MUMBAI'S MID-SECTION NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

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Like all great cities, Mumbai's 'pot-luck' culture evolved from what migrants brought with them when they came to the city, wave after successive wave, and made it their home. The popular bard Annabhau Sathe (1920–1969) – a dalit, mill worker and communist – wrote an ever-popular Marathi song on the longings of these migrant workers: '*Majhi maina gavavar rahili, majha jeevachi hotiya kahili*' ('My beloved is left behind in my village, my heart burns for her'). The song is iconic and part of the vast repertoire of migrants' songs in all cultures and all languages. The reason why Mumbai's migrant stories are so fascinating and have inspired so many popular narratives, including those of Hindi films, is that the misery, loneliness and cruelty many migrants inevitably face are often compensated by the hospitality and the warm relationships the city incubates – these are stories that are both heart-rending and heart-warming. The secret of the 'heart' of this city is its working-class culture: the easy camaraderie that accompanies the faceless anonymity of an assembly line, the symbol of industrialization and large-scale production – satirized so brilliantly in Chaplin's *Modern Times*. As migrants from the hinterland came to Bombay's textile industry, they fitted into the various networks that had already been built by those who came before them – *gaokari mandals* (village-based clubs), *khanavals* (women-run, home-based eateries) and *bhajan mandals* (music groups), all of which combined to create a distance-family structure to watch over them. Much of film and fiction has tried to capture the trust and warmth of Mumbai's migrant culture, but only those who have experienced the city first-hand can truly tell the tale: industrial workers, strugglers in the film industry, runaways, small entrepreneurs with big dreams ...

In 1884, Marathi-speaking people accounted for over 50 per cent of the total population of the city of Bombay. Despite a decline in numbers they were still by far the largest linguistic group more than seventy years later, when the states of India were reorganized – broadly on the principle of language. Before the states' reorganization, Gujarat and Maharashtra were part of a single administrative unit, Bombay Presidency; and Gujaratis, being a prominent business community and owners of the textile mills, wielded considerable clout despite their smaller numbers. On the other hand, the Marathi majority felt belittled in what they considered their city. The report of the 1955 States Reorganization Commission recommended a bilingual state which would include the regions of Gujarat, Maharashtra and also Belgaum, with Bombay as the capital. This was not acceptable to the Marathi-speaking majority and thus the Samyukta Maharashtra (United Maharashtra) movement was born, which first fought for an exclusive Maharashtra and then for exclusive rights over Bombay. Else, Bombay was to be either a joint capital for both Gujarat and Maharashtra, or, as suggested by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, an independent union territory like Delhi.

Without getting into the long-term implications of these historical decisions, even a brief look back at that period helps in understanding the rise of the Shiv Sena in Bombay, its style of chauvinism, and the baffling support it attracted, despite its aggression and excesses, from the Marathi-speaking middle castes. The dominant Marathi ethos of that time was captured by the spirit of the textile mill workers, Bombay's underclass, which was mainly Marathi-speaking. Marathi was thus the popular language of theatre, literature, poetry and politics. Although, by the late 1950s, the Hindi cinema produced by the city was already an all-encompassing form of entertainment, it was still considered a 'national' phenomenon, while Marathi cultural

forms flourished as the 'local'. This is not to say that Marathi-speaking workers did not enjoy Hindi cinema. They did, as much as other populations in the subcontinent. But their immediate cultural milieu was of Marathi literature, Marathi theatre and Marathi music. However, it is important to note that even during that period of conflict around language-based statehood, it was possible for a national culture and a local culture to coexist in the city. It is also important to remember that the Bombay film industry of that time was not exclusively Hindi. Ironically, both Gujarati and Marathi cinema in Bombay went into a decline soon after the formation of separate states based on linguistic majorities in 1960.

