despite outwardly breaking ritual taboos (166-168). Gold (1994) argues that this story represents the subversive possibilities for women to achieve proximity with deities, thought to be the realm of powerful, male priests.

259

they ran, helping them up if they stumbled, taking their pictures with their cell phones, providing a running commentary on the mic.

Post- running and jumping-jack races, the mandal members arranged chairs along the length of the tracks for musical chairs, as the Jonas Brothers took charge of music. Two members of the mandal stood at two ends of the line of chairs to mark the poles around which the children had to take a U-turn. As the children began their utterly frenzied running along the line of chairs, I noticed that every time they reached the end of the line and had to turn, they would grab the mandal members' waist or leg for support as they made a U-turn, like one would hold a pillar. The two young men obliged and let the children tug at their shirts, or would grab them by their wrists to make sure that they did not fall. Through the next half hour I watched the young man in a black T-shirt and track pants, with his back towards me, occasionally plant his legs firmly apart and steady himself, to make sure that he did not lose balance when the children grabbed his waist and swung to the other side. The scene kept coming back to me through the entire duration of my fieldwork, as I attempted to sketch the myriad ways of being a man in the vasti.

For me, the bodily comportment of the two young men standing at two ends of the line of chairs promised support and protection, combined simultaneously with fond indulgence and permissibility for the little participants,unmistakably indexing a persona of an "elder brother", an archetype richly foregrounded in the all-male, hierarchical membership that mandals espouse. Evidently, the mandal members were sincerely invested in ensuring that the events were organized and conducted smoothly, and that the participants and the audience had maximum fun. They seemed to be thoroughly enjoying the games, themselves participating in a few games themselves.

The manner in which each of the moments above unfolded in the physical and social space of the mandal-galli complex referenced in significant ways myriad existent masculine ideals and archetypes, whether it be that of the caring elder brother or a confident owner of the alleyways. It was through the mediation of these archetypes that the bodily acts of the mandal members became meaningful in gendered terms, for themselves and for others. This is perhaps best articulated by Connell (1995) referring to embodied practices,

> "Particular versions of masculinity are constituted in their circuits as meaningful bodies and embodied meanings. Through body-reflexive practices, more than individual lives are formed: a social world is formed" (64).

It is also crucial to highlight that the male body is implicated in this case not just in gendering the identity of those inhabiting the bodies, but also in gendering the space occupied by those bodies, in this case that of the vasti and its alleyways.

III

"Friendship Circles"[25]: Mandals, Masculinity and the City

The preceding section demonstrated how the process of enacting an embodied gendered identity in the vasti spaces by the mandal members was dialectically related to an extension of their bodily control over the alleyways and lanes of the vasti. In this section I focus more on practices of networking enabled by the mandal which crucially served as conduits for the mandal members to imagine and experience (even if temporarily) a sense of control over a broader canvass, over the spaces and domains of the city, and how this imagination was cast in distinctly masculine idioms.

Friendship was a vital theme in the life world of the mandal and its members and I focus on it in detail in the next chapter, wherein I examine the ways in which friendship was imbricated with moral values of help and co-operation and was the fundamental paradigm through which mandal members related to each other. For the moment though, I attempt to cast the analytical net a bit wider, keeping aside the intimate spaces of friendship between mandal members. Within a few months of fieldwork I discovered that the world of friendship for several senior members like Naresh, Vinit, Anya, Randhir, Kiran, extended in concentric circles from the vasti to other neighborhoods and towards farther parts of the city. While not necessarily close friends, they were nevertheless part of the larger networks of peers ("circle," as Anya termed it) which senior mandal members consciously cultivated.

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[25] Friendship circle here does not refer to the term used by Muslim voluntary organizations. This term was used by one of the mandal members in describing their networks of friends across the city.

I first got a glimpse of this process during the celebration of the Ganesh Janma festival right in the beginning of my fieldwork. In the middle of the evening, when the communal meal was in full swing in the galli, everybody's attention was suddenly drawn towards a large group of men who walked down the galli, all the way towards where the stage was set up, in a mini-procession. As approximately twenty young men walked along the length of the galli, younger members in the mandal made way for them; I was stuck by the lack of an easy conviviality which generally marked their interaction with their peers within the galli. The group was greeted by Naresh and a few other older men; hands were shaken, shoulders slapped and bottles of Coke specially ordered. Two men from the group sat along with Naresh and spoke briefly, while Coke was passed along and everyone drank from the bottles. One of the men (clearly their leader, given his starched white shirt and a pair of jeans) offered a coconut to the Ganesh idol. The group left as quickly as it had come and mandal members resumed serving the guests at the function.

The entire evening was punctuated by three or four such visits, which proceeded along this fixed choreography: big groups, brief greetings, exchange of coconut and Coke, handshakes and quick departures. As I was told later, these occasions were the sites of expressing and cementing group alliances between various mandals located in the neighborhood or at times those located in other parts of the city. Along the continuum of friendship circles, these visits constituted distinct expressions of solidarity, alliance and support between mandals, though qualitatively different from the way friendship was expressed within the intimate circle of the vasti or mandal friends. Though as Naresh, Anya and others told me later, they also met with a lot of these friends over tea in various parts of the city, ensuring that there was occasional contact with these friends.

In her research on formations of masculinity amongst young men in rural Punjab, Chopra (2004) emphasizes that friendship networks (between men) are as crucial as kin networks in the construction of a web of support along which useful information, aid and resources can be exchanged, leading to tremendous efforts and value being invested in consolidating these bonds of friendship (56). Chopra (2004) underlines the value of friendship as, "a form of capital, that 'grows' into social networks of support" (57). Apart from ensuring support in times of their need, I suggest that the enactment of male friendship amongst the mandal members and with neighboring mandals in the everyday context facilitated a crucial exchange of specialized (and *spatialized*) information about the city which helped the mandal members acquire a handle on the city outside the galli.

To illustrate this point, I present below an excerpt from the transcript of an interview that I conducted jointly with Naresh, Anya and Anand, all senior members of the mandal. We were discussing a popular politician, Prakash Keerat and the reasons behind his meteoric rise in the Pune's political scene.

Naresh: I had heard from my friend that Keerat was involved in a huge land scam near his village, through which he had earned 500 crore rupees. He was involved in a big *jhol*(scam)…

Anya: My friend said that he has fully occupied the farm lands of poor peasants in that area, he had gotten those who resisted murdered.

Naresh: This is his inner avatar (*aatlaroop*), though outside he enjoys a different image.

Anand: Once you leave the city limits, Madam, there are several seasoned dons…kickass! (*jabardast*) [Emphasizing on the word*jabardast*]

Naresh: You don't even want to know about Pimpri Chichwad[26] area…

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[26]All original place names in this excerpt are retained, except for all references to Peth areas or any mandal within it. Similarly I have retained the names of well-known, high profile politicians (elaborated below), while masking the identities of those who might have intimate or distant connections with the young men in Moti Peth. Naresh, Anya and Anand used quite a few English words and phrases in their conversation, all of which have been added in quotes in this excerpt.

Anand: That is where you will find the highest number of criminals and politicians...those guys are ready to take on directly somebody like Ajit Pawar[27] as well!

Anya: The entire area ahead of Hadapsar is controlled by Anna Kore and his men; a man stands a chance of getting elected as the municipal councilor only if his goons support him.

Anya: Anna Kore is Sharad Pawar's special man

Anand: But now he was arrested, in an encounter… (Unclear)

Me: How do you get to know all these little details?

Anand: Through the newspaper…

Naresh: That is also there, but importantly, we have our 'boys' everywhere, there are friends everywhere…

Anya: We have our own "circles"

Naresh: We have to hang out with "gangs"…one must encourage friendship with such people. Not because one can get something done through these contacts, but it makes an impression (*chaap padte*) if you are seen with such people.

Anya: I have actually shaken hands with him! You have to see Anna Kore…in Pune, he is the most…

Naresh: Haven't you heard his name? He lives in Uruli Kanchan, but the entire area stretching from Hadapsar to Daund is scared of him.

Anand: You must know about sand business/ contracts…

Me: Oh, he is in the sand business?

Anand: He has cornered the contracts for entire Uruli Kanchan. Nobody has dared to go against him.

Me: He must be a millionaire then!

Naresh: Billionaire!! (Almost triumphantly)

Anand: But the good thing is that he helps the poor…

Naresh: He entered the criminal underworld after his brother was murdered ten years ago.

Anya: There is this guy called Pillai, from Upper (Indiranagar), he is an outsider, not a Maharashtrian…he, the Salunkhes, all of them are outsiders

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[27]Original name of the politician retained. Ajit Pawar is an extremely powerful figure in the political landscape of Maharashtra. He is the younger cousin of Sharad Pawar, ex-chief minister of the state and an astute politician himself, who is rumoured to have built an empire worth billions in Maharashtra, based upon his involvement in sugar co-operatives in the prosperous western Maharashtra and recently through real estate development. Sharad Pawar is the founder of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Ajit Pawar is a senior functionary of NCP. In recent times, Ajit Pawar has been responsible for establishing near-total NCP supremacy in political constituencies around Pune, especially in the industrial twin cities of Pimpri and Chinchwad, not without crucial linkages with the underworld.

Me: Oh, even the Salunkhes?

Anand: Salunkhes are Maharashtrian, but they are originally from Pandharpur, now settled in Pune. They are good people.

Naresh: Have you heard of this guy's name, Kalandar? That was in the newspapers…he is originally from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh.

Anand: He was just "encountered" [i.e. killed in an encounter] last week

Me: Oh?

Anya: Had you heard of that "matter" in Balajinagar?

Naresh: They showed it on T.V.

Anya: Around hundred four-wheelers were smashed there…this guy Pillai in Upper…that area is his fortress. He wanted to extend his territory all the way down to K. K. Market and he had almost managed to do that with the help of his right hand man, TD, TatyaDadhe. TatyaDadhe was actually a good activist, but his "wicket" fell on the pretext of some conflict surrounding counterfeit notes…

Naresh: No no, that was because of some conflict during a procession

Anya: Arrey no! It was about counterfeit currency notes!

Me: This is such a different Pune that you begin to see no?!

Naresh: This is how it has always been, but it is invisible!

Anand: You know there were these forty gangs who were hit listed, and the Salunkhes figured in that, but they are good people, they will never trouble poor people.

Anya: Yeah, they are good people and they are not afraid of anyone. They will enter anyone's territory and beat the others up… (*bindhastjaatyat*)

Naresh: And we had stood up to them in those days! (Chuckling, to the other two)

Anya: We [earlier mandal members] have gone and beaten them up at a time when they were going pretty strong, we have beaten even them!

Anya: Though there is one thing that I don't like about them: their shooters, who we call "sharp shooters", they are all very young, they catch boys at a real young age. This guy Appa Vichare, when he was shot at, it was a young fellow, even younger than me, who shot at him.

Anand: The fights which occur in areas ahead of Sonar peth are all fights unto death.

Anya: I'll tell you how it is: the scene of underworld in the city is dominated by those in "construction line", those who collect dues in return for protection (*haftavasuli*) and those who make money through mandals' programs. Earlier the scene was dominated by a few "danger"mandals and a select few gangs.

Anya: And then there are these other boys who are not hardened criminals, but who take up contracts for murder…

Anand: Like Dinya Parab…

266

Anya: No longer, Dinya!! Dinya is dead, he died! (Shaking his extended hand vigorously at the other two)

Naresh: That boy studied with me in Jay Shivaji [school] in class eight…

Anand: He was my friend…a good guy, I mean, he had "picked up" well in such a young age…

Anya: This is what happens when you are possessed by the "craze" of becoming a goon (*gunda*)

Naresh: [Becoming a goon is a] shortcut…not to success, but to fame!

Me: Hmm…and probably all the boys make you into a hero…

Anand: Yeah! They make you into a hero!

Anya: *Bhai*![28] (In a raised voice, throwing back his head and thrusting out his chest). But the area from the corner of our mandal till Nava Kaalmandal: this is the only area where this craze to become a *gunda* (goon) does not exist…

Taming the city

For me, the crash course on the criminal underbelly of the city and its suburbs was highly illuminating, for the young men's energetic narrative was a rich archive of their gendered referents of power, of locality, of morality, and of their own tangential place in that universe. As the three men warmed up and I struggled to keep up with their barrage of information, the interview briefly turned into an animated conversation between them, with information volleying across furiously. This, for me, was a tentative recreation of how this specialized information might be exchanged, corrected, and assimilatedthrough conversations that the young men engage in within mandal friends and with their circles outside the mandal. Threads of conversation

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[28]*Bhai* (Hindi) means brother, and in a conversational context, one would call an elder brother as bhai. From 1980s onwards this word has been transposed into the realm of Mumbai's famed underworld, coming to signify a powerful, masculine figure, generally rooted in local working class cultures, who would provide protection, mentorship and even employment opportunities to the youth in his locality, through his city-wide networks. Hansen (2001) elaborates upon the culture of *dada-ism*, which closely corresponds to the connotations represented by bhai. *Dada* translates as elder brother in Marathi. Hansen (2001) defines *dada-ism* as, "a style of exercising political and social power and protection that invokes images of a masculine, assertive, often violent local strongman, whose clout lies in self-made networks of loyalty rather than in institutionalized action and discourse" (72).

developed off-shoots, which further branched out into smaller threads and fissured even further, until an entire web of information, details and opinions was rapidly cast in a specialized vocabulary, exhilaratingly vast, minute and updated in its spread.

The sheer pleasure of contributing to the creation of this exclusive knowledge about the illicit city and simultaneously of consuming its potent mix of power and danger, where men commanded spaces, controlled and killed fearlessly was hard to miss in their controlled, but unmistakable enthusiasm. Their participation in a much wider network of intra-mandal all-male friendship practices served as a conduit for acquiring this knowledge, which by the virtue of its scale, opened up the otherwise invisible underbelly of the entire city itself for the young men's distanced consumption. The ease with which they traveled along the scale of the city and its suburbs and nearby small towns in our conversation was in stark contrast to the acutely localized lives that several of them led, circumscribed decisively by the familiar referents of the *galli* and its social life.

On October 27, 2011, Pune Mirror, local English daily, carried a story titled, "Poster Boys" on its inside pages.[29] Reporting a steady rise in youth gangs in the city, which called themselves as "groups," the article elaborated upon the liaisons that some of these neighborhood-based groups enjoyed with political parties and local mafia to form mini-extortion rackets occasionally erupting in low-grade violence in parts of the city. The groups consisted mostly of young unemployed boys along with sons of rich landlord fathers, the article quoted a senior police official as stating. The nomenclature of these groups was extremely suggestive: "Enjoy Group;" "Jolly Group;" "Naughty Boys Group;" "Talli Group;" "No Fear Group;" "Goli Group;"

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[29] See http://www.punemirror.in/news/india/Poster-boyz/articleshow/31990660.cms,

"Katta Group;" "Yamraj Group."[30] It is a remarkable continuum sliding from the youthful

masculine "enjoy" paradigm to a more risk-taking variety, licking the edges of danger and

violence. It was suggestive that the former variety, subscribing to "enjoy" paradigm chose to

give themselves English names, while the rest stuck mostly to local linguistic references.

The collective knowledge produced about the city by these inter-mandal friendship

networks finds resonance in the concept of "urban infra-power" (Hansen and Verkaaik 2009: 20-

23), which refers to the,

> "…non-obvious, non-formal, and often ephemeral forms of organization, knowledge, connections, solidarity, and mythology that organize and weave together urban localities, if not entire cities" (Hansen 2005, as quoted in Gupte 2012: 200).

Specifically in the context of post-colonial cities in the global South, information and economic

flows, exchange of favors, obligations, patronage and protection for the urban underclass, all is

routed through urban infra-power, embodied in the figures of the hustler, the street-smarts and

"big men" of the cities, who are repositories of this specialized knowledge, navigational skills

and resources in cities (Hansen and Verkaaik 2009). For Hansen and Verkaaik (2009) urban

infra-power represents a mode of engagement with the urban, which contains within itself the

possibility (or not) of making the city yield its pleasures and powers to those who take the risk of

"playing" the city (22). I suggest that for mandal members, mastery over the specialized

information about the city which circulated in the spheres of inter-mandal networks, constituted

this sense of almost *taming* the city (even if temporarily), implicit in the enactment of urban

infra-power.

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[30]*Talli*, a Hindi and Marathi slang usage, refers to a state of utter drunkenness. *Goli* is a bullet in Marathi.*Katta,* again a slang Hindi and Marathi usage, refers to a country-made pistol.Yamraj is the God of death in early Vedic mythology.

Paul Willis (1977), writing in an entirely different context and era, nevertheless provides crucial cues for this analysis, in his elaboration of the "informal group" (22-27); informal group, according to Willis (1977) provides the basis for the construction of a counter-school culture, within working class boys in an industrial town in England. It is within this group that individual boys derive the identity of "being one of the lads" (23), which also allows them to construct alternative maps of social reality by linking up with other groups (26). According to Willis (1977),

> "School groups coalesce and further link up with the neighbourhood groups, forming a network for the passing on of a distinctive kind of knowledge and perspectives that progressively place school at a tangent to the overall experience of being a working class teenager in an industrial city" (ibid).

Following from this, I speculate that the conversations between young men and their implicit celebration of certain worlds within the city shift the fundamental co-ordinates of the city's relevance for these men to select domains like local political dynamics and the city's criminal underworld (among several others), which they were familiar with, if not adept at working those worlds.

Doing "Gender Work"

However, apart from the distinct process of construction of the city in terms whichare recognizable and legible to them, I feel that the three young men's conversation begs far closer examination. I attempt to show how their narrative, as an embodied and a linguistic act, constituted their gendered selves, lay bare the inherent ambivalences within these selves and reflected the ways in which urban space mediated this process.

270

In the last two decades, feminist linguists have critiqued traditional sociolinguistic perspective on language and gender, which assumed a fixed dichotomy between masculine and feminine ways of using the language, stemming from men's and women's respective socializations (Johnson 1997; Cameron 1997). The sociolinguist perspective thus regards language as merely reflecting learnt ways of gender (Johnson 1997: 23). However taking cue from feminist and post-structuralist analyses which fundamentally questioned the sex role theory and destabilized the gender dichotomy, feminist linguists proposed the analysis of language as a speech act, the performance of which is central to the very constitution and reaffirmation of appropriate gendered roles (Cameron 1997: 48-49).

On a related note, Polleta (2006) and Coates (2003) highlight the centrality of narrative or story-telling in fashioning a sense of self. Narratives differ from an "objective account of reality," in that they assume a specific point of view from which events are experienced, narrated and represented by subjects (Polletta 2006). The narratives we construct about our experiences and life- events are not simply a way of "sense-making" but are fundamental in fashioning our identities and embedding them consciously in time, space and social relationships (ibid). In her research on men's storytelling, Coates (2003) demonstrates how, "men's talk sustains and perpetuates 'hegemonic' masculinity, that is, 'approved' ways of being male" (4). On the lines of the above insights, I want to highlight the narrative which Naresh, Anya and Dinesh participated in enthusiastically as a linguistic resource through which they performed their gendered selves.

At first glance, the conversation between the three young mandal members and the stories they narrated, both at the level of content and at the level of subtext, were clearly aligned with and celebrated a powerful, hegemonic masculine ideal: of controlling (spaces, people, loyalty,

271

resources) through power (of violence, money or of specialized knowledge). Throughout the conversation Naresh, Anand and Anya narrated their proximity or access to this power, realized in gestures of their shaking hands with a don, being associated with a mandal which had dared to challenge a powerful gang in its hey days, going to the same school as an upcoming contract killer or through their intimate knowledge of the inside stories associated with these figures' lives (and deaths). In these instances, the masculine quotient of the men being discussed (and also of those who were discussing) was neatly aligned with the power that they purportedly commanded.

We were sitting on a December afternoon in the mandal's gym room for this joint interview, the sounds of the local FM radio channel playing in the carom club above, of children's shrill crying outside in the galli and an occasional auto rickshaw or a motorbike continually encroaching on our conversation and on my recording. Like most of their peers, the three men had given in to my requests for an interview after a protracted resistance which included avoiding me, feigning being busy suddenly whenever I brought up the topic of an interview or not turning up at the designated time. As we finally sat down for the interview, the three men had joked nervously about this imminent examination and had requested for "easy questions."

If the interview was a gradual process of the evaporation of their nervousness and of being able to say what they felt with relative ease, this part of the conversation was what represented a radical turning point. Their faces were animated, their intonation traveling along a variety of expressions, of admiration, disapproval, pride and eagerness, Naresh, Anand and Anya launched into the details with an enthusiasm markedly absent from their responses for the

preceding thirty minutes of our conversation. I realized that in a remarkable way, it was now that the terms of our interaction shifted perceptibly from an interview to that of a conversation: wherein the three men talked amongst themselves, emphasized their versions of the narrative or unselfconsciously tossed a few questions towards me, to discover how little I knew about a world on which they had such a firm grip. Once it was clear that my reply to most of their questions was in the negative, it was with a certain amount of confidence that the young men launched into giving me information, without even waiting for my response.

These claims of proximity to power, cast in a highly masculinized domain of violence, city-gang, territorial control and politics, was akin to what Coates (2003) terms as "doing gender work" (40); Coates (2003) and Cameron (1997) in their respective work analyze the content of men's talk to highlight ways in which the participants in the conversation project their identity as consistent with a hegemonic masculine ideal, through a range of strategies like narration of tales of heroism, near exclusion of women from the narrative, through "having a laugh" or through highlighting their stark contrast with homosexual men.

In a context closer to South Asia, Osella and Osella (2004) elaborate upon young Malayali men's enthusiastic participation in charity activities of fan clubs dedicated to their respective heroes, Mammooty and Mohanlal. According to the authors, this participation in acts of largesse presents the male fans from lower middle class or working class backgrounds with the possibility, "that through involvement in the fan association and its work one might participate in the star's power and reach" (242). Osella and Osella (2004) interpret the fans' adoption of their hero's style of walking, smiling or voice into their own embodied actions not so much as an act of identification with their heroes; they argue that this can be read more as taking

273

on aspects of their heroes which temporarily transfer the hero's attributes onto the fans, a, "magical transformation of the self" (242).

Anya, Naresh and Anand's narrative overlaps with some aspects from the above instances, in that the latter are exercises of crafting a masculine self through identification with a hegemonic masculinity and proximity to it and through an unconcealed admiration of some of the attributes of this manliness. However, apart from the content of the conversation, our mode of interaction itself was doing important "gender work:" in terms of a confident display of intimate knowledge of a masculinized sphere by the three young men, in the presence of a woman researcher whose ignorance of these spheres had been lain bare in front of a knowledgeable group of men.

However, the mandal members' narrative was hardly a uni-dimensional celebration of a powerful masculine ideal, as embodied by the dons and violence with which their narrative was saturated. I argue that their narrative represented neither a seamless alignment with a hegemonic masculinity (Coates 2003), nor was there an attempt at performing a gendered self through taking on certain attributes of the men that the mandal members seemed to admire at one level.

Throughout their conversation, the young men's admiration for the powerful men and their powerful acts was disrupted by the former's own admission of the vulnerability of this power. Thus the trajectories of several dons and bhais ended in an "encounter," arrest, being hit-listed or in untimely death. Notwithstanding their boy-like admiration for the powerful men's personas and their feats, Naresh, Anand and Anya displayed a deep sense of ambivalence as regards this power, disavowing any indication that they coveted that power or aspired to acquire it themselves. Implicit in their narrative was the young men's unmistakable moral commentary

on the bhai/ gang/ don realm and its powerful, but ethically suspect ways: reflected in Anya's disapproval of the young age at which a gang initiated its sharp shooters, Naresh's claim that becoming a don was merely a quick route to fame, *not* necessarily to success and Anya's announcement of the inevitable consequence of the craze of becoming a bhai, as ending in untimely death.

I suggest that these instances represented how articulations between men, masculinity and power were unstable and contingent for the young men in the mandal; it was evident that the young men grappled with their simultaneous admiration and rejection of a world, which was saturated with masculine power, but which lacked legitimacy and moral validation. It was with a curious mixture of pride and thankfulness that Anya noted that everyone apart from boys from this galli nurtured the aspiration of becoming a goon. Thus despite their tremendous fascination for the ways of the powerful men of the underworld, the lure of this power *did not* translate in a straightforward manner into masculine attributes worth aspiring to or emulating, for the mandal members. The articulation between power and quotient of manliness was mediated in crucial ways by hegemonic considerations of legitimacy and morality of the power, in the minds of Anya, Naresh and Anand.

Narrating the city, narrating masculinity

It is vital to understand how the spaces of the city mediated this process of the young men narrating their masculine identity and its ambivalences. The remarkable thing about Anand, Naresh and Anya's referents of masculine power were that they were firmly located in a tight matrix of city spaces and the moral underpinnings of the acts of power that were enacted in these

275

spaces. Thus their marking of city spaces as controlled by certain dons, not just constructed

geography of the city's violent, dangerous face; it also superimposed corresponding

considerations of morality on this mental map. The characterizations belied easy categories:

benevolent "outsiders" (Salunkhes) or corrupt, hypocritical "insiders" (Keerat), extreme Sonar

Peth (with its fights unto death) versus the galli in Moti Peth, where no one aspired to become a

bhai. The mandal members were thus constructing a city, which was recognizable and

comprehensible (and hence controllable) to them, through their intertwined categories of locality

and morality which operated on a terrain of politics, violence and illicit activities.

At the same time, as demonstrated in the earlier section, Naresh, Anya and Anand were

also narrating their gendered selves, through this exhibition of in-depth knowledge of the ways in

which masculinized power circulated through city spaces and through their proximity to this

power. It was through engaging with and thus knowing the city in a distinct way (or through

providing the evidence of this engagement and knowledge) that they could claim a masculine

identity. In this instance then, narrating their masculinity necessitated *narrating the city*. The

constitution of a gendered identity was mutually linked to the construction of the city spaces, in

case of the mandal members.

Narrating the city however, was not an empty spatial endeavor for the mandal members; I

suggest that this was also a referential exercise. Thus their imagination of a much broader

canvass of the city space simultaneously foregrounded for them their own situatedness in Moti

Peth; this sense of location where no one aspired to be a bhai (yet, where the members were

daring enough to stand up to a powerful gang), clearly tinged their evaluation of other spaces and

people controlling them as dangerous (Pimpri, Sonar Peth) and as immoral, in comparison to

276

*their*vasti. It was highly indicative that Anya ended the conversation around dons and gangs in Pune by symbolically retreating into the specific space between the corner of Siddhartha mandal and Nava Kal mandal, as if holding on tightly to that place which, in his imagination was assuredly distant from the morally fraught spaces controlled by bhais and dons. Their gendered identity then was inextricably enmeshed with locality: what Anya, Naresh and Anand articulated was not merely an abstract masculine identity, but a masculine identity firmly rooted in the moral referents of Moti Peth, a decidedly situated masculinity.

This instance also illustrates the basic axiom of the dialectical relationship between space and gendered identities underlying geographical and anthropological research on gender and space (Hopkins and Greg 2009; Ranade 2007; van Hoven and Horschelmann 2005; Berg and Longhurst 2003; Massey 1994). In my conversation with the mandal members then, while the latter imagined and constructed city spaces from their location as working class, Mang men, the very spaces of the city which they inhabitedor aspired to shaped the process through which the mandal members experienced and performed their masculine identity.

Conclusion

While the portrayal of the mandal in the lives of the young men in the vasti remains partial at this point, the above sections provide some clues to answer the following question: how is urban space articulated to the construction and experience of their gendered selves for the mandal members? This chapter has demonstrated how the spaces of the city (including the galli itself, the alleyways of Moti Peth, the physical and abstract territories of political parties and

dons in the city) become the site of an embodied enactment of the mandal members' masculinity, mediated by practices of the mandal (of collecting vargani, organizing celebrations in the vasti, participating in inter-mandal networks of friendship).

The construction and performance of a masculine self in this case is not divorced from a process of gendering the vasti itself as a masculinized terrain and indeed in casting the city in an imagination saturated with spatialized tropes of control, power, violence and mastery, themselves powerfully suggestive of hegemonic masculine attributes. More importantly, the masculine self, performed by the mandal members is simultaneously a situated masculine self, shaped and experienced through their location in the socio-moral regime constituted by the galli and Moti Peth.