Bombay's cotton textile mill workers were the centrepiece of the history of the trade union movement in India for a whole century. The first organization of workers in the city, the precursor of the modern trade union, was the Mill Hands Association set up in 1884 by Narayan Meghaji Lokhande, a follower of the radical social reformer Jyotiba Phule. One of the first workers' campaigns was launched by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a leader of the national movement for independence. Curiously, the issue raised by the campaign was neither colonial rule nor working conditions in the mills; it was against alcohol. Its main constituency was women who, fed up with the liquor addiction and borrowing habits of their mill-worker husbands, participated enthusiastically. Tilak's popularity, not just among women but also among men, was demonstrated when he was arrested by the British government in 1908: the mill workers went on a total strike for six days, demanding his release. Alcoholism remained an issue of contention in the city among the working class and in popular culture. At times, the debate was linked to issues of social morality and state control; on other occasions, it was conducted around the economy of the working-class household, workers' alienation and the security of women in domestic spaces. In 1939, the popular film star Master Vinayak and social activist P.K. Atre produced a Marathi film, *Brandichi Batli* ('Bottle of Brandy'), ridiculing Gandhi's campaign against alcohol. In 1950, the newly formed state government established a dedicated berth called the Prohibition Ministry, and enlisted bards from the trade union movement to campaign for the cause. Shahir Sable, an eminent poet-singer and trade unionist, came under criticism from progressive circles for composing and performing anti-alcohol propaganda songs on behalf of the state.

The precincts of the textile mills and their worker-inhabitants were like villages and village communities in themselves. The mills were large areas, most of them comprising 6 to 7 acres of land each. They were the centre of the universe for the workers – they not only worked, but also bathed, ate and slept here. Home was often just a bedroll on a patch of ground in a tenement, a patch that had just been vacated by a fellow-worker from an earlier shift. The time consciousness of the city of Bombay too evolved out of its industrial persona. Oriental mills initiated dawn-to-dusk working hours in 1858; soon all others followed suit. Most worked for 13 to 14 hours in the summer, and 10 to 12 hours in winter. Often workers came early and slept outside the mill-gates so as not to be late for the early morning shift. Life inside the mils was supervised by the 'time-keeper'. Anyone who reported for work even 10 minutes late would be replaced by a '*badli*' (temporary) worker for that day and one day's pay would be docked. Hordes of *badli* workers hung about in front of the mill-gates before every shift in the hope of finding work, and quite often they did. This 'time-keeping'

also led to accidents; for instance, at Mahalakshmi Station yard, workers rushing to get to the gate before the siren died would sometimes be crushed under an oncoming suburban train. Then there was the overseer, the all-powerful jobber or *mukadam* through whom the management communicated with the workers. He patrolled the mill-sheds constantly, on the look-out for slackers: those who tried to snatch a nap after a meal or dawdled at the toilet to gossip, or took time off to smoke a *beedi* or to chew tobacco or to just be. Woe betide a romancing couple if they happened to get caught in the act! The ways out of speedy dismissals could consist of very nasty financial or sexual favours. There was no forum for appeal; the only face of the management the workers knew was the *mukadam*. Yet all overseers were not the same; there were exceptions. When the first labour unions started to be organized, some of the more class-conscious *mukadam*s even became leaders of the working class.

The capital circulating in the manufacturing industry during the early twentieth century was easily expanded to the then new and unstable venture of cinema. Finances for early moving image projects (including *Raja Harishchandra* by D.G. Phalke, hailed as the father of Indian cinema) were provided by mill barons. In the early 1930s, theatres that screened silent films came up in the precincts of textile mills, under the direct patronage of the mill owners. For instance, Laxmi Theatre was built in 1923 on land donated by India United Mills, then owned by a Parsi family. The mill owners possibly wanted to ensure the migrant workers' attachment to the city and to their jobs by providing amenities and entertainment that were inaccessible to them in their villages. Show timings at these theatres coincided with work-shift timings at the mills. Cinema set itself to counter the popularity of folk and traditional performance forms such as the *Povada*, *Dashavatar*, *Tamasha* and *Lok Natya*, and the renderings of left-wing poet-singers. Interestingly, in 1942, following the euphoria around the Quit India movement and the mill owners' strategic support to the independence movement, the theatres in the vicinity changed their names – Laxmi Theatre became Bharatmata, Venus became Jaihind, and so on. Although most of these theatres have since bowed out under pressure from the service industry and gentrification, some still exist, though precariously – Bharatmata continues to run three shows a day with tickets priced at Rs 10 and 15.

There is a unique, iconic picture of the woman textile mill worker of Bombay. She wears a nine-yard *sari* in the Maharashtrian style, with a part of it wound round the legs like a *dhoti*; she carries a handbag slung over one shoulder; she stands straight and looks the camera in the eye. This is an image of Bombay's working woman: confident and *bindaas* (carefree), and with a better sense of entitlement than her sisters in other Indian cities. Bombay's public transport system and work culture have been conducive to working women. If there were always women travelling till late in the night on the suburban trains, it was because public transportation existed. If there was safety on the roads, it was because they were never empty. Bombay never slept as long as industries still hummed in the city, as long as workers from second and third shifts filled the roads and public transportation, keeping the city safe.