At the same time, this chapter has demonstrated how the notion of power, a necessary attribute of masculinity, operated via a distinct trope of morality in the imagination of the mandal members in the galli. Concerns about legitimacy orabout the moral merit of acts of masculine power engendered deep ambivalence in mandal members, as they grappled with tremendous attraction and a simultaneous reservation for these acts. In the following chapter, I highlight in detail the inter-linkages between morality, locality and masculine identity as they unfold in the mandal and galli, in order to explore this theme further.

Chapter V

Tale of the Mandal (II): Of Morality, Masculinity and Place

This chapter continues the exploration of the site of the mandal, attempting to sketch how it impinges upon the process of gendered self-making of its male members in the vasti. Stepping away from embodied practices and friendship circles, this chapter zooms in on the discursive space of the mandal and the distinct hues of masculine attributes that are foregrounded within it. The last chapter touched briefly on the ambivalent relationship of the mandal members with masculinized power: as being significantly mediated by considerations of morality. The latter aspect forms the pivotal point of this chapter, as I attempt to trace the intricate relationship between morality, locality and a masculine identity. I argue that the gendered, moral identity experienced and performed by the mandal members is recuperative, and serves to counter the lack of respect and self-worth in arenas of employment or economic dependence. Simultaneously, this identity is essentially contingent, its slippages between the ideal and the actual eventually giving shape to a caste, place and class-specific masculine ideal for its young members.

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I

Moral Masculinities: The Discourse and Practice of "*Madat*" and "*Eki*"

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The mandal was not merely a site where certain ways of being a man were bodily enacted; as I have shown earlier, the mandal itself was identified with a masculine ethos. In this section I highlight how the discourse around the mandal, in conjunction with the everyday practices of its members predicated on this discourse, generated idealized images of masculine

identity, undergirded by a fundamentally class and caste-based morality. I term this as moral masculinities.

The identification of masculine attributes with moral qualities is by no means a phenomenon unique to the mandals. The co-constitution of masculinity and morality has been central to the evolution of notions of citizenship and patriotism in colonial India. The ideal of the patriotic social servant that was constructed in colonial India through the emergent civic associations which Watt (2005) describes, integrated moral virtue, patriotism and a healthy, strong physique into the ideal, "manly social servant" (17). Watt (2005) finds parallels of this ideal with the Boy Scout movement which originated in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the objective of producing healthy citizens, who were equated with virtuous, active and manly men (152-4).[1]

Hansen's (1996) analysis of constructions of masculinity in the Hindu nationalist discourse, which gained strength in the middle of the twentieth century in India, show several overlaps with this moral masculinity. Hansen (1996) gives a description of a real Hindu, in the words of Golwalkar, the RSS ideologue, "The real strength of a Hindu – what makes him a real man and not a machine – is his 'national will' i.e. his character and his devotion to his motherland, rather than his physical strength per se" (146). In outlining the development of

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[1] These constructions of masculinity also find resonances in imperial Britain. Duncan (2000) illustrates how Britain's imperial project in early nineteenth century demanded the production of a moral Evangelical manly ideal, which shouldered the responsibility of conquest of the empire. Thus the ability of the white colonizing male to subdue the unpredictable tropics and "morally depraved" natives was projected essentially as a consequence of his moral virtue and self-control. Along similar lines, Mangan (1996) also traces the shift in the meaning of manliness from moral spirituality to "muscular morality" (30) in the context of late nineteenth century Britain; attributes of masculinity were no longer signified by Christian virtues of Godliness and Good Learning, but came to be understood more in terms of athleticism and muscularity which were underlined by gentlemanly and moral qualities of fair play, in terms of "courtesy in triumph and compassion for the defeated" (34).

masculine Hinduism as a response to imperial Christian manliness, Banerjee (2005) highlights a similar emphasis on the notion of "muscular spirituality" (58) as propagated by Swami Vivekananda, wherein the figure of the "warrior-monk" (ibid) would protect the Hindu nation not via his physical prowess only, but more importantly through his moral and spiritual strength.

Alter's (1992) research on wrestlers in North India, locates wrestling in an elaborate ethical-moral framework, wherein the strength in the wrestler's body is not simply a physical attribute but fundamentally derives from moral values like duty and devotion, to be cultivated through devotion to the guru and from a strict moral disciplining of the body (78-9) through the exercise of "brahmacharya" (celibacy). Wrestling, according to Alter (1992) is thus a profoundly moral endeavour, not just contingent upon physique or technique, but one in which purity of thoughts and a righteous character free from sensual desires is seen to be the primary source of the wrestler's power and manliness (108-113).[2]

In his more recent work, Alter (2011) continues with some of his earlier concerns, albeit with a more direct focus on complex meanings encoded in male bodily fluids; he examines the discursive import of semen in the making of contemporary notions of the masculine in India. Alter (2012) traces the discourse of production, regulation and retention of semen in the celibate male body to demonstrate how it is articulated to a quality of purity and truth, which allows the patriarchal system to appropriate claims to truth as *essentially* a male virtue (49-51). Similarly,

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[2] The notion of brahmacharya and the version of masculinity manifested in wrestlers'*akhaaras* (pit) are closely linked to Lord Hanuman, the God of Wind in Hindu mythology. Alter (1992) shows how Hanuman embodies the links between divine energy (*shakti*), devotion to Lord Ram (*bhakti*), brahmacharya and virility, making him a central deity for wrestlers to worship and express their devotion to (163-178). In referring to the figure of Gandhi and his practice of brahmacharya, Alter also draws our attention to what initially might seem an unlikely comparison. According to Alter, Gandhi's self-control and insistence on making morality the key peg for our social lives, contributed to his image as the ideal brahmachari, who wrestlers should take inspiration from, transforming wrestling into a moral-ethical field (180-187).

the celibate male body (of the *brahmachari*) was viewed as the site of nationalist assertion because the regime of semen control indexed not just a "balanced integration of body and nature" (52), but also one which countered the anxieties generated by the appearance of post-colonial desire i.e. the colonial discourse on sex and sexuality which categorized the Indian man on the moral yardstick of virility or lack of it (41-52). This work illustrates the genealogy of a discourse which bestows a moral quality on the male body, which when mediated by a regime of control of bodily fluids makes the latter into a privileged site of a seminal truth and a nationalist sentiment.

In the above instances, the notions of strength and control play a crucial role in mediating the relationship between masculinity and morality.[3] As it transforms and travels from the realm of the corporeal to the moral or vice versa, strength contained or cultivated in the male body, also imbues this body with the potential for moral character and virtue. The moral masculinity expounded in the mandal, while not symmetrical to the instances elaborated above, provides a helpful conceptual tool to understand how the gendered identities of the members were mediated by the discourses of the mandal saturated with considerations of masculinized moral virtue.

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[3] The figure of Gandhi presents a remarkable site where the relationship between strength and masculinity gets reconfigured, in his rejection of the hegemonic masculine ideals represented by the colonizing master. In this context, see Nandy (1983) on Gandhi's redefining of masculinity, not just through his implicit strength derived from self-restraint and ascetic disciplining of the body, but also by not shying away from incorporation of the feminine into his subjective self. Similarly, Chakraborty (2011) highlights Gandhi's contribution to an alternative model of masculinity by making it compatible with allegedly feminine attributes of non-violence, endurance and penance (122-136).

On madat

The moral value of extending help and of maintaining unity amongst themselves constituted the bedrock of values behind the mandal. I contend that these values generated a profoundly moral, gendered ideal which all mandal members strove (or failed) to achieve not just through specific mandal activities but also via their everyday social relationships in the vasti.

While elaborating on the objectives of a mandal most of the members, young and senior, were emphatic about the notion of, "*Dusryanchi madat karne*"(Helping others). For Khandalekaka, a senior member of Siddhartha mandal, running a mandal entailed looking after the basic needs of the people affiliated with the mandal: ensuring the basic level of amenities in the neighborhood, drainage lines, clean water, helping needy students and so on. "*Sukhachya, dukhhachya kamala gela paahije, hi jaaniv paahije*"(One should be conscious towards one's duty towards others in their times of joy and grief). For Kartik, secretary of the mandal at the time of my fieldwork, the primary objective of the mandal was to bring people together and consolidate their "relation.""*Aata mandal nahi samja, tar kon konala uthun baghnaar aahe ki bolnaar aahe*." (If the mandal does not exist, no one will even bother about what is happening to others), he explained. The qualification of *madat* (help) was consistently similar across the board in my interviews with mandal members: helping vasti members during a medical emergency, aiding in domestic crisis, minor financial help in case of a crisis, aid to needy students to continue education, helping vasti members get ration cards and information about state-sponsored welfare schemes, providing space and material help for their family celebrations, and so on.

285

Talking about their vision of the mandal once they take charge, Jonas Brothers lined up an ambitious set of activities: organizing street plays to create awareness about alcoholism; reconstructing the mandal building in order to make space available for running computer training classes; a well-equipped gymnasium and tailoring classes for girls, all of which would eventually benefit the mandal (in terms of an income) and the vasti residents equally.

The last component of mandal's objectives and activities was organizing major annual festivals. Vinit, the treasurer of the mandal, explained that organizing "*sanskrutik karyakram*" (cultural programs) was important for providing entertainment and recreation to vasti residents and consolidating the unity of the vasti and mandal through these celebrations.

The idiom of madat articulated in the mandal's activities and objectives encoded a deep class-based vulnerability, revealing the fundamental dependence of working-class lives on informal networks of physical and financial support and patronageto pool communal resources, for their social and physical survival (Gupte 2012; Hansen and Verkaaik 2009; Bayat 2000; Chandavarkar 1994). The notion of madat, straddling realms of livelihood, monetary help, medical aid, leisure and self-improvement, thus starkly marked the very orientation of vasti residents towards their social and public life in Shelar galli. It was then not surprising that this discourse animated the basic rationale for the mandal here, articulated aptly by Vinit,

> "*Karan aaj nahitar udya aapli hi tich avastha aahe…aaj aapan tyanna jhala tar udya te aaplyala hotat*" (Who knows, tomorrow we can be in a similar position [of need/ difficulty], if we are there for others today, then they will be there for us tomorrow).

This discourse was crucial for the collective self-definition of the mandal members, as it enabled them to locate themselves in relation to other mandals and neighborhoods, in a moral and spatial economy of madat. For mandal members, their mental map of Moti Peth was constituted by the

cluster of mandals and the caste or linguistic communities that these mandals indexed and the mandals' performance on the madat criteria. Velgode waada, located at one end of the galli, populated mostly by Telugu speaking weavers from Sali caste was alleged to be a "selfish" community by mandal members, where no one ever helped each other. Further ahead was Tiranga mandal, associated with Bairagi caste, where, mandal members claimed, most people were cheats and engaged in petty theft.

Veer mandal in the neighboring ward 755 was particularly crucial in this spatial exercise of self-definition. Veer mandal was also primarily a Mang mandallocated in a much more destitute slum and was constantly highlighted as the den of vice, immorality and addictions. In Anya's words,

> "*Aho, ti itki bekar loka aahet na, kunachi mayat jari jhali ashi mayati paashi hasat bastaat.*"(They are such a useless/ inferior people that even if there is a death in the locality, they will sit next to the dead body and laugh at it).

As he said this, Anya contorted his face and exposed his teeth to portray a particularly exaggerated expression of malicious laughter. Implied in this remark and his expression was an extreme contempt towards Veer mandal for their failure to extend madat even in the direst circumstance of death of its vasti residents.

In their interview, members of Jonas Brothers claimed that it is mostly Siddharthamandal boys who go and help solve local fights or take charge of the situation in case of emergencies like a short circuit in Velgode waada.You will never find anyone else bothering about other people's problems, but we are not like that, we will always intervene in all conflicts, said Chotu. Satya added proudly to this, "*Annabhau Sathech karun gelay aaplyala tasa, to kasa ladhla sarvansathi*" *(*Annabhau Sathe himself has made us like this, the way he fought for others). So

much so that even the local municipal councilor's brother brought his family affair to them to resolve, instead of approaching the former, the younger members of the mandal claimed.

Madat thus, was not merely a class-specific exchange of support; as signified in the above instances, the imperative to extend madat was unmistakably cast in logic of caste and ethnicity-based attributes. In fact, as Satya proclaimed, the mandal members' impulse towards madat was a result of this value being instilled in successive Mang generations, by the example set by their own icon, Annabhau Sathe. In mandal members' portrayal of their mental map of Moti Peth, the spatial and caste-based co-ordinates of valuable madat was charted out in unequivocal terms: Mang-populated Shelar galli as the lone shining example of selfless madat, in the otherwise madat-barren terrain occupied by Bairagi, Sali and other Mang mandals.

Interestingly, several mandal members spoke passionately about extending selfless help to those in a health-related crisis. Mohanlal narrated an incident about the death of an HIV positive woman in the vasti and his courageous role in taking care of her last rites when no one was even ready to touch her body. Vinit spoke, not without pride, about carrying another neighbour in his arms, after the latter collapsed in the galli due to a sudden paralytic stroke. Kiran described how he drove down a busy main street in the city at break neck speed clearing the traffic ahead of him to make way for a speeding van which was carrying a neighbour who had tried to commit suicide to the hospital, despite having a conflict with the latter.

It seemed to me that help during a health-related crisis or support at the time of a death was inarguably the most coveted mode of fulfilment of the madat ideal, since danger to physical life and struggle to survive constituted the most naked form of helplessness. It reminded me of Rama's sentimental outburst once, when he was telling me about the circumstances of his

288

father's death, a few years ago. He narrated how his mandal friends accompanied him all over the city, helping him arrange money for hospital expenditure, all drenched in the monsoon downpour. "Our food at the hospital did not come from our relatives then" he said in raised voice and a tone which seemed to challenge me, to prepare me as if, to hear something that shattered my assumption.

> "It was my friends in the vasti who got lunch for me and my family every day! Without fail! Even if I drank the water washed off their feet today, I will not be able to repay what they have done for me then." [4]

He ended his spiel vociferously, his lean face a peculiar mixture of the anger he must have felt for his uncaring relatives and a simultaneous sense of defiant power he felt in being able to reject their indifference on the strength of his friends' support.

Locating friendship within madat

Rama's case also demonstrated that apart from helping the vulnerable in the galli, the extension of madat to peers carried a tacit, but equally moral affective importance for mandal members. In this case though, I suggest that it was the ideal of friendship that rendered madat as an exchange of support between men and their equals.[5]

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[4] As part of Hindu worship, the deity's feet are bathed in water and this water is distributed amongst the devotees as it is considered to be blessed by the deity's divine qualities.

[5] This analysis would be guilty of a vulgar functionalism to suggest that it was the exigencies of madat in the vasti that provided the *raison d'être* for the glorified discourse of friendship that circulated amongst the mandal members. The sheer intensity with which their lives continued to be bound to each other (in terms of physical proximity, shared memories of childhood, shared history of life and hardships in the vasti) generated an equally intense mixture of emotional attachment, dependence and expectations from each other for the mandal members (just like for all sets of peers in the vasti), which far exceeded the singular concerns of madat or vulnerability. The focus on the ideal of

289

"*Aapli mula lagnala yet nahit, pan mayatila yetat*" (Our boys might not come for [a friend's] wedding, but they will come for the funeral).

I was introduced to this curious axiom along which friendships of mandal members operated, during a highly animated conversation with Jonas Brothers. Satya then clarified for me,

"*Baherhyala maraychay na, mag te dushmani visartaat, ekatra yeun baherchaynna dhada shikavtaat. Ashi eki evdyach area madhe aahe… [ ] wadyaparyant*"(If outsiders require to be beaten up, then they [mandal members] forget mutual enmity. They come together and teach the outsiders a lesson. This kind of unity exists only in this area, up to Velgode waada).

Thus while disruptions in relationships between friends could be forgiven, the tenet of the friendship ideal demanded that absolute support was extended to friends who were in need or crisis. Friendship at that juncture was non-negotiable.

In his interview, Naresh admitted that he had not been on talking terms with Vinit for a long period in the past due to a fight. However, when Naresh needed a friend to be picked up from the bus terminal in the wee hours of the morning, he could bank on Vinit to do it. All he needed to do was call Vinit and the latter even made sure that the friend was fed breakfast and chai before dispatching him to where he wanted to travel further. It was because he (the other person) was *my* friend that Vinit did this favor for me, Naresh said proudly.

Rama's emotional narrative about the support he received from his mandal friends was, in his eyes, worthy of worship. Inversely, failure to support mandal friends unconditionally was sacrilege, leading to loss of respect in the eyes of their peers. In his interview, Rama confided that a few "rotten mangoes" in the mandal were spreading discontent about the fact that he was

friendship in this section attempts to examine the ways in which this ideal molded discourses of the mandal and the consolidation of gendered identities of the mandal members.

being made the president of the mandal (since Rama was not Matang). He felt acutely

disappointed that friends could have such objections.

> "*Bhawapeksha mothi jaaga aahe mitrachi, mag asa kahi jhala ki manala jara feel hota na. Manatun utartat te*" (A friend has a more respectful stature than a brother [for me], so when things like this happen, obviously one feels bad, no? One loses respect for them).

Indeed a crucial evaluative criterion for earning peers' respect was the ability to perform

friendship, in terms of support and transcending one's own expectations in favor of helping out a

friend.

I find it useful here to refer to Chopra (2002) who proposes the framework of men's

supportive practices as a constructive conceptual tool to explore male subject positions which

goes beyond a narrow focus on men's acts as articulations of patriarchal violence. This volume

focuses on everyday practices of men in varied contexts in order to demonstrate how a masculine

self is molded through ways in which men extend support to women, their families and other

men, while recognizing that this support-giving role itself is firmly rooted in a patriarchal

structuring of gendered roles in South Asia.

At the outset, Chopra (2002) alerts us to the common thread that runs through the papers

in this collection: the centrality of friendship as a major conduit for exchange of support between

men. For instance, in case of migrant male workers in beauty parlors in New Delhi, Ahmed

(2002) demonstrates how it was their network of friends who enabled them to find jobs in the

city's beauty parlors and also gain the requisite skills to work there. In another remarkable study

of male domestic workers in the city of New Delhi, Indukuri (2002) describes how acts like

playing volleyball with their friends (who were also domestic workers) or hanging out in front of

the milk booth, helped male domestic workers to regain a sense of autonomy and masculinity,

within the space of their friendship circle, away from the context of powerlessness that is associated with their feminized work.

In the same volume, Dasgupta's (2002) work on all-male neighborhood clubs in Kolkata parallels my research very closely. Similar to the mandal in Pune's landscape, neighborhood clubs in Kolkata are localized, all-male entities, which organize the Durga Puja festival in the neighborhood, apart from organizing minor help for the neighborhood's residents and playing an active role in the public life of the neighborhood (121-124). Dasgupta (2002) elaborates upon the everyday practices of support and help that young club members exchange, including helping each other in studies, advising each other in their respective love affairs, passing on information about job vacancies and so on; this enables the creation of non-familial and relatively non-hierarchic group of support for the young men in the neighborhood, which also initiates its members into the world of responsibility and support, according to Dasgupta (114).

The practices of friendship as a crucial channel of men's supportive practices in this volume finds strong resonance in the mandal relationships, as the above ethnographic instances demonstrate. For the mandal members, the boundaries between madat and friendship often became obscure, with madat serving as a primary measure of friendship, in times of vulnerability and need. While the papers in this volume (2002) document the practices of friendship far more effectively, they do not address directly the modes through which the performance of friendship itself becomes masculinized, thus making it (friendship) into a crucial evidence of a support-providing, masculine self in these settings. I delineate these modes in the coming sections of this chapter, by focusing on how the ideals of madat and friendship are cast in a masculine idiom in the rhetoric and practices of the mandal.

"Mandal he ekicha bal!" (The mandal is an embodiment of the strength of unity!)

Kartik's definition of a mandal thus characterized unity as the constituent element of the collective, the very agent which held it together. Concern with maintaining *eki* (unity) within the mandal and sticking by each other through hard times was an overwhelming presence in mandal members' everyday conversations, practices and relationships. The need to keep mandal space free of personal conflicts and politics was aired strongly by all the mandal members, senior and junior, whom I interviewed. As Kiran put it,

> "*Jo paryant tumhi ekatra yet nahi, to paryant tumchi takat samorchyala kalat nahi.Mhanun mandalanni mhana, kahi sthanik lokanni aaple matbhed sidela thevun ekatrapana dakhvun, samorchyavar maatkeli pahije. Aapan aapli takat dakhavli pahije, majority dakhavli pahije*" (Unless you come together, others will not realize your strength. That is why mandals and local people have to put aside their internal conflicts and defeat the opposite party in a unified way. We have to show our strength, show our 'majority').

I was to soon discover, eki in the mandal was more an ideal than a reality. Kartik, the mandal secretary, marked out the indicator of declining eki in the mandal, in his interview. So while the mandal still went through its annual cycle of celebrations including Ganesh Janma, Navratri, and Republic Day etc., Kartik contended that the substantive activity was missing: like collectively helping a family to resolve their domestic dispute. "*Kahi loka aapli personal bhandana mandalat aantaat, tyala kay karnaar?*" (Some people drag their personal quarrels into the mandal, what can one do about it?). Kartik's diagnosis for mandal's eki's ill-health was echoed by several other members as well.

Indeed, since the last decade, themandal was beleaguered by *gatbaaji* (factions) directly

mapped on to the long-standing conflict over ownership of land in the galli between the alleged

owners and tenants in Shelar waada. Also, despite repeated assurances that 'our boys' did keep

their factions aside and came to help each other at least in crisis, the intensity with which the

failure to achieve eki was condemned was a striking indicator of the continued anxiety that

gatbaaji aroused amongst mandal members.

Mixing politics with objectives of the mandal came a close second in explaining the

malaise of declining eki. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, mandals in the city have

increasingly acquired a pivotal status in local political mobilizing, on account of the handle that

they provide on localized (and spatialized) caste and community equations. Kiran explained the

principled stance of the mandal during his time,

> "*Poorvi kay hota amchya timeala, mandala madhe rajkarananaycha naahi.Mandala madhe kuthla candidate anaycha nahi. He alyanantar mag kay hota, sagala chitrabadlunjata*" (During our time, it was our principle that we shouldn't mix politics with the mandal. No getting any [electoral] candidate in the mandal. But once this happens, the entire picture changes).

Satish, another senior member alleged that opening the mandal to political candidates

sows seeds of discord amongst the members, as each then might owe allegiance to a different

candidate. According to him, the earlier mandal members believed that while each member was

free to campaign for a political party of his choice, these personal preferences should not

interfere with the functioning of the mandal. Undeniably, the ideal of mandal constituted a

"pure" space, free from personal interests, oriented towards a collective good. The entry of

political interests in the mandal not only defiled this purity, but also violated the tenet of selfless,

294

apolitical social service which formed the very basis of the moral capital that mandals commanded.

The precedence of members' selfish interests over mandal's ekicame in for impassioned righteous criticism by all the members alike. In my interview with the Jonas Brothers, Satya was quick to point out that once they took charge of the mandal, it would not take them long to spot the lowly (*ghan*) boys in the mandal who take illicit money in the name of the mandal for their own selfish gains and to banish them from the mandal. Mohanlal could hardly conceal his contempt for some mandal members, whom he claimed were selfish(*swarthi*) and drunk on greed for money (*paishachidhundi*). He was referring to the mandal members' refusal to put up a unified demand of money to an electoral candidate, so that they could reconstruct the mandal building and thus provide more communal spaces.

Moral masculinity

Directly linked to the vulnerability (physical and social) of the vasti and its inhabitants, performance of madat and eki or their failure provoked strong emotional responses from the mandal members. I contend that the discourses of madat (often encompassing the ideal of friendship) and eki amongst the mandal members and indeed, within the vasti itself, was cast as "duty" in a distinctly moral idiom,[6] the fulfilment of which was deemed to be worthy of worship and gratitude (as in Rama's case). Inversely, the failure to extend madat was condemned harshly,

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[6] I refer back to Watt (2005) who delineates how the notion of social service that emerged in colonial India was undergirded by Hindu religious concepts of seva and daan. At a general level, mandals in the eastern part of Pune defined their rationale of social service or community seva in moralistic terms; hence the casting of madat and eki as a moral duty in the context of Siddhartha mandal was hardly surprising.

indicting those involved with a judgment of moral depravity with which this failure was associated (as in case of Veer mandal). Similarly, the inability to maintain eki was often framed within morally suspect acts of selfishness, of drunkenness, or of gambling.

Madat and eki however were not merely moral constructs; as demonstrated earlier in this section, for mandal members the imperative to extend madat and maintain unity was bound inextricably to their caste and class identity and as I argue, to the galli itself, as Matang men dealing with the vagaries of the vasti life in Moti Peth.

The mutual constitution of a sense of locality and a moral obligation towards the neighborhood stands out in Jankowski's (1991) study of thirty seven ethnic gangs across the North American cities of New York, Boston and Los Angeles. Exploring the reasons for joining neighborhood gangs by young men hailing mostly from highly marginalized ethnic backgrounds including Puerto Rican, Dominican, African American and Chicanos, Jankowski (1991) found that gang membership was propelled by strong "local patriotism" (46), a feeling that the youth had to fulfil an obligation towards their neighborhood, of giving back something to the community. The spatial rootedness of the gangs in their respective neighborhoods is not something that Jankowski (1991) highlights explicitly. However, his research amply demonstrates that the gangs have a deep relationship with their neighborhoods, materialized in its alley and streets, as they protected the residents, prevented their exploitation from loan sharks, greedy storeowners, and developers and slowed down gentrification (183-92).

Jankowski suggests that the social status and respect that gang members gained via this idiom of duty towards neighborhood was immense in the light of utter lack of respect and dignity that they experienced in the wider world outside their neighborhoods (200). Madat, I argue,

296

constitutes a similar idiom of local, moral patriotism for the mandal members, as it carved out the space of the galli as the field of members' moral actions and in turn imbued the galli itself with this morality, which set it apart from other neighboring communities.

The definition and performance of madat was simultaneously acutely gendered: attributes which ensured a successful performance of madat, drew upon profoundly masculine archetypes of valor, dependability, commitment, loyalty to peers and a public presence which commanded respect. Vinit's narrative first drew my attention to this element,

> "*Lokanni sangitla asel tumhala ki mahiti nahi, pan mi jevdhaattaparyantlokanchya madatila gelo, nahi ka…rogi aso, jalalela aso…bakichekilasle, ghabarle, mi kilaslelo, ghabarlelo nahi. Mi rogi jari asle tari tyala haat laun, tyala uchlun madat keleli aahe, bhajlela asla tari tyala haat laun madat keli aahe*"(I don't know if people here have already told you about this, but [nobody has helped others here] the way in which I have helped people here till now. It may be someone who is diseased or someone who has suffered burns…others were scared or felt revulsion. But not me, I did not feel scared or revolted. I have not hesitated to touch and lift a diseased or a burnt person in order to help them).

Vinit expected his acts of help to be talked about and admired in the vasti, because he had transcended fear and revulsion in extending madat.Mohanlal and Kiran's narratives also had an unmistakable quality of drama and heroic courage to them.

It was also the spread and extent of one's network of contacts which made one into a reliable source of madat. For most mandal members, Naresh, the mandal's president during my fieldwork, was a shining example of this reliability. Naresh's close contacts with members of various mandals and gangs across the city implied that he could fetch handsome donations on the basis of his contacts, for vasti's celebrations and ensure protection for mandal members, in case of a conflict with outsiders.

297

The various forms of madat, ranging from physical aid, arbitration of local conflicts, successfully conducting programs in the vasti, networking with mandals across the city, all were contingent upon mobility and a mode of sociality available almost exclusively to men, in case of the vasti, thus transforming madat into an explicitly masculinized domain. I suggest that the ideal of madat, as a core value of the mandal, was a decisive axis along which the mandal members could imagine a sense of collective and individual self-worth, as performers and proponents of a class, caste and place-specific masculine morality.

Interestingly though, even though eki was one of the pillars on which the edifice of the mandal was built, it was the perceived absence of the ideal of eki amongst the mandal members that rendered its presence in such bold terms in the discursive terrain of the mandal. In the next section I explore how this contradiction served as an evaluative register for the mandal members to judge their own and others' performance and its implication for their gendered identities.