Bombay has always been a city with a high concentration of working women. Women constituted 20–25 per cent of the total work force of textile mills until 1931 when, with the introduction of the night shift (which excluded women workers) and maternity benefits, the percentages declined though the absolute numbers increased.

In 1934, out of a total of 1,28,420 mill workers in the city, 24,319 were women. These women were a force to reckon with, especially as a militant section of the communist-led textile workers' union. There is evidence to show that as early as 1894, 400 women textile workers, belonging to Jacob Mill near Supari Bagh, stopped work because they were not being paid fair wages for an increased workload; twenty-nine of them were charge-sheeted and fined for pelting stones and dirt at the manager's motor car. In the famous strike of 1939 at Bitia Mills (later Phoenix Mills), women used the technique of *gherao* – perhaps for the first time in trade union history. The mill owner and manager were locked inside the factory for twenty-four hours by women workers who guarded the gates, armed with brooms and *lathi*s, not allowing anybody to enter or leave. They were protesting against the doubling of their workload by the management.

The core of the much-celebrated 'spirit' of Bombay is actually just fierce pride in working hard. There is no place here for a leisurely feudal culture with its attendant graces and courtesies. It is interesting to note that one of the reasons for the Bombay mill workers' antagonism towards 'Pathan' moneylenders was that the latter did not have to work hard for a living; workers entering and leaving their daily shifts would often see these Pathans idly reclining on *charpai*s in the neighbourhood. The Pathans were originally from Afghanistan, and their main occupation was lending money at interest to low-paid mill workers. They 'worked' only in the first week of every month, when they stood by the mill-gates to recover money due to them. In 1927, in an outburst of violence, workers attacked these men whom they hated – but also feared for their physique and strength. The incident has been labelled a communal riot by historians. But, in the words of an old-timer:

> What right did these goons have to live off the interest they earned on the misery of the poor? They were not attacked because they were Muslims, it was because of the high interest they extracted. You could see them standing outside the gate on pay day, turbanned and bearded, looking like demons. The rest of the time they would lie about in full public view on the *charpai*s outside their houses. Workers hated to look at them!

Violence is an integral part of the urban scene and Bombay's mill area was well known as a crucible of organized crime, inhabited not by petty criminals but by gangs of an organized mafia – who were used and feared, at the same time, by the rich and the powerful. The members of these mafia gangs belonged to the working class; they did not come from privileged backgrounds. As a result they had a complicated relationship with their working-class neighbours, one that combined loyalty and terror. The first mafia gangs in the city were created by the Congress government in 1982, when local criminals were let out of prison on the condition that they would break the textile mill workers' strike. Hardboiled though these men presumably were, they often claimed that they didn't care for this job and that they did it only because they had to, to evade arrest and prosecution. One of the first dons of Bombay, Babu Resham, who was in charge of the Saat Rasta area, would tell striking workers not to create trouble in his area but go someplace else so that he wouldn't have to beat them up. Though tales of working-class men turning into mafia dons have been a popular ingredient in the city's films, the complexity of their class allegiances has never been dealt with adequately.

It is somewhat ironic to consider that the mill workers and the mafia, henchmen of the mill owners, were closely related – by blood and kinship, through village networks and proximity in the city's neighbourhoods. In Khatau Mills in Byculla, for instance,

where the Girni Kamgar Sangharsh Samiti (GKSS) was actively involved in organizing the workers, the owners contracted a local mafia gang to help them enforce their agenda in the mill with workers, banks and creditors. The gang inspired so much dread that its leader's name was never taken in public. Gang members ensconced in the mill were armed, and no one dared to speak against them or the mill owners. The official workers' union was brought under their control as well. As part of the GKSS campaign against sale of mill lands and the imminent closure of mills, of which I was a part, we held gate meetings in front of the mill. The mafia gang was not amused; they forbade workers from standing around listening to our speeches. So absolute was the terror they exercised that most of the Khatau Mill workers refused to talk to us, or to join the protest against sale and closure of the mill; they signed on the dotted line wherever the owners wanted them to, under pressure from the gang. When these gang members started threatening union activists, we, as union representatives, decided we had to confront them, come what may. Accordingly, we went to the gang's headquarters – to beard them in their lair, so to speak. The don was running his activities from prison at that time, and we were received by his lieutenant. Perhaps because he was simply unsure of how to deal with our foolhardy delegation of four which also included a woman, the lieutenant spoke to us courteously and muttered some assurances. This did not prevent the gang from beating up a Khatau union worker within an inch of his life and pistol-whipping many others. However, the winds began to change. The story that we had actually dared to step into Dagdi Chawl, the headquarters of the mafia gang, made the rounds of the mill area the same evening; and by the next morning we were being viewed with immense awe and respect. Even though we assured everyone that it had been a pleasant enough meeting and that there had been no animosity, the legend grew nevertheless. The workers began to resist. The mafia gang eventually withdrew from Khatau Mills, presumably on instructions from the don, when the clashes with workers threatened to intensify.

It must also be said that the mafia, especially the one at Khatau Mills, supported the mill workers' struggles on occasion – presumably when there was no specific *supari* (contract) to threaten or beat up the workers. Often, when the GKSS announced a protest action, we would see notices put up at the street corner saying the gang supported it. By then they had turned into politicians in the legislature with whom the GKSS shared a non-antagonistic, if not amicable, relationship.

If mill workers and the mafia were two corners of a familial triangle, the police constituted the third. Police personnel in the city are recruited almost always from working-class families, and almost every Bombay cop is the son/daughter/grandchild or close relative of a mill worker. Although there was often hostility and violence between the workers, and the mafia and the police, there was also a bond. The struggles of mill workers were frequently and quietly supported by the police – not just by the rank-and-file but even officers. In a recent mass meeting of textile workers, a worker-activist exhorted: 'We call upon the police not to react. We will break the barricades. If you cane-charge us, don't forget your cane is coming down on the back of your grandfather, your mother or your father.' Mill workers famously rioted in support of the police when the latter unionized and fought for their demands in 1982. They never forget to remind the police about this solidarity action.

The Bombay police has always been a favourite theme in the city's cinema. There

have been numerous police sagas in which sometimes the police are vigilantes, sometimes a part of corrupt politics, sometimes henchmen of mafia dons. But this aspect of the class identity of the lower rung of the police force has rarely entered cinema narratives, except for some early films of Dada Kondke and a few other popular Marathi films where police constables are portrayed as lovable yet sly country bumpkins from the Konkan region.

The legendary efficiency of the Bombay police could have been a serious handicap to those opposed to the draconian national Emergency of 1975–77. The Bombay police have a reputation for actually investigating and detecting, and not just extracting confessions by using the third degree. When I first arrived in Bombay in November 1975, India was under Emergency rule, imposed by the Indira Gandhi-led Congress government in June that year, citing 'imminent danger to the security of India being threatened by internal disturbances' and outlawing all opposition to the government. The entire country was under watch, and at the mercy of the police who could arrest, detain, torture, even commit murder, with impunity. I was then a member of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist), more commonly known as the Naxalite party. During the Emergency years, anyone who did not extend abject and absolute support to Indira Gandhi, and anyone who opposed the mad schemes of her younger son Sanjay Gandhi, was considered an enemy and a potential threat to the internal security of the country. Those who sympathized with a banned organization were enemies of the state. The 'Emergency state' was even-handed in its treatment of protest: the right wing, left wing, criminals, business scamsters, hawala traders, journalists who reported the excesses of Congress goons and the police – all were uniformly incarcerated and packed in together in the same prison barracks, giving rise to some strange friendships and interesting, if bizarre, conversations between these diverse prisoners. The worst forms of torture in prison, as bad or even worse than those hardboiled criminals were subjected to, were reserved for the Naxalites.

Most Indian citizens were unhappy with what they saw as an intolerable attack on democracy and their freedoms. The Bombay police, born into a community of workers that embodied a high level of social consciousness, were no exception. There are some remarkable stories about the way a section of 'Bombay's finest' dealt with political activists during the Emergency. Vasanthi Raman, a teacher in Bombay University, was interrogated by a visiting team of the Special Branch from Andhra Pradesh regarding her connections with the banned Naxalites; she was not allowed to go to the toilet to relieve herself for nine whole hours. The local police saw her discomfort, and a Bombay police officer called her out of the room under some pretext and accompanied her to the toilet. In another incident, when a meeting of college students opposing the Emergency was broken up, they were let off with a mere warning – something unheard of in those dark days when the police generally had a free hand, and used it with destructive and cruel vigour. Pravin Nadkar, then a student activist, testifies:

> There were about twenty of us, students from various colleges. We were to gather on the terrace of the house of B.T. Ranadive's brother. We had gone there individually in order not to be noticed, but someone from an opposing group in college, who lived in a nearby building, saw us and informed the police. We were discussing our underground campaign against the Emergency, and the police suddenly appeared. They knew the group was anti-Emergency, and at that time it meant you could be arrested and held without trial under

> the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) for life. We were surprised when they let everyone go. We were even sure it was a trap at first.