II

Mandal as an Evaluative Register

The mandal's decline

Discussions around the declining eki were not restricted to the mandal; my everyday conversations in the vasti with older men and women often veered towards wistful reminiscing about the years when the *mahaul* (ethos or atmosphere) in the galli was radically different from

the current one, where now everyone found themselves on either side of a seemingly unrepairable divide which only seemed to worsen with time.

It is helpful to place this larger discourse of decline of the mandal and of a general dilution of its sublime values in the context of the broader socio-economic and cultural transformations that had occurred in the Indian society in the latter half of the 20th century. My early conversations with the current mandal members had yielded little insight into the nature of their madat and social service (*samaaj seva*). Vague references of taking the sick to the hospital or helping a family in financial crisis did not give me a sense of who the beneficiaries of the purported social service were. However, a few detailed conversations with some older men and women in the vasti about the mandal's work in their times (in the late 70s and 80s) gave me an entry point in understanding the nature of samaaj seva that was repeatedly flaunted to a newcomer like me. Three decades ago mandal members were actively involved in a wide range of supporting roles vis-à-vis the vasti: intervening physically in personal conflicts; arbitrating in finalizing marriages; helping vasti residents obtain basic state documents (like ration cards and death certificates) and electricity meters; working with the local police to extricate a vasti member involved in a brawl or fight; filing applications for improvement of basic services laying drainage lines or water supply and so on.

Khandale kaka, an older member of the mandal, now in his late 50s, passionately described the unique pilgrimage that mandal members undertook during his tenure (in the late 1970s): they walked to Mahatma Phule's native village and returned with a torch which symbolized Phule's enlightening teachings. Quintessentially representing the reformist ethos of self-improvement and social change that aggressively marked all public policy and action in

299

Maharashtra (and India) in the 70s and 80s, this gesture, according to Khandale, aimed to enlighten the vasti residents about the significance of a reformer like Phule, who sacrificed everything in his endeavour to stress the importance of education to lower castes and who risked being ostracized by his own caste members by embracing those belonging to lower castes.

Social service as practiced by the mandal then was not just shaped by the existent social reformist ethos but also by the stark reality of acute poverty of most families in the vasti. Lacking a source of stable income or employment and struggling to keep themselves afloat, social service practices of the mandal constituted an overwhelmingly needs-based response to alleviate this very real collective vulnerability of the vasti.

When I began my fieldwork in 2011, the vasti had moved a long way away from the earlier decades of naked vulnerability and need. With at least one member of every family holding a permanent job with the city municipal council, sheer physical survival was not the primary concern for most families here anymore (though they continued to be subjected to a fundamentally class-based vulnerability). More importantly, as seen in earlier chapters, young people in the vasti, most of them growing up in the 90s decade, found themselves caught in a sudden onslaught of new ethos and aspirations unleashed by an aggressively globalizing India. The reformist idealism that had propelled most of the mandal's activities through the 70s and 80s had dissipated considerably, now replaced with an increasingly aspirational outlook of its younger male members for whom distinct consumption practices, caste-based politics and mandal activities constituted some of their primary avenues of self-making.

The cumulative effect of these developments was responsible for a considerable shift in what was understood and practiced as madat or social service in Siddhartha mandal in 2011.

While extending help to vasti members in times of their need still held a place of pride in the mandal discourse, this was now largely limited to help in health-related emergencies or an occasional intervention in a conflict in the vasti. The absence of the intense reformism and of a strong sense of community that characterized mandal's activities in the 70s, coupled with an increasingly aspirational perspective of its members led to many elders (men and women) in the vasti condemning this as a decline of the mandal.[7]

This reference to the mandal's decline, coupled with mandal members' consistent articulation of eki in a tone of general lament alerted me to a crucial aspect of the mandal universe: that the moralized ideals on which the mandal was founded and their realization within the social space and interrelationships of the mandal need not necessarily correspond to each other. The space inhabited by the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual, I discovered, became a sliding continuum, along which mandal members evaluated their own and each other's performance, in the process also consolidating the contours of a masculine ideal in the galli.

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[7]This broad change in the discourse and praxis of madat in the mandal resonates strongly with the shift that Lukose (2009) traces in her important work on youth and globalization in Kerala, a shift which she describes as moving from "midnight's children" to "liberalization's children" (5). The reference to Salman Rushdie's famous novel indexes the distinct Nehruvian socialist ethos that the post-Independence generations in India are thought to be "riddled" with. This is reflected in these generations' concerns with service to the nation and the rural poor and an austere attitude towards consumption. Lukose argues that post-1991 a new discourse has ascended to the fore which celebrates the energy of a globalized India, embodied centrally by its youth, their hip attitude, ambition, willingness to take risk and an unabashed propensity towards consumption (4-7). On another level, there was an unmistakable sense of loss expressed by most elder and even younger vasti residents with regards to community life as it existed in the galli two or three decades ago. Fall of moral standards and rise of selfishness was a recurring trope which vasti residents used to process this atrophy of social relations, an oft occurring theme in diverse contexts of post-colonial India. In her elaboration of perceptions of changes in rural Rajasthan, Gold (2009) analyzes how the shift to cash economy and profit-based agricultural practices have had profound effects on what she terms as "moralities of mutuality" (368) embedded within the larger ethos of an agrarian system of production, leading to laments about decline of love, respect and ascendance of instrumental relationships. It was precisely these "moralities of mutuality" which seemed to be the casualty of the intense consumerism and aspiration that gripped the galli's ethos, causing irreversible damage to its eki and the impulse to help and support each other.

Constructing the righteous self

Chopra,Osella and Osella (2004) contend that, "performances of a male gendered self are not primarily enacted, repeated and reiterated before a critical audience of women, but rather orientated toward 'audiences' of significant men" (28). They go on to add, "The relations between men in all-male contexts are of critical importance to establish masculinity… constituted in the evaluative presence of other men" (ibid). The space of the mandal with its heavy emphasis on upholding a masculinized moral ideal thus served as to consolidate the strength of their own masculine or moral attributes, based upon their critical evaluations of others' performance.

That today's mandal could hardly hope to match up to its own extraordinary avatar fifteen years ago, was a candid refrain in conversations with and interviews of all mandal members. Their outright acceptance of the decline of the mandal represented to me mandal members' collective admission of failure to uphold the mandal's ideals. At the same time, on revisiting some of these remarks, I sensed that the tone and delivery of the quotes attested to an unequivocal distancing of those who articulated them from the "problem" situation. When I asked Naveen why he thought the unity in the mandal had declined so radically, he sighed before saying,

> "*Techh.Vastitle loka! Hikadcha tikde, tikadchahikde.Lava lavi…Ata lokanna jaaniv pahije na koni aaplya sathi kay kela*" (The same old thing! The people in this vasti... exchanging allegations, feeding rumours and controversies…People should have a sense of who has helped them out).

Naveen referred tacitly to the history of largesse that Pandurang Shelar had extended to all the residents of the vasti in the past, and blaming the current lack of unity on the refusal of the

302

tenants to acknowledge these favors anymore, and fuelling disunity, which now had consumed the mandal as well.

Anya's critique was directed against the senior members of the mandal, who had accused the current body of not maintaining clear financial accounts, of not conducting enough activities. This had really hurt mandal members, who according to Anya, had to face this unwarranted criticism, despite having worked hard to conduct excellent programs, which had even received publicity now in the US![8]

Kiran, now a senior mandal member, did not mince any words while criticizing the current body of mandal managers:

> "*Tyancha chukta asa ki margadarshankunachaghetnaahit.Konala kimmat det nahit.Tyanna asa vatata ki mala mishi aali mhanje mi phaar motha jhalo. Pan tumhalaanubhav aahe ka? Tumhi hishob det naahi mhanje tumhi paishe khatay ki naahi?*" (Their [junior members'] fault is that they do not take anyone's guidance. They do not value anyone. They feel like now that I have grown a moustache, I have grown up. But do you guys have any experience?? If you do not submit a financial account, that implies that you are a fraud, doesn't it?).

In Kartik, Satya and Mohanlal's remarks about selfish interests in the earlier section, their righteous anger or a sense of supercilious disappointment was directed against other unnamed members, who were condemned as the perpetrators of disunity; pinning the problem on to the acts of the others also simultaneously extricated their own self as an agent in the situation. Depending upon their location in the mandal and vasti dynamics, mandal members sought to deflect the culpability of the withering of the mandal on to tenants, owners, senior members,

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[8] Anya was referring to my visual documentation of most of the mandal programs. Most of the mandal members were highly pleased that a lot of their activities would travel all the way to an American audience via Madam.

303

junior members, self-centred members, in the process establishing their own position as that of a pained observer, desirous of, but unable to stop the descent of the mandal.

These denouncements of other members were a significant opportunity for mandal members to construct their own self-image in contrast to others' undesirable attributes. When Rama was telling me about his tenure as the president of the mandal, he emphasized that it was just he and Ketan who worked hard to get things off the ground before any mandal activity. He felt angry that later it was others who took all the credit, "*Kaam aapan karaycha, ani malai tyanni khaun jaychi*" (I do all the work and they get to lick the cream!).

I discovered that Rama was not the only one who felt this way. Laughing cynically, Kartik told me that the biggest lesson he learned by working for the mandal was the fact that one rarely gets credit for one's work, but brickbats are easy to come.

> "*Nantar ain timeala he kami padla tar bolayla yetat, he kami padla, te kami padla*" (Of course, at the last moment when something goes wrong they [others] will definitely appear, to point out the shortcomings).

Kiran emphatically pointed out how he never hesitated to call spade a spade, irrespective of whether it might invite other members' ire.

> "I never fought for my personal interests, but it was always directed towards the mandal's betterment. And my honesty has given me a bad name today (*vaitpana*), I know what they say behind my back about me. One has to risk getting a bad name for the mandal's sake. But I don't care for that; I will stick by my conviction."

Kiran underlined his own fearlessness by pointing out the recent instance wherein Naresh had temporarily shifted out of Moti Peth on account of an inter-mandal conflict.

> "*Bhayanak aamhala, amhi under tension hoto.Amhi ha vichaar nahi kela, he honar aahe mhatla, mhanun amhi ghara dara sodun dusrikade rahayla gelo? Amhi tyala face kela.*

304

Tumhi jar aaj ghabarle itha, ithun jar ghar sodun gelat, kay tumhala guarantee titha tashi manasa bhetnaar nahit? Tithun pan tumhi ghar sodun jaanar ka?" (We ourselves were under a lot of tension [earlier]. But did we just shift elsewhere because of that? We faced it. If you get scared today and leave for elsewhere, what is the guarantee that you will not meet similar people there as well? Will you then leave that place also?).

The ordeals of a principled stand for the mandal's sake and its ensuing martyrdom were a recurring topic. Prakash, who was Kiran's younger brother, claimed that all the major local Congress politicians knew him on a first name basis, when he was the president.

"*Pan mi dakhvun det nahi. Aata itar loka, te payala haat lavnaar, tyanchyashi pudhe pudhe karnaar, te mala jamat nahi, majhya tatvat nahiye te*"(But I never display my connections. Others will fall at the leaders' feet, act obsequiously…I cannot do all that, it does not fit into my principles).

Prakash went on to tell me that on being offered a senior post in the local branch of Congress party, he demanded that some of "our boys" be given jobs along with him; but since that was unacceptable to the party officials, he chose to forego the opportunity in the interest of the mandal's responsibility.

Vinit also claimed, not without anger, that he always spoke the truth, which was unpalatable for several mandal members; which is why he had now withdrawn gradually from the mandal. However, in spite of all the conflict, he always offered to paint the mandal's Ganesh idol free of charge, thus saving at least INR 5000 for the mandal every year.

The unnamed others and their objectionable behavior in the above comments often served as a point of contrast in the exercise of self-definition for these members. Thus notwithstanding a range of unethical behaviour from others, mandal members highlighted their own moral-ethical virtues which they staunchly stood by: unwavering commitment to one's principles, fearless

articulation of truth, orientation towards the mandal's interests as opposed to individual interests, hard work (despite lack of credit) and a strong sense of self-respect.

Eki and mandal talk represented an elaborate affective tapestry, laden with mandal members' feelings of disappointment and anger at the lack of recognition of their hard work, feelings of hurt as mandal members refused to respect their advice, or a deep sense of regret for where the mandal had arrived. It is crucial to remember that a discussion about the mandal in most of the members' and galli residents' minds was never divorced from the social space of the vasti; these evaluations thus were hardly devoid of an intense emotional content, as they played out against the backdrop of an deep history of simultaneously fulfilling and conflictual interrelationships between the mandal members and their families in the vasti.

The affective import of the mandal was acute not just because this social space was now tainted by disruptions in friendships and relationships between families. The fact that their nostalgia for a time when things were "perfect" in the vasti could so concretely be routed through the memories of the mandal's heydays also made the mandal an emotionally charged space, evident in the following section.

On recuperation

Mandal memories of fifteen years ago hence often provided feelings of succor from the realization of hollowing out of relationships in the vasti.

> "*Asa mandal hota na aapla, ki akkhya Moti Peth area madhe ek numberla hote aaple karyakram, ustav…aamcha lahanpan athavla na majhya khara dolyat ajun pani yeta. Adhichya lokanni je mandal ghadavla na, tya mandalachi sagali atta vaat lavli, kahi*

lokanni"(Our mandal ranked at the top in entire Moti Peth for its programs and celebrations. Even now I get tears in my eyes when I think of my childhood. Some people here have destroyed the mandal that the earlier generation had created).

Vinit's eulogy was representative of the larger sentiment of loss and nostalgia that pervaded the mandal and vasti space, expressed by all, men and women alike. Kiran also articulated this sentiment rather strongly,

> "*Ani purvi evdhe chaan chaan karyakram asayche na, ki shala kadhi sutati and mi vastit kadhi jato asa mala vataycha. Pan aaj ase divas allele aahe ki, mi tya vastichya baaher kadhi padtoy asa mala vatata. Evdha kichkat, ghanerda vatavaran jhalela aahe. Matlabi loka jhalele aahet khoop, heva-deva karnare*"(Earlier the mandal used to conduct such great programs, that I would wait for the school to get over so that I could come back to the vasti. But now I wait when I can get out of that vasti. The whole atmosphere has become so murky and terrible. Everyone has become selfish, jealous of each other)

It was suggestive though that when mandal members reflected upon the past glory of the mandal, their narratives invariably hovered around tales of *dabdaba* (terror/ control) that the earlier mandal enjoyed in this area.

> "*Juni pora danger hoti, aapla tevha vat hota vasti madhe.Koni tyanchya naadi lagat nhavta. Tyanna mahitiye, ithe aala ki bhuga! Kheema! Adhichya lokanni he karun thevla hota. Amhi pan tyancha thoda thoda kaam pudhe neto*" (The older mandal boys were "dangerous," they inspired terror in Moti Peth. Nobody would dare antagonize them. Others knew, if they came here, they would be crushed! Made into minced meat! The older generation has created this legacy and we also try to take this forward).

Jonas Brothers literally shouted above each other's voices, as they competed to tell me about the fear that this mandal inspired in Moti Peth, twenty years ago. Even the current mandal members could not hide their sense of pride while talking about the mandal when they were children.

> "*Tya veles ithe 70-80 baherche loka jugaar khelat padle asayche. Aadhi aaplya ithlya lokanchi toli hoti…gang hoti…Te kuthe pan jaaun konalapan marayche. Golden days hote tyavelesche!*"(In those days, there were at least 70-80 people who used to be hanging out here, gambling. Earlier our mandal had a gang, they could go anywhere and thrash anyone in that area. Those were the "golden days!").

Anya and Naresh went on to describe to me how a well-known gangster in the city in those days had walked into the galli to attack someone, but was beaten up by the mandal members and thrown out unceremoniously of the galli. It was akin to a gang war, Naresh said, almost gleefully. Mohanlal was greatly troubled by the fact that the Telugu speaking castes surrounding the galli were no longer tractable, like earlier. That marked for him the fall of the mandal from its heights of fame.

> "*Nusta asa baghitla na amhi, palun jayche.Aata he aamchya samor kaam kartaat. Ata kon nahi rahila, ithlich pora tikde cross hotat*" (We just needed to glance in their [Telugu communities] direction and they would flee. Now they work right in front of our eyes. No one enjoys that kind of control, now, it is boys from here who "cross" over to their side)

These narratives fed into an extremely fertile repertoire of urban legends which revolved around Moti Peth, while simultaneously re-constructing them anew. The golden days of Siddhartha mandal was a reassuring time-space where the ideal was not perceived to be apart from the actual, embodied not just in top-notch quality of programs and the mandal's fame in Moti Peth, but also in the unchallenged power of the mandal members over the area's territories and its people.

The past was continually evoked in the service of assuaging the mandal's present ignominy, including its divided membership, flagging strength and lackadaisical activities. Without doubt, the pain of the current lack of eki and the substandard quality of the mandal's programs could derive partial comfort via a glorious past. Through the performance of their talk, mandal members attempted to restore the mandal's current decrepitude in its heady days of superior performance. The bold presence of eki and fame in the past clearly referenced their absence in the present time (like in Vinit and Kiran's laments) and hence were recuperative.

308

In an identical fashion, the subtext of mandal members' unabashed adoration of the earlier members' bravado and their sheer dominance of Moti Peth suggested to me an attempt to recuperate the lack of the former's ability to invoke similar fear in other men within their locality in the present. But on closer examination of their talk, I realized that these enthusiastic tales of mandal members' power and dominance in the past refused to yield a corresponding reference in the present, like it did in case of eki or the mandal's fame. By articulating these tales primarily through a celebratory frame, rather than a lamenting one, the mandal members effectively precluded the possibility of establishing a connection between these narratives and a present lack. While the decline of eki and the mandal's fame were relatively easier to name and condemn, the precise naming of the absence of fear-inspiring control and dominance had inevitable implications for their own sense of masculinity, and hence understandably so, was *rendered silent*.

Fragile selves

What was sought to be kept unstated by the mandal members was articulated, however, with an easy nonchalance by some of the women in the galli, revealing the nature of the divide between the gendered worlds in the vasti. Thus, while the recounting of the past glory did not yield a referent in the present for the mandal members, for the women, an outright comparison between the past and the present was the easiest mode to articulate how they processed the mandal's contemporary state of affairs.

This struck home during my interview with Prasad, in the tiny ten square feet room, where he stayed with his parents. Prasad was a senior member of the mandal, now no longer

involved as intensely with the mandal activities. We sat on a single bed which filled the length of the room and talked, while his mother sat on the floor and cooked the day's meal. As we talked, I could see her knead the dough in a steel plate, from the corner of my eye. By the time I finished my conversation with Prasad, she was done too and on her insistence I stayed back for a quick bite of roti and aubergine seasoned with peanuts.

Taking a cue from my conversation with Prasad about his experiences in the mandal and the vasti, his mother described her own days in the galli and of the glory of the older days in the mandal.

> "*Aadhi mandal nehmi 'line'nila asaycha, aata kahich naahi asa.Ithlya ithe netat, tithech budavtat!*"(Earlier our mandal always participated in the line, now, nothing of that sort. They just take the idol to a nearby canal and drown it there itself!)[9]

As she said the last line, she picked up an imaginary small idol of Ganpati, swung to her side and brought it down swiftly, as if drowning the idol in a small tub. Considering the fact that the Siddhartha mandal idol was five feet tall and needed to be held by at least ten young men, to be able to set it afloat in the river, Prasad's mother's gesture hinted at her unmistakable sense of contempt at the ordinariness and smallness of the act as performed by the contemporary mandal. Prasad stood next to her and watched.

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[9]*Line*is a very specific reference in the context of the Ganesh festival in Pune. On the last day of the festival the idol of the deity has to be ceremoniously immersed in water to signal the end of the festival. On this day, all the major mandals in the city line up in a procession which travels through the arterial street of the city towards the Mula river, watched by millions of onlookers. Being the first city which started public celebration of Ganesh festival, the procession of Pune mandals is steeped in tradition and constitutes one of the biggest milestones in the city's cultural landscape. For smaller mandals like Siddhartha mandal, participating in the "line" is a matter of great pride and prestige, reflecting their stature as a mandal which can muster the necessary resources and strength to participate in the spectacle that the main procession is, with major mandals in the city, some of them more than 100 years old.

Reminiscing about Pandurang Shelar and his humility and simultaneous strict disciplining of the women in the vasti, she remembered how no woman in the vasti could stand in front of him and meet his eye.

> "*Mulinna baykanna taap hoti, koni aaplya ikde aala tari nazar var karun tyanchyakade baghu shakat nhavta!Aata kay, muli chara chara boltaat!*" (Young girls and women were disciplined well then, even if an outsider came, they wouldn't dare to look at them. And now, young girls speak up without a care or fear!).

In her younger days, if she stepped out in the galli late in the night to look for her husband, who was often drunk, Pandurang Shelar would immediately send her inside and would *himself* set out to look for him, she mentioned, not without a hint of pride. For Prasad's mother, the decline of the mandal and its utter failure to perform was indistinguishable from the overall decline of a patriarchal control exercised over women in the vasti, a neat alignment of mandal with masculine attributes. But even today if she stepped out to see what is happening outside, she added, Prasad told her to get inside. Her damning judgment of the young men in the vasti, through her comments on the mandal and control over women, however, was careful in underlining her own son's intact masculine control that she claimed to experience even today.

Participation of the mandal in the "line" was a prominent marker of its performance, as I discovered in a casual chat with Preeti, Kartik's elder sister. The ten days of Ganesh festival were incredibly busy for Preeti, who used to string flowers for the entire duration of the festival, to be sold to a wholesale flower merchant in the neighboring Peth. Preeti was stringing tuberose and rose petals in venis, with rhythmic, seasoned movements, when I asked her whether she had seen Siddhartha mandal in the main procession ever. Preeti looked up to me, continuing her veni-making with unchanged precision, and smirked,

311

"*Aapli mula bhitri aahet. Thoda bolle ki line madhun Ganpati parat aanla!*" (Our boys are timid. Some other mandal members said something to them [in a minor scuffle] and they just got the Ganpati back from the "line!").

Prompting laughter from both of us, the lines were delivered with a mixture of sarcasm and amusement, conveying a sense that all it took was a minor spat with another mandal for our boys to promptly return back, when they had participated in the line a few years ago.

As I was soon discovered, undisguised contempt was the most prominent mode in which women characterized the current mandal in the vasti."*Arrey, alshiet, alshi, ek numberchi!!*"(Lazy! They are all lazy, of the highest order!!). Madhu snickered while saying this aggressively, in a raised voice, explaining why she thought the mandal could not match up to the performance of the earlier years. I was interviewing Madhu and her twelve-year old daughter, Anita on the tiny balcony of their newly built concrete house in the galli. For the mother and daughter duo, the lack of moral responsibility of the mandal was best embodied by its members' attitudes towards the "pure" space of the mandir in the galli. Their list of irresponsible acts was long: mandal members hardly ever cleaned the mandir, they consumed alcohol and meat before hanging out in the mandir, they sat there and gambled, they spat right in front of the mandir and several such defiling acts.

Madhu was outright angry when she claimed that the mandal men hung out in the mandir, primarily because the mandir offered them a good vantage point from where to keep a strict watch on the women in the galli and to follow their movements when the latter stepped out of their houses. She was willing to bend her standards of morality provided the vasti benefitted from the mandal's programs. Thus even though the president of the mandal from a few years ago was corrupt and a drunk, she emphasized his sincerity and hard work in ensuring that all the

312

programs were organized efficiently in the mandal.

Through the duration of my fieldwork however, it was rare for me to see women, especially younger women in the vasti expressing their opinions about the mandal or its members explicitly, let alone express them in front of the members themselves.[10] In that sense, it is difficult to gauge the extent to which women's explicit judgments influenced how mandal members looked at themselves and their performances. Women's opinions and judgments, explicit or implicit, might be expressed within the space of their domestic relationships with mandal members; however because I did not focus on men's domestic spaces and their relationships with women and other men within these spaces, it is beyond the purview of this ethnography to comment decisively on this aspect.

What then constitutes the rationale for including the above vignettes in this analysis? The sheer discrepancy between the perceptions of men and women in the vasti about the mandal and men's roles in it begs deeper examination. To me, it suggests the almost heartbreaking fragility of the process of building of gendered selves that the mandal members engaged in, which could be lain bare with brutal ease. Values of morality, hard work and efficiency in organization, all laboriously valorized by men in their portrayals of themselves as mandal workers, were easily dismissed by the critical audience of women, who viewed them as immoral, lazy, ineffective and even timid.

The manhood of mandal members, seemed to be poised uncertainly between the opposing expectations represented by Prasad's mother and Madhu's angry accusation. Damned

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[10] Prasad's mother though, did not mince her unkind words about the mandal in front of her son, but took care to end her criticism with her validation of her son's masculine agency.

for having lost its former controlling edge from one side and resented for excessive patriarchal control from the other, these instances bring to the fore the fundamental instability of the project of moral masculinity undertaken on the site of the mandal, driven by a continual need of reinforcement and protection of its boundaries from being breached by threats of their perceived failures.

Mandal as an evaluative space

Ethnographic explorations of male-male relations illustrate how processes of competition and evaluation shape formations of masculinity in spaces of all-male audience. For instance, Herzfeld (1985) focuses on the centrality of "performative excellence" of manhood in a Cretan mountain village in Greece; card games, consumption of meat and alcohol, and strategically raiding other men's flocks of sheep were the major arenas where the men in this village showcased their excellence and expertise in an idiom which prioritized "being *good at* being a man" rather than "being a good man" (16) thus laying symbolic claim to a robust manhood.

In his investigation of the construction of hegemonic masculinity in Pardais, a village in southern Portugal, de Almeida (1996) locates the village café as, "the main stage of masculine sociability" (88), in a context where domesticity and loneliness are regarded not just as anti-social, but also as an indicator of a compromised manliness (ibid). de Almeida (1996) marks out ethnographically the competitive exchanges and etiquettes that underlay the easy sociability between men in the café, the performance of which determined the index of masculinity of its patrons. Competition among café goers involved feminizing other men through physical gestures, jokes or monetary show; similarly, quick wit, mastery over linguistic metaphors and an

314

ability to recite poems and to retort with smart repartees were the valued criteria along which to claim a manly selfhood in the café (91-3).

Along similar lines, the social space of the mandal served as a crucial evaluative terrain for its members, where they judged and in turn were judged for their performance on the masculinized discourses of madat, morality and eki. The sharp fall in the mandal's stature in the current times had heightened this evaluative potential, as the mandal members' acts became amenable to being judged as contributing to or attempting to prevent the sliding of mandal's status.

There were never any attempts to deny the mandal's deteriorating stature in Moti Peth, and most members articulated and condemned this development without any reservations. Shifting the responsibility for this development from a collective to an individual level however, was a difficult prospect, and understandably so; several mandal members framed the decline in a way which, through its focus on other members' acts, effaced their own possible agency in perpetuating this situation. These comparisons not only rendered them non-culpable in the mandal's decay, but also constituted opportunities for mandal members to construct a principled, hard-working self, often martyred in the service of the mandal.

The implications of mandal as an evaluative register for the process of gendered self-making among the young men in the vasti cannot be overemphasized. In their emphatic efforts to demonstrate their successful upholding of the masculinized values underlying the mandal (often in comparison to the failure of others to do the same), they simultaneously referenced and shaped the contours of a masculine ideal in the galli. For instance, by connecting the inexperience of the younger members (non-appearance of a mustache or shifting out of the

315

locality out of fear) with "incomplete masculinity" (Chopra 2004), Kiran highlighted his experience, risk-taking and principled stance as an evidence of his own mature masculinity.

Perhaps the above articulations between the mandal's ethos of madat, eki and friendship among men, a sense of locality and a masculine gendered self are best illustrated through focusing on concrete instances through which they impacted the everyday lives of the mandal members. In the following section, I sketch a portrait of a mandal member and his tenuous engagement with mandal dynamics in an attempt to highlight how it constituted his sense of worth as a (masculine) mandal member and simultaneously pegged him firmly to the material and social space of the vasti.

III

Seeking Respect, Seeking Friendship: The Mandal President's Story

My first introduction to Naresh is hard to forget, lodged in the remarkable ringtone which greeted me when I called him on a Sunday afternoon in early 2011. I had been told to contact Naresh, who was then the president of Siddhartha mandal, in order to explore the possibility of conducting my fieldwork with the mandal. On dialing his number, the deep baritone voice of Bollywood superstar, Amitabh Bachhan spoke to me in Hindi with an unmistakably menacing authority, heightened by effective pauses during the dialogue,

> "*Mujhe jo sahi lagta hain main karta hoon…woh chahe bhagwan ke khilaaf ho… samaaj ke khilaaf ho…pulis, kanoon…ya phir…poori system ke khilaaf kyon na ho*"(I do what I feel is right. Even if it goes against God, the society, police, the law, or even against the entire system).

Barely had the dialogue ended than the tense ring tone exploded into apocalyptic music followed by a chorus of male singers repeating the word "Govinda Govinda"rapidly, like a chant.[11] It was a riveting number, the title song and a famous dialogue of the 2010 Bollywood film, "*Sarkar*,"based loosely upon the life of the leader of the chauvinistic Hindu right wing party, Shiv Sena.[12] As the song continued to play, I could not escape the inevitable class-driven image that quickly consolidated in my head about the young man on the other end of the line, who wished his callers to listen to *Sarkar* dialogues before talking to him: macho, arrogant, reticent.

I found out that I was right about the macho-ness and the reticence. Standing at 5'8, Naresh was not very tall; but his muscular physique testified to his job at the time as a gym coach. He wore a close-fitting pair of jeans and a body- hugging shirt, which amply outlined his broad shoulders and chest. A solid, half inch broad, flat gold chain rested around his neck, starkly standing out against his dark complexion. A few months later he had started wearing small gold studs in his ears, which also stood out in a similar fashion. His gelled hair was combed slickly, a few strands of red and brown providing the evidence of highlights done a while ago. He spoke little in our initial few encounters, in a soft voice, sometimes breaking into a smile which shaped his mouth into a distinct rectangle.

Naresh's family was probably better off than most families in the vasti, with his parents, Sunita mami and Kishor mama, holding permanent jobs with Pune Municipal Corporation, as a

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[11]Govinda is another name for Lord Krishna.

[12]*Sarkar* literally means "state" or"government" in Hindi and Marathi. It also refers to a benevolent lord in a feudal context. The movie was based upon the life of Bal Thakeray, the militant, chauvinistic leader of Shiv Sena, who was famous for his hate speeches against Muslims and the Congress party. Shiv Sena's regime in the state of Maharashtra was sustained by a mixture of xenophobic, anti-Muslim and chauvinistic rhetoric and arm-twisting tactics of its party cadre, most of whom were lower-middle class Maharashtrian young men. For an elaborate account of the *modus operandi* of the Shiv Sena, see Hansen (2001,1999).

317

sweeper and a tax officer respectively. The eldest of three brothers, he seemed to have inherited none of his mother's wicked sense of humor or her flamboyant personality. Though he had taken over as the mandal's president one year ago, his status as the mandal's president was hardly ever explicit for me in the first few weeks of my fieldwork.

I remember a scene three weeks into my fieldwork, when I was still extremely awkward and self-conscious in my attempts to interact with the mandal members, clueless regarding the negotiation of my middle-class ness in the hyper-gendered space of the vasti. It was a motley group of mandal members, the younger, enthusiastic ones, the current organizing committee members and me, our conversation mostly staccato and peppered with several silences. Naresh then signaled his friends that they should go for tea and I took a cue and started saying my goodbyes, in my eager attempt to respect their space of interaction. However, Naresh paused and then asked me, "*Tumhi yenaar ka madam? Ithech aahe jawal*"(Will you also come, Madam? It's right here).

This was unexpectedly quick, I thought excitedly. Turning to the younger members, unthinkingly I invited them along as well. Satya and Shailu even got up and then as if belatedly remembering something, shot a quick glance towards Naresh. "*Tyanna asu det. Apan jaaun yeu*" (Let them be. We will go), Naresh said quietly without looking at Satya and Shailu. I got the feeling that the scene began to flow smoothly again, after a quick, unnecessary flutter.

Irrespective of what deliberations had occurred before inviting me for tea, it was Naresh who had the prerogative of extending the invitation to me, when he thought it was appropriate. I remain grateful to his offer that evening, which came from his understanding that I wanted access to that space, while simultaneously perceptively realizing that it was impossible for me to

318

request it, at that point in my fieldwork. In hindsight, this scene for me is emblematic of Naresh's leadership in the mandal. His leadership was marked by his undeniable presence; one which was not explicit, but always underplayed or even masked. On occasions like Ganesh Janma or Ganesh festival though, he did don his formal role more explicitly, welcoming members of other mandals, felicitating them with a coconut, taking charge of fund-raising activities and so on.

I complete this portrait drawing partially from material that would qualify as epilogue for this dissertation. Eighteen months after my fieldwork ended, when I was on a brief holiday at home, I visited the vasti, excited at the prospect of meeting everyone again. It was impossible to not notice the radically altered energy in the galli, from when I had last been there. Hanging out was lackadaisical at best and the galli was uncannily deserted by 8.30 p.m. I met Naresh on my second visit to the vasti, taken aback by how much weight he had lost. The fitting jeans, fitting shirt, gold chain remained constant though. He asked me if I would mind going to a tea shop outside Moti Peth; "*I don't go to Sadanand anymore,*" he said, as he kick-started his bike, looking over his shoulder to see if I had climbed up on to the bike.

On our way to the other tea shop Naresh explained the recent events in the galli, speaking rapidly and constantly looking sideways and tilting his head backwards as he drove, to make himself heard to me above the evening traffic's incessant honking. He mentioned that the year that I conducted my fieldwork in the mandal was exceptional as compared to earlier years, because of his proactive role in ensuring that all the celebrations were held regularly and because of the amount of donations that he had managed to garner through his city-wide networks and contacts. This was a first, since Naresh (unlike several other mandal members) had never talked about himself in a laudatory fashion to me before.

He went on to elaborate how ever since he had become the mandal's president, he had always intervened in conflicts that his friends had with those outside the vasti, in the process antagonizing a lot of outside elements, for the sake of his friends. Consequently he and his brothers were "hit-listed" by some dangerous gangs from Ranewadi and Jawaharnagar, the two notorious neighborhoods on the edge of Moti Peth. On Christmas day, about twenty five young men walked into the galli, armed with *ghodas* and *kattas* (country revolvers) in a bid to finish him off, he claimed.

> "At this time no one in the galli stepped out to protect me. Only Kartik and his mother were around. My mother had never stopped me from getting into fights for these boys, but when my time came, all these other women protected their sons and took them inside the house and locked the door. Some boys just went out of town for three days!"

His parents were terrified, his wife, now pregnant with their second child, had started crying. As we continued to weave in and out of the evening traffic, I could sense Naresh's raised voice, though I was unable to see his face. Luckily he had managed to escape unhurt by taking the lesser known, narrow alleyways in the labyrinths of Moti Peth.

> "*Aaplya ithe aaplyala mula aali ghari marayla mhanje ijjaticha bhaji palach jhala na*" (Boys from outside could come inside my own house to kill me. My respect (*ijjat*) was reduced to zilch!)[13]

Things had changed dramatically after that, Naresh continued. His younger brother, Arun, unable to articulate his anger at this betrayal by the galli, had hurled the mandal-owned television set in the mandir on to the floor crashing it to bits. Sunita mami had ranted angrily standing right in the middle of the galli, accusing everyone of not supporting her son when he

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[13] The statement"*ijjaticha bhaji palach jhala na*" would literally translate as "My honor/ respect has been reduced to (something as frail and worthless as) a bunch of leafy greens, isn't it."

needed it the most. Within two days of this incident, the Sathe family had moved from the galli to a small flat that they had bought several years ago in a neighborhood away from the central part of the city.

It was only his network of friends (and some powerful men) outside the vasti which afforded him some protection during the days immediately following the assault on him. He had built this network while working in several gymnasiums across the city and befriending the regulars there. Well, thank god for these friends at least, I said, though it suddenly sounded tepid to my own ears. "*Baherche aahet, pan gharchech madat karat nahit, tar kay fayda*" (These outside friends are of course around, but what is the point if your own [friends] do not help you), Naresh retorted instantly, before finishing his tea in one large gulp. He said that just like other mandal members, he also should have never put himself out there for the mandal boys; this incident made him feel like he had been used by the mandal boys, who he had mistakenly thought were his friends. But doesn't he miss being in Moti Peth, in the galli, I asked him. "It doesn't matter anymore," Naresh replied, "being in the galli itself is so distressing for me now."

Through my two week- long visit though, Naresh and his brothers continued to visit the vasti every day, without fail; "*Flat madhe rahun karmat nahi na aaplyala*!" (We don't know what to do sitting in an apartment!), was what Naresh had said, the characteristic rectangular smile spreading across his face.

IV

Lessons from the Mandal: The 'Public' Man

"Loss!A complete loss!!" I was startled at Anya's unequivocal reply to my question of what he had learned by working in the mandal. He clarified for me:

> "It is complete waste of time working hard in a mandal which has neither the income nor a name. After working in the mandal I have learned that one can earn some fame or help others only in a mandal which itself is famous and has decent income"

Implied in this critical view was Anya's expectation of the mandal as a route to earn recognition for oneself while simultaneously extending madat. It drew my attention to the notion of the mandal as a vital channel of visibility for these young men, in the context of the lack of avenues where they could make themselves visible to the world outside the galli in order to seek its validation. Vinit further strengthened this connection, when I asked him what his lessons from the mandal were:

> "*Mandalachya madhyamaatun samor olakh hote aapli, olakh houn thodasa samaaj karya hi karta yeta, ani thodese aadve lok ani changle lok he pan tya mandalatun shikayla milta. Samorchyavar aapli chaap kashi takaychi te kalta mandalatun, ti chaap pan swatahun nahi takaychi, ti aapoaap padli pahije*" (It is through the mandal that one gets recognition outside, through this recognition one can also serve the society and learn to deal with all sorts of people, good or bad. Mandal teaches you how to create a lasting impression on the other person; this however, cannot be engineered, but the other person has to be impressed by your deeds).

The membership of the mandal by default conferred this opportunity for visibility for its members. But there was an important caveat: merely membership was not enough. Not only did the mandal have to be famous itself, the members themselves had to be proactive, in order to ensure that their deeds spoke out loud. According to Kiran, it was only the "minded" boys and

men, who can utilise the opportunity presented by the mandal to learn myriad new things. Thus only those who were smart and applied their minds to their tasks in the mandal learnt all the nuances of organizing a festival, came to know about formal procedures (like seeking police permission before conducting any public celebration), and its economic management. Working in the mandal might also give you the confidence of public speaking, an asset if you are eyeing entry into politics, Kiran added.

For the members, lessons from working in the mandal were inevitably oriented towards acquiring skills of negotiating the outside world, which reinforced for the old and new members alike, their expected gendered roles and realms. Rama was quick to elaborate upon the education that he received in the mandal for the last two years,

> "*Mandal madhe kaam kelyane kalta ki aapan kunabarobar kasa rahaycha, kay bolaycha, kuthli loka kashi aahet, tyanchya barobar kasa rahaycha, tashi thodi far olakh hoti, baaher firtana kunashi kasa bolaycha, te mulanbarobar rahun jara shikta yeta*"(By being together with the boys you understand who you should hang out with, how you should talk to others outside, how to recognize all kinds of people accurately. It also helps you to network).

This astute judgment of people, ways to deal with them and a grasp on the minutiae of how things are done constituted a form of knowledge which was particularly valued in the business of "getting by" for this group of young men.[14] In their understanding of what they learned from the mandal, members were articulating the centrality of this knowledge in their social worlds and by extension also the centrality of the mandal as the site of acquiring this knowledge.

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[14] See"urban infra-power" as elaborated by Hansen and Verkaaik (2009) in the earlier chapter. Research on urban informality (Roy 2011; Bayat 2000) and on post-colonial cities (Chandoke 1991) also stress how these informal networks based upon kin or patronage relations are a crucial resource in the lives of the urban poor in the contemporary neoliberal context of the global South.

Like Anya, several current functionaries of the mandal spoke about lessons from the

mandal in a critical tone. For them, it was their bad experiences in the mandal which in itself had

taught them the hard lessons in dealing with human foibles of selfishness, dishonesty, and

betrayal. Recall Kartik's resigned admission of no longer expecting credit for his hard work in

the mandal or Rama's lament about others unethically taking away credit from him. Sonu, a

younger member, was rather pragmatic about his learnings,

> "*Shikayla he milala ki life madhe na saglya prakarchi loka miltaat. Koni fayda karun ghenara asto ani…koni fayda kasa karaycha he shikavnara asto*" (You get to learn that there are all sorts [of people] that you come across in life. Some exploit you for their gains, while some teach you how to exploit others for your own profit).

Interestingly, Vinit claimed that the dynamics in the mandal taught him the complexity of similar

decision making bodies at a higher scale,

> "*Jevha baithak baste mandalachi, tyamadhe ekmekanmadhle vaad, charcha, tyatun shikayla milta ki aapan evdhyashya vastit rahun…he karto, mag aaplya mahanagar paliket kay challa asal, tyanantar Mumbaichya vidhaan bhavanamadhe kay chalu asal, tyanantar mag Dilli madhe kay asal…he fakta aata vichaar karu shakto*"(We see how much conflict and discussion happens in the mandal meetings of such a small vasti, so one can then imagine what must be happening in the city municipal corporation, in the Vidhaan Sabha [State Legislative Assembly] in Mumbai, and in Delhi [Parliament of India]).

For Vinit, the mandal represented the lowest rung of a hierarchical chain of rational, decision-

making domains, a microcosm of the socio-political dynamics that characterized the city, state

and nation's governing entities.

The ideal of manhood celebrated in the mandal was not merely an agglomeration of the

moral attributes related to madat, eki and friendship; this section suggests that the mandal

represented to the members a framework which routed the experience of their masculine selves

through their engagement with the public domain. In claiming that male gendered identities in the mandal are articulated to the public domain, I do not want to uncritically bypass what Gutmann (1996) terms as one of feminist anthropology's "hoary debates" (147): "the man for the public, woman for the domestic/ private sphere" analogy. Basing the gendered division of spheres in women's biology, Ortner (1974) explicated this association: women's reproductive role restricts them to the domestic sphere, while men, free of this role, monopolize the realm of the public and wider social activities. This contention was widely critiqued on the grounds that this dichotomous view of gender might naturalize as inherent the very differences that feminist theorizing was attempting to denaturalize; ethnographic evidence demonstrated that gendered roles, family structures and households were organized in ways which did not conform to the public-domestic sphere model (Yanagisako 1979; Collier and Yanagisako 1987).

It is unquestionable that there is a continuing need to explore how men's subjectivities are molded by their engagement with the domestic and inversely, how work-spaces might influence women's gendered selves. However, in the context of starkly gender-segregated arenas, wherein asymmetrical gender relations are largely hegemonic, I believe that it is equally crucial to explicate how this hegemony (reflected in the public/domestic division) is constructed, maintained or subverted through material and discursive practices, precisely to expose its contingent, essentially political nature. The relevant question to investigate for this research then, revolves around the processes through which the mandal enables its members to connect their gendered identities to the domain of the public, so that the "masculine" and the realm of the "public" become mutually constitutive categories.

Recall here the historical antecedents of mandal as elaborated in the previous chapter, which has already demonstrated how the very notion of a "public" in colonial and post-colonial India has been imbued with masculine terms, in the process transforming the mandal itself into a masculine (as opposed to an all-male) social space. In spatial terms as well, these two chapters on the mandal testify to the process through which the world of the mandal was firmly established in the realm of the "outside:" achieved through the mandal's material presence marked in the galli, the nature of its activities (organizing celebrations and madat) and the demands of sociality that result from these activities (friendship circles, networks, a certain kind of mastery over the city and galli spaces). Similarly earlier sections of this chapter have delineated how acts of madat and organizing and networking which underlay the mandal were masculinized on account of a mode of sociality, physical mobility and engagement with the city's spaces which could be accessed only by the men in the vasti.

Visibility to the world outside of the galli and a pragmatic wisdom to deal with the vicissitudes of this realm were hence not just valued lessons imbibed in the mandal for many members; they also were the crucial indices which signaled to the members their own abilities of negotiation, as expected of men. As the potential upholders of the moral discourse of madat and eki, the mandal allowed its members to see themselves as playing a significant role in the regulation of the social life of the vasti, ensuring that that vasti's needs of arbitration, recreation and support were met, distinct from the intimate site of the family, where they might (or might not yet) fulfill similar roles.

This last point finds resonance in Dasgupta's (2002) work on neighborhood clubs in Kolkata, which function through idioms identical to those in a mandal. Dasgupta also points

towards the regulatory function performed by the members of the club, geared towards

consolidating their masculinityin the context of the neighborhood. Club members arbitrated in

local conflicts, helped the neighbors during floods, organized competitions for children in the

neighborhood and shut down gambling dens in the area, thus playing a decisive role in defining

the contours of public morality from a distinctively male vantage point, and establishing their

own centrality in conducting the flow of everyday life in the neighborhood (123). The

recognition of these acts of public regulation as a responsibility they shared with other male

members of the mandal/ club established for the mandal and club members alike the alignment

of their gendered identity with the public realm.

V

Articulating Mandal to Masculinity

The ethnographic data presented above is a rich and layered testimony of the place that

the mandal occupies in the social and affective landscape of its young male members. In this

concluding section of the chapter, I attempt to make explicit the modes through which mandal

shapes the experience and performance of the gendered identity of its members. The mandal, its

structure and its practices overlaps strongly with ethnographic explorations of all-male spaces

and constructions of masculine identity therein.

Male gendered selves in the vasti: of vulnerability and respect

I begin by referring to anthropological literature which investigates multiple realms of men's social lives including work, leisure, education and religious engagement, paying special attention to the ways in which men's practices in conjunction with hegemonic gendered, class and ethnic discourses construct, reproduce or subvert masculine identities. I have already highlighted research by Herzfeld (1985) and de Almeida (1996) in this context; I present below a brief review in which to ground my observations about masculinity and mandal in this concluding section.

Willis' (1977)brilliant sociological study of the counter-school culture in Britain, conducted long before masculinity became a major theme of academic interest, continues to be relevant for its astute portrayal of intertwining of class and gendered identity in reproducing working class culture in a capitalist context. The research, conducted in an archetypical industrial British town, focuses on the acts of working class male adolescents as they aggressively construct a counter-school culture which sets them apart as "lads" from the conformist "ear'oles," through truancy, hostile opposition to and subversion of authority represented by the school, active violence, preying humor and through explicitly racist and sexist modes of talk and behavior.

Willis (1977) suggests that the lads' culture predisposes them towards a certain imagination of work and future. This imagination actively rejects mental labor, associated with the hegemonic authority of school, official judgments on the lads' lack of merit and with the passive conformity of the "ear'oles." On the other hand, the lads celebrate, glorify and aspire to physical laboring, which expresses to themselves their aggressiveness, street-smart, real world

skills and an irreverence to authority, experienced as their masculine selves (89-105). The lads'
masculine identity in this context is thus indistinguishable from their working class location and
from the imperative to recuperate a sense of self-value within the hegemony of capitalist
relations of production.

The enmeshment of the axes of class and masculine identity is also the subject of
Ramaswami's (2006) ethnography, conducted in a radically different space and time of a steel
polishing factory in Okhla, New Delhi, in the first decade of the 21st century. Ramaswami
elaborates upon the male workers' fertile repertoire of ribald, sexualized and non-sexualized
humor (*mazaak*), enacted in the punishing work environment of the polishing factory, as an
expression of and simultaneously constitutive of the workers' fraught sense of manhood.
Through this embodied and verbal humor, *mehnat*, (diligent, back-breaking hard work) was
imbued with a masculine quality, as opposed to what they perceived to be homosexualized
behavior of *chamchas*, i.e. lackeys of the factory management, who told on their co-workers,
were insincere and disrupted workers' solidarity against the repressive management (222-3).

However, Ramaswami demonstrates how this alignment of masculinity (*mardaangi*) with
mehnat and rewards was constantly threatened in the workers' experience owing to harsh
conditions of work which made even the hardiest of the workers physically vulnerable and owing
to an extracting management who refused to give in to workers' demands. Ramaswami (2006)
also locates the disturbingly misogynist and othering aspects of the workers' humor as
articulations of the latter's anxieties borne out of their sheer inability to fulfill the *mardaangi*
ideal of being the sole provider of the family in the context of their poverty and precarious work
conditions (225-6).

The autobiographical narrative provided by Shire (1994) of growing up in rural area of post-colonial Zimbabwe, generically known as Shona, stresses the centrality of men's spaces (and women's spaces) as key domains through which men are constructed as masculine. Shire (1994) describes in detail his time spent in *dare*, an exclusive male space, largely inaccessible for women of the household or the clan, where younger men apprenticed under the older ones, in acquiring modes of being a man. Demonstration of linguistic prowess, ability to hold forth and clever manipulation of metaphor and proverbs were celebrated as manly, and boys, irrespective of their age, were taken seriously if they were able to voice their opinions without fear (149). On the other hand, Shire describes the demotion of those who spilled the *dare* gossip outside to performance of womanly chores.

Importantly, Shire (1994) elaborates upon the transformations in Shona men's gendered identities in the wake of their increasing urban migration in post-colonial Zimbabwe, where stripped of their masculinity identified hitherto with totemic clans, men developed an extremely misogynist and macho sense of manhood, legitimizing violence against women in male spaces (151-2).

While it is true that in the context of a gender-segregated society, membership of an exclusively male institution inevitably assumes the masculine identity of those deemed fit to be included in it, the above instances also serve to challenge the assumed seamlessness of this process. They caution us to the fact that these spaces might make available the possibility of achieving a masculine status for its members, but that this achievement is neither guaranteed nor permanent. I attempt to locate the mandal's discourse and practices as similarly embodying the

site for its members to realize and perform their gendered selves, simultaneously highlighting the uncertainty of this realization and the complexity of this process.

The mandal's discourse, centered on the moral weight of the twin values of madat and eki, carried unmistakable class and caste referents for the mandal members, and indeed for the vasti. As the performance of the mandal itself became an index of the quality of vasti's social relationships, the values constituting the mandal were transformed into a site of contest and competition enacted between an all-male audience, evocative of the shop floor competition over mehnat and mazaak analyzed by Ramaswami (2006) or the coffee houses elaborated in Herzfeld (1985) and de Almeida (1996). Based upon their evaluations of their own and others' performances of eki and madat, members established for themselves a loose hierarchy of men who are *better* friends, who are *more* moral, principled, loyal and hardworking as opposed to those who are immature, disloyal, lacking courage and integrity. In competing for the execution of these values and simultaneously drawing upon the existent gendered discourses in their larger context, mandal members were defining for themselves the outline of an ideal manhood.

However, the mandal was not merely an avenue *par excellence* to realize and perform a gendered self; it also represented a fraught space where this sense of gendered self might be disrupted for the men participating in it. Thus while individually several members were able to distance themselves from the blame of disrupting unity of the mandal and causing its decline, the mandal's recent history was literally strewn with undeniable failures of its members to live up to its ideals of madat, eki and friendship. The mandal's past provided some possibility for recuperating a sense of pride through its tales of unity and fame; but this very aspect of the mandal threatened to lay bare the members' current state of emasculation. Vasti women's

unflattering opinions about the mandal members' efficiency and sincerity in running the mandal represented this threat even more poignantly. The masculine identity constructed on the site of the mandal hardly went unchallenged, a constant vulnerability licking at its edges, threatening to unravel its tightly woven narrative.

It is significant at this juncture to pause a bit: notwithstanding the unmistakable masculine attributes that are represented, evaluated and performed on the site of the mandal, it is worth highlighting that mandal members' experiences of successful performance, of failure and of loss were narrated primarily through value-laden acts of friendship and morality. These acts were enacted in the social and material space of the vasti, *not* through an explicit emphasis on a "manly" self. The point I want to emphasize here is that masculinity is not a thing; a neatly packaged set of prescribed rules and expectations which lead to an experience and status of manliness. In the context of the mandal members, what we, for the purpose of analytical convenience call masculinity, in fact is not distinct from a messy, complicated mix. A mix which consists of experiential modes of (failed) responsibility (of maintaining eki, of performing friendship, of doing one's duty to the vasti etc.) and/ or of (failed) morality (of being a good friend, of being honest, of extending madat), which, as I have shown, are themselves entrenched in distinct caste, gender, place and class co-ordinates of Moti Peth. Notwithstanding its fragility and constantly faced with the danger of failure and disruption, I contend that men's gendered selfhoods in the vasti continued to rely on mandal's celebrated moral ideals, drawing valuable sense of self-worth as protectors and keepers of mandal'sand vasti's social and moral lives.

Arbitrating and negotiating vasti's social dynamics instilled into the young men's lives a gratifying sense of purpose and dignity, expressed poignantly by Prasad, a senior mandal

332

member, in his response to my question about what he thought he had gained by working in the mandal. In my initial months of fieldwork I had felt quite intimidated by Prasad: standing at six feet, he easily towered above most of the men in the vasti walking with an easy, lumbering gait. His thick set face was covered with carefully trimmed, yet luxuriant beard. Healways wore a vermillion mark in the shape of a crescent moon in the middle of his forehead, reminiscent of the iconic figure of the seventeenth century Maratha warrior king, Shivaji. Sometime around the end of my fieldwork his mother casually told me that he had been unemployed for almost two years now. While responding to my question, Prasad alluded to his unemployment, his hyper-masculine comportment suddenly incongruous with the tentative language in which he haltingly talked about his feelings of inadequacy,

> "*Jari mi kuthlya changlya nokri-dhandyat nasal, kiva prapanchamadhe maajha ek motha haatbhar haye ki nahi to mala…khant aahe ki mi job la kuthetari haye ki nahi, pan mi kahitari changla shikun mi kahitari changla ghadavto. Te vadatna shiknyasarkha asta, mi te pahilela aahe. Tyachyamule te aaj mi kuthlya vadala kasa valan deun aapan te kasa mitwaycha, tyachatna maarg kadhun pratyekala tyacha vichaar kasa pathvun dyaycha he karu shakto aaj. Tyamule aaj mi kuthetari stand aahe*"(I regret that I do not have a good job/ business, I do not contribute to the family's expenditure, but then [through the mandal] I learn something good and I create something good out of it. I have seen what one can learn from [arbitrating in] conflicts. Today I am able to steer a way out of a conflict in such a fashion that everyone involved is satisfied. That is the reason why I have some "stand" today).

The "standing" in the vasti he derived from his mandal work at least partially alleviated his inadequacy; the creativity of arbitration and the merit of "doing good" a decisive compensation in the absence of some of the most explicit markers of manliness: employment, confidence and financial independence.

Recuperating their masculine identity at the intersection of the moral and the local for the young men however, was never an exercise devoid of ambivalence, as we have seen in their

333

approach towards the underworld gangs or vis-à-vis their failure in the realm of madat and eki. As I show in the following chapter, the opportunities provided by the mandal for the young men to participate in local political brokering foregrounded this ambivalence even more sharply. I highlight the spatialized nature of local political practices and demonstrate how these practices present young men with recuperative possibilities and moral dilemmas, while simultaneously strengthening their rootedness in the galli.

Chapter VI

Electoral Politics, Urban Space and Masculinity: A View from Below

In October, on the third evening of the nine-day Navratri festival dedicated to Goddess Durga, Kamla Shinde was invited to perform the *aarti* (worship), at the behest of Kartik, the galli's local MNS cadre. Kamla Shinde was the aspiring candidate from this ward for the upcoming municipal elections[1] from Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), a political party whose fortunes were rising rapidly as a result of its chauvinistic anti-migrant stance and its xenophobic rhetoric.

The glittering idol of Durga, riding a tiger, was placed on a covered raised platform, built at one end of the narrow galliin front of Shelarwaada. Kamla tai, probably in her late 40s, arrived dressed appropriately for the festive occasion, in a chiffon green sari, studded with shiny stones, with matching earrings. Two of her party cadre also joined her. As she was helped on to the raised platform to perform the aarti, Vinit leaned over and gave me a quick introduction to Kamla tai. She was the second wife of a feared Mang don in Moti Peth, who had died a decade ago. I was a bit startled as Vinit alluded to her running a gambling racket. Two minutes later Shirish *mama* joined us and instantly said, "*Aaplyatli nahi ti, Marwadi aahe.*"(She is not one of us, she is Marwadi).

As I was still processing her unusual profile, Kamla tai had finished the aarti and had joined her hands in supplication in front of the Goddess. Vasti members crowded around her as soon as she got off the stage and a couple of chairs were hurriedly brought out for her. Flanked by Suresh nana, the eldest of the Shelar brothers and a couple of other elderly men, Kamla

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[1] Elections to Pune Municipal Corporation were held on February 16, 2012, to elect municipal councilors for a total of 76 administrative wards in the city. In 2011, Maharashtra state legislature had voted to reserve 50% seats in local government bodies for women. In Pune, each administrative ward would be required to vote for a male and a female candidate thus making the total number of councilors in the Municipal Corporation to 152 (State Election Commission, 2011).

taileaned back into her chair, sipped her tea and chatted casually with some elderly women and enquired after their families. Kamla tai then looked at no one in particular and reminisced how she used to walk around with Maruti Shelar as a little girl.

> "*Mi ithech mothi jhale, madam mhantlya peksha, kamle jasta jawalcha vatata…mhanun ithun ubhi rahnaar*"(I grew up here. Calling me by my pet name feels so much more intimate than calling me Madam. That is why I am going to contest from here).

There was an air of easy confidence and familiarity in the way she talked, with a smile on her face. Kamla tai then looked around expectantly and as if on cue Satish bhau burst forth, "*Tumcha saglikade koutuk aahe!*" (Everyone around here admires you!) With a smile pasted on his face, he bowed and pitched his proposal to Kamla tai: the mandal needed a three-storied building to be built, so that the vasti members can have extra space for usage. Shailesh, another senior mandal member, added a smaller demand: the mandal boys would really like to participate in the city's main procession during the Ganesh festival, for which they needed to renew their mandal's license. Since they had not renewed the license for the past several years, they might need the help of someone with influence to achieve this. Kamla tai was eager. She promised she would do all she can to help. In fact she would be ready to go with the mandal members the next day to the local police station to help the former renew their license.

By this time Kamla tai's assistants began to indicate that she should leave. After another bout of energetic banter with the men and women who had gathered there, Kamla tai left, but not before handing over a bunch of booklets with devotional songs dedicated to the Goddess, to be distributed amongst the women in the vasti as a Navratri gift from her party.

"Realistically speaking, what do you think she will give the mandal?" I ask Surendra Shelar and Shailesh, after Kamla tai has left. "Who knows what she will give. But this is the way

in which you can test the electoral candidates. Just to see how far they can go to reassure you."

Surendra Shelar smiled and added, "Between her and Jaysingh Pawar (who was another electoral candidate) we can get the construction of the mandal building sponsored." Little did I know then that this was the first of the series of visits that Kamla tai and several others of her ilk would make to the galli, seeking political support and votes in return for a fantastic array of the proverbial carrots, setting into motion a charged dynamic that was to pervade the galli in the coming months.

The incorporation of poor neighborhoods as vital nodes in local electoral political networks has been accepted as a defining feature of urban politics in post-colonial India, though the contours and implications of the former aspect continue to be subject to vigorous debate (Chatterjee 2004, 2001; Hansen 2001; Wirsing 1976, 1973). In this chapter I focus on the micro-processes through which neighborhoods and political parties establish and nurture mutual networks and navigate the terms of rewards and obligations, not just during the electoral period, but also in the time preceding and following the elections. I demonstrate how these processes are fundamentally mediated by the mandal. I contend that the profoundly spatialized nature of these processes is constitutive of an identity which tightly binds place and location with caste and masculinity for the young men and boys in the galli. As a consequence, these processes fix the vasti and its male residents even more firmly in the spatio-political regime of the city.

At the outset, I find Chatterjee's (2004, 2001) "political society" a useful conceptual tool to frame this chapter. Chatterjee proposes a division between civil society and political society in his characterization of the relationship between the state and poor, marginalized sections of the

population in post-independence India.[2] He argues that in the post-independence period, though the bureaucratic-administrative arm of the Indian state has managed to reach large portions of its poor and marginalized populations via its welfare distribution, this interaction cannot be framed within the state-civil society relationship, given the exclusive nature of civil social institutions in India, limited to a smaller group of legal "citizens" (172-3). Chatterjee (2004, 2001) terms the former terrain as political society, wherein the status of the beneficiaries is not that of law-abiding citizens within the ambit of legality, but of urban poor (like squatters, hawkers, homeless) who mostly have to violate the law in order to survive.

He contends that through the 70s and 80s decades, political society consolidated in the form of an entire infrastructure of paralegal arrangements, tacitly approved by the state, which facilitated the integration of the urban poor in the low-wage labor populations servicing the Indian cities, while providing the urban poor with basic amenities like housing, drinking water, toilet facilities and a host of welfare schemes (Chatterjee 2004: 135-38). The implication of framing this relationship as political society rather than civil society is that the provision of certain facilities or welfare distribution by the state is not a result of demand of legal rights by citizens, but rather as a part of electoral mobilization, fraught with negotiations, calculations and contingencies (ibid).

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[2] Chatterjee's division between civil society and political society has been subjected to considerable academic scrutiny and has been shown to be porous and tenuous through empirical research. (Wood 2012; Coelho and Venkat 2009; Roy 2003). It has to be emphasized that these categories, while helpful, are not mutually exclusive and do not necessarily correspond to a clear cut "middle class- urban poor" division in contemporary urban India, in terms of their political participation. I use this concept *not* to emphasize that the urban poor essentially and exclusively constitute the "political society" in all instances, but primarily to understand the mode through which the urban working class is are articulated to processes of electoral politics in the context of Pune.

This concept finds resonances in recent work on urban poverty in Kolkata by Ananya Roy (2008). While describing the modes of interaction that mold the political regime of the city, Roy draws upon Castells' concept of "urban populism" referring to dynamics in Latin American cities. Urban populism refers to the, "the process of establishing political legitimacy on the basis of a popular mobilization supported by and aimed at the delivery of land, housing and public services." (Castells 1983, as quoted in Roy 2003: 139). For Roy, like Chatterjee, urban populism is a process through which the urban informalized poor are sorted into beneficiaries or non-beneficiaries of arbitrary state largesse; however Roy takes Chatterjee's argument further ahead in stressing that the arbitrary state benefits and protection do not translate into any substantive rights or entitlements that the poor can claim from the state. In fact the precariousness of this arbitrary doling of benefits merely serves to perpetuate for the urban poor, "…a regime of calculated uncertainty and unrequited hope (the hoax of formal citizenship)" (ibid).

Some of the earliest evidence of what can be termed as urban populism in post-Independence India is provided by Wirsing (1973), in his study of the electoral process in the city of Nagpur, in eastern Maharashtra. He describes in detail the variety of strategies that candidates indulge in, in their pursuit of a councillorship in the local municipal government. The range of strategies includes heavy bribery to slum dwellers, material gifts, donations to local voluntary associations , initiating public works , intimidation and last-minute monetary negotiations (197-207). Wirsing, located in his historical moment, interprets this as the evidence of, "…growing political responsibility to popular demands" (212) in the context of a young democracy. However, from the vantage point of contemporary urban India, this is a marker of the consolidation of urban populism or the contours of political society in the culture of electoral politics in post-Independence India.

More recently, Berenschot (2011), in his exploration of everyday mechanisms which sustain communal riots in the western Indian city of Ahmedabad, uncovers for us the deeply embedded politics of patronage amongst the poor neighborhoods of the city. He traces the intricate and intensely local networks of mutuality between municipal councilors, intermediaries, local fixers, state officials and goons which mediate the urban poor's access to state resources and amenities in exchange for electoral support (77-119). Berenschot (2011) argues that it is this web of "dependence on political mediation" (80) which is mobilized during communal flare-ups and which enables local politicians to instigate large scale violence in a short period of time.

This chapter aims to shed light specifically on the spatiality and everydayness of these webs of political patronage in Moti Peth. I demonstrate ethnographically how the mandal'sparticipation in the local political dynamics establishes for its members a strongly gendered, class and caste identity, one which is intrinsically bound to their physical location in the galli in Moti Peth. In the light of the marginalization of the young men in the city's life, participation in political brokering via the mandal holds the key to understanding the ways in which they negotiate their marginal status and situate themselves in the city.

I

Early Beginnings

In the larger scheme of things, the local municipal elections were really the proverbial tip of the iceberg. The electoral process, be it the local municipal elections, state legislature elections or parliamentary elections, represented a culmination of minute processes that were

lodged in the nooks and crevices of the everyday life of the vasti and its social relationships: vasti spaces being the arena *par excellence* for its residents as well as cadres of political parties to establish and hone mutually beneficial alliances.

However, the vasti was not merely the physical site where these strategies were executed; the social life of the vasti actively molded the format and content of the strategies used, in the process foregrounding the very physicality of the vasti for the residents and also in the calculations of party cadre in their maneuvers. In hindsight I realize that while the local municipal elections was a time of unprecedented excitement and electrifying atmosphere in the vasti, a potent time for rich ethnography, it was the months preceding the elections which led to the build-up of this dynamics.

Religious celebrations in the vasti, organized primarily by the mandal were fertile initiating grounds for these negotiations. My first lesson on the latter was during Kamla tai's visit during Navratri, described at the beginning of this chapter. For a newcomer to vasti politics like me, Kamla tai's visit was illuminating. Both the mandal members, who pitched their propositions to her, recognized that these were early days; they were merely testing the waters. For Kamla tai also, it seemed to be a reconnaissance visit, in order to get a sense of the nature of demands from the galli and to gauge the extent of possible support that she could expect from here.

Both the parties seemed to be seasoned at the drill, evident from the seamless way in which the conversation eased from mutual appreciation and rhetoric of belonging to an unapologetic recognition of mutual needs that both the parties laid out on the table. Pragmatism seemed to be the operative factor in the approach of the mandal members. Hearsay about Kamla

tai's reputation or her non-Mang status did not stop the mandal from approaching her to perform the aarti at Navratri and from making concrete demands, which the members were aware would essentially require "returning the favor." Clearly, the Navratri meeting was more of a strategy; the meeting was casual, but candid. "Begin early, begin slow," seemed to be the first lesson in what for me was the first-hand experience of how the wheels turned at ground zero of vasti politics.

In fact, I realized that the wheels had begun turning even earlier than this in Shelar galli. On a chilly morning in the February of 2011, the vasti had woken up to a bright orange idol of Mhasoba[3] installed right opposite the mandal's gym. Engineered by Mohanlal, who lived behind the public toilets, it was public knowledge that the mini-temple built around Mhasoba was entirely financed by Krishna appa, the current municipal councilor from the right wing Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). In the predominantly Congress-friendly vasti dominated by the Shelars, this was tantamount to an act of defiance; in fact, in anticipation of the local election approaching in a year's time, Mohanlal had made his allegiance clear and had fired the first salvo.

As the calendar of religious celebrations in the vasti traversed through its annual cycle and rolled towards February of the next year (when the local elections were to be held), each event came to be laced with more urgency and tension. In January of the New Year, the young mandal members were planning the celebration of Ganesh Janma, the biggest event on the calendar of this mandal and unsurprisingly, the question of funding quickly took center stage.

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[3]Mhasoba is a local deity in Maharashtra, associated largely with pastoral tribes in the region.

January and Ganesh Janma were dangerously close to the elections and it showed: in an already cramped corner of Sadanand tea shop, mandal members huddled around Randhir, engaged in a heated discussion about which political party to accept contributions from, for the Ganesh Janma celebration. As political parties scrambled to enhance their vote counts, mandals could command any amount of money, in return for an assured count of votes from their respective neighborhoods. Naveen explained this to me in low voice, while not taking his eyes off Randhir. The downside of this, he revealed later: many times an assurance entailed active campaigning on behalf of the party and an open allegiance to the donor party.

Randhir was clearly in charge, as he specified that the mandal will not take large amounts of money from any single electoral candidate.

> "*Konachahizenda aaplya mandalavarlaagnar nahi!*"(No flag of a single political party will fly on our mandal building!)

The strategy was to keep a taut balance and keep all the electoral candidates suspended in hope till as closest to the elections as possible, while making sure the mandal's needs were fulfilled. Thus the spices and dairy items required for the communal meal sponsored on Ganesh Janma was procured from MNS, the rented tables, chairs and utensils to be used would be sponsored by electoral candidate of the Congress party.

In the same month, one day before the annual Sankranti[4] festival, Sunny and Rama's mother was approached by Suresh Bhandari's wife for a quick "favor." Suresh Bhandari was the

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[4]*Makar Sankranti* marks the movement of the sun towards the tropic of Cancer, and is generally celebrated as a harvest festival across India. In Maharashtra, married women get together on this occasion and exchange small household items as gifts. The presence of these small household items made *Sankranti* an ideal forum during the election campaign for political parties to woo women voters by inundating them with small *Sankranti* gifts like calendars, lamps, glasses and packets of spices.

local senior level cadre from the Congress party in the galli. The favor was to persuade at least forty women from the neighborhood and surrounding area to attend a Sankranti special programme organized by Surendra Pawar, the Congress electoral candidate from Moti Peth ward. Sunny's mother was handed over a total of four thousand rupees, so that she could hand over a hundred rupees to each willing participant, by way of persuasion. I met Kiran, faithful Congress cadre, two days after Sankranti. "You did not come for Surendra Pawar's Sankranti bash?" Kiran asked me cheerily. "You should have been there; it was attended by almost 500 women!"

Even as we stood there chatting, Mala tai, who stayed in a small shack at the end of Shelar galli, came down the lane smiling broadly and waving something wildly above her head. As she came closer, we saw that the source of her immense pleasure lay in the pair of steel cups that she was carrying, like a trophy. She had just come from Krishna appa's Sankranti bash, where all the women had received gifts of steel cups.

These instances afford a quick glimpse into how the maneuvers of political parties and aspirants molded themselves along the contours of the existing spatial and temporal rhythms of the vasti. Navratri, Ganesh Janma, Sankranti, Ganesh festival were not mere annual milestones of the social life of the vasti and of the mandal; they determined the mode and channels of transaction through which parties and mandal representatives cast tentative overtures towards each other. The act of building constituencies of electoral support and seeking political favors materialized in the very material space of and was dictated by the social calendar of the vasti: embodied in varying degrees through Kamla tai performing the aarti for the Goddess, through Mohanlal stamping his defiance through the Mhasoba idol, through brand new pairs of steel cups

sitting on the shelves in kitchens in the galli and through the construction of the mandal building which was sought to be sponsored by political parties in return for electoral favors.

II

A Spatial Logic

Two weeks before the elections Vinit and I stood watching as children in the vasti eagerly collected election pamphlets distributed by some cadre of a political party, in order to make paper planes out of them. With a surfeit of pamphlets as part of the election campaign, paper planes rained in the galli throughout the day, much to the delight of the children here. Looking at a paper plane which nosedived and lamely landed in a puddle, Vinit gravely commented,

> "*Ek vel aamdarkhaasdarnivadnukaparvadlya. Pan hi galli- bolachinivadnuk aahe.*"(Even the parliamentary or state legislature elections are manageable. But this election is a galli-mohalla election) (literally translated as 'election of the narrow lanes').

As the local municipal election played out before us in the next two weeks, the fuller meaning of Vinit's casual but astute comment dawned upon me gradually. The preceding section illustrated the material ways in which the stage was set for the local elections in the vasti; in this section I build on these insights and contend that the electoral process is governed by an inevitable spatial logic, undergirded by the way electoral politics is embedded within structures of caste and class in post-Independence India. This section aims to map the geography of local politics in Moti Peth, to demonstrate how, mediated by the mandal, space, caste and class coalesce in the space-time of local election, translating into a gradual fixedness of the vasti itself in the existing spatio-political regime of the city.

347

As the election campaigning picked up momentum, it injected the everydayness of the galli with a heady mixture of excitement, tension, anticipation and even intrigue, transforming the galli into a charged, trembling field. The soundscape and terrain of the galli was a riot, caught in the frenzied grip of the fervor: auto-rickshaws bearing colorful cut-outs of the symbol of electoral candidates trundled through the galli, playing eulogies to the candidate set to screechy Bollywood tunes. The ground was littered with pamphlets and leaflets distributed by the candidates. Children frenziedly ran to grab caps, whistles, kites and candies that the candidates freely distributed as part of their "election gear." Mandalmembers hung around expectantly in groups discussing the latest update or at times went into conspiratorial huddles as they strategized their next move in the "game." Almost every day, candidate-led rallies swept through the narrow galli, as the party cadre drummed up support through catchy slogans.

Photo 6.1: The candidate from the Congress party received an impressive welcome in the galli when his campaign procession passed through the galli. His arrival was accompanied by fire crackers and women greeted him in the traditional way with a ritual lamp and by applying vermilion on his forehead. Bottles of Coke were passed around for the candidate and his volunteers.

Photo 6.2: Children in the galli crowd around an auto-rickshaw used for campaigning of a candidate, to collect free whistles being distributed. Whistle was the election symbol of this independent candidate.

Photo 6.3: The galli was inundated with scores of pamphlets distributed by political parties elaborating upon their agenda. These leaflets were prized election gear, as children scrambled to collect as many as they could and make paper planes out of them.

Ten days before the election, Krishna appa, the reigning councilor and current BJP candidate, led one such massive campaigning rally through the galli: the narrow lane became a sea of appa's supporters, mostly women, wearing orange sashes and chanting, "*Bachhabachhajanta hain, Krishna appa sachha hain*" (Even every child knows that Krishna appa is an honest man). Huge cut outs of an orange lotus, BJP's election symbol, bobbed up and down in the crowd. Krishna appa stopped to touch a surprised old woman's feet, shook hands

with a few young men waiting by the side and then looked around and waved to no one in particular, a determined smile fixed on his gaunt face all the time.

Photos 6.4 and 6.5: The BJP (Bhartiya Janata Party) rally sweeps through the galli.

As the last of the women campaigners disappeared round the corner, Shailu of the Jonas Brothers quipped, "*Hya saglya ekshepannasvalyavatatat. Kapdyanvarunachvatatat*" (All these (women) seem to be the (rupees) 150 category. You can make it out from their clothes itself).

Puja, who was standing beside him, turned to me and said half –jokingly, "*Tumhi pan jayala pahije, tumhi standar dista, paachshe tari miltil*" *(*You should also go, you look "standar," you will get at least (rupees) five hundred).

According to Shailu and Puja's earnest evaluations, the women campaigners seemed to have been hired for the rally at a rate of INR 150 and I would fetch much more on the basis of my appearance. In their evaluations, they had effortlessly normalized the monetary transactions which formed the very basic grammar of local electoral politics here and had associated them with class, poorer or "standard."

By now it was evident that the terrain of electoral politics for those in the vasti was saturated with modest and fantastical hopes of gains, in cash and in kind: from cash for their votes, to steel cups, calendars and pressure cookers, to an all-expense paid holiday to Kanyakumari for a group of fifteen young men or the sponsorship of a three storied mandal building. In order to understand the singular association of participation in the electoral process with a favor, I go back briefly to Chatterjee (2001) who traces the consolidation of the political society in the 70s and 80s to two main influences: the increasing legitimacy of the notion that governments are bound by an obligation to provide for the welfare of marginalized populations, irrespective of the latter's status as, "…proper members of civil society" (47). The second factor relates to the intensification of electoral mobilization in cities in India during this period, as political parties expanded their sites of mobilization to realms not strictly political, like cultural and religious events, voluntary associations etc.

It was at this intersection of contingencies of electoral mobilization with the logic of government welfare that a peculiar culture of politics took root, which continues to define the

way in which the urban poor are tied to political regimes in India (Chatterjee 2001: 134-5). Thus obtaining largesse from political parties and local political leaders in return for electoral votes has been the one of the major pegs around which the urban poor have negotiated their tenuous status as citizens in post-Independence India, a terrain which Chatterjee (2001) terms as "political society"(38). It is precisely this mode of relating to the realm of electoral politics which was reflected in Shailu and Puja's naturalized assumption that any involvement (whether mine or the women's) in the electoral processes had to be necessarily connected to monetary gain of some sort.

Two days before the election when the campaigning ended, Vinit pointed out another milestone in the vasti's electoral calendar. He said,

> "*Madam, aata pasun election paryant barso period suru jhala.Udya ratribagha lokanna ratri madhun vatteltevdhepaisevatateelgallyanmadhun.*" (Madam, the time from now till the election-day marks the "barso period."[5] Just see, tomorrow night they (the political parties) will distribute crazy amounts of money in these lanes).

Vinit's "*barso* period" was but one instance of time and place-specific embodiment of the history of the populist politics as it played out on its ground zero.

Of special relevance here is Chatterjee's contention that the urban political society was organized around poor neighborhoods in cities like Calcutta and Bombay, since these neighborhoods served as ideal units of local groupings which could be clearly demarcated in terms of their support for a particular party in exchange for benefits of the state policies or protection from legal action (2004:139). Similarly, Roy (2003) elaborates upon what she terms

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[5]*Barso*, in Hindi (infinitive form: *barasna*), means to rain.

as, "the geography of patronage" (107), in contemporary Kolkata, constituted by a dense network of clubs and party offices, which function as hubs of political mobilization. Urban populism/ political society in this context are not merely abstract conceptual frames, but index highly spatialized processes which play out in urban India, on concrete sites of neighborhoods or via networks of local clubs or party offices.

Interestingly, most of the recent research which has addressed the question of spatiality of urban political processes has done so via their investigation of communal violence in urban India. Das' (2007) analysis of the anti-Sikh pogrom in the wake of Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984 in a lower middle class locality of Delhi highlights that extraordinary violence is actually a continuation of everyday social relationships shaped within a locality, structured by minute yet significant caste and class antagonisms (135-161). As described earlier, Berenschot's (2011) ethnography on riot politics illustrates the ways through which mobilization of violence is routed through localized networks of political patronage in Ahmedabad, nurtured and enacted in the narrow lanes of neighborhoods, in tea stalls, common seating spaces (*otla*) and in the local political party offices (77-120). Jaoul (2012), on the other hand, presents an ethnographic description of how these localized networks enabled a Hindu-majority poor neighborhood in Kanpur in north India, to extricate itself from the institutionalized riot mechanisms which operate in these spaces. Of relevance is his focus on symbolic appropriation of space by and spatial performances of political competition between the Hindu right wing and Dalit factions of the neighborhood, which resulted in the ascendance of the latter over the former. The spatialized workings of the networks elaborated above provides us with a valuable understanding of how the everyday and the extraordinary within urban neighborhoods are realized via an intricate,

invisible, yet a concrete and dynamic web of social relationships and material spaces, which extend from localized settings to the larger city contexts, involving a host of actors.

The mandals represent a similar tangle of intersections of localized and spatialized relationships, which mold the galli's relationship to the political scape of the city and its access to state services and amenities. I refer back briefly to Chapter I which has demonstrated the distinct caste-based logic which governed the growth and development of peth areas in Pune, in the 18th century (Kosambi 1989; Gokhale 1988). As mentioned earlier, the older part of the city continues to retain its original caste-based make-up in rough terms, with a distinct social and spatial difference between the eastern peths inhabited largely by lower caste, Muslim and Dalit populations, and the largely middle class, Brahminical western peths. The mandals in the older part of the city, their affiliations often corresponding closely to the existent caste configurations in its residential areas, thus represent a reasonably accurate caste-based shorthand map of this part of the city.

I suggest that the presence of mandals in Moti Peth (as thousands of others elsewhere in the city) provided a neat peg in social and spatial terms around which to organize the "political society" in the context of Pune on two accounts: first, the mandal's sphere of activities, underlined by its distinct class-defined morality provides a perfect forum for political parties to conduct the mutual exchange of favors on a collective level with the urban poor. Second, as a highly localized entity firmly inscribing within it the minutiae of caste equations within a local neighborhood, a successful bargain with a mandal often constituted gaining a handle on the larger caste or community group that the mandal represented, for the political party.

354

The dynamic between space, caste and mandals gradually unfolded for me as the mandal members guided me through the quicksilver of complex political equations and calculations for the upcoming election in our neighborhood. Embedded as these equations were in the social space of the vasti, I realized that, in strict ethnographic terms, my interlocutors were actually mapping the vasti and Moti Peth anew for me, not just in material terms but also in moral caste-based terms.

Thus for Suresh nana, the eldest of the Shelar brothers, Moti Peth police station was the boundary which demarcated the current field of political action: beyond Moti Peth police station, elections did not entail throwing so much money. But this side of the police station, the poorva bhaag, was where money was crucial, he said.

> "*Ithlya lokanna tyanni ti savay lavli aahe*"('They' have gotten the people here habituated to this [taking money]). He added,"*Pan Sadashiv Pethet paisa nahi chalat. Tithe konihi ubha asla tari kamalalach mat padta*"(But money doesn't work in Sadashiv[6] Peth. It is always the BJP that gets the vote, irrespective of who is contesting).

Suresh nana's remark was a telling comment on the way the "beneficiaries" of the political society processed this relationship, almost in terms of a vice that the political parties had cultivated amongst their poor voters. His remark about Sadashiv Peth, located in the western part of the city, clinched accurately the caste and class nexus through which the economy of electoral favors and votes operated: almost exclusively inhabited by a highly educated, professional middle class, Suresh nana was right in pointing out the absence of this economy of favors and votes amongst this class in such a distinctly spatialized manner. In the same breath, he had highlighted the indisputable caste logic of the voting behavior of the largely Brahmin and upper

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[6] Original place name retained.

caste constituency of Sadashiv Peth, in terms of their unflinching support for right wing BJP party.

Kiran vehemently criticized Krishna appa, the current councilor, alleging that the latter had initiated no work for the patch of road that stretched out between Velgode waada and Jay Mata mandal. I had heard this accusation frequently in the last few weeks: that Krishna appa had deliberately left out this specific patch of Moti Peth out of his improvement works. And that no matter what in-fighting broke out between the cadre of various political parties after the election, the stretch of road between the waada and the Jay Mata mandal stayed absolutely safe. If I did not know the exact co-ordinates of the fuzzy area referred to as the vasti or galli in my field, here it was laid out to me now, as accurately as it could be. Kiran was obviously proud in emphasizing the fact that the galli was a safe haven in troubled times of post-election conflicts; but much starker than this was the sense of how the galli was unmistakably the victim of Krishna appa's deliberate neglect, on account of the vasti's lack of support for him. The image of the vasti as a victim became even more pronounced when placed against the surrounding neighborhoods, projected and perceived to be hostile, as elaborated in the preceding chapter. Thus Velgode waada was condemned for being a "BJP fortress," benefitting from Krishna appa's selective development work and "755" was easily sold out to to Krishna appa's monetary tactics.

The existing fault lines in the galli, mapped clearly along caste lines, had now, in the thick of election fever, acquired bolder contours, emerging into our field of vision. This galli, dominated by the Shelar clan, followed a trajectory of unflinching electoral support to the Congress, scripted primarily by the larger Mang community in Maharashtra since Independence

(Deshpande 2010; Guru 1995).[7] While the antagonism for BJP's Krishna appa was loud and clear in the galli, it was only in my personal interactions with individual residents that I realized that several of the beleaguered tenants of the galli were closet BJP supporters.

On the tense Election Day, I was privy to an uncharacteristic emotional outburst by Kiran Shelar, an active Congress cadre from the galli. Kiran had just come to know that three of his Shelar cousins had become turncoats and had voted for Krishna appa, having succumbed to the latter's monetary offers. Krishna appa has never given Mangs any opportunities to contest for elections, Kiran said angrily. Only the Marwadis and Telugu communities had received his largesse. He raised his voice as he narrated his conversation with the three turncoats,

> "*Tujhijaat mhanje tujhi aai aahe.Tu tila kasa sodushaktos?*"(Your caste is your mother, how can you leave her?), he had asked them.

The sense of betrayal in his voice was unmistakable. His political affiliation was so fundamentally tied to his caste in Kiran's understanding that a betrayal of the political affiliation amounted to rejection of one's own caste.

Akin to the peculiar trajectory of articulation of class to electoral politics in post-Independence India, formations of caste are also inextricably enmeshed with the realm of electoral politics, the latter probably enjoying even a longer history in the Indian context. The politicization of caste can be broadly traced to the arrival of colonial modernity and its attendant

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[7] Both Deshpande (2010) and Guru (1995) emphasize the history of Congress support by Mang caste in Maharashtra. With their historical antagonism towards the Dalits, Mang caste groups were never a constituency for the Republican Party of India (RPI), the chief political party representing Dalit interests in Maharashtra. Guru (1995) suggests that while Mangs were staunch Congress supporters till early nineties, in the past decade, their support has also been split between BJP and Shiv Sena, as both the latter parties have attempted to aggressively woo Mang voters (734). Reflecting this larger history, support for Congress was most evident and visible in the galli, in residents' conversations, the mandal's programs and narratives of senior and old mandal members of the galli.

contingencies of enumerating and classifying the population into caste groups and the

inauguration of representative democratic practice by the 1920s (Deshpande 2010; Sheth 2002;

Dirks 2001; Gooptu 2001; Rudolph and Rudolph 1960). As nationalist politics consolidated, the

above developments provided an impetus to the construction of new identities and political

vocabularies based on caste (and religion), not just shaping the praxis of electoral politics but

also re-molding configurations of caste at local and regional levels (Sheth 2002: 210-217).

In the post-Independence period, mobilization of numerically large groups became

paramount for electoral success in a democratic polity. This spawned forth a mutually

constitutive relationship between caste formations and actors in electoral politics: on the one

hand, caste associations expanded their networks vertically and horizontally to be able to

mobilize political support and acted unequivocally as political interest groups in their

negotiations with political parties (Deshpande 2010; Shah 2002; Rudolph and Rudolph 1960).

On the other hand, the dominant political party in the first two decades after Independence, the

Congress party, set the precedence of using the caste calculus for electoral gains, thus

consolidating a culture of electoral politics which relied heavily on caste as a vital axis of

mobilization, termed in popular parlance as "vote bank" politics (Sheth 2002: 217).

Commentators on Indian politics have pointed out that from twentieth century onwards,

spurred on by the gradual impact of affirmative action and democratization, an unprecedented

section of lower caste, Dalit and tribal populations started actively participating in democratic

political processes (Palshikar 2003; Sheth 2002; Yadav 1999). The upshot of this has been not

just the intensifying of politicization of caste (and ethnic and religious) identities, but importantly

it has legitimized the invocation of caste identity in the political domain as a matter of social

justice and of political representation of the erstwhile marginalized caste groups (Deshpande 2010; Yadav 1999: 2397). In the light of the depth of this history, caste continues to be central to political mobilization at all levels in contemporary Indian politics: local, regional and national.

It was not surprising then, that caste-based political loyalties were constantly evoked in the vasti spaces in the days preceding the election, frequently pitting various constituencies against each other: owners versus tenants, the galli versus Velgode waada and so on and in the process heightening the awareness of this caste-place nexus. The high stakes in the election and its charged energy thus further deepened the mutually constitutive relationship between space and caste in the vasti for its residents.

While the conversations remapped the moral-spatial caste-based co-ordinates of the galli for me, the mandal's negotiations with the electoral candidates highlighted specific places in the vasti for me in a very different light. The centrality of neighborhood spaces as sites of for tenuous access to resources and strategies of identity creation for the urban poor has been documented in recent research in India (Jaoul 2012; De Neve and Donner 2007). In similar vein, in elaborating upon the politics of the urban poor in the global south, Bayat (2000) highlights the streets as the only space available for the urban poor and marginalized to live out their lives; as a space to "…assemble, make friends, earn a living, spend their leisure time and express discontent" (551). The negotiations in the vasti resonated with this contention over and over again, bringing to fore the inevitably classed nature of this space and the larger electoral process.

Consider for instance, the proposition about construction of the mandal building that was made to Kamla tai, at the beginning of this chapter. Notwithstanding internal fissures, the mandal and vasti members were unanimous about the agenda for this election: to get the mandal space

rebuilt. Mohanlal, who claimed that he had driven a hard bargain with the Congress candidate about the same, insisted that the mandal needed a three-storied building, which could accommodate a gymnasium for the boys in the galli and an open hall which the galli members could use gratis for celebrating birthdays, weddings and other family occasions. Rick, one of the Jonas Brothers, talked to me about their plans of inaugurating computer classes for young boys and girls of the vasti in the refurbished mandal building.

At the root of Krishna appa's notoriety was the strong perception in the galli that the former had knowingly neglected the civic needs of the galli: he never laid the road in this particular galli, especially during the monsoons. Unlike municipal councilors of other wards, he never ensured that the water supply in the galli lasted longer than for a measly hour. He did not install lights in the public toilets. Contributing towards rebuilding the mandal space was out of question for Krishna appa.

At the risk of sounding repetitive, I want to highlight how material spaces of the galli, tied inextricably to their class position, figured prominently in the expectations and disappointments of the vasti residents as they zeroed in on their electoral choices. In the everyday and in the eventful, the place of the mandal building in the life of the vasti remained absolutely central. It was the venue of the vasti's aanganwadi and periodic state sponsored health camps or immunization drives. With its meager equipment, it was where the young boys worked out in the evenings. The walls of the gym room were scribbled with monetary calculations, since this was where the women's bachat gat weekly meetings were held. For two months this was also the room where giggly young girls from the vasti thoroughly enjoyed a beauty treatment training programme sponsored by a social organization.

360

On his wedding day, Naresh got ready in this room, since there was no space in the 10'X10' room that constituted his house. Several young men, who otherwise would sleep outdoors in the vasti, due to lack of space in their own houses, would sleep in this room during the monsoons. As elaborated in Chapter IV, the mezzanine floor of the mandal building doubled up alternately as a carom club or a gambling club, fetching the mandal valuable regular income. The gym room was also the site for the playing out of Madhu and Sunny's surreptitious affair, as I have demonstrated in Chapter III.

In a context of sheer non-availability of space in their miniscule shacks and in a context where the galli was the primary site where they could access public amenities otherwise unavailable to them as slum dwellers, the mandal building and the galli constituted a vital axis along which the social reproduction of life in the vasti proceeded. These places figured prominently in the social, economic, every-day, political, romantic, public *and* private lives of the vasti residents. It is not surprising then, that the mandal and the vasti raised its stakes in these places in their electoral negotiations.

Clearly, it was not just the political parties which had to employ a spatial logic during the electoral exercise. For the mandal members and for vasti residents, it was the galli as the material site of playing out of electoral dramas that boldly highlighted for them their physical and social location in the intricate matrix of caste and class which governed the electoral process at varying levels of the vasti, Moti Peth or the city, at different points. As shown above, in the days preceding the election, calculations of caste vigorously erupted out of the mundane everydayness with which the latter governed the relations within neighborhoods, and gained a decisive and hyper-visible presence in the residents' mental map of the neighborhood. Simultaneously, there

361

was an implicit realization of their status as the "urban poor" in the city's landscape, which made them the recipients of the political parties' largesse, as opposed to middle class or upper caste localities, where, as Suresh nana put it, "money did not work." In this respect, Vinit's comment of this election being the election of narrow lanes and galli struck home because his statement indexed the distinct class profile of this galli, making the latter the decisive terrain of mobilization, networking, contest and of gains during the election for both, the voters and the for the contestants. This latter aspect is elaborated more clearly in the next section, in which I demonstrate the links between spatiality of the electoral process and its articulation with performance of a masculine identity for the mandal members.

The inextricable relationship of electoral politics with structures of caste and class makes urban neighborhoods intrinsic to the practice of local electoral politics on account of the axes of caste and class along which these neighborhoods have been historically shaped. For the mandal members (and to an extent for the larger vasti community), their lived experience of electoral politics, of its games and of its gains, served to further tie their caste and class identities ever so tightly to their physical co-ordinates, of the galli and of Moti Peth.

III

A Man's World

While the spacetime of local elections underlined the way in which space was aligned with caste and class configurations in Moti Peth for its residents, the fundamentally gendered lines along which this spacetime unfolded in the galli was far more explicit. This section aims at

uncovering these gendered contours in order to illustrate how the realm of politics became the site for the construction and performance of a masculine ideal and its relevance for the men of this galli to negotiate their marginal status in the city outside Moti Peth.

Research in recent times has confirmed the value that "doing politics" has acquired in lower-class, lower caste masculine context of contemporary India. Jeffrey (2010) and Jeffrey et al. (2008) demonstrate how local, low caste (male) youth in rural north India respond to unemployment by establishing themselves as *netas* (political leaders), engaging in local political brokering and networking, which provides the young men with a model of masculinity which incorporates the value of education, earning them respect.

As already elaborated in earlier chapters, Hansen (2001) demonstrates how the militant right wing party, Shiv Sena, in order to establish their stronghold on the city, effectively harnessed the aspirations and hopes of boys from poorer backgrounds, for whom being a part of the political party was instrumental in gaining money, power and status, (105-113). While the above instances overlap in differing degrees with the notion of the political society (Chatterjee 2004, 2001), they indicate clearly that the acutely masculine terrain of this domain has given rise to a remarkable constellation of politics, class and masculine identity across contexts spanning rural and urban India.

The association of politics with the public realm and the ability to negotiate wide and intricate networks of In her research on youth in post-liberalization Kerala, Lukose (2009) demonstrates that in a bid to contest the reconfiguration of the meaning of "public" in consumer terms by increasing middle class civic activism, lower caste or lower class youth assert their claims to the public by engaging in local politics. Significantly, it is the masculine forms of

sociality and mobility that make possible this exercise of political agency, thus making political

practice itself primarily a masculine domain, according to Lukose (134-162). In the context of

local politics, Roy (2008) also points towards a similar casting of, "…practices of patronage and

mobilization" (107), in primarily masculinized idioms, thus leading to the *masculinization of*

politics (106-118) itself in the context of urban India.[8]

Drawing upon these insights, I describe how their active participation in the realm of

local politics and its attendant tasks shapes the affective and moral worlds of the young men and

boys in the vasti further binding their worlds and their gendered identities tightly to the social

and physical space of the vasti.

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[8]The increasing masculinization of the realm of politics however, does not imply a straightforward erasure of women's participation in it. The implications and dilemmas of women's involvement in Hindu right wing politics in the last three decades have been a site of fertile research focusing on the gendered nature of everyday political praxis and communal violence in urban India. Particularly of interest has been the work on women's involvement in the militant Shiv Sena in Mumbai, the site of Hansen's (2001) important research. Sen (2012) documents the creative ways in which Shiv Sena women members from a Mumbai slum popularized a repertoire of historical story-telling in their neighborhood, extolling the exploits of militant female personas associated with the 17th century Maratha warrior king Shivaji. Sen argues that the reiteration of these stories represented an attempt to link women's contemporary participation in vigilantism or violence to a glorious historical past, in order to recover legitimacy and agency for their acts, without isolating themselves from men or being openly rebellious (77). Bedi (2007), on the other hand, focuses on the embodied and visual strategies that the lower middle class and middle class women cadre of the Shiv Sena in Mumbai deploy in order to construct a gendered political self, in order to counter their marginalized location in the institutional machinery of the political party. Bedi documents ethnographically the women's attempts to insert themselves into the "sphere of visibility" (1538) of the party through distinctly visual and embodied displays during *morchas* (public processions, protest marches), and through the public celebration of the Hindu ritual of *haldi-kumkum*; these embodied displays enable the women to project themselves as "dashing" and "daring" (1535) and create an autonomous space for themselves. Also see Menon (2010) and Banerjee (2005) for more elaboration upon women's participation in other Hindu right wing outfits; women in these case studies negotiate their participation in political sphere via hegemonic gendered roles of wives and mothers or then by adopting the grammar prescribed by the ideal of a female virgin warrior. However, this research, disproportionately focusing on women and the Hindu right, gives us little insight about the negotiations and subversions that women's participation in electoral politics might involve, or how women might (or not) access informal networks of knowledge and information which serve as the basis for political brokering in everyday lives of the urban poor. Berenschot (2011) makes a brief reference to cases of women "social workers" in Ahmedabad, who successfully managed to achieve the status of a political broker. However, he goes on to caution us that the opportunities to become political brokers were extremely slim for most women, molded by the demands of brokering and networking in the neighborhood, which could easily lead to the questioning of women's "character" and moral integrity (111-113).

This section will illustrate how for many young men in the galli, their exposure and participation in local politics was heavily mediated by the mandal; however, I also demonstrate the complex nature of the young men's relationship with the mandal as they negotiated the prevalent hegemonic discourse around politics and corruption. As a site par excellence for establishing and fine-tuning political alliances in the terrain of contemporary local politics, the mandal provided its exclusively male members an opportunity to actively engineer these alliances. According to Mohanlal, he had made a daring, straight-forward demand when the Congress candidate had come to discuss Navratri contribution: construct a three story building for our mandal and we all will work for you. He was highly agitated because he thought that the mandal boys chickened out of this commitment, when he had almost sealed the deal for the mandal with his networking skills.

Vinit, in an attempt to establish his credentials as someone who was above the mucky ground of mandal politics, nevertheless told me with great pride that he was contacted by a lot of political big-wigs; the other mandal members thought small, according to him, as they pandered to all small and big politicians for miniscule monetary gains. In the last two days preceding the election, several of the younger mandal members almost did not sleep through the night because "you never know when you will get phone calls from parties for last minute negotiations." There was an unmistakable pride and sense of self-importance attached to be able to bring about these meetings or to being contacted by an emissary in order to "discuss" arrangements.

I witnessed one such meeting, when I accompanied the younger mandal members, along with their seniors, on a trip to Kamla tai's election headquarters late in the night to strike the "final" election deal, two days before the election day. Younger members of the mandal, many of

365

them voting for the first time, accompanied by a few senior members in their late 20s, were

crammed into the parking lot, which served as Kamla tai's headquarters for the election. The

younger ones stood on one side, uncharacteristically quietly, while the four or five senior

members sat right opposite a visibly tired Kamla tai, who had probably been campaigning since

early morning. After an awkwardly silent few moments, Ravi, one of the senior members spoke

up:

> "*Aaplya ithe ek pan mat phutnaar nahi. Aamhi amchya sathi magat nahi, aamhala kahich nako, pan lahaanmulanchiiccha aahe, tyanna trip la jayache aahe. Hya pekinchepahilyandachyaadit naav lagle aahe*"(Not a single vote from our area will betray you. We are not asking anything for ourselves, but the younger boys wish to take a trip. Some of their names have appeared for the first time in the voters' list). There was also a cautionary tone in Ravi's voice and on his face as he said, "*Rashtravadi che mula sarkhya chakra martayet*"(The boys (emissaries) from Rashtravadi (Nationalist Congress Party) are constantly hovering around the galli).

For me, the meeting with Kamla tai condensed multiple facets of the basic grammar of the world

of local political negotiation. Almost a text book demonstration of effective political bargaining,

Ravi's brief speech included the right combination of an assurance of support, a disclaimer of

selflessness to their demands and a slight bit of pressure, in the form of the cautionary intimation

about the Rashtravadi emissaries. It also clearly followed the internal hierarchy within the

mandal: the senior members, projecting a more mature, disinterested front, speaking on behalf

of their younger brothers, requesting Kamla tai to make the first timers' initiation into the world

of electoral politics worth it. Later Shailu admitted to me that even though they might have an

amount in mind to demand, in the actual situation of such meetings the younger boys did not

dare to do it, they were scared and tensed (*jamatach nahi, load yeta*).

The qualities of an astute political player at the level of the mandal which emerged from

these instances were indistinguishable from an idealized manhood, given the exclusively male

366

terrain of the mandal. Negotiating with party candidates attributed a certain level of experience and astute sense of judgment of people on the part of the negotiators. The drill of going and meeting with party candidates itself was taken as evidence that the men were in this position because of their individual or collective well-built networks which they could harness and thus make a difference in the local political equation. The above practices of political brokering and negotiation constituted fertile sites of learning and performance of a politically suave masculinity.

The other fundamental element of this performance was the possession of intimate and insightful knowledge of the political equations in the concentric circles of the galli, ward and the city. The galli and its immediate vicinity was subject to rigorous analysis as all the men in the galli, young and old, mandal and non-mandal members, huddled in intimate groups in the galli during all times of the day discussing the intricate equations between political parties and the neighboring Mang, Sali, Bairagi, Telugu and "Mohammedan" communities.

Three weeks before the elections, Mohanlal's mini-temple received a radical make-over, sponsored this time not by the BJP, but the Congress candidate. As everyone tried to process Mohanlal's unexpected political U-turn, Vinit offered his reading of the situation: "*Election nantar shot honar tyacha*." When I asked what that meant, he said that after the election, the Congress candidate himself will order the temple to be broken down on the pretext of encroachment, implying that Mohanlal was merely being used by the Congress candidate temporarily for electoral gains. I was struck by an unmistakable sense of nonchalant authority in Vinit's voice and the faint, confident smile which played on his face as he said it. He had the air

367

of a smooth, seasoned expert, who gives an accurate diagnosis of a situation just by scanning it casually.

I encountered this combination of authority and expertise repeatedly in the next few days as mandal members ran me through fascinating facts and trivia about the election: how Krishna appa had hired a computer data entry operator just to keep a computerized record of money pumped into various areas so that he could track down individual voters, how certain independent candidates were propped up by either the BJP or Congress just to eat into their opposition's votes, how the Congress candidate owned a dozen liquor stores across the city and several such instances. As they described animatedly these small details, the mandal members exuded a highly palpable aura of self-importance, of experience, of being privy to intimate details, which others might not have access to.

Notwithstanding the intimate level of narrow lanes and gallis, at which this election was fought, there was a heightened sense of the city itself as a dense network of wards, inhabited by specific caste communities and their respective political affiliations: a space singularly pervaded with local politics. Opinions and critical evaluations were offered about certain wards in the city as strongholds of particular political parties, arch rivalries in specific wards, caste-specificities of different areas of the city, ward-wise distinctions in the strategies of political parties, the variety of sops and money pumped in other wards, parts of the city that were likely to be tense during the elections and so on.

This election was however not about the city as simply a terrain of keen contest. The spatial co-ordinates of politics were circumscribed by an urgent temporality transforming the city almost into the site of a drama which began with a deep, lethargic rumble and galloped towards a

high-octane climax. There was an acute awareness of this temporality as the men and mandal

members keenly followed the declaration of election dates, dates of filing candidacy, the date

when the electoral code of conduct would be imposed across the city, inauguration of

campaigning and its end: each of these dates marked an intensification of the tension that gripped

the galli as things proceeded towards a charged crescendo.[9]

The spacetime of the galli during the election period provided a site for the mandal

members and other men in the vasti to project and to perform a persona which exuded

knowledge, judgement and expertise in the realm of politics in the vasti. When viewed through

the predictable and familiar idiom of wards and local political competition, the city itself became

more legible; thus this projection and performance enabled a distinct sense of mastery over the

grammar of a space which was not just limited to the vasti or Moti Peth, but one which

temporarily took in the entire city in its spread.

While the elections indeed underlined the masculine contours of the realm of politics, one

has to keep in mind that the discourse of politics itself and of the actors involved in politics was

what generated idealized images of and aspirations towards a distinct masculine identity

informed by this discourse, for the young mandal members in Moti Peth, as also across countless

other mandals across the city.

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[9]Banerjee (2011) in her elaboration upon the Indian elections as *communitas*, highlights the temporal dimension of the electoral process. She contends that the time of elections is marked by a temporary suspension of hierarchies which separate the politicians and ordinary voters, as the former woo the latter for votes; it generates a peculiar momentum which occupies spatial and temporal dimensions of public life in an overwhelming way, which "heightens the contrast between the everyday and the extraordinary" (85). Banerjee's claim that this spacetime is comparable to a sense of communitas, as a kind of a caste and class leveler (83) however, seems to gloss over entirely the spatialized caste based logic that precedes the election day, or the immensely complex regional caste and community hierarchical equations which mark the campaigns and the voting day excitement.

In their enthusiastic post-Ganesh festival debriefing a few months ago for instance, I was struck by the tremendous admiration that was reserved for a flamboyant BJP politician in Pune, DheerajGhate.[10] His influence in the immersion procession had gone unchallenged; he had easily flaunted the restriction on decibel level of the music, ignoring warnings of police action. Some of the senior members of the mandal recounted how earlier in the year he was the only one who had dared to publicly screen the cricket World Cup match between India and Pakistan, when the police had specifically banned all public screenings due to possibility of tensions erupting. When I asked about why they all looked up to him so much Rama said,

> "*Tosaglabaghto tyancha. Kapde, boot, khanyapaasun*" (He looks after his boys completely, right from their clothes, shoes and meals).

Rama went on to describe to me how Ghate just needed to signal to one of his boys and he would be surrounded with a protective ring of his boys within a flash. Similar legends floated in the mandal about an equally talked about member of state legislative assembly from Pune, Ramesh Wanjale, who had passed away at a young age, six months before the local elections. Wanjale, who wore two kilograms worth gold on his person, had earned the title, "The Gold Man" of Pune. He was described as a *vagh* (tiger) by the younger boys in the mandal. Importantly, while they acknowledged that all his gold was earned through "*don numbercha paisa*," (through illicit means) Dhawan hastened to clarify, "*Pan garibanchachorlela nhavta*" (It was not stolen from the poor).

Closer to the elections, the mandal members, young and senior alike, were taken in by competing stories around the veritable range of sops that were distributed: free press irons,

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[10] Original names retained for DheerajGhate and Ramesh Wanjale.

watches, pressure cookers, silver, saris, bikes, children's fun fairs, sponsored trips to the zoo, pilgrimage trips, even honeymoon trips for newly-weds. But the money and silver tales got the highest number of "hits." In a ward in Ramnagar for instance, the story went that if you promised to net ten votes for the candidate, the reward was a Bullet motorcycle. And if you promised twenty five, the reward was a Maruti Swift car. Or how Suresh Shinde, an extremely wealthy Congress candidate from our neighboring ward, was zooming around on his Ducati with cronies in tow, carrying briefcases full of cash, to be dispensed freely in order to buy votes.

There was an unmistakable sense of adulation and awe that I sensed in these tales and the way in which they were performed by the mandal members in the vasti. The narrator's face was animated. The others hung on to his every word, their responses punctuated by expletives and sometimes a shocked silence. These stories almost acquired a mythical quality, as they re-circulated amongst an eager audience of young men in the galli: Naveen earnestly told us all that the source of Wanjale's gold was a tortoise which defecated gold, because of black magic that Wanjale had performed on it that and after the latter's death all this gold would be sunk into the river. And that Shinde, the Ducati-riding candidate, had gifted each mandal in his ward six kilograms of silver (a kilogram of silver costs between INR 57-59,000).

Clearly, narratives like these were not just about admiring an uber-masculine ideal, but also deeply enmeshed with an unabashed flaunting of wealth, which fed into the appeal of this masculinity. The temporary spacetime of these urban legends and their performance made fuzzy the boundary between the narrators and the men they narrated about and the latter's power-laden acts. From the vantage point of the galli, the world of politics seemed so excessive and so saturated with conspicuous consumption and bravado that even narrating stories associated with

371

it gave one a vicarious high of actually living it. The sheer power associated with the stories of daring consumption of silver, bikes and gold, was evidently accessible to the mandal members only through these obscene legends of excess. While on the one hand there was an explicit aspiration to feel the power which accrues through this kind of excessive consumption, the casting of some stories almost as incredible urban legends and myths, I suggest, were indicative of the simultaneous implicit realization of the impossibility of achieving this wealth and power for themselves.

Photo 6.6: Ramesh Wanjale, the "Gold Man" of Pune, who passed away in June 2011. In its tribute to the politician, a prominent Marathi newspaper had noted Wanjale's favorite quote, "*Main dikhta hoon villain jaisa, lekin kaam karta hoon hero ka***" (I look like a villain, but my deeds are those of a hero). (http://www.esakal.com/esakal/20110611/4995627739999601207.htm)**

Photo 6.7: In December 2012, Datta Phuge, a chit fund manager from Pune created a huge splash for his custom made shirt of gold worth $ 235,000. Phuge's extravagance and obsession with gold received wide national and international media attention. (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/07/datta-phuge-solid-gold-shirt_n_2425863.html?ir=India&adsSiteOverride=in)

Photo 6.8: Wanjale also inspired another young aspiring politician from Pune to display his penchant for gold in public. Claiming to wear eight kilograms of gold, Samrat Moze had joined the Nationalist Congress Party in August 2012. This image has been taken from his Facebook page. (https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=103930503092302&set=a.103930499758969.11217.100004260579832&type=3&theater)

Photo 6.9) In a more recent instance, in May 2015, Sachin Khese, a businessman from Pune made news on account of his Jaguar model, which he had recently gotten gold-wrapped, in order to ward off evil attention, following the advice of an astrologer. (http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/a-golden-jaguar-prowls-pune-roads/)

These images are powerful signifiers of the ways in which power, consumption, politics and masculinity were coming to be increasingly enmeshed in the public culture of urban Maharashtra. It is crucial to note that none of these men corresponded to the image of urbane, suave, English-speaking consuming male figure, heavily celebrated in the media and Bollywood, occupying visual space in the urban spaces of consumption such as malls and life size advertisements on the streets. All these men in fact, belonged to the Maratha caste, which, though a dominant caste in Maharashtra (in terms of political power and financial prowess), does not enjoy the cultural capital claimed by urban, professional Brahmin community. The formers' carefully managed public personas, and the urban legends generated by their acts of consumption consolidated an extremely seductive narrative of working class and lower caste masculine power for the young men, one which legitimized unabashed consumption or the aspiration to do so

while simultaneously upholding a distinctly class-based moral ethic and values of loyalty and defiance. [11][12]

After the election, I was curious to know about the extent of the gains that various mandal members had made during this time, against the backdrop of the frenzy of secretive meetings, huddles and strategizing that I had seen them engage in, in the last two weeks. The gains were anti-climactic: the senior mandal members had gotten approximately three thousand rupees each and the younger members had made two thousand rupees each. The disparity between dramatic tales of the members' demands in the past few days and their actual gains was startling. Roy (2003) encounters similar disparity in her research with poor men in squatter settlements in Calcutta. Though the men projected themselves as active political cadre, engaged in the important task of maintaining neighborhood peace, as Roy discovered, they had little or no influence in the actual workings of their settlements (108-15). Roy uses Connell's

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[11] This finds resonances in Hansen's (2001) research, on Shiv Sena in Mumbai. Hansen describes effectively the almost mythical aura which is constructed around a local Shiv Sena leader, Dighe*saaheb*, attributing "superhuman" (104) qualities to him. Hansen contends that Dighe*saaheb's* carefully cultivated image was more than just a political gimmick; it also represented the aspirations of scores of young boys who adored Dighe and who sought to replicate the narrative of his journey from humble origins to a place where he commanded enormous power, status and blind loyalty of local boys. The boys' dreams of a bright future entailed a transformation, "…from a "nobody" to a local "somebody"" (105).

[12] It should be emphasized here that local women politicians were not absent from the city's political terrain. In fact, as mentioned earlier, women's visibility in local politics had drastically increased in the last few years on account of reserved administrative wards for women candidates in the state's cities. I speculate that it was those women politicians who were overtly masculinized in their demeanor or stance who the young men in the galli engaged with more seriously in the context of local politics. Kamla tai, for instance, was highly respected in the galli for her political acumen; though outwardly conforming to markedly feminine markers (of wearing sarees, jewelry, vermillion on her forehead), her masculinized demeanor was unmistakable (she rode a scooter, often with a male assistant sitting behind her, her plain speak, making eye contact in conversations, easy humor with young and old men, all suggested a clearly aggressive, masculine style which earned her credibility in the galli). I remember an instance of the mandal members talk about Manjusha Thorat (name changed), a young woman politician from a neighboring Peth, with unabashed admiration. She looks beautiful, they claimed, but she dressed like a man (*mansasarkhi dressing*). They were in awe of the fact that she swore "better" than most of the galli residents and no men dared to take any liberties with her on account of her sharp tongue and aggression. "*Tichyat daring aahe*" (She has daring) was what Chotu had claimed with admiration. My research, however, has thin data on the gendered interaction of the young men in the mandal with these women politicians, apart from these broad generalizations.

conceptualization of "marginalized masculinities" (115) to argue that it is through these narratives of their disciplinary function in the settlements that the men could claim a semblance of power, against the backdrop of their starkly powerless positions as unemployed men from poor settlements.

I suggest that for most of the young men in the galli the spacetime of local election became a crucial arena to reclaim their sense of masculinity, power and a sense of control. Their explicit performance of expertise, display of skills of networking and unabashed admiration of narratives of local political power testified to a dualism: of the tremendous sense of control and self-importance, cast in distinctly masculine terms, that they experienced in this spacetime and precisely of a lack of control and of power that was experienced vis-à-vis the world outside the galli at other times.

As I processed the hectic three weeks of election fervor and its aftermath, it became gradually evident that the narrative of the participation of the galli's men in elections and local politics was hardly monochromatic, one characterized by uniform participation in a celebration of opportunistic gains or of narratives of power. It was only during our post-election debriefing that some of these disruptive strands emerged with some clarity for me.

I was particularly struck by the centrality of the mandal in mediating the men's participation in electoral politics in the galli and the simultaneous assertions of the infallibility of the mandal from the monetary brokering and exchange that was assumed to be the very grammar of this politics. Given the hallowed space that mandal occupied in the young men's lives, as the site of their moral masculinities and claiming a sense of self-worth on its basis, it seemed difficult for me to imagine how the mandal members reconciled the moral character of their

376

instrumental acts of brokering of money and favors with the righteous morality that mandal embodied. The hegemonic middle class discourse continues to characterize the participation of the urban poor in the electoral process via moral straitjackets of "slum mentality" and "unscrupulous selling of votes," vilifying the urban poor in the corruption of the democratic ideal.[13] For a newcomer to local politics like me and given my own middle class bias, the overtly straightforward, pragmatic nature of monetary dealings in the vasti during the elections led me to believe that these moral underpinnings were surprisingly missing from these dealings.

The ambivalence first became legible in my interview with the Jonas Brothers, who were going to vote for the first time in this election. Dhawan stated nonchalantly that their objective was to make most of the election opportunity and work for a party in return for money. Yet, this sense of nonchalance and an open instrumentality of motive were strikingly absent later when they all talked about the mandal's role. Chotu claimed,

> "*Atta paryant aaplya mandalat konich 'Siddhartha Mandal' mhanun kaam kela nahi. Je kela te personally kela*" (Till now no one in our mandal has worked (for a party) under the name of Siddhartha Mandal. The work done has been on a personal level).

I immediately remembered Randhir's passionate, almost threatening caution about no single political party's flag fluttering on the mandal's roof. In the coming three weeks it was repeated to me by several mandal members with obvious pride: the mandal as a collective had never openly "sold" itself to one party, it never will. No one should be able to claim that the mandal worked under their thumb in the realm of electoral politics, was the main rationale behind this rigid ideal.

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[13] I rely primarily on my own location within the upper caste, middle class context in Pune, in order to comment upon this perception of the urban poor vis-à-vis electoral politics. For a larger discussion on the historical evolution of the idea of politics as a corrupt arena and discourses of corruption which constitute the idea of state and governance itself, see Hansen (1999) and Gupta (2012;1995).

During the elections the mandal members negotiated in smaller groups with political parties as individuals in order to gain what they could during the elections.

I suggest that the rhetoric of "*mandal konachya 'under-khali' nahi*" (the mandal not being under any outsider's thumb) which marked all these moral disclaimers, was central for mandal members because it represented reconciliation between their strong desire to engage in local politics which the hegemonic discourse had branded as fundamentally corrupt, but which provided them in the temporary spacetime of negotiating votes during elections with a strong sense of value and agency, and the simultaneous imperative to preserve a sense of pride and self-respect, through an image of being incorruptible. In the light of their individual choices, it was important to derive a sense of the mandal, as the site of their collective identity, as being clean and incorruptible.

The minute ways in which the young members of the mandal negotiated the simultaneously pleasurable and condemnable acts of doing local politics had to be excavated gradually, in our post-election debriefing. Answering my question on whether it was merely the money which drove their electoral choices, Naresh, the mandal's president, elaborated upon the method behind the madness.

> "*Fakta paishech jar ghaycheaste tar amhi Krishna appa kade pan gelo asto, tithe group madhe pratyekmulalajawalpaas 12 hazaar rupaye bhetle*" (If it was just about taking money, then we would have even gone to Krishna appa; every member of the groups which worked for him got about twelve thousand rupees).

He added that because they had already decided to work for the Congress candidate they accepted money from him. In his angry election-day outburst, Kiran had claimed that Krishna appa had offered his group a whopping five lakh rupees just to stay neutral, but the former had

378

not budged from his commitment to the Congress candidate. Through these assertions, the men

projected an image which conveyed that commitment, loyalty and ethical considerations gained

precedence over monetary considerations, in an attempt to respond to the invisible accusations of

the hegemonic discourse which paints the urban poor as those who merely sell their votes to the

highest bidder.

The actual accepting of monetary favors however, was hardly debated, since that choice

was not really existent, in the perceptions of the mandal members.

> "*Aaj kaal chya election mhanje na madam, fakta paisa*"(Elections these days Madam are
> only about money!)

Ketan had said to me, shaking his head as the election campaign had just begun. The

overwhelming presence of money in the terrain of local elections was repeatedly pointed out to

me by mandal members before and during the elections, which after a point seemed like stating

the rather obvious to me. But what was striking was the way in which these comments were

delivered, tinged with the speaker's unmistakable disapproval and simultaneously a kind of

resigned acceptance of the inevitability of the presence of the money. When asked about his

insider's view of party politics, Kartik, the local MNS activist, had one word to describe it:

"*Bhayanak*" (horrific). He added gravely,

> "*Konihi aapala nasta.Manasavarvishwasthevaylakathin*" (You cannot call anyone your
> own. It is so hard to trust anyone)

For me, these comments served to destabilize the seamlessness of the mandal members'

relationship to the world of electoral politics and its strategies, as merely pragmatic or

opportunistic. Notwithstanding the proximity to power and a sense of value that their

participation in local politics bestowed upon them, the latter's place in the moral worlds of the

mandal members no longer seemed one-dimensional. Framed undoubtedly by the hegemonic

notion of the essentially corrupt nature of the realm of politics, they processed their own

enthusiastic participation in this allegedly corrupt endeavor as inevitable. In Dhawan's words,

> "*Election mhanje bhrashtachaar.Paishyashivay election houch shakat nahi ani tyachyat amhi pan involve aahe. Aamhi kaam karnaar, aapla fayda karunghenar. Kontachvyakti asa nahi ki paisa na gheta kaam karto*" (Election means corruption. Elections cannot happen without money today and we are also involved in that. We will work for a party and make sure that we make profit out of it. There is no one today who will work for a party without being paid).

When I asked some of the mandal members if they also aspired to become politicians and contest

elections, the collective response was,

> "*...Vatata na. Vatayla kay. Pan vatayla nahit!*" (Of course we feel like it, why not. But we don't have any (money) to distribute!)

Their response was a play on the word *vatane*, which in Marathi means "to feel" and "to

distribute. Clearly their perception of the pervasive presence of corruption at all levels of

electoral politics implied that they saw no choice but to indulge in corrupt acts, in order to gain

entry into this realm.

Naresh' defensive reply to my question on corruption articulated this lack of choice even

further. According to him,

> "*Je mhantaat ki paisekhaaun vote dila te swataha pan bharshtachaar kartaat. Anna Hazare mhane evdhyashya kholit rahtaat, mag tyanchya punyatevdhyasanstha vagare kasha aahet?Evdhya bhari-bhari gadyaat kasa phirto?*" (Those who accuse of selling our votes themselves also indulge in corruption. Apparently Anna Hazare stays in a small room, then how come he owns all these institutions in Pune? How come he roams around in such expensive cars?)

380

The reference to Anna Hazare is highly instructive, given the surge of an anti-corruption sentiment that had swept the nation eight months ago via a popular movement under his leadership.[14] Naresh' inability to identify with Anna Hazare and his agenda also showed that deep down Naresh and possibly his other mandal colleagues like him, felt that *they* were the "corrupt" elements that were being targeted by Hazare's movement and the general sentiment of anti-corruption.[15] His factually vague accusations about Hazare's ownership of cars and institutions nevertheless is a telling instance of how in Naresh' judgement, the righteous sentiment of those espousing anti-corruption in Hazare's movement was aligned with owners of big cars and institutions in cities.

The powerlessness that underlay this lack of choice was perhaps best expressed by Dhawan,

> "*Sarvanna mahiti aahe, ki poornadesh pan chalu shakat nahi bhrashtachaarashivay, mag aapli vasti tar kay karnaar?*" (What can our vasti do, when everyone knows that even the whole country cannot run without corruption?)

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[14] Anna Hazare's indefinite hunger strike in April 2011, demanding the passage of an anti-corruption law, the Lokpal Bill, led to a swell of support from various sections of the middle class of the Indian society (though this profile of supporters remains highly debated), resulting into nation-wide protests, processions and candle-light marches, fuelled by electronic and television media. The discourse of corruption and citizens' profound disillusionment with the failure of the state to address this question pervaded the public discourse during the three months following Hazare's fast. Various sections of the organized and independent Left critiqued Hazare's movement, accusing it as being a media-fuelled middle class spectacle, which conceptualized corruption in a narrow sense and which endorsed a highly authoritarian, undemocratic institution like Lokpal with sweeping powers. Various sections from Dalit activists and Muslim public sphere also distanced themselves from the movement, branding it as upper caste or as tinged with Hindu right wing motifs. The class character of the movement, its revolutionary/ regressive potential and its conceptualizations of corruption were some of the broad themes which were the topic of hot debates in the public sphere across various forums that the movement spawned. Some enlightening perspectives can be found on www.kafila.org, www.dalitmuslims.com

[15] In an article critiquing the narrow conceptualization of corruption by Hazare's movement, Sengupta (2011) shows how siphoning of money, accepting monetary favors etc. is the most visible and fiercely attacked form of corruption in Hazare's movement. The latter however, completely invisibilizes other forms of corruption like low wages and state-violence and unaccountability. In this light, it was not surprising that Naresh felt targeted by the movement's rhetoric, for having accepted money in return for votes.

The discourse of corruption in politics in the Indian context has always been tied to a distinct class and caste dynamic historically. Hansen (1999) points towards the notion of politics as being corrupt and dirty which consolidated in the 70s and 80s in India, as the upper caste elite had to contend with the increasing lower caste/ class assertion in political decision making in the wake of an increasing democratization of Indian polity.

At the same time, in recent times, social scientists have emphasized that it is only through the realms of informal practices defined as corrupt and through a substructure of paralegal arrangements that marginalized and dispossessed sections of the urban populace in India manage to sustain their access to livelihoods, shelter and other basic necessities (Visvanathan 2013; Roy 2011; Sengupta 2011; Bayat 2000; Chatterjee 2001). Dhawan's comment then, cannot be read as refusal to take responsibility of their allegedly corrupt acts, but is a poignant questioning of the system which routes life opportunities and possibilities of attaining self-worth and dignity only through illegal, corrupt acts for urban working class or Dalit men.

I suggest that their understanding of their participation in morally suspect acts surrounding electoral politics as unavoidable rather than as a choice, was a powerful commentary by the Mang men in this vasti on the praxis of electoral politics itself; it was an indictment of the systemic violence that left them with no choice but to participate in acts labeled as corruption in order to feel any sense of worth and value, but which condemned them at the same time as being the perpetrators of this corruption.[16]

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[16] In his recent ethnography on bureaucracy, Gupta (2012) focuses on narratives of corruption of low and high level state officials as means through which the rural poor in North India imagine the state as well as themselves as citizens. The young men's simultaneous desire for and criticism of what were deemed as acts of corruption in the

In Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate the ways in which the vasti and galli spaces are intrinsic to the logic of electoral politics in the city of Pune. I trace this centrality to the distinct culture of electoral politics that evolved in post-Independence India, one which was articulated in fundamental ways to structures of caste and class in urban India; an upshot of this is that localized entities like small neighborhoods and neighborhood associations, which condense specific constellations of caste and class within them often are elevated to be the primary units of electoral mobilization of the urban poor within this culture. I contend that on account of the essential spatial idiom that both, political parties and electoral constituencies have to employ to participate in the electoral process results in a further consolidation of the alignment of space with class and caste identity for the residents of the galli.

Further, reflecting the acutely masculinized contours of the realm of politics itself in urban India, participation in local politics in the galli is an explicitly gendered terrain, inhabited mostly by young members of neighborhood associations, who through their familiarity with local political equations, experience temporarily a sense of mastery over the galli and indeed over the city space itself. Their enthusiastic participation in a terrain which celebrates masculine qualities of control, expertise, political acumen, a street-smart ability to negotiate with power and upholding of a class-based morality is undoubtedly a powerful means for these young men to

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elections indicative of their relationship to the state: as one marked by the limited avenues that were available for them to participate in it or to avail of its benefits.

383

reclaim a sense of power and self-worth refracted through distinct masculine ideals. While negotiating the morally sticky terrain of electoral politics, the young mandal members implicitly articulated their lack of agency in choosing to indulge in corrupt acts; but explicitly, the idealized notion of the mandal still provided them with a mode to reconcile these dilemmas and project an image which testified to their loyalty and commitment.

The galli in the spacetime of the election became the material site for the realization of a sense of value and power for the young men; simultaneously it also became the site which enabled them to locate themselves in the city's electoral process via their caste and class identities, entrenched and manifested in the concrete space of this galli. I contend that in the light of their marginalized status outside the galli as Mang, uneducated (and often unemployed) young men, the temporary, but intense experience of self-worth, power and a semblance of control in the galli, bound their affective worlds deeply to this place. This contributed to a large extent towards limiting the young men's imaginations of gaining a life of dignity, opportunity, their notions of future and respect to the space of the galli within the cityscape. Seen from the outside, these processes imply a fixing of the galli ever more firmly in the spatio-political regime of the city, circumscribed by stark caste and class co-ordinates.

From the Field Notes

September 21, 2011

One September evening, five months before the election, as I wind up an intense
fieldwork day in the vasti, I am surprised to see all the boys gathered in the galli, with
their respective bikes and scooters, an unmistakable sense of anticipation bristling around
the group. "*Vicky Chavhan chi party aahe, yenaar ka?*" (Vicky Chavhan is throwing a
party, you want to come along?)Vikas invites me, his usual indifferent demeanor replaced
today with bubbly boyish excitement. Of course I would go. Hurriedly I start my scooter
and join the gang of bikers, as we noisily make our way through the narrow lane towards
the main street.

Vicky Chavhan is the son of Vinay Chavhan, a senior leader in the Congress Party and a
long-standing member of state legislature from Pune. Recently Vicky has been elected as
the vice-president of the city Congress branch and hence has organized a big bash to
thank all his supporters and the party cadre. With the local municipal corporation election
barely six months away, this bash is a sign of things to come: the first in a series of favors
and overtures, trickling from higher levels of party leadership to the local karyakartas
(party cadre), the latter mostly made up of young boys and men, like the ones in the
group that set out from Moti Peth that evening.

Suresh Bhandari, the local Congress leader in the vasti is in charge of the evening. I
figure this out at our first pit stop which was the nearest petrol pump. Suresh bhau, with
his stocky build and large protruding eyes, stands next to the filling station and barks out
directions to the boys to line up their bikes and scooters. With a bunch of keys in one
hand and a cell phone in the other, he directs the petrol pump attendant to fill in petrol
worth INR 30 in each scooter. Every part of this bash is sponsored, including the trip to
and back from the venue of the party.

I also wait in the line; though when my turn comes, Suresh bhau walks over and tells the
attendant to put in fuel worth INR 50. I make weak sounds of resistance but already know
that what matters here is not what I think of the privilege I am given, but the fact that
Suresh bhau stamps his authority by taking arbitrary decisions about who gets how much
of the party largesse. And that he underlines his power by showing his familiarity with
the currency of power: privilege. Before we leave Suresh bhau raises his voice and makes
a leader-like announcement, "*Konihi vedivakdi gaadi chalwaychi naahi! Aadhich*

vatavaran tanga ahe" (No one is to drive rashly! The atmosphere is already tense!) Why will the atmosphere be tense because a few hundred Congress cadres from all over the city are headed to a Congress bash, I wonder.

It is hard not to notice us as we emerge out on the busy Patel street, as a loud and noisy pack of motorbikes and scooters. The younger boys let out a couple of shrill, high-pitched whoops attracting a lot of attention. Their excitement is palpable. Those amongst them who are pillion riders are gesturing and screaming out things to each other and at times, casually saying things to pedestrians as we zoom by them. Forty minutes later we are fighting our way through a traffic-jammed narrow lane in order to get to Krishna Lawns, where the party is being held.

The scene inside is incredible. A huge stage is set up at one end of the expansive Krishna Lawns. Two life-size cutouts of Vicky Chavhan smiling beatifically tower above the stage, beyond which one can see the yellow-lit drawing rooms in high-rises located behind Krishna Lawns. We are in National Society, an up-market residential neighbourhood in Pune dotted with several gated communities and building complexes.

The stage is book-ended by five-feet tall black walls of loudspeakers which are belting out, very suggestively, the title song of the latest Salman Khan blockbuster, "Bodyguard." "*Sabkiaan, sabkishaan, sabka ek bhai jaan, aa gaya hain dekho Bodyguard!*" (He is everyone's pride and he is everyone's dignity, he is everyone's big brother, here he comes, the Bodyguard!) "Feel the heat, feel the beat, feel the powerrrr," the song goes, as the huge walls of speakers shudder and tremble with each beat of the song. A stout thirty-something Vicky Chavhan, dressed in a crisp white shirt tucked inside blue jeans, stands in the center of the stage. He is surrounded by a couple of dozen men, handing him bouquets of flowers, hugging him and shaking his hand, as two or three photographers capture these shots.

By the time I take in all this, I realize that the mandal members have already made it to the stage and are surrounding Vicky, shaking his hand, getting themselves photographed with him. I notice that Chotu and Dhawan have found themselves a couple of chairs on one side of the stage and are sitting in it and are playacting like they were leaders, waving to us below and joining their hands in supplication like politicians do. They love every moment of it.

As soon as everyone gets off the stage, there is a mad rush to catch dinner. For the umpteenth time since we left Moti Peth, I am told that, "*Aaplya party madhe non-veg asnaar aahe!*" (There is going to be non-vegetarian (food) in our party!). There are several buffet tables along the sides of the lawns where young boys are thronging for biryani. After unsuccessful attempts at three overcrowded tables, we finally succeed. Balancing Styrofoam plates heaped with biryani and watery salad, we walk to a patch on the lawns and sit down to eat.

Conversation around dinner is enlightening. Some of the mandal members chat with friends they meet from other parts of the city. Others evaluate other karyakarte. Chotu cracks a joke about some boys' clothes, they actually came wearing track pants to the party, he sneers contemptuously. I notice that all mandal members are dressed in their Sunday best. Ganesh tells Chetan about the enormous money that Surendra Pawar has given to Mecca Masjid in Moti Peth neighborhood. Surendra Pawar is hopeful of contesting the municipal elections from our ward from the Congress party and the donation to Mecca Masjid is an advance bid to win over the significant Muslim electorate in this ward.

By this time a melee seems to have erupted on the stage. A national level bodybuilding champion has been invited for the party and his arrival on the stage has triggered off another wave of excitement amongst the boys. This time Vicky is clearly marginalized as everyone surges to meet the man with bulging muscles, with their hands raised in unison to take his picture with their cell phones. Mr. Serious Muscles is the entertainment of the evening. He obliges gladly. The karyakarte from Moti Peth fight their way through and Shailu, Dhawan, Chotu and Akash get a photo taken with the body building champion.

I stare at the scene ahead of me and the evening suddenly comes together in my head: this isn't simply a fun evening with free biryani for the young men in the vasti. The time and space extending from Moti Peth to Krishna Lawns today evening belongs to them in a way that is different from any other time. Their spiffy clothes, the spring in their step and the freedom with which they ride the bikes tonight bespeaks to the fact that this is a special occasion. It also is an occasion that makes them feel special: they are important enough for someone to pay for them to come to a party, where their favourite goodies have been ordered specially for them: biryani, Salman Khan, the bodybuilder.

"*Aapli party!*"(Our party!). How many times have I heard this being said today evening. This is a spacetime they feel fully entitled to inhabit, that is rightfully theirs to claim and enjoy. For the young men, whose confidence deserts them outside their narrow lane in Moti Peth, aapli party elevates them to a place of value, even if it is for a few hours and restricted to a wedding venue in an upmarket locality of the city. Aapli party though, is not just a social space that is rightfully "ours." Aapli party is also a chance to participate in a masculine world, the collective celebration of which affirms the masculinity of its participants while simultaneously providing them with ideals of being a man.

Vicky Chavhan, Salman Khan, the bodybuilder, each represented distinct yet overlapping idioms of masculinity for the young men; Vicky as the politically suave, caring elder brother, the bodybuilder as embodied brawn, and Salman Khan representing both these ideals, as the tough and brawny bhai jaan, who has a golden heart, evoking a fierce sense of loyalty, who bestows you with dignity and respect.

Despite this aura of awe and excitement around Vicky's party, I believe that the mandal members' own incipient "expertise" in the world of politics meant that they were not unaware of the fact that events like these constitute mere strategy for political parties; I am not sure that any of the mandal members really expected a politician of Vicky's stature to extend support or help to them individually; nevertheless, I suspect that the tantalizing brush with the world of political power and the sense of importance that they could legitimately claim, far outweighed the tacit realization that these occasions were mere strategy or posturing.

As we are planning to leave, there is anxious discussion amongst everyone about informing Suresh bhau before we leave. I sense the need to make sure that we act responsibly towards Suresh bhau, almost like if we leave without telling him it will be like letting him down or embarrassing him before his peers. With the needful finally done, Suresh bhau's permission obtained to leave, we head out. We are a gaggle of excited young men (me being the only woman in the vast sea of young boys and men), busy debriefing about the food, the bodybuilder, Vicky's chances and the upcoming elections. Shailu tells me animatedly of one occasion when in a crowded political rally he suddenly found himself face to face with Vicky Chavhan. Vicky extended his hand to me and said, "*Kay re!*" (Hey you!)to me before going ahead, he told me, with obvious pride in his voice.

Conclusion

Arsefuckers Park I[17]

There are neither flowers
Nor leaves;
Neither trees
Nor birds.
All this is mimicry by mercy of His grace:
Sealed fragrance of musk.
Thus the chains on one's legs are transformed
Into music…

> O revealed friend! O gardener!
> What shall I recall?
> Tears flood the soil of your sensibility.
> In the morning and in the evening,
> On your sterile field of silence,
> Home Guards perform their drill.
> On some festive day, a pederast politician
> A Councillor preaches here.
> The dancing water-pot of goddess Yellamma.
> And an all-India women's conference…

Pimps confessing
To a study group of streetwalkers.
Politicised crows listening to the proceedings.
Charas smokers, *ganja* smokers;
Pickpockets and thieves.
A mortal forest in the hurt heart.
O Arsefuckers Park!
What sad hour you've chosen
To strike at my roots.
Praise and curse;
Arousal and ears.
An eternity of darkness

> Arsefuckers Park!
> Your city of insatiable angels.

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[17] Excerpted from Namdev Dhasal's "Gandu Bagicha" (Arsefuckers Park) (1986), translated from the Marathi by Dilip Chitre (2007).

Untitled

After eating *chaat* at Pandara Road she would often insist
On going to Khan Market for shawarma.
He who grew up eating only yogurt, beaten rice and pickle
began to tuck into prawns at "Sidewok."
The first taste of Chettinaad Chicken
at Swagath Restaurant at Defence Colony
drove him crazy.
He was now beginning to have it in him
to deal
with the embarrassment of being found
on a ladies seat in the bus.
Now he no longer withdrew his shoulder
from under her resting head.[18]

Cities deserve poetry. Reminders of their twisted places and unkind ways, a celebration of

their ought- to-be-lived havens and yet-to-be-achieved utopias and demands of accountability

and justice from their seamless histories.In "Arsefuckers Park" reputed Dalit poet Namdev

Dhasal portrays powerfully the urban, (allegedly) immoral wasteland, reclaimed by the

marginalized and the faithless in a park in the city of Mumbai. Ravish Kumar, in his deeply

personal musings about finding love in the city (or finding the city, in love) charts his own

journey from a small town to the cosmopolitan spaces of Delhi, a gradual gaining of confidence

in the ways of the big city enough, *not* to conceal his affections for his lover in the city.

Not everyone gets to write poetry about cities however. And not all cities get poetry. As I

make my concluding remarks regarding men's lives which are shaped in cities and which in turn

shape cities, I attempt to weave in this realization, in tracing my way back from Dhasal's

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[18] Borrowed from "Ishq Mein Shahar Hona," by Ravish Kumar (2015), 55. I am thankful to Chris Mary Kurian for translating it from the Hindi for me.

Mumbai and Kumar's Delhi to Shailu's Facebook ode to Pune. In this concluding section, I recapitulate the enmeshment between urban space, caste and masculinity in Pune, while simultaneously reflecting on the larger questions that emerge out of these articulations. Some of the themes that I elucidate in these concluding remarks revolve around gendered access to the city's resources and to knowledge-making about the city (inflected by caste and place), negotiating the terms of inquiry for masculinity in urban India, and the hierarchy of knowledges about cities themselves. This dissertation has traced how gender and urban are mutually constitutive categories in contemporary India; however, it also has shown how both these categories are inflected by caste (and class) in fundamental ways. In this concluding section, I reiterate some of these arguments and elaborate briefly upon newer areas of research and intervention which my research points towards.

City and its men

The preceding chapters have illustrated how markers of being a man or of manliness in the vasti were intimately tied to the referents in the city. In gaining access to and "fitting in" in certain spaces of the city and in gaining mastery over the city's inner workings, the achievement (or not) of masculinity unfolded along peths, gallis, mandals and eateries in Pune. The city as embodying its people, was a crucial presence in not just the physical itineraries of Mang men; their constructions of themselves as working class, as Mang, and as men relied heavily on performing distance from or proximity to certain spaces and certain kinds of ethos manifested in the city and spaces beyond (refer to, for instance, the young men's relationship to 755 slum, KFC, "standar areas" and Khadki Dapodi in Chapter II or Sunny efforts to stand apart from the

vasti's conservatism in Chapter III). Constructing the gendered self then, was undeniably a spatial endeavor for the young men in the vasti, replete with strategies of alignment with and distinction from the social body of the city.

The spatial nature of construction of themselves as certain kinds of men however, also incorporated the process of "placing" themselves within distinct temporal realms of the city's life. Thus while "slow" life in the galli as compared to the rapidly-changing city outside of the galli indexed an admission of a lack, nostalgia for the "golden days" of the mandal was partly recuperative. The young men's participation in a strict regime of control of young women's time and space stood in direct contrast with their uncertainty about their future and their abilities as a breadwinner, reflected so starkly in their ambivalence about leaving the galli. These instances illustrate how their gendered identities were relational, a product of a constant negotiation with their specific locations in time and space of the city's life.

The preceding chapters have also shown that, what the young men in the galli aligned with or distanced themselves from, in order to become certain kind of men, was dictated singularly by aspirational imperatives (to consume like standar people, to do "smart work," to not *look* low caste, to do local politics) and moral imperatives (to be considered as performers of selfless "madat," friendship and loyalty, as possessing integrity, as being guided by an ethical compass). Achieving manhood for the young vasti residents thus flowed from their negotiations with the demands of an aggressively changing ethos of the city as well as from their attempts to respond to their enmeshment in caste and class structures entrenched in Pune's historical urban trajectory.

As the earlier chapters have illustrated, the gendered spacetime of the galli enabled their performances of moral masculinity and imbricated the young men in intensely local networks of

political brokering, thus transforming the galli into a crucial recuperative site for the galli's men. Yet, the galli became a fraught site for the young men: as a site which made available to the young men precisely those freedoms not available to them outside the limits of Moti Peth, the galli served as an implicit, spatialized reminder to the young men of their marginalization. On the one hand it was a place of belonging and social support networks where they felt valued, and on the other, of self-denigration and stigma, all of which tied their caste identity intimately to their place. We can see how the galli reproduced unequal relations of caste and space in the city of Pune through the men's consistent ambivalence towards stepping outside the galli (physically or in terms of their imaginations of future and success) and in the severely restricted opportunities of acquiring substantive employment or cultural capital. The city's geography of exclusion could thus be plotted on to the galli, like several hundred gallis which crisscrossed the eastern peths.

While this summary illustrates the ways in which the city is implicated in the dynamic process of producing young men's sense of manliness (or not), I ask myself whether the framing of these insights suggests a privileging of the role of the city in making men as opposed to a more reciprocal relationship wherein men also make the city. I use this concern as an entry point to discuss the question of men as products of the city's social and spatial relations and also as active makers of the city itself and to examine the relevance of caste, access to resources and knowledge-making about the city, to these processes.

Men and their city

The preceding chapters show how the young men in the vasti claim and own the city as reflected in their every day practices. Their excited discussions about Pune's underworld, predictions during the election time, or their efforts to fit in at a KFC, evinced a constant striving to make the city legible and script themselves in it. Their daily engagement with the city (ranging from discussing tea shops in the peth areas to political gossip to complicated rules and policies of the municipal corporation) and the everyday occupation of the city for work, leisure or consumption in itself constituted making the city anew through their practices. The young men did not merely plug into the intricate, subterranean informal networks of work, practices and knowledge that made up the city; they actively regenerated and sustained these networks through their participation. Also, it would be reductionist and naïve to suggest that Pune, its history of inequality and its social ethos represented a "blueprint" of a low caste/ working class gendered identity for the young men to passively fit themselves into; as is evident in the section above, the young men actively used their affective, embodied and social resources in continual relation to the city's history and geography to fashion a caste- and place-based gendered identity for themselves.

The recognition of the ordinary ways in which the urban poor continue to shape, claim and build the city flows from a larger academic imperative that noted planner Ananya Roy (2011) terms as "subaltern urbanism" (226). This imperative seeks to challenge the earlier representations in urban studies of poverty and slums as sources of disruption in the journey of a city, and aims to restore the agency of the urban poor in the city's life, by highlighting their entrepreneurial capacity, subversive acts and resistance, especially in the cities of the Southern

397

hemisphere (226-229).[19] While I certainly subscribe to this perspective of recognizing the urban

poor as makers of the city or as agents in the city, and agree that the young men in Moti Peth

undoubtedly were agents of making their neighborhood and their city in the way they inhabited

these spaces and re/imagined them, the lens of subaltern urbanism, I believe, is inadequate to

capture how young men here related to the city, in its entirety.

For instance, the distancing and alignment that the men in the vasti performed vis-à-vis city

spaces and certain kinds of ethos in the city are without doubt a proactive exercise to belong to

the city and to stake a claim in the city's membership. However, the terms of this distancing and

alignment, I argue, are driven by the hegemonic ethos of the city, defined by new imaginaries of

success and consumption on the one hand and by the Brahminical imperatives of moral and

material "improvement," achieved through education and culture. Being "unrecognizable" in

KFC or settling in an area away from the vasti were crucial endeavors since they would validate

the hegemonic moral value implicit in *not* being a resident of the "slum area" or a "vasti" and

partaking in upper caste, middle class norms of respectability that consumption assumes

(speaking in English, dressing a certain way, bodily comportment etc.). Rejection of aspirations

to become a bhai was a matter of pride, because it underlined the strength of the moral-ethical

compass of the youth in this area, who were assumed to indulge in these immoral activities by

default, given their low caste and lower class status.

That the young men did not stake their claim on the city in terms of their labor or their

specialized knowledge is however, a telling comment on the history of unequal social and spatial

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[19] As I have already pointed out in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, Roy (2011) is cautious about an indiscriminate application of the approach of subaltern urbanism in studying the subaltern politics in the global South.

relations of the city. This history precluded them from regarding either their labor or their

knowledge of the city as carrying any value for the making of their gendered selves or for the

making of the city and giving the city its identity. That the above mentioned attempts were

heavily oriented towards becoming someone other than who they were, in order to qualify to

belong to the city's social and moral body, alerts us against an unqualified celebration of the

everyday claiming of and occupation of the city spaces by the young men. The earlier chapters

are replete with instances of how these attempted moves by the young men (to transition from

deemed disreputable to respectable and moral, low caste to "standar," slum area to flat residents)

were marked with a high degree of ambivalence, with a constant back-and-forth between the

desired ideal and the safety of known contexts. Self-denigration, doubt and lack of value seep

through several narratives which I have presented in the earlier chapters, and are a product of this

trying process of constant desiring and simultaneous pushing away, from both their city of

aspirations and the vasti alternately.

This process resonates strongly with Paik's (2014) historical analysis of the struggles of

Dalit women in Pune to obtain an education and the resultant dilemmas it produced for a section

of second and third generation educated, middle class Dalits in Pune. Paik (2014) describes the

everyday negotiations of lower-middle class and middle class Dalit women with their Dalit

markers, at times modifying their language, dress, food habits or names to conform to an

aesthetic and a normative ideal defined by the "Puneri" (20) culture.[20] Drawing upon Fanon and

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[20] Paik (2014) clarifies her use of the term "Puneri," by saying that it refers specifically to the, "…quintessential
Brahmani ethos of Pune" (20). She elaborates upon these modifications in terms of the third generation Dalit women
imitating the Puneri Marathi intonation and pronunciation, or giving up eating beef, or adopting surname suffixes
like "*kar*," which indexed a Brahmin surname and so on. Paik (2014) terms these practices collectively as the,
"…complicated aesthetic of the Dalit self" (233). This resonates heavily with Jonas Brothers' attempts at erasing

Du Bois' radical work on colonized minds, Paik (2014) contends that the constant tussle between

disavowing and embracing their Dalithood produced something akin to a "double consciousness"

(Du Bois, as cited in Paik, 2014: 234) for one section of the new entrants or aspirants to the

middle class space of the city. Importantly, she describes the inclination of Dalit families to

move out of slums to gain respectability, given the fact that the slum itself, "…became a

metaphor for the Dalit" (234).

The transition from "City and its Men," to "Men and their City," would thus entail

reversing the question: how Dalit men (and/ or the subaltern) make their city should become the

starting point in understanding urban spaces. This question however, cannot be divorced from

the formers' redeeming of a sense of value to *where* they belong, in terms of caste and place, and

from posing a challenge to the hegemonic prescriptions of what and who constitute the city and

its dwellers. The process of reclaiming value of one's caste and place location and owning it is

not different from Dalit political subject formation, which Rao (2011) terms as a process of,

"remaking the caste self and the caste body—the experiential site of stigma—through acts of

political re-signification" (625). As a "theoretical outsider" (Sarukkai 2012: 33) to the

experience of caste-based exclusion and stigma, it is hardly my place to "prescribe" the best way

to achieve political subjectivity or to predict accurately the trajectory of this process for any caste

subaltern, including for the young men in the vasti. However, my ethnographic data allows me to

speculate that the process of re-signifying "Mang-ness" and "Moti Peth" might proceed along a

complex itinerary similar to the one described by Paik (2014) above: a continual back and forth

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their caste identity from their bodies and becoming like those who frequent KFC on the one hand, while claiming
pride at Mang men's propensity to help others and extend selfless madat (Chapter II).

between a simultaneous desire to own caste and disown it, to own place and reject it, to conform to the requisites of an aspiring neoliberal city and of the respectable upper caste city and question its hegemony. Which among these moments, caught between these two contradictory impulses, will be generative of a new consciousness or articulation for the young men, is a narrative that can only belong to the latter.

What my work can legitimately do however, is to contribute to a critical gendered geography of caste within the city and to an understanding of the ways in which urban social and spatial structures sustain exclusion in the city. I hope both of these contributions are relevant to the subaltern project of marking caste and place locations with an alternative, political meaning. Ethnography of the city is a political project not just in terms of the kind of knowledge that it produces of the city and its processes, but also in terms of the way in which this knowledge can facilitate the generation of new knowledges about the city and new claims on the city. It is to this aspect that I turn to in the following section.

Cities and poetry

As emphasized in the introduction of this dissertation, the objective of my ethnographic project was to understand the acutely political nature of place-making. As the preceding chapters have shown, the processes of caste and class-based exclusion have contributed to and continue to firmly embed Moti Peth and the galli in the city's social, economic and political life as a "backward area," thus also simultaneously justifying the marginalization of Moti Peth from the city's aspirations and concrete interventions to fulfill those aspirations. My focus on the city's

trajectory of urbanization from 18th century onwards and on how this trajectory intersects with contemporary urban processes does not aim to merely portray Moti Peth as a "victim" of historical and contemporary urban processes. In fact, I argue that making explicit this history of unequal spatial relations will constitute a platform from where to demand justice, inclusion and accountability from the city today. Similarly, I ague that highlighting the ways in which Moti Peth (and other eastern peths) is linked to the making of the city's everyday life and the city's identity through labor, through associational culture of mitra mandals and through the creation of specialized knowledge (albeit not recognized as that) of the city will be central to the project of claiming the city. It will make visible the relationship of Moti Peth to the city which was hitherto masked by the dominant narrative of the city.

In joining a large body of recent research on the "urban" situated in India specifically and in South Asia at large, I hope that this ethnography contributes to the larger process of producing knowledge from locations which have not been addressed adequately by the Euro-North American-centric urban theory and conceptual frames. In locating my ethnography in Pune within the larger contemporary research on the urban (whether in anthropology or in urban studies), I refer to Robinson's (2002) critique of urban theory, which she claims is marked largely by, "the categorizing impulse" (549). Robinson refers to the tendency among urban theorists to locate cities within a certain classificatory system, thereby inadvertently creating hierarchies of urban areas. For instance, the enthusiasm to measure how each city scores on its relative relevance to global structures of finance, exemplified by the "world cities" approach, might thus make irrelevant several cities and urban areas in the South which do not fit into this narrow categorization. In a similar vein, in its attempt to locate cities within broad categories like "the gendered city;" "the postcolonial city;" "the contested city;" or "the sacred city" (Low

1999), ethnographic enquiry on the urban might lose out on how the sacred and the contested nature of the city might have in fact been shaped by its postcolonial and/ or its gendered histories.

These hierarchies operate not just on a global scale but also in the context of Indian cities. Most research in the last fifteen years on urban India has overwhelmingly focused on its metropolises, as the exemplary locales of the experience of aggressive neoliberal transformation underway in India and of colonial and post-colonial India's negotiations with modernity (See Prakash, 2002; Nandy, 2001). My research shifts focus to non-metropolitan cities like Pune, which do not yet figure on the itinerary of ethnographic research, but which need greater attention in order to make place for their particular alignments of exclusions, aspirations and desires in the definition of urban India today. Contemporary research provides sophisticated analyses of how the neoliberal discourse, class and gender are intrinsic to the evolving definitions and practice of "cityness" in India. But what does "cityness" do to the public life of and lived experience of caste and how does caste - intersecting with class, gender and religion - mold the contours of being a city in return? These are questions which have received scant attention in hitherto research. Against this background, my research contributes to a deeper understanding of the articulations between caste and the city.

My work demonstrates how the public culture of voluntary associations and the praxis of electoral politics in Pune represent post-colonial urban forms of association and informality, which make available peculiar modes of mobilizing Mang identity and of locating this identity in the city's social, cultural and political life. These modes of mobilization rely on claiming a virtuous, moral self on the one hand and validating a relationship of patronage with political

actors in order to stake a claim on the city's resources, on the other. Importantly, my research has illustrated how Mang political subjectivity, shaped by the caste group's rejection of claiming a Dalit identity, has shaped the city's life in uneven ways. It feeds the city's "menial" labor regime and molds (along with other caste groups) the political and associational culture of the city, resulting in the continuing tenacity of the geography of exclusion in the city. The chapters in this dissertation have illustrated in detail how the lived experience of caste for the vasti men was heavily mediated by their location in the transforming city, in social and material terms.

I hope that my research provides an entry point into further research on the above themes, which go beyond mere descriptions of caste-based exclusions reproduced in smaller cities, and focus on how caste, in conjunction with the city's historical context and with urban processes, is articulated to realms of consumption or to the informal realms of life in the city. Can Dalit citizens' experience of the city be subsumed under the broad category of the "urban poor" in the metropolitan and non-metropolitan cities in India today? How can ethnography of urban spaces come to be a fruitful methodology for the study of changing contours of caste and the processes through which caste-based, gendered identities are consolidated, challenged or reproduced in urban India? How is the career of a caste group mapped onto the city's history and spatial organization and what does that do to the experience of caste for its members? My dissertation flags off some of these questions as themes for future research in the hope that these questions will shift the research focus also towards non-metropolitan urban centers in India and on caste, a fundamental axis along which cities in India continue to be spatially and socially organized.

I go back to the warning sounded off byAnjaria and McFarlane (2011) that though the massive restructuring underway in South Asian cities prompted by neoliberal development is

surely a crucial framing concern for research on the city in South Asia, one has to steer clear of reified accounts of the neoliberal juggernaut sweeping through the city (5-7). They emphasize that neoliberal development could constitute one possibility among many others, and that it is shaped by a multiplicity of factors including the local political economic ethos and historical contexts (ibid). In the context of the young men in Moti Peth, it is true that neoliberal development shapes not only their desires and aspirations, but also sharpens their sense of caste-based exclusion in the city. However as the earlier chapters have demonstrated, this hardly exhausts the explanatory frames through which we can delineate the complex enmeshment between history, urban space and caste in Pune.

This is crucial for future research in non-metropolitan cities in India, in that it alerts us to the fact that our inquiry should not be directed by an attempt to look for developments which mirror the experience of contemporary Indian metropolises (the latter's experience itself being shaped by historical, political and social factors specific to each metropolis). This research should consciously train the ethnographic gaze on to the specific constellation of factors, in terms of historical trajectory, caste and community histories, political culture, regimes of informality, which shape the city in material and discursive terms. Only then can each city get the poetry that it deserves.

At this point, I go back to where I began, to Shailu's poetic Facebook tribute to his city. Against the backdrop of discussions around exclusion, cities, caste and poetry, Shailu's post poses two questions. Will his expression get counted as poetry about the city? And, might Sonali, Priya, Rashmi, Madhu and other young women in the vasti also create poetry dedicated to the city? The political agenda underlying ethnography of the city points our inquiry towards

the question, "who belongs to city and how?" This is connected intimately to, "who can create knowledge about the city and how?" If knowledge-making about and the ability to representthe city indexes staking a claim on the city itself, then the process of representing oneself as part of the city, or the city as part of one's self would be transformative for all city dwellers, more so for those marginalized from the city's life.

As I turn my sights towards the future areas of possible research and intervention, I would like to engage with the question as to whether and how my ethnographic insights about the city can play a role in countering dominant narratives of the city by generating conversations around the themes of exclusion and aspirations within the vasti, in Moti Peth, and in the eastern peths more broadly to enable the youth in these communities to articulate their experiences of the city.This will require taking my research insights back to the field and will require conceptual work of a different kind, via translating these insights into concrete methods of public engagement such as public workshops, writing groups or neighborhood based projects around the themes of gendered space, caste, aspirations, work, surveillance. More importantly it will necessitate an ethical mode of transacting the above methods in a way that does not reproduce the researcher-researched and caste power relations or in a way that does not transform the insights of my research into perceived judgements on the young men and women by the researcher.

If the process of my research and writing has allowed me to access the ways in which I am complicit in and relate to the city and its people, I hope that my research insights might similarly provide a platform from where to elicit from young people in Moti Peth their experiences of being the city and the contours of their desire to belong to the city. Surely, some

of these narratives are present in my dissertation; they are present in terms however, mediated heavily by my researcher's editorial authority. It is only in the minimization of this editorial authority that the process of generating new knowledges can take root. The visibility accorded to these narratives in itself might contribute to a forging and consolidation of their relationship with the city's spaces on their own terms.

On researching men

As I have mentioned in the introduction, current discussions around gendered violence and urban space have influenced the direction in which I chose to frame my ethnography, which was not originally intended to be about men's gendered identities. In light of a monolithic hegemonic view of lower class/ caste men as a violent and dangerous problem, and an uncritical, punitive approach towards this "menace," ethnographic studies such as these which highlight the vulnerability that contemporary cities produce in young, subaltern men hold the key to direct our attention to underlying structural violence rather than narrowly blame those who are also at the receiving end of this violence. The preceding chapters have made it evident that "masculinity" for the young men in the vasti is hardly a given, fixed attribute of their manliness. The allegedly "natural" attributes of masculinity in a starkly gender-segregated context (like being courageous, capable of earning a living, being respectable, being familiar with the public realm) have to be achieved and negotiated continually through men's relationships with women, with other men and with the spaces and practices institutionalized in the city. The experience and narratives of the young men of themselves as men cannot be neatly distinguished from their experiences of marginalization as Mang, as working class or as those who hail from Moti Peth.

Conversations, academic and non-academic, around gendered access to the city cannot be framed in terms of (middle class) women's right to the city versus lower class/ caste men's right to the city's social life and its economic opportunities. However, this endeavor is arduous, one which demands a continuous delicate balance between empathy and sensitivity to how class or caste or gendered privileges weigh in for each case differently. Also, these conversations have to be alert to *not* obliterate the figure of the Dalit woman and her relationship to the city, in opposing the simplistic binary of middle class women versus low caste men. Thus in researching further the masculinized contours of the realms of local political brokering or mandal culture, we cannot ignore the exclusions that this masculinization produces in terms of gendered access to the city's political, economic and cultural resources.

A crucial insight of my ethnography is that caste and class based vulnerabilities fuel assertions of patriarchal privileges among the young men in Moti Peth. In Chapter II, I have briefly touched upon the unmistakably hyper-masculine tropes used in the attempts to recover dignity and respect for being Mang, rife in the virtual space of Facebook. In this context, public engagement projects which might present ways for Mang youth to recover value in their location (of caste and of place) might be highly relevant as an alternative route to recuperate their sense of being men. While upper caste masculine presence has been researched in the context of discursive formations of masculinity in colonial and post-colonial India (see Srivastava 2014, Sinha 1991), the articulations between masculinity, lived experience of caste, and the public life of a caste group in contemporary urban India present a theme fertile for further ethnographic research.

Following from the above contention, I want to point towards another potential area of interest for me, which my dissertation has opened up, and which research on gender and masculinity should attend to, not simply because it remains hugely under-researched, but also as a matter of politics within which any kind of knowledge-making is implicated. In its focus on poor, subaltern men, emergent research on men and masculinities in contemporary India (including mine), might contribute to a consolidation of the discourse of subaltern men's gendered identities as being constructed and shaped by caste, class and location, as opposed to the upper caste, middle class, urban man's *unmarked* masculinity. A sole focus on how subaltern men's masculinities are constructed/ contingent might inadvertently solidify the former into an "Other" to the unnamed masculinity of urban, upper caste or middle class men.[21] What are the dissonances and privileges that make up the urbane, upper caste man's sense of himself as a man and how is this figure as much a product of relational interactions with low caste/class men, low caste/ class women and middle class women? Given the fact that academic knowledge-making in modern India has been the preserve of the upper caste man (and now woman), this project will be a crucial intervention not just in the burgeoning area of research on men and masculinities but also in the process of creating a more self-reflective academy itself.

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[21] A recent special issue edited by Chowdhury and El-Baset (2015) represents an attempt to address some of these questions, as it invites male scholars to reflect upon the making of their masculine selves in conversation with feminist ideology. Similarly, recent literature on queer sexuality in India does look at questions of class and masculinity in their critique of the class bias of the LGBTQ rights movement in India (see Dasgupta and Gokulsing 2014).

Glossary of Terms

Aarti: Ritual worship of a Hindu deity, generally accompanied by singing of hymns and invocations with lit lamps.

Aanganwadi: Localized state-run outreach services which provide nutrition, immunization, pre-natal care and post-natal care for infants, toddlers and pregnant women in working class and poor settlements respectively.

Bachat gat: Self-help savings groups to be found largely in working class and poor settlements, mostly run by women.

*Eki***:** Unity, in Marathi.

*Fresh hone***:** A commonly used phrase to refer to the act of "freshening up." Reserved for evenings, this act generally entailed washing one's face and changing into a fresh set of clothes, in the context of the galli.

*Galli***:** A narrow alleyway or a lane. This term is often to refer to a specific neighborhood, especially in older parts of the city.

*Madat***:** Help or aid in Marathi.

*Mandal***:** Voluntary association or a neighborhood association based in middle class and working class neighborhoods in Pune. These are run exclusively by men from the respective neighborhoods.

Mardaangi: Masculinity, in Hindi

*Paar***:** Paar refers to a concrete ledge that is built around large trees. Paars are a peculiar feature of urban (and rural) Maharashtra, since they also serve as seating spaces and spaces for sociality in small neighborhoods.

*Peth***:** Pune city is divided into wards known as Peths. The original city had eighteen peths, which also constitutes the core of the old city of Pune today.

*Sarkari nokri***:** Government job, either with the city council, the state government or the central government.

Standar: The English word "standard" was interpreted and used as standar in the galli. Standar generally was used to refer to anything that indexed aclass or caste background which was much higher than what the galli residents perceived they belonged to. At times, it also refered to a certain comportment, way of dressing, language and behavior.

Tapori: Used to refer to a street-smart figure, part-hustler, part big-hearted young man. Used generally in the slang language that has originated in Mumbai, called Bambaiyya.

Vargani: Donations, which young male members from neighborhood associations used to collect from residents in the neighborhood as well as commercial establishments in the vicinity in order to fund the activities of the associations including celebrations of the ten-day Ganesh festival and the nine-day Navratri festival dedicated to Goddess Durga.

*Vasti***:** A settlement or human habitation. In recent times, vasti has come to refer specifically to those settlements categorized as slums in urban Maharashtra. Vasti thus has become a distinct spatial category in urban Maharashtra which indexes poor/ low caste/ working class localities in the city.

Veni: An intricately strung, U-shaped flower adornment, to be worn in women's hair.

*Waada***:** This refers to a house constructed along traditionally defined structure, since 17th century in the Deccan region (now Maharashtra). A typical waada will have a stone square shaped structure, two or even three stories high, with a courtyard in the middle. Several small waadas constructed in the early 20th century in the older part of Pune have now been taken over by dense shanties and shacks, blurring the boundaries between a waada and a vasti in many cases.

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EDUCATION

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Centre for Social Medicine and Community Health, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Master of Philosophy (M. Phil), June 2003
Dissertation title: *"A Social and Historical Analysis of the Relationship between Public Healthand Biomedicine."*
Institute of Women's Studies, Lahore, Certificate Course in Women's Studies, May 2003
University of Pune, India, Master of Arts in Sociology, July 2000
University of Pune, India, Certificate in Women's Studies, July 1999
Fergusson College, Pune, Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, July 1998

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Center for Advocacy in Mental Health (CAMH), Pune, India
Research Co-ordinator for research project titled, 'Health and Healing in Western Maharashtra: Role of Traditional Healing in Mental Health Service Delivery in Maharashtra',
November 2003-July 2007

▪ Extensive fieldwork on indigenous healing practices, including qualitative interviews and focus group discussions.
▪ Camera work and participation in research, conceptualization and post-production of two documentaries titled, '*Trick or Treat: an enquiry into the phenomenon of trance and spirit possession*' and '*With Rhyme and Reason: why traditional healing is relevant to mental health*', produced by CAMH, Pune.

Center for Advocacy in Mental Health (CAMH), Pune, India
Research Assistant, August 2002-January 2003

▪ Research and documentation on 'Mental Health Issues in Gujarat from a Gender Perspective'.

***Aalochana*, Center for Research and Documentation on Women, Pune, India**
Researcher, February-May 1999

- Research and documentation on atrocities against Dalits in the state of Maharashtra

PRESENTATIONS AND CONFERENCES

'Electoral Politics and Urban Space: A View from Below,' workshop on 'Social Science Approaches to Urban Studies', Institute of Economic Growth, Goa, December 2013

'The Ground Beneath their Feet: Articulating Property Regime to the Social Life of an Urban Neighbourhood,' presented at Modern South Asia Workshop, Yale University, March 2013

'Boyz II Men: Ganesh Mandals as Site of Masculine Identity,' conference on 'The Sacred and the City in South Asia', Stanford University, October 2012.

'A Hundred Slums, A Hundred Stories: An Analysis of Slum Dwellers' Response to Rehabilitation Programmes in Pune,' International Summer School on 'The City and the Village in Modern India' Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS), University of Goettingen, July 2012

'Making Sense of Place: Exploring the *Vasti* as Urban Commons,' conference on 'Contested Cities: Voices from the Margins' Pune University, January 2012

'Youth Collectives in Urban India: Intersection of Religion and Space in Identity Formation and Civic Participation,' conference on **'**Place/No Place: Spatial Aspects of Urban Asian Religiosity*,'* Syracuse University, October 2009

'Articulate Spaces: An Analysis of Urban Landscape in an Indian City,' Spring Lecture Series, South Asia Center, Syracuse University, March 2009

'Articulate Spaces: A Photo-Essay on the Culture of Writing *Vartaphalaks* in Pune City,' Photo-exhibition, Balgandharva Art Gallery, Pune, July 2007

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Visiting Faculty, Academic Writing Programme, Shiv Nadar University, Spring 2016, Monsoon 2015
Mentored Teaching Writing Fellow, Shiv Nadar University, Monsoon 2014

Teaching Assistant, Department of Anthropology, Syracuse University, between 2007 and 2010, for the following introductory courses in Anthropology:
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ANT 185, Global Encounters

Guest Lecture titled, **'Articulating Property Regime to Urban Space: The Case of Pune'**, School of Habitat Studies, Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai, February 2014

Guest Lecture titled, **'Understanding the Relevance of Indigenous Healing Systems for Health'**, Centre for Social Medicine and Community Health, JNU, New Delhi, November 2013

Guest Lecture titled, **'The City in Neo-Liberal India'**, ANT 121, Peoples and Cultures of the World, Department of Anthropology, Syracuse University, Syracuse, September 2012

Guest Lecture titled, **'Doing Ethnography: Methods and Concerns'**, Department of Sociology, Pune University, Pune, April 2012

Guest Lecture titled, **'Linking the Social to the Spatial: Understanding the Relationship between Citizenship and Urban Space'**, Department of Sociology, Fergusson College, Pune, February 2012

Guest Lecture titled, **'Whose City is it Anyway? The Politics of Space in Pune'**, FLAME Institute of Liberal Arts, Pune, December 2011

AWARDS

Engaged Anthropologist Grant (2016) awarded by Wenner-Gren Foundation, New York, to conduct public engagement activities related to dissertation research in Pune, India.

Case Development Grant (2015) awarded by Indian Institute of Habitat Studies, Bengaluru, to develop a case study as part of the 'Re-Framing Urban Inclusion Project'

FURS Writing up Grant (2015) awarded by Foundation for Urban and Regional Studies, Oxford University Centre for the Environment, for completion of dissertation writing

Wenner-Gren Foundation Dissertation Research Award (2010) awarded by Wenner-Gren Foundation, New York for dissertation research in Pune, India

Toni Taverone Graduate Student Paper Prize (2010) awarded by Women and Gender Studies Program, Syracuse University, Syracuse

Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award (2010) awarded by Graduate School, Syracuse University, Syracuse

Roscoe-Martin Award (2010) awarded by Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, Syracuse, for research on the politics of public space and public sphere in Pune, India

Goekjian Fellowship (2009) awarded by Syracuse University, Syracuse for summer research on public space in Maharashtra, India

Sarai Independent Research Fellowship (2007) awarded by SARAI, New Delhi, for research on urban space and identity in Pune, India

PUBLICATIONS

"Boyz II Men: Neighborhood Associations in Western India as the Site of Masculine Identity," in *Cultural Politics of Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Asia*, edited by T. Zheng, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press (in press)

"Neighborhood Associations in Urban India: Intersection of Religion and Space in Civic Participation," in *Place/No Place in Asian Urban Religiosity*, edited by J. Waghorne, ARI-Springer Asian Series. Dordrecht/Heidelberg/London/New York: Springer (in press)

"**Processes of Urban Exclusion: The Case of Young Men in a Mang Settlement in Pune,"** in a volume on Urban Sociology (in Marathi), edited by S.Tambe, Pune University (further details yet to be known)

LANGUAGE AND SKILLS

Native fluency in Marathi, English, conversational fluency in Hindi
Experience in visual documentation and photography