The police in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, trained in tough anti-Naxalite measures and ready to use the worst forms of brutality against them, had no time for what they saw as namby-pambyness on the part of the Maharashtra cops. They did not hesitate to cross the border from Andhra Pradesh into Maharashtra in unmarked cars and abduct suspected Naxalites whom they had been secretly tracking, subjecting them to inhuman torture and jailing them without any papers.

Bombay is a mecca for runaways, for those who need to hide. There are other Indian metros but it is here, in this teeming, fractured, anonymous, unpredictable city, that it is most difficult for the threatening seeker, whether parent, spouse, landlord, employer or police, to navigate the complicated pathways of kinship networks and parallel sets of authority to find a determinedly lost person. I arrived in Bombay on 30 November 1975 by the Deccan Express from Hyderabad, with just a jhola and the sari I was wearing, and the threat of arrest hanging over my head – as was the case with innumerable political activists at that time. Of the thousands that various trains disgorged into the city that day, I was one of perhaps three or four hundred who did not have or plan on buying a return ticket. Underground political life meant a total absorption with the law and order machinery: what did they know, how would they operate, and how to stay a step ahead of them. I managed to evade arrest – which might have been under a MISA warrant that allowed the police to hold prisoners without having to present them in court – but it meant I had to be very careful to remain in hiding.

Human relations in the city of Mumbai are paradoxical. On the one hand, there is the forced intimacy imposed by proximity in a space-starved city and a kinship that has always characterized the working class of Bombay. This is tempered by a respect for private space. There is no pressure to be sociable – and those who treasure their privacy and prefer not to speak with neighbours are left alone. This is what makes Bombay a good city to hide in. I stayed with a couple, Vijay and Sarita, in the slums of Khar. Vijay worked in a big hotel and Sarita stayed at home; they had no children. The house was a one-room thatch, about 14 by 12 feet. It had one curtained-off corner where the couple slept and in the opposite corner was a mori, a wet area, where everyone bathed. Water had to be collected from a street tap outside after standing in a long queue, and that was the scene of many epic battles in the locality. Although Sarita offered to fetch me water for my bath, I insisted on getting it myself – little knowing how difficult a task it was for someone not used to it. The story for my cover was that I was an educated relative of Vijay's from Kerala. I was addressed as 'teacher madam' in the locality. Being one of those unfortunates who could carry only one bucket of water at a time, I was patronized and assisted good-humouredly by the other women. I noticed that Sarita, on the other hand, was not treated with similar indulgence, and the reason was not clear to me at first. They sneered at her clothes; at her short choli and low-slung, brightly coloured sari. Indeed Sarita's clothes were different from the rest, jarring and somewhat 'provocative'. My attempts to present her my own rather conventional saris were unsuccessful; she found them too dull for her taste.

In conversations over a period of time I discovered that Sarita was a former

sex worker, and that Vijay and she had fallen in love and married much against the wishes of her pimp and 'madam' – a resentment they demonstrated by beating up Vijay on more than one occasion. However the couple remained adamant, and finally they reached a mutual agreement on payment of money to her 'owners'. The transition from sex worker to housewife was difficult, often impossible, but Vijay and Sarita carried on, ignoring the taunts of relatives and neighbours. They were as blissfully ignorant of the risks of providing me shelter – that during the Emergency, people who gave shelter to fugitives could themselves be arrested and tortured. Sarita wept when I left, for the most unexpected of reasons. She explained that not only was I someone she could talk to, but my leaving also meant there would no longer be any protection for her in the house from her husband who had taken to alcohol and abuse, and which he had stopped when I joined the household. In 1977, Indira Gandhi lifted the Emergency and declared general elections. Everyone was sure the elections would be rigged, but we were wrong. The people cast their votes and she lost. In a collective burst of euphoria, reminiscent of the day India gained independence from British rule, people danced on the streets – in Bombay and all over the country. I went to see Sarita, only to be told she had left her husband. No one knew where she had gone.

The 1992 riots exposed the stark reality of communal pressures in Bombay, and called into question the impression that it was a cosmopolitan city with a high degree of inter-community tolerance. What cosmopolitan means is of course a matter of debate: whether it means that people of different communities live together in mixed societies where there is no majority community of one language, culture or religion; or whether it is a cultural construct, composed of tolerance, compassion and respect for each other's cultural differences even if living areas are separate and delineated. Certainly Bombay was cosmopolitan when it was an emphatically working-class city with a diverse work force, even if the majority spoke Marathi. It was taken for granted that people who spoke the same language, shared the same customs, food, festivals and history, would prefer to stay together. And yet the different neighbourhoods would intersect, and the people would interact as well. This is not to say there were no riots, no violence and no sectarian issues in the city in those days, but these were seldom and not the norm. Then came the riots of 1992–93 which put paid to all of that.

One of the first clashes of the infamous riots took place in the mill area. According to locals living in the Khatau Mill chawls in Byculla, which adjoins a Muslim-majority neighbourhood, Muslim militants belonging to the mafia attacked policemen who were patrolling the area just after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya – a collective criminal act orchestrated by right-wing Hindutva forces with appalling and cynical ruthlessness. The reaction of the Muslims in Byculla, even if they were armed goons, might have been a flash in the pan which could be easily dealt with by an efficient and well-networked police force, had the atmosphere not been inflamed by stories and editorials in a hysterical right-wing section of the Marathi media.

In the Saat Rasta area, just behind the Jacob Circle police station, taxis belonging to Muslims were burnt; two hand-cart pullers were killed and their bodies dumped on the railway tracks in gunny bags. The home of Sheikh Jainu Chand, a local poet-singer, and friend and comrade of the famous leftist bard Amar Sheikh, was ransacked. A Shiv Sainik boasted of how he had killed nine of 'them'. An old, bearded Muslim hand-cart puller was burnt on the road at Kalachowki in front of the GKSS office. The only silver

lining amidst all the mayhem and madness, was the sense of shame and helplessness expressed by some of the mill workers. They were unnerved by the fact that the local youth, their own children, could indulge in such random cruelty. They tried to stop the violence but were powerless against the hysteria, which they laid squarely at the door of the Shiv Sena leadership and the Marathi media. They often remark, 'We lost one generation to the mafia, and the next one to the Shiv Sena.' During the historic Bombay textile workers' strike, which lasted for about a year before it was broken, workers and their families went through a crisis of utter penury, and this, they believe, resulted in their sons getting frustrated with the ideologies of their parents. The mafia exploited the sense of frustration by recruiting a number of these young men. The next wave to manipulate them was unleashed by Bal Thackeray, founder of the Shiv Sena. The Shiv Sena began with an uncontroversial demand: jobs for the local youth. It is worth recalling a story of the early 1970s when Marathi film producer Dada Kondke was bullied by cinema-hall owners who prioritized the Hindi film star Dev Anand's *Teen Deviyan* over his own *Songadya*. Acting on Dada's behest, Thackeray arm-twisted the exhibitors into changing their booking schedule in favour of the 'son of the soil'. Instances like these played an important role in building up an image for the parochial party. The side-benefit, with the active instigation and collusion of the Congress Party, was the decimation of the Communist Party, entrenched in the textile mill area. Local youth were called upon to resolutely oppose their leftist parents, who had given them nothing but poverty and high ideals. Needless to say, both the Sena and the Congress succeeded: the former in their long-term goals, the latter in the short term.

Mumbai today is no longer a centre of industry. It does not produce much that is solid. This has had a corresponding impact on the demography and the identity of the city. Mumbai is clearly in danger of losing its lustre. The change has been wrought, not by poor migrants from the north as claimed by Raj Thackeray, nephew of the original Thackeray, but by the destruction of the very marrow of the city: its culture, its people, its tolerance, its single-minded work culture. The city has changed, with industrial closures, changes in land-use, rampant real-estate speculation, lack of access to basic services like housing, public transport, drinking water and waste management, lack of planning for open spaces, even health and education, and entertainment. What is replacing Girangaon, the original mill lands, has led to a genuine identity crisis – one that is robbing the city of its eccentricities, its fluid complexities, its urban angst. Mumbai is losing its beauty and its romance. It can renew itself, not through a series of redevelopment plans, but when and if it can connect with its own history, and recast itself to find a new voice, that represents the vast diversity and energy of this great city. This is not as remote a possibility as it might seem to be from where we stand now. The citizens of Mumbai, a city of survivors, will certainly find a way